NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 25 September 1990
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Thursday 27 September 1990

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

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Fifth Assembly
First Session

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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 25 September 1990

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this period of sittings be granted to the member for Arafura on the grounds of ill health.

In moving the motion, I request the Assembly's best wishes for the honourable member who is undergoing quite a serious operation in Adelaide.

Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Report of the Distribution Committee 1990

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the 1990 Report of the Distribution Committee Volumes 1 and 2 on the distribution of the Territory into electoral divisions revised in September 1990 in accordance with section 18A of the Electoral Act.

MOTION
Report of the Distribution Committee 1990

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly resolve, in terms of section 18(1) of the Electoral Act, that the distribution of the Territory into electoral divisions, as proposed in the revised 1990 Report of the Distribution Committee, be approved.

On 29 November 1989, His Honour the Administrator directed the Distribution Committee to redivide the Territory into proposed electoral divisions. The distribution became necessary due to the significant population changes in certain areas of the Territory which have taken place since the electoral distribution of 1986. The procedures to be followed in conducting a distribution are set out in the Electoral Act. The Distribution Committee consists of the Chairman, who is presently Commodore Eric Johnston, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General. When directed by the Administrator, the committee is required to equally divide the Territory electors into proposed divisions subject to a 20% tolerance. In making the distribution, the committee must take into account, with respect to each division, such things as community of interests, means of communication and travel, population trends and density, and the areas and physical features of the proposed divisions. Following public consultation, the committee is required to forward its report to the minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

If the Assembly approves the report, the Administrator is required to declare the names and boundaries of the new divisions. The new divisions then come into effect for the purposes of the next general election. Following the Administrator's declaration, the Electoral Office must amend the rolls, to reflect the new division boundaries, and advise those electors affected. In the present case, the committee provided its initial report to me on 25 July 1990.

Honourable members will be aware that formal advice from the chairman of the committee indicated that an error had been made in the initial report and that it was necessary to display for public comment a map showing the corrected boundary between the proposed divisions of Sanderson and Karama. The committee reports that no formal objections to the corrected boundary have been received. In the revised report, which I have now tabled, the Distribution Committee advises that its recommendations are predicated on the basis of one vote one value and the tolerance provisions are utilised to take account of projected growth patterns. The distribution is based, as honourable members are aware, on the retention of a 25-seat Assembly.

The committee reports that, as of 1 May this year, there were 81 296 electors on the Territory electoral roll, giving a quota per electorate of 3252 electors with an upper and lower tolerance limit of 3902 and 2602 respectively. It is worth noting, in the context of the Territory's continuing growth, that the similar figures for total electors and quota size in the Distribution Committee's last report in 1986 were 69 985 and 2799. That is a 16% increase in the number of people enrolled during the last 4 years.

The committee sees the Territory electorate as being clearly divisible into several discrete urban communities with the balance of the electorate being widely spread over the Territory. The urban areas of Palmerston and Katherine are identified as areas expanding at a far greater rate than the broad spectrum of the electorate. Thus they require consideration as discrete urban communities in addition to Darwin and Alice Springs. Members will note that the final recommendations of the committee are little changed from the proposals put on public display several months ago.

Six objections were received to the proposals within the prescribed time frame but most of the recommended alterations were not supported by the committee. The exceptions were the realignment of the proposed southern boundary of the Victoria River electorate and the movement of the western boundary of the proposed Barkly electorate. There was also some finetuning of other proposed boundaries as set out at page 8 of volume 1 of the committee's report. The committee notes the difficulty of meeting simultaneously the quota requirements for each division, together with all the other legislative criteria for a distribution. Therefore, it adopts solutions which it considers to be fair and realistic for present and projected requirements.

Mr Speaker, the provisions of the Electoral Act require that a distribution will not be effective until the Legislative Assembly passes a resolution approving the distribution. Mr Speaker, I commend the proposed redistribution to the Assembly.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I note the Chief Minister's comments in respect of this redistribution. I must say that I am heartened by his capacity to transcend the Berrimah line that is often the subject of public debate, particularly around Alice Springs. I imagine that candidates in the northern suburbs of Darwin will be concerned that the Berrimah line has become a Doctor's Gully line, which is drawn somewhere this side of the northern suburbs.

I thank the Chief Minister for outlining the activities of the Distribution Committee and its statutory responsibilities. I note his comments about the glitch in the committee's previous report which led to the need for further display following on a relatively minor amendment to the report. Today's tabling of the report and the motion to accept the

report are the final stage of the redistribution and open the way for an election to be held at some time in the future. Judging by remarks made by the Minister for Transport and Works and the Chief Minister himself, I have the impression that this motion comes none too soon.

I have no intention of involving myself in any electioneering in this debate, but I do want to make a couple of comments concerning the effect of the redistribution on my electorate. Like many other electorates in the Territory, MacDonnell has undergone some dramatic changes during the last 10 years. The 1983 redistribution included in MacDonnell an area north of Alice Springs. The area included cattle stations like Mount Riddock, Bushy Park and Aileron, together with Aboriginal communities at Harts Range and Alcoota. With this redistribution, those communities will no longer be part of MacDonnell. It is with some sadness that I place on record in this Assembly the fact that I will no longer be able to visit those communities as a local member. However, I have no doubt that the member for Stuart will represent those communities very capably.

If I am concerned about those communities to the north-east of Alice Springs being removed from the electorate of MacDonnell, I am deeply saddened that Santa Teresa will also become part of another electorate. Santa Teresa has been in MacDonnell since the commencement of the first fully-elected Legislative Assembly in 1974, and I have represented the people of Santa Teresa in this Assembly for the past 10 years. During that time, I have appreciated not only the electoral support I have received but the personal relationships which I have built up with many at Santa Teresa, including the expatriate staff located there. I have great respect for the work of a number of Missionaires de la Sacre Coeur who have worked there, together with the Marist Brothers and the nuns who have staffed the hospital and the school. Their work has been impressive and my coming to understand the nature of such work has been one of the satisfactions of being a member of the Assembly.

I will not go into the dislocations and the tragedies, as well as the happiness, of representing a community like Santa Teresa. I could refer to a wide variety of community celebrations, and funerals of people who have passed on, too many of them before their time, but time does not permit me to do so. Whilst the loss of Santa Teresa from the electorate of MacDonnell causes me a great deal of sadness, I am sure that my colleague, the member for Stuart, will represent it with capability and enthusiasm. I believe that that will be a successful transition.

The area that moves back into MacDonnell is that area south of Heavitree Gap that is currently part of the Flynn electorate. Of course, it was part of MacDonnell prior to the redistribution in December 1983 and, as sad as it is to lose those other places from my electorate, it is a pleasure to be able to visit what I believe will be constituents in the farm area, the racecourse area and in the White Gums area as a result of this redistribution.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I would like to pass on my appreciation to the members of the Distribution Committee. I believe that the minor glitch that the Chief Minister referred to in his speech has been dealt with appropriately and that that minor glitch should not be allowed to blur our appreciation of the excellent work done by Commodore Johnston, as chairman of that committee, and by Mr Charlie Phillips and Mr Peter Wells. Whilst there may be some areas where there are contentious redistributions, I believe that the committee has done a job that is just and fair and that

the boundaries on the basis of which the next election will be fought are ones in which all members of this Assembly should be able to have confidence.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, Sadadeen is a name that is about to disappear, although I had some hope from the Chief Minister's Sadadeen ...

Mr Perron: A last minute recording.

Mr COLLINS: Perhaps he felt sorry for me, although one would doubt it.

There is no doubt that the redistribution had to be done. The distribution was out of kilter and it is required by law that we have the distribution within certain tolerances. Numbers in some electorates were outside those tolerances and therefore there was no choice. The job had to be done. I was one of those people who lodged objections to the way that things were done in Alice Springs. I suggested 3 possible ways in which it could be done using geographic features and matters of community interest. It concerns me considerably that Sadadeen should be divided down Undoolya Road when people in the same distinct community live on both the north and south sides of that road. They are a group of people who feel united in very many ways and, suddenly, they are finding that Undoolya Road will divide them. The northern part of Undoolya Road will go into the current electorate of Braitling where there is quite a big difference and distance between the east side of Alice Springs and the Braitling area of the old racecourse and beyond.

I submitted a number of proposals. I said that the Todd River should be a natural boundary and that the east side of the Todd, including the golf course, the old east side and the Sadadeen areas made up a reasonable area. However, looking at the numbers, whilst I am sure I was within the tolerance if that suggestion had been accepted, that area would have been a bit on the low side, and I am not one to shirk taking on a number of people. Thus, my primary suggestion was that the current part of the Sadadeen electorate, which consists of the central business district down to the swimming pool, be retained until the numbers in the golf course area, which is a growth area, increased. At that time, the electorate could retreat back to the boundary.

In one sense, I appreciate the Electoral Office's assistance in providing the numbers to me as it ascertained them. I sat down with my staff and we developed a number of propositions. I was a bit perplexed, I must confess, to be told by one of the tribunal's members that the figures that I had were wrong. When those figures were obtained from the Electoral Office itself, it is a little hard to understand what the redistribution is based on. Whilst it would not have assisted me, I raised the fact that the northern part of Braitling had been put into Stuart because the figures indicated fewer electors in Braitling than in Stuart. If a bias should be permitted anywhere, it should be to allow the lower numbers in the bush electorates because of the sheer difficulty those members have in travelling around their electorates whereas members in town seats have a really cushy job.

Mr Vale: I don't run a grape farm as well.

Mr COLLINS: I am flat out working. I can indicate to the member for Braitling that I look after my electorate and I look after it very well.

The new Braitling, as proposed, has one of the lowest numbers of electors in it and it appears to have nowhere to grow. The Greatorex area

has at least the golf course area which has plenty of room for expansion. It has been slow to take off, but it will expand in time. I put this to one of the member's of the committee, and he made the interesting point that a couple of zealous members of this Assembly had added a string of extra names to the Electoral Roll. Obviously, the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell had been out there doing their duty, and it was suggested to me that, if a careful habitation review and cleansing of the roll were undertaken in those areas, it could well be expected that numbers in Stuart would be lower than those in the proposed new Braitling.

That brings me to a point that sticks in my craw and in the craw of a number of other people. I refer to the names and that have been selected for electorates, the names that remain and the names that are to disappear. Flynn and Sadadeen have gone. Braitling remains, and the new Braitling is roughly 60% of the old Braitling and 40% of Sadadeen. I would suggest that this tends to give a sitting member, who can claim to be the member for such an electorate and a candidate for it, a bit of an advantage. It may not be very much to judge from the basic views that have been put to me. I have come to accept that these boundaries will be accepted as they have been proposed. I cannot say that I am wrapped in it. I have to make the choice between chopping off an arm or chopping off a leg. That is the way I feel about it. One does tend to become rather attached to those people one serves and looks after. They have been very gracious to me, but certainly I cannot represent both areas, although it would have been tempting to do so if it had been possible electorally.

To whichever group I have to walk away from, I will be saying that it is not my choice. I will thank them for allowing me be their representative and tell them that I aim to be re-elected to the Assembly. I have never worried where people who visit my office come from. In the past, they have come from all over town and I am sure that happens to other members too. I make it clear that, if people seek assistance and I am able to provide that assistance, I will certainly provide it.

Mr Bailey: Which seat are you standing for?

Mr COLLINS: That is for me to know and for you to guess at the moment. I will announce that when it is due and ready.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I am working for all the of the people in Sadadeen and I have letter-boxed both of the new parts. You let me run my campaign, honourable member for Wanguri. You try to run yours. You can attempt to get back in, but the way that you have performed in this House does not augur well.

Without any prompting from me, a number of people have said that those who have suffered most from this distribution are the 2 independent members. My electorate has been split in two and the member for Koolpinyah's electorate has been slashed, although she does not appear to be particularly worried about that. She seems quite confident that she can win in the electorate she has chosen to contest. The electorate of the member for Flynn has been chopped around pretty badly and even the member for Barkly may find it harder to win in that electorate. The other member who has had a difficult time is the member for Ludmilla. Perhaps it is just fate that he went the way of the member for Koolpinyah and I and missed out on CLP preselection. However, I am prepared to fight and I aim to win.

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Of course, there are ways and ways of missing out.

Mr Hatton: You are not saying that he did it for the pension, are you?

Mr COLLINS: It has been done before. People have indicated that they would stand when they did not really want to. That is a different kettle of fish.

I can assure the members of this House that I will be contesting an electorate and that I will be doing my utmost to win. I aim to be back here and I trust that my colleagues on the crossbenches will be around too.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. The Assembly's assent to the Report of the Distribution Committee will be very timely for those organising the election. Following the unfortunate events of the last sittings, it is probably best to get it out of the way as soon as possible.

In the next election, I will have the honour of running for office in the Assembly for the eighth time. I have seen about 5 redistributions during the period in which I have been contesting the seat of Barkly in this House. Communities such as Lake Nash, Warrabri or Ali Curung, Yuendumu, Elliott and Borroloola have been included in and removed from Barkly on a regular basis. It seems as though people have to take turns in different electorates in order to make up the numbers. This occasion is no exception.

The inclusion of Ali Curung in the electorate and the removal of communities like Newcastle Waters, Elliott, Dunmarra and Daly Waters is regretted in the sense that, whilst it is perceived to be and possibly is designed to make it a little more difficult for me to win, the losers are the people who need to be serviced by their member. Over a period of many years, it became an accepted premise that there was value in putting Lake Nash, Warrabri, Yuendumu and Hooker Creek in a single electorate because of the skin relationship of the people in those communities. Since 1980 or 1983, that situation has worked very well, particularly for the people concerned. Because of their orientation towards Alice Springs, they were included in electorates with the same orientation. Making an exception of Warrabri, as has happened with this redistribution, does not present me with an electoral difficulty as some would have hoped but rather it makes it a little more difficult for people to get the representation they want.

The same will apply to people in Elliott, Newcastle Waters and north along the track, who now find themselves in the seat of Victoria River, if the member for Victoria River lives in Katherine or points north. Those communities generally look south for their business and normal communication connections and they will be at a disadvantage in being serviced by their local member. I think that the present member for Victoria River would be the first to concede that servicing Elliott from where he lives in Batchelor, or from where any future member might live to the north of Katherine, is very difficult. It is just as frustrating for the constituents who want to have contact with their local member for whatever reason. In that sense, the boundary changes are unfortunate.

When the first Report of the Distribution Committee was released, it was reported that the Territory Nationals had made no submission to the committee. I would just like to place on record the fact that that is not correct. We made a submission as a result of the findings of the committee

in its first report. It was sent to the office and, for whatever reason, was lost or mislaid and was not known about or included. It has been made available subsequently to the chairman and his committee for consideration.

Whatever politicians and the committee think about changes to boundaries, it is always interesting to hear what the people think. It is very easy to assume that the people are not interested, do not care and will go along with anything that is dished up to them. I was very impressed with the feedback that I received as I moved around. I have travelled fairly widely throughout the Territory of late and a number of people have taken an interest in this redistribution. People do care about whether they are in 1 electorate or another and many have voiced their pleasure or displeasure accordingly. I think that has been a good thing for the Territory and I welcome the reaction that I have received in the community.

In effect, the impression that was widely perceived from the presentation of the report was that it was designed very nicely to see the Nationals and the Independents disappear graciously out of the Assembly. I think it has failed on that count quite miserably.

Mr Finch: What a shameful suggestion!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, what pious pap is coming from the honourable minister. We are all men of the world, Mr Speaker, and we are not stupid. That was one of the prime designs of the exercise and it did not work. In fact, probably it has hurt the government more than it has hurt anybody else.

Mr Hatton: I note that the recommendation for Ludmilla for your party is identical to ...

Mr TUXWORTH: It just shows the wisdom that the committee had in adopting that proposition.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased the report has been handed down. We can now get on with the real fun and have the election.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few brief points in relation to this report. Most people are aware of the dramatic change the redistribution has made to my electorate. However, most members may not be aware that I wrote to the committee prior to its second deliberation pointing out that, since self-government, the Ludmilla electorate has been changed in a dramatic manner at each redistribution. The electorate has been squeezed into different shapes at regular intervals. In fact, it has always had a difficult time in trying to come to grips with whether Coconut Grove, Fannie Bay, the Narrows or the RAAF are or are not within its boundaries at various times. It has had a difficult time establishing an identity.

When I saw the original propositions by most parties in respect of the redistribution for the Darwin area, whilst I thought the electorate of Ludmilla was dealt with poorly, I believed that the electorate would be able to cope with those changes. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that the disastrous - and I stress 'disastrous' - and unrealistic attitudes of the Distribution Committee would impact not only on the Ludmilla community but on 3 separate sections of the Darwin community. The 3 communities that have been badly affected are Karama, Palmerston and Ludmilla.

The major aim of the redistribution was to provide 25 seats in a fairly equal representation across the Northern Territory. However, in respect of

Aboriginal communities, skin groups and related matters should be taken into consideration as well as the numbers. To some extent, that has been done. Community centres of interest, such as Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek, obviously need to be taken into consideration. In my view, the fact that the Darwin suburbs have an identifiable name and boundary area ought to have been taken into consideration. That has not been done in respect of the electorate of Brennan. We have the ridiculous situation now whereby not one of the original parts of the old residential areas of Ludmilla is left in the electorate of Brennan. Previously, it was the largest electorate in the metropolitan area and it has been doubled in size now. It incorporates portions of areas which have no traditional link with each other. The boundary with Karama runs some of the way along Kalymnos Drive, and then deviates in a wedge before going back to Kalymnos Drive again. That boundary places in Brennan about 820 electors who identify with Karama and the electorate of Karama.

The situation is even worse in Palmerston. One would think that, in dealing with numbers of people and maps, reasonable people would attempt to keep like-minded people together. If it was really necessary to go as far as Palmerston to add numbers to bring Brennan into parity - and I will talk later about another way of achieving that - I would have expected that at least individual suburbs in Palmerston could have been kept intact. The committee could have included the whole of Driver or the whole of Gray but it has not done even that. It has carved off a small portion of Gray and 3 small segments of Driver. That cuts across all the traditional links which have built up in those suburbs in the existing Palmerston. It turns them into isolated pockets of housing tacked on to the end of the electorate of Brennan. Brennan contains a portion of Palmerston, a portion of Karama, Winnellie, Ludmilla and the Navy and Air Force bases. Relationships between these areas are limited or non-existent but they have all been lumped into a single electorate.

To show how difficult it is, when you ask the Electoral Office how it intends to run the election in the electorate of Brennan, the people there shudder. Whilst most electorates may have 1 polling booth or possibly 2 at the outside, the electorate of Brennan will require a minimum of 3 polling booths - 1 for Karama, 1 for Palmerston and 1 in Hidden Valley for residents of Berrimah, Knuckeys Lagoon and possibly the Navy area, and there is a contingency plan to set aside a special booth at Ludmilla to cope with voters in Winnellie and at the RAAf base. This really is a very sensible redistribution!

Mr Collins: Can they run a mobile?

Mr FIRMIN: They may end up having to run a mobile as well. There are Aboriginal camps at the 15-mile and other places. There is also the Knuckeys Lagoon Camp. We may end up having a mobile as well.

I am saying that there is no focal point within that electorate. The residential areas bear no relationship to each other. There is no focus at all, unlike most other suburban electorates that are centred on schools, shopping centres, suburban environments and names that people recognise and come to understand. I now have 7 schools that the people of my electorate will attend. Whilst 4 of them are within the electorate, 3 of them are not within the boundaries of the electorate, but across the road from the electorate. It will be interesting to see how they will relate to each other because they have no commonality of interest at all.

A member interjecting.

Mr FIRMIN: With a great deal of respect, yours are all within a reasonable distance of each other and are collector areas for the primary and the preschool students to go through to your high schools. I do not have even that.

Today, really I wanted to speak on behalf of my Ludmilla constituents because the Ludmilla people feel very upset about this redistribution. In all the time that I have represented the community since 1976, either with the Darwin City Council or with this Legislative Assembly, I have never seen a group of people so upset by such changes. In 1976, when I was first elected to the Darwin City Council, the election was for the total municipality of Darwin. There was no ward system. In the next election, 2 years later, the ward system came into effect. I represented the Chan Ward which then incorporated Nightcliff, Coconut Grove and a small part of Ludmilla. At the next council election, the area was changed again and incorporated the Narrows and all the areas I mentioned previously, except parts of Nightcliff, were removed. It incorporated the RAAF base and parts of Winnellie.

In 1983, I came into this Legislative Assembly. There was a change to the electorate of Ludmilla to the extent that the RAAF and the Navy bases had been removed and parts of Fannie Bay and all of Coconut Grove had been added. The people did not quite know where they were. In 1987, Coconut Grove and Fannie Bay were excised and the RAAF base included again. The electorate extended to the Berrimah crossroads and also included the Trade Development Zone. There was no real rationale behind that.

The new electorate of Brennan is simply a hotchpotch of all the areas for which the Distribution Committee could not find a place. It has worked on the wrong premise. If it had started with major residential areas of, say, Karama on the other side of McMillans Road, worked through the electorates correctly and excised some 3000-odd constituents, as it should have done in the first place, none of this would have occurred, these people would not face the problems they will have in achieving their aims and the successful member at the next election would not have such problems in servicing their needs.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I rise to add my comments to those already made in relation to the report. I would like to begin with a general congratulatory comment to the committee for the work it has done in carrying out its task of redistribution. In general, I believe that the boundaries that it has come up with are fair and equitable. I would like to pick up a couple of comments made earlier by the current member for Ludmilla. I am not quite sure what he will be after today.

Mr Collins: He will still be the member for Ludmilla until after the election.

Mr BAILEY: Yes, but where is Ludmilla now? It has gone.

I agree with him that there are a number of electorate boundaries that make the representation of the local population difficult. His electorate is probably the most difficult of all in that it includes suburbs from the extreme end of the northern suburbs through to the RAAF base and out to Palmerston. My own electorate has similar difficulties even though its boundaries have not changed significantly. These matters should be taken into account in future redistributions.

Currently, I have voters in 4 suburbs. I have all of Wanguri. I had about a third of Wagaman. I have a small section of Leanyer in Woodleigh Gardens and nearly all of Tiwi. In the redistribution, I picked up half of the area in Tiwi that I did not have previously. As Mr Speaker will be aware, he still has the bottom corner of Tiwi within his electorate. In exchange, I lost half of the area that I represented in Wagaman.

As has been made clear by the member for Ludmilla, having small sections of suburbs in an electorate different from the bulk of the suburb creates problems in respect of your representation of the area. It means you represent a small section of 1 suburb or that a small section of a suburb which you represent falls within another electorate. I share the member for Ludmilla's concerns. I too have many schools that impinge on my area. At least 2 of them have only a small number of students from the electorate. However, because that section of the suburb is in my electorate, I feel obligated to go along to those schools. The 2 schools are Leanyer and Wagaman and the number of my constituents in that area has been decreased significantly. In future redistributions, the way boundaries divide suburbs which are seen to be defined geographic areas, especially within the major urban centres, should be taken into account. We have a tolerance within the numbers and, therefore, there may be a way to balance things.

I finish my response to the Chief Minister's motion by saying that I would like to welcome the people from the area of Tiwi who have come to join the electorate of Wanguri and I hope that I will be able to serve them, and I would like to thank the electors in the area of Wagaman who have not been moved out of the electorate of Wanguri. I support the motion.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to make some comments to the motion by the Chief Minister this morning in tabling the electoral redistribution papers which we have now received. I remember that once my seat of Arnhem extended from the East Alligator down to the Roper and covered all the area back to Nhulunbuy, except for a very small area at Nhulunbuy itself and Yirrkala. Before I became a member of the Assembly, Senator Bob Collins represented much of that same area, before moving on to represent the Territory in Canberra. Certainly, the names of electorates have changed and the communities in my area have grown. It is remarkable to see these changes.

Electorate boundaries change as a result of the work of the Distribution Committee. I would like to congratulate the committee for presenting a very commendable report and one which I believe most honourable members will be pretty happy with although, like the member for Ludmilla, I have some concerns about losing areas of which I have grown fond. In particular, I speak of Milingimbi and Ramingining.

I remember expressing some concern when Galiwinku was moved from the electorate of Arnhem, which I represented, to Nhulunbuy. I did so because of the shared social and cultural background of the people in that area. On this occasion, I would like to thank those people from Milingimbi and Ramingining who voted for Labor and for myself in the last 2 elections. I look forward to their carrying on that tradition by voting for the member for Arafura who will certainly be representing them in this House after the election. I would like also to welcome the people of Gapuwiyak to the electorate of Arnhem as a result of the changed electoral boundaries. I welcome too people from a number of outstations in the area, people with whom we have had a long association. Whenever the Chief Minister calls the

election, I am certain that the people in my electorate will be ready to cast their votes for the person they consider to be the best candidate and I am sure that they will carry on the tradition of voting Labor in that area.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory is a small, dynamic society. During the last decade or so, it has undergone tremendous growth. Although in recent times the rate of growth may have declined somewhat, the reality is that growth hot spots continue to exist. Recently, such hot spots have existed in Katherine, Palmerston and Karama. Whilst we have very small electorates, everything is relative. As the community grows, adjustment in electorate boundaries is necessary. To the best of my knowledge, a redistribution has preceded each of the last 4 or 5 elections.

Mr Vale: No. We did not have one in 1974.

Mr SETTER: I stand corrected, Mr Speaker. In 1974, the first fully-elected Legislative Council was elected.

That is the reality of the dynamics of the Northern Territory's society. In larger communities, such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, boundary changes might be fairly minimal and the societies in which the boundaries change might be very similar. In the Northern Territory, because growth has been concentrated in hot spots, adjustments have to be made right across the range of electorate boundaries. For example, in this particular redistribution, 1 seat has been removed from the Alice Springs region and another created in the northern region, just south of Darwin. Regrettably, that has created considerable change to certain electorates. For others, it has created minimal change but, until the population of the Northern Territory grows to the point where there is very little effect in spite of growth - when growth occurs across the community rather than in hot spots - there is no option but to have redistributions prior to each election, as we have seen occur in the last decade or so.

Unfortunately, the downside of that is that some boundaries do have to change fairly dramatically and some incumbent members may feel they have been disadvantaged by that, but there is no other option. The result of the redistribution that we have before us today is based on the decision of the committee which, of course, considered proposals put forward by all the parties represented here today, by several Independents and by the community at large. All have had the opportunity to have input into the proposals and the result of that is the deliberations and the committee's assessment of all of those proposals. In other words, the credibility of those proposals is matched against the actual numbers on the ground.

Whilst I can understand that some members feel a little aggrieved, I think too that they must realise that the decision that was made and the report that has been written were completed by a totally independent group of people, a committee of very credible people from around the Northern Territory. I am firmly of the belief that that committee has acted in a totally unbiased manner, has assessed all of those proposals and arrived at what I believe to be the best report possible under the circumstances.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I did not intend to speak to the motion, but I am being reminded of a matter on which I must comment. I have not read the report in its entirety but, in reading through the report briefly, I was interested to read about the public participation in respect of the interviews conducted by the Distribution Committee. I would like to draw to the attention of honourable members that the Koolpinyah electorate had the most number of people present themselves to put forward

their views regarding the redistribution. I would like to say now that the views put forward by the people from parts of the Koolpinyah electorate took precedence in the consideration by the Distribution Committee. In other words, the committee redefined the boundaries of the rural area according to the wishes of most of the people who attended the hearing at the Litchfield Shire Council's office.

I believe the Distribution Committee had a thankless job. It could be said that its members were damned if they did and damned if they did not change the boundaries. Boundary changes will not please everybody and they will displease quite a few people. I think the only way to accept the decisions of the Distribution Committee is to adopt them philosophically, do the best you can and put forward the views of the constituents as best you may. In that way, I believe a sitting member stands a pretty good chance of being re-elected.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the only comments that I wish to respond to are those of the member for Barkly. Unfortunately, he repeated in the House a comment implying that the Distribution Committee undertook its task with the intention of making his seat more difficult to win. I think that comment was regrettable. Honourable members who were watching the press during the course of the Distribution Committee's work will be aware that he made several comments to the media, as did his party's president, which said basically that the committee was taking into consideration who current members were when it was doing its work. I believe that that was really quite an irresponsible statement to be made by a member of this House. I think it was a sad reflection by him on the committee and its members.

As we all know, the committee had a difficult job to do. Anyone who sat down and tried to divide the Territory into 25 roughly equal portions, under the population statistics that we had, would realise just how difficult a job it was to do. To suggest that the committee did its job on the basis of who was sitting where is quite preposterous. If the member for Barkly thinks that he and the member for Flynn have been given a rough deal, he might ponder the situation that the member for Ludmilla is in, or the member for Victoria River or the Deputy Chief Minister, and they are not members of the National Party. The member for Sadadeen is not a National Party member either, yet consider his plight in so far as his original electorate is concerned.

I wanted to put on record my disappointment that the member for Barkly made those grossly unfounded comments. We are all in a position wherein our electorates may be changed dramatically between elections, if population growth occurs. I have had the misfortune in the past, if that is the right word, whereby a seat that I once represented was abolished totally. I was Deputy Chief Minister at the time and the seat of Stuart Park disappeared altogether. Half the electorate went into Port Darwin and the other half into Fannie Bay and I was left there without an electorate. I did not accuse the committee of adopting some course of action to get rid of me. I accepted that it was a difficult job that the committee had to do. An answer had to be found to the redistribution and it found one. I accepted that result and the challenge to find somewhere else to go. As good fortune would have it, I am back here.

The member for Barkly made an interesting comment about the new seat of Victoria River, which includes portions of towns which he represents until such time as his electorate's boundaries are changed. I think he was referring to people in Elliott and other such places when he said that they

all look south for their servicing. He said that, if the new member for Victoria River lived in Katherine or points north of Katherine, that would be a bit of a disservice to people in places like Elliott. What he failed to mention was that he is the member for Barkly, which is further south than Victoria River, and he has been living in Darwin. He had a hide to raise the matter in this Assembly at all. I thought that was very cheeky.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to commend the committee and officers who served the committee on the preparation of a great deal of detail. It is unfortunate, and I know that it is very sincerely regretted, that a small error was found in the original report and therefore it had to go on redisplay. Notwithstanding that, the committee worked with honesty and integrity. In my opinion, it tackled a difficult job and came up with a solution that I am sure will serve the Territory well into the future. I thank other honourable members for their comments in support of the report.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE
Alec Fong Lim AM

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its deep regret at the death, on Monday 3 September 1990, of Alec Fong Lim AM, Lord Mayor of Darwin from 1 June 1984 to 9 August 1990, place on record its appreciation for his long and distinguished service to the city of Darwin and the people of the Northern Territory, and tender its profound sympathy to his wife, Norma, and family.

This is the first sitting day since the untimely death of Alec Fong Lim AM and it is fitting that we pause for a moment to pay tribute to him. Alec was one of the most popular people ever to have held public office in the Northern Territory. During his 6 years as Lord Mayor of Darwin, he symbolised the success of our multi-racial society and was an ambassador, not only for Darwin but for the Territory and Australia. Alec was a friendly and extraordinarily likeable man, someone we could all respect and admire, a civic leader we felt proud to have represent us at home and abroad.

A Territorian through and through, Alec Fong Lim was born in Katherine in 1931, the sixth of 9 children of George and Lorna Fong Lim who were themselves born and bred in the Territory. His first years were spent in Katherine where his father was a tailor and the family ran a general store and owned a peanut farm. When Alec was 7, the Fong Lims moved to Darwin and bought a general store and tailor shop which was combined with a milk bar. The premises were not in Cavenagh Street, where Chinese businesses were confined at the time, but in what was then the white Australian only business area of Smith Street. To use Alec's words: 'Dad was told that he could not possibly succeed in Smith Street as there would be too much discrimination against him'. George and Lorna Fong Lim and their 5 girls and 4 boys did succeed. They won the confidence of the people of Darwin and their business prospered accordingly.

During the war years, members of the family were evacuated to Alice Springs where they operated a cafe and tailoring business. In those days, there were no high schools in the Northern Territory and Alec attended Scotch College in Adelaide from 1944 to 1946. After the war, the Fong Lims moved back to Darwin and set up a business similar to that which they had here previously, just down the street from the site of the original building, which had been destroyed during the war. By the time Alec

returned home from college at the age of 15½, the family had also bought the Vic Hotel where he immediately started work.

In 1955, Alec married Norma Chin who, although she had been brought up in Sydney, had been born in Darwin. They raised a family of 6 daughters. Alec worked at the Vic until it was sold in 1965, and also worked part-time as a licensed bookmaker at the Fannie Bay racecourse from 1962 until 1977. When the Vic Hotel was sold, Alec went into the wholesale business, specialising in wines, spirits and groceries. He was also a shareholder and director in another hotel which the family opened in 1972. With the sale of his wholesale business in 1981 and the family hotel in 1983, he had no business interests when asked to stand for the position of Lord Mayor in 1984.

A proud Australian as well as a dedicated Territorian, he claimed the distinction of becoming the first Australian-born Chinese mayor of an Australian capital city. Of course, he emphasised the Australian-born to distinguish himself from Harry Chan, who was our first Chinese mayor and the first elected President of the former Legislative Council. Always a community-spirited citizen, Alec wanted to make a greater contribution to the people of Darwin, and this he certainly did. He was such an outstanding Lord Mayor that he was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1986 for his services to local government and, when he stood for a second term in 1988, he was unopposed.

Alec always led a very active life in business, sport and community service. Among other positions, he was a founding member of the local Apex Club, past Chairman of the St John Council, senior Vice-President of the NT Spastics Association, inaugural Chairman of the NT Australia Day Council, a trustee of the Cyclone Tracy Trust Fund, and a member of the NT Australian Bicentennial Association. He was very involved with the Chinese community and was the Secretary of the Chinese Recreation Club for many years. A true all-rounder, he took part in many sports including competition basketball, baseball, soccer and darts, and he also played golf and bowls.

Despite failing health, he battled on as Lord Mayor almost to the very end, and his death came as a great and sad loss to the city, the Territory and the nation. Mr Speaker, I wish to convey the sympathy of members of this side of the House to Norma and all members of his family. I can only guess at the full impact Alec Fong Lim had on the people of the Northern Territory and on other people's perceptions of the Territory, but it was certainly profound and, because it was so positive, there is no doubt that it will endure.

One of his aims was for all citizens of Australia to classify themselves as Australians irrespective of racial background. He wrote that Australia certainly benefited from its mixture of different cultures and that, as long as these customs, traditions and celebrations were shared with the whole community, Australia would become a tolerant non-racist society. I believe the Northern Territory is a better place because of him.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, it is with a mixture of considerable sadness and deep respect that I rise to join with the Chief Minister in accepting a motion of this kind. It was one of life's great pleasures to have known Alec Fong Lim as a fine man, a great Territorian and an Australian of whom all of us can be proud. Of course, there is sadness at our loss, as a community, on the passing of Alec, and for the loss suffered by his family and his friends. Together with that sadness, I believe that

this motion seeks also to express considerable respect for the man, his life and his achievements.

As the Chief Minister outlined in his speech, Alec Fong Lim's family came to the Northern Territory more than 100 years ago, and he was born in Katherine in 1931. In a talk he gave in May last year, he spoke about his early life in Katherine. That talk reflected the man and provided an understanding of how he came to be the type of person that he was. There is much about Alec's life and its description that reflects a different time in the Northern Territory. He valued the familiar charms of the Territory, such as his children playing, a healthy outdoor life, the friendship he experienced, neighbours, his close family network, hard work and a sense of adventure that, in many respects, have not changed all that much for all Territorians.

After spending his early years in Katherine, Alec Fong Lim arrived in Darwin at the age of 7 with his family where, against the advice of many, they set up in business in Smith Street, as the Chief Minister explained, but they managed to make a go of it. What is interesting about the story of this time in his life is that it did not seem to occur to the family that they might fail, and I think that that characteristic is evident in many, if not all, of the actions in Alec Fong Lim's life.

The family lived above their shop in what Alec described as the run-down town of Darwin with a population of about 2000 and 2 schools. After school, Alec worked delivering groceries and in the family business. Clearly, there were some problems, not unfamiliar today, and the family shop had a broken window and shelves were ransacked following a disturbance in the Vic Hotel in 1941 when Alec was just 10 years old. In the same year, civilians were being evacuated from Darwin and, with the exception of Alec's father and an older brother who stayed to pack, the family returned south to Katherine, where they stayed until March 1942 when the town airfield was bombed. Evacuation to Alice Springs followed, where the family remained until 1945. The family opened a business combining tailoring and a cafe in the same premises. The contrast between the climate of Darwin and Alice Springs was a shock and it took a toll in chilblains and other aggravations. The central Australian climate has not changed too much, Mr Speaker.

The family lived in a sleep-out bordering their shop, with no heating and that delight of many a childhood, an outside toilet. Alec helped in the family enterprise in Alice, collecting stock for their shop and helping to prepare food. Even in his childhood, that sense of optimism, hard work and total involvement that marked his life was apparent. In 1944, he won a Commonwealth scholarship and went to Adelaide where he attended Scotch College. The trip to Adelaide took 3 days which he remembered as a great adventure for a 13-year-old, but nevertheless long, slow and bone-shaking. Following a holiday in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, the family returned to Darwin and were open for business again in 1946. At the end of that year, Alec completed his eduction at Year 10, and returned to Darwin. He travelled the Alice-to-Darwin leg in an open trailer, but with pleasant company which lightened the effects of the hard packing on which he sat.

Alec described the Darwin of 1946 as a man's town with few women. There were shortages of beer and cigarettes and no fresh produce. As well, the roads were poor and the buildings pretty shoddy. It was in 1946 that the family bought the Vic and he began his full-time working career. It was such a different Darwin at that time. The boundary of Darwin was at Parap. There were a few army huts at East Point, no suburb of Fannie Bay, illegal

betting shops and gambling houses and, on the positive side, a sea teeming with fish and a population of 2000 where everyone knew everyone else.

Conditions were hard, but life was lived to the full, so to speak, in more than just an alcoholic way. Sports teams abounded, with basketball the leading sport of the 1950s. Alex described his early days at the Vic as a shock following the cloistered atmosphere of a boarding college down south. The atmosphere of a man's pub in a frontier town is what he believes gave him the background which he used so successfully as Lord Mayor of Darwin. With typical humour, he insisted that it helped him to deal with difficult aldermen.

More seriously, it was his close association with ordinary people and their problems which helped him to understand and care about the day-to-day problems of the community. At that time, the Vic Hotel fulfilled some of the same functions as it does today. Alex described it in those days as a social watering hole and office for those from the bush as well as the locals. Crocodile hunters and buffalo shooters rubbed shoulders with miners, journalists, eminent lawyers, QCs, bankers and, dare I say, the occasional parliamentarian.

In his address, Alex told the story of his early life, his family, its businesses, hardships and joys, and the other people who formed his life. His story was full of the friendly, open, honest and hard-working qualities that he personified. Alec's later life, in which he formed his own close and loving family, worked at the Vic for many years and became involved in many areas of community life, was not covered in his address on that occasion. Much of that story is known to members of this House and the wider Territory community, as it is throughout Australia and in other countries. Our knowledge of Alec Fong Lim's life includes the essence of his greatness which lay in the fact that he was the embodiment of all that is the best in the Northern Territory. We can all admire his life, his respect for the values of close family, friendship and hard work, and his sense of fun and commitment to the community.

As a member of this Assembly, I met Alec on many occasions in his role as Lord Mayor of Darwin. Like all members of this House, I developed an understanding of the man and of his part in the history of this town. I am very pleased to be able to place on record today my respect for his achievements in public life, in business and as a family man.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this condolence motion and to pay tribute to the late Alec Fong Lim. So much has been said in recent times about Alec, his love for people, his love for the city of Darwin, and his dedication and commitment to his job as the Lord Mayor of Darwin. It is not often that one finds a person liked by so many people. Alec had a difficult task to perform as Lord Mayor of Darwin but he tackled the problems head on and was not frightened to make decisions. It is indeed unfortunate that Alex did not live to see the culmination of many projects in which he was involved.

Alec and his family were well known to my parents. Alec was known also to my wife and my son, and he will be missed. It is always sad to lose someone whom one has known for so long. Indeed, I can make that claim as far as Alec is concerned. My earliest recollections of Alec go back to the days of the old Vic Hotel. At that time, the Star Picture Theatre, owned by my father, was operating. At about 8.30 every evening, someone would race from the Vic Hotel to the theatre and ask what time the interval was to be. That was to enable the Vic to prepare for the rush of theatre patrons during

the interval. I can assure members that, on many occasions, the entertainment was not only in the picture theatre. I well recall those times and the way the Lim brothers worked together in the Vic Hotel.

Back in the 1950s, I played a trombone. We used to get together regularly on Saturday mornings for jam sessions in the old Vic Hotel beer garden which was situated next to Bell's Camera House. It was through such activities that I became friendly with the Lim family. Listening to the Chief Minister, I was reminded too of my involvement with Alec through his opening of a wholesale outlet selling liquor. Because I had a restaurant at that time, I visited Alec's outlet on many occasions to purchase stocks.

As I said, it is always sad to lose someone whom one has known for a long time. I extend my sympathy to Norma Fong Lim and her daughters. I close by saying that Alec was a good man and we are the poorer for his passing. I support the motion.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to the condolence motion and to extend my sympathy to Norma Fong Lim and Alec's daughters.

I did not meet Alec until after I became a member of this House, but it is interesting to note that his name was well known in school circles in South Australia. He went to Scotch College in the mid or late 1940s and his name, together with that of a fellow called Pat Pak-Poy, was synonomous with excellence in sport. In the sporting world of high schools in Adelaide, Alec's name and Pat's name used to come up quite regularly as Darwin residents who had reached great heights in sport in South Australia. I do not know what sport Alec played but I remember that Pat Pak-Poy was a great all-round athlete, footballer and cricketer.

It was not until later in life, when I became a member of this House, that I had the good fortune to meet Alec. In recent years, I became quite friendly with him and enjoyed the occasional game of tennis with him. Although Alec's death was not unexpected - he really had a very traumatic period towards the end - it is fair to say that the contribution he made as Lord Mayor of the city of Darwin was one of which all Territorians can be proud. He had a style and a dignity that was most fitting to the office. I join with other honourable members in saying that Alec Fong Lim's death is a great loss to us all, as well as to his own family.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion and I will not repeat most of what has been said with regard to Alec's background because that has been well-documented here this afternoon. Perhaps I could start from the time when Alec was elected as Lord Mayor of Darwin in May 1984 and then re-elected unopposed in 1988. He served as Lord Mayor until his resignation due to ill-health in August this year.

Alec had no background in local government as such when first he was elected to that office. However, he stuck by some very clear principles in the way he dealt with his new responsibilities. He believed council should consider all the facts before making a decision on any issue. He always stuck by those decisions unless there were very valid reasons for changing them. Alec always insisted on council unity in public. He firmly discouraged aldermen from public dissent once council had reached a decision. I think that the fact that he was able to maintain that policy during his period as Lord Mayor indicates the great respect in which he was held by his council and by all who were affected by those decisions. Alec was also very strong on the point that there was no place for party politics

in council. He was successful in keeping politics out of the council chamber.

His contributions to Darwin and its development as a green city are well known to all. I have no doubt that his work over the years in developing Darwin as a beautiful tropical city will be remembered. He was a strong proponent for foreshore developments such as the lake at the East Point Reserve and the Bicentennial Park. I believe that those 2 facilities will continue to be 2 of the greatest features that Darwin will have to offer into the future.

Alec had a great sense of humour. At times, I have been the butt of some of that sense of humour. However, it was a good, friendly sense of humour which I think attracted people to him. He was an outstanding ambassador for Darwin, around Australia and overseas. He helped to establish city sister relationships with Ambon in Indonesia and Haikou in China. He enjoyed the respect and good wishes of Darwin citizens from all walks of life.

In my view, Alec was probably best described as a delightful person. I do not think I could find a better description than that for him. He was the same in any company. It did not matter who or what you were, Alec was the same. As minister responsible for local government, I had many meetings with him over the last few years. Those meetings were always friendly and always positive. Even if there were a difference of opinion, there was no downturn in the relationship. I was always very pleased to meet with Alec because I found those meetings a most pleasant aspect of my job as minister responsible for local government.

In 1985, I was fortunate to be able to visit Guam with Alec as guests of the United States Air Force. In fact, Alec led that group of Darwin citizens who were invited by the United States Air Force to go to Guam as its guests because of the treatment that it had received in Alec's city of Darwin. I refer to Alec's city of Darwin deliberately because it was Alec's city. In Guam, Alec's very presence enlivened Darwin in the minds of people in Guam. It was as though he made it home and he was able to attract people to him. I know that air force people whom he met in Guam developed such an enormous respect for him and kept in touch with him over the years because of his ability to attract people to him. At a function by the sea in Guam, Alec spoke of Darwin and his love for this place was in his every word. It was as though Darwin came alive for those people there. He had an ability to make it come alive in the minds of others.

I am honoured to have known Alec Fong Lim and I will remember him with great fondness. I extend my sympathy to Norma and the Fong Lim family. I know their loss is great, but I know that their memories of Alec will maintain his presence always.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this condolence motion and I begin by expressing my sympathy to Norma and his family - a somewhat extended family as it is now.

Basically, we have forgotten the state of the Darwin City Council at the time that Alec Fong Lim took over as Lord Mayor. The previous Lord Mayor had been, to put it politely, a fairly controversial character and that was reflected in the way the council itself was perceived in the community. There is no doubt that, in his reign as Lord Mayor of Darwin, Alec exercised a healing influence over both the council itself and also the perception of the council by the broader community. The attitude people

have now towards the council is completely different from the attitude that people had towards the council before Alec became the Lord Mayor. To an overwhelming extent, that is because of the way that Alec went about his task.

The minister responsible for local government described Alec's views on how local government decisions should be made. I do not want to repeat them, but perhaps they provide a model that the rest of us could follow. He certainly succeeded in taking the Darwin City Council off the front pages and in raising the esteem in which the council and, in particular, the position of Lord Mayor, are held in this town. That was certainly a very important achievement indeed.

The thing that struck me most about Alec was his humanity. As the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government said, Alec was a man who was comfortable at all levels of society, who was able to relate to all people in all situations, and who always had a cheery smile and a kind word to say to people. His greeting to me, as it probably was to many other people, was: 'It is a long time since I met you last'. Quite often, I had shaken hands with him that morning or the day before, but that was one of Alec's ways of expressing his feelings and his approach to the job.

I must say also that, during a difficult time in my life, when I separated from my first wife, and became entangled with my second wife and married her, Alec had no doubt about how I should be treated, and how my present wife should be treated. That too was something that I appreciated particularly because a number of other people in the community found some difficulty with that situation. I put it on the record that my respect for Alec, in a very personal manner, was very great indeed.

In a broader sense, Alec reflected all that is good about Darwin and its society. We talk about the cosmopolitan nature of Darwin and Alec was an embodiment of that. We talk with pride about the achievements that people from all walks of life and all nations can make in Darwin and, again, Alec was an embodiment of that as well. He represented very proudly the values of our cosmopolitan city and enhanced those values. Alec Fong Lim was a very fine man indeed, and I think all of us will miss him. In our quieter and more reflective moments, we could do worse than to reflect on the type of man that Alec was and the lessons that his life has for us.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, when Alec Fong Lim died, not only did we lose an important Northern Territory figure, but so many of us lost a very good friend. Alec had that rare gift of moving harmoniously through all company, as other honourable members have said before me. Quite happily and easily, he could talk, joke and converse with people ranging from barmen to baronets - not that there are many baronets in Darwin.

I often regret that people who die cannot hear what is said about the good points in their life. However, when we think about Alec Fong Lim, we think also about his family. It is obvious to everybody that Alec and his wife, Norma, have a beautiful family of lovely girls. Indeed, so outstanding are they that, to my knowledge, observers complimented Alec on his family on many occasions. Alec was a strong family man with large extended family interests and, when he became Lord Mayor of Darwin, Darwin became part of his family and he had the interests of all Darwin residents before him always.

Alec Fong Lim was a genuinely nice man, and I am honoured that I could call him a friend. Alec was not the first person of Chinese origin to hold a high office in local government in Darwin because he was preceded many years before by Mayor Harry Chan. The people of the Northern Territory have been fortunate in having so many people of Chinese origin living and working in the Northern Territory for many generations as fine citizens.

Alec Fong Lim had a very fine sense of humour, as previous speakers have said. I recall one naturalisation ceremony, when Mike Rowell from the Bushfires Council was being naturalised. Alec and myself were among a group of people with whom Mike was talking. He said: 'I am a Briton and I had to come to Australia. I have lived here 30 years and, when I came to be naturalised, I had to be naturalised by a Chinaman'. Alec appreciated the joke and so did others who were in the group.

Alec was a very down-to-earth man. I do not know if other honourable members were lucky every year but, each year, I was lucky enough to receive a jar of his mango chutney. It was very good mango chutney. I encouraged him to enter it at the Royal Darwin Show but, to my knowledge, he never did so. He was also a man of very discerning taste who liked goat milk and goat cheese when I brought them to him.

Other honourable members have spoken about the good points of Alec Fong Lim and of his whole family. My sympathy goes out to Norma and his family of lovely daughters.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a great man, probably one of the greatest men that we have had from the Northern Territory this century. My story today about Alec Fong Lim begins in the gutter in Hong Kong on the way to the Star Ferry Terminal. You would know the area well, Mr Speaker. A street sweeper was sitting in the gutter reading the Morning Post. There was a big picture of Alec Fong Lim on the front page of that paper. It gave me a kick, as a Territorian, to witness this sight. I looked over the man's shoulder and I felt proud. I was in a great metropolis, with millions of people busily going about their daily business, and I was looking over the shoulder of a street sweeper who was reading a story about Alec Fong Lim.

As politicians, I guess we need our egos fed from time to time. It is vitally important to us to be in front of television cameras and microphones and for our words to be reported in the newspapers. In November, Alec Fong Lim took over the Northern Territory Expo in Hong Kong. Television cameras were chasing him and he was eagerly sought after by the media. In November last year, a politician had no chance of securing even a square inch of media coverage because the show belonged to Alec Fong Lim. He went there, dressed in his Lord Mayoral robes, and took over the NT Expo. He was sought after by reporters from every Chinese and English language newspaper and television company in the region. Once again, one simply felt proud. It was a time to sit back and let Alec Fong Lim have his day internationally. Of course, it was not the first time that he was to have an impact internationally. As the member for Victoria River said, there were his sorties into Guam. He also played a large role in the development of Darwin's sister city status with Ambon in Indonesia and Haikou in China.

To illustrate the contrast in the man, I remember well the opening of the Pine Creek Mining Museum. Another side of the man was revealed as one saw him there among many of his relations and people with whom he had grown up and listened to their stories about mining and how they had started out

in Katherine. He was happy sitting there talking to the old miners about their experiences and discussing the role that the Chinese played in developing the Northern Territory.

I often wonder what would have happened to places like Pine Creek or Katherine if the activities of those early Chinese people in the region had continued into the 1950s or the 1980s. I am sure that Pine Creek would have become the market garden of the Northern Territory. With the horticultural industry that we are trying to establish in the Territory today, we have done very well. In the last 8 years, horticulture in the Northern Territory has grown from $400 000 a year to $24m a year, but I am sure that, if the enterprise of the early Chinese settlers had continued, that industry would have gone much further much faster. There are many Chinese market gardens around the Pine Creek area that were established by those people and, of course, the diggings in those areas were extensive. It is interesting to note that most of the mines in the Pine Creek area, including Mt Todd, were all discovered by Chinese people at the turn of the century. Although they had none of the technology that is available today, they were very enterprising. We should be proud that some 8% of our population is made up of Chinese people. They comprise one of the larger groups in our population.

In relation to Alec Fong Lim's role in local government, the Leader of the Opposition correctly pointed out that we forget what the Darwin City Council was like when he came to office and the way in which the direction of the council changed under his stewardship. He should be congratulated for that. It would be very hard for any of us to forget that final interview that Alec Fong Lim gave. He was asked how he thought that people would think of him. The very emotional response that he gave was: 'Kindly, I hope'. I think that that is the mark of the man. All that he really wanted was that people would have kind memories of Alec Fong Lim.

Not too many people would know what Alec Fong Lim has done for Darwin, or for local government in the Northern Territory or for the Northern Territory internationally. He was capable of operating in any arena and of doing it well, as indeed he did. I have travelled to parts of the world where he has left his mark. He will be remembered not only kindly, but as one of the Northern Territory's greatest statesmen. He was at ease in any arena. Whether it be in the Pine Creek goldfields or on the streets of Hong Kong, he will be remembered as the Northern Territory's greatest ambassador this century.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, it is rather difficult to speak to this motion today. Alec Fong Lim was a personal friend and, indeed, a great human being. I believe that his contribution to our city, our quality of life and our reputation throughout Australia and overseas will not be equalled by anybody. His enthusiasm for the city he loved knew no bounds. He certainly lost no opportunity to promote Darwin and the Northern Territory to anyone who would listen and, if people would not listen, he would not let up until they did so.

Alec's enthusiasm can be illustrated by this example of how he went out of his way to promote our city. As many would know, Alec was the patron of the Darwin Motor Enthusiasts Club. On one occasion, the Humber Car Club of Australia travelled to Darwin from New South Wales. About 20 vehicles were travelling in convoy and Alec decided that it would be a great thing if members of the Darwin Motor Enthusiasts Club travelled to Adelaide River to meet them and to welcome them with a barbecue lunch and an escort to Darwin. I fuelled up my old 1949 Plymouth, packed my picnic lunch and took off with my family. I had reached the Berrimah intersection when, as old

cars are wont to do, my Plymouth stopped. I had to make rather rapid arrangements to return home and collect my trusty Commodore in order to make the rendezvous.

I was worried that I would miss out by being late but, lo and behold, some 2 or 3 miles from where the Plymouth had broken down, there was the silver Bentley, Alec's pride and joy, beside the road. It had broken down too. Alec got a lift back and fetched his trusty Commodore. We proceeded to Adelaide River, after picking up the member for Koolpinyah and a number of other people, and we were able to welcome the Humber Car Club. We had a great barbecue luncheon and escorted the convoy to Darwin. I am sure that the members of that car club are still talking about their reception to our town and the way in which our Lord Mayor went out of his way to make them feel welcome. That was typical of the way Alec operated.

One of the great things about Alec was that he never spoke badly of anyone. He could always see the good side of a person. On a number of occasions when, in his presence, I spoke with displeasure about the actions of somebody, Alec would remind me of the good side of the person and I would feel slightly chastened. My life and that of my family is certainly richer for our having known Alec. I am certain too that the Northern Territory is richer for Alec's time with us. I extend my deepest sympathy to his wife, Norma, and his family. I commend the motion to all honourable members.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would like to join other honourable members in supporting this motion of condolence. Years ago, on the subject of death, a fellow called William Shakespeare wrote something to the effect that 'the evil that men do lives after them but the good is oft interred with their bones'. I have always considered that statement to be quite inaccurate and, when it is applied to a man like Alec Fong Lim, it is totally inaccurate. With Alec Fong Lim, there was never any evil and the good which he did in the community will live on for ever. As other honourable members have said, Alec could hold his head up anywhere in Australia or indeed the world, and he could move in any company. He was blessed with the common touch. In terms of helping and supporting people in the community, his record will probably live much longer than that of any other person in contemporary politics in the Northern Territory.

Last year, I was in Melbourne for a meeting of tourism ministers which clashed with the Melbourne Cup. Alec and other Lord Mayors were in Melbourne for the occasion, and the Victorian parliament hosted a reception. At the reception, guests wore name tags. Whenever people looked at mine, they would say: 'You are from the Northern Territory. Do you know Alec Fong Lim?' Lord Mayors were in attendance from all over Australia but I can guarantee that the best-known Lord Mayor in Melbourne on that day was Alec Fong Lim from Darwin.

As some other members have said, Alec had an incredibly quick sense of humour. I can recall being at Gardens Oval for a football match one Sunday. Alec asked me what it was like in Alice Springs. I said: 'It is pretty dry. The Aboriginal rain dancers are not having any success; we need a Chinese one'. His response was: 'I am pretty busy until Wednesday'. Although I forget the month, it was on that Wednesday in 1987 that the skies above Alice Springs opened up, precipitating an almighty flood which broke the banks of the Todd River and swept through the Mall and into the town. At 3 am or 4 am, I went to my office to check on things there. I found a fax which read: 'To Roger Vale: Please advise when had enough - Fong Lim, rain dancer, Darwin'. I phoned Alec the following morning. Norma answered the phone and said: 'He is out the back, Roger. Do you want to speak to

him?' I said: 'No, just go out and break his legs. We have had more than we wanted. Tell him to stop'.

On another occasion, Alex and I were both on an early morning flight from Sydney to Canberra. My recollection is that he was in row 3. He was reading and did not notice me as I boarded. After I had sat down, I said to the hostess: 'Do you carry Chinamen on this plane?' She said: 'Yes, we do. Why?' I pretended that I was upset and disturbed. I asked whether there was another flight and acted as if I was about to get off. After the flow of passengers died down, I overheard the hostess saying something like: 'There is a redneck around the corner. He is really anti-Chinese'. After the aircraft took off, Alex noticed me. There was a spare seat beside me and he sat down in it. As we chatted, I forgot about the joke with the hostess. When she came around the corner with the breakfast tray, she took one look at the Lord Mayor and I sitting beside one another in conversation, telling funny stories. She nearly dropped the breakfast tray. Later, she asked me: 'Did you know this fellow, Fong Lim?' I said: 'I have known him for years'. She said: 'At one stage, we were going to ask you to get off the plane. He is one of our most popular passengers and we thought that you would upset him'. I told Alec about that later.

In fruit seasons and fish seasons, barter between the Top End and the Centre is common. Years ago, I used to take barramundi back to Alice Springs courtesy of Donna Steele's father and, in turn, I would supply grapes and citrus fruits. In later years, Alec Fong Lim found out that one of my daughters had a great fondness for mangoes. It was not long before I was regularly carrying mangoes to Alice Springs and grapes to Darwin. Having spoken to other people, I understand that I was one of many people who had such a exchange going with the Lord Mayor of Darwin. I bet that there is nowhere else in the world where a Lord Mayor would be involved in swapping home-grown mangoes for fresh fruit and vegetables from other parts of the Northern Territory. That was typical of the approach of Alec Fong Lim.

If I were to say that Alec Fong Lim was the most popular mayor in the Northern Territory, it would be the gross understatement of the year. He was not only well known but also liked, admired and respected. On a number of occasions, I said to him: 'I wish there were 2 of you. We could trade you in'. I told Norma that he would be a great asset to Alice Springs if we could get him. Indeed, he would have been a great asset to any town or city in the Territory, Australia or the world. It is somewhat ironic but most appropriate that Alec Fong Lim was Lord Mayor of a city in the most multicultural society in the western world. He served in that position with distinction and charm, and set a record which it will be impossible to follow. Not only was Alec Fong Lim a truly great Territorian, as the history books will record, but he was a truly great Australian. Indeed, his passing is not only a loss to the Territory but a loss to the whole of Australia.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the condolence motion of the Chief Minister, and the comments made by so many honourable members in this House today. I do not want to speak for long or to reiterate much of what has been said.

All of us in this Chamber have known Alec Fong Lim for many years. All of us have loved and appreciated his company. On a personal note, I feel a great sense of loss for a friend and mentor and for a man who, through his wit and wisdom, was able to reinforce the good side of one's character and temper the more intemperate parts. His gentle chastisements from time to

time and his unique way of offering advice and assistance in such a way that it was readily received without any sense of challenge or threat were a credit to the man. On many occasions, the wisdom and judgment of Alec Fong Lim has stood me in good stead. I will be forever grateful for his friendship, advice and assistance.

Many members have said that Alec was proud of Darwin and proud to be an Australian, but also very proud of his Chinese heritage. It was one of the great sadnesses that he was not alive in the week when the sister city arrangement came into place with the city of his family's origin. It would have capped off his life - although in effect it did so - with a marvellous link.

Alec was very proud of the multiculturalism of Australia and Darwin. I recall him hosting a reception at the Civic Centre for a conference of school principals. As is normal at such receptions, he gave a speech of welcome. In doing so, he recalled the fact that, at the turn of the century, there were more people of Chinese origin in the Territory than there were people of European origin. He thought it was a great mark of the tolerance and the multicultural attitude of Territorians that they had made such a successful job of integrating Europeans into their society. I think that was a fine example of his wit in driving home a very clear message that Territorians do not come from any one background, but we do work together.

I feel a deep sense of loss of a friend in Alec. My sympathies go out to Norma, Lorelei and the other members of the family for their sense of loss and grief. We are all the poorer for the passing of Alec, but we have all been enriched through having our lives touched by his.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I suppose there are almost as many stories about Alec as there were days in his life - interesting, exciting and humorous stories about the way in which he carried on his affairs, both with his family and with other people. I met Alec very shortly after I arrived in Darwin in 1966. As someone mentioned earlier today, Alec was a founder member of the Darwin Apex Club. Within a matter of weeks of arriving in Darwin, I was introduced to Apex through another Chinese gentleman who is known to most members. I refer to Eddie Quong. Eddie took me to meet some of the local identities not long after I arrived in Darwin. One of the people whom I met was a fellow whom he called 'Slim Lim'. He said: 'You must come and meet Slim Lim, because you will have to buy some grog off him sooner or later'. We raced off for a few drinks and met this fellow called Slim Lim in Smith Street West.

About a year later, I met my wife who had some friends in the liquor trade - Dorothy Durack and Bill Gartner. It had been her habit to visit Dorothy and Bill late of an afternoon on a Friday or at the weekend. We would all have a few drinks and we ended up becoming quite good friends with Slim Lim. About that time, another young fellow joined Apex. He was introduced by the same Chinese gentleman as Fat Fong. Of course, I came to know that Fat Fong was Slim Lim's brother. Thus, we had Richard Fong Lim and Alec.

Fat Fong and Slim Lim became quite good mates of mine over the years and we spent quite a lot of time together. Because he was much older and did not always enjoy good health, Alec always thought that his brother would outlive him. Mr Speaker, you will recall how devastated Alec was when his younger brother, Richard, died of a heart attack while mowing his lawn. He was survived by a wife and several small children. Alec took over the

responsibility of looking after Richard's family as well as his own. At the same time, he undertook all his civic duties.

I spent considerable time with Alec on different committees. However, the time that I enjoyed best was on the Australian Bicentennial Authority Committee. He brought an enormous sense of balance to the way in which the committee approached its responsibilities for the community in providing an Australian bicentennial celebration rather than a multicultural bicentenary for Darwin. He was instrumental also to a large extent in providing some of the more spectacular events. He knew so many people and he was able to convince them to place Darwin in a slightly higher category than would otherwise have been the case.

Many people have spoken about Alec and the manner in which he dealt with people. I was not untouched by that. I found him to be a very sensitive person who had a great sense of humour. He always dealt with people in a very fair manner, and he never became particularly upset about things. He set about trying calmly to solve the problems that he saw and ensuring that people had an opportunity to air their views. Whether he agreed with them or not, he was always prepared to accept that they had a point of view to offer.

There have been many suggestions about what ought to be done to commemorate the involvement of Alec and his family in the Northern Territory. Recently, it was suggested in the media that it might be appropriate for the council to consider the naming of the lake at East Point after him. Alec initiated that project and supported it staunchly. I believe it would be appropriate for the Darwin City Council to consider naming the lake after him.

Mr Speaker, I join with the rest of this parliament today in expressing regret at the passing of a person of Alec's standing. I would like also to tender my sympathy to Norma and the family.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I too would like to place on record my sincere sympathy to Norma, and to the girls at the sad loss of their father, Alec. Darwin has a proud tradition of having colourful Lord Mayors, and none was more colourful than the late Alec Fong Lim. Although he was a vastly different character to Tiger Brennan, of whom the town was so proud, he carried on that tradition in a fine way. Alec Fong Lim was the quintessence of Darwin. Anybody who knew Alec could understand the deep love he had for Darwin and its people. I think the love he showed for the people of Darwin and the town itself was repaid in the enormous respect that the people of the city had for him. That was shown clearly in the last Lord Mayoral elections when no candidate stood against him.

Looking at the history of Alec Fong Lim - milk bar operator, publican, bookmaker, politician - he sounds more like a Greek to me. One could not think of less likely occupations for a man who attracted such love and respect from people. Around Australia, bookmakers and publicans are considered fair game. To leave those pursuits behind to become a politician, who are considered even better game than publicans and bookmakers, would seem to be a retrograde step. However, our Alec fitted the bill well and was well-respected by all.

I listened with interest to stories today of Alec's sporting prowess. I was unaware of that previously. However, it explains one thing. Some 2 or 3 years ago, I was invited to Casuarina Square to sit on a machine and have balls thrown at me in an attempt to knock me into the water. Along

came the Lord Mayor who promptly paid $10 for 10 balls. I laughed and joked and asked: 'How could a silly old Chinamen throw a ball and knock me in the water?' He hit me 7 times out of 10. I think it might have been throwing stones that he excelled in. He was certainly a fair shot with a tennis ball.

Some time ago, I came across an article in the Northern Standard of 1918. A chap called Fahey had written back from Belgium describing the front at Ypres. Fahey was a Darwin enlistee who had spent time at Pine Creek. He described the fields of Flanders as reminding him of someone having let loose 2000 mad Chinese fossickers. With great delight, I took that quote to the Lord Mayor and pointed out that perhaps there were a few more Chinamen in the Australian army than we had recognised previously.

The member for Ludmilla suggested that perhaps the lake at East Point could be named in honour of Alec Fong Lim. I do not want to throw cold water on that suggestion, but I do not think Alec Fong Lim Lake really sounds appropriate. I would like to suggest that the road from the entrance to East Point Reserve be renamed Alec Fong Lim Drive. That would be a far more fitting memorial to this great man, this great Territorian, who truly was one of the most colourful Lord Mayors this town is ever likely to have. Finally, I reiterate my deepest sympathies to Norma, the girls and Alec's entire family.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the condolence motion, I indicate my very sincere and genuine sympathies to Norma Fong Lim and to her daughters, not only on behalf of myself but on behalf of my constituents and my family. I would like simply to endorse all the comments that have been made by honourable members. There is no doubt that Alec Fong Lim was a fine gentleman who had the total respect of the entire community in the Northern Territory and of those who knew him from elsewhere. That is well and truly demonstrated by the responses that have come through since his passing and the comments made by other honourable members.

Probably, I knew Alec's brother Richard rather better than I knew Alec. For some reason, I seemed to come in contact with him more regularly through a mutual friend. It was at a social function through the Lions Club that I met Alec and Norma. Certainly, the standing that he held in the community long before he became Lord Mayor was very well recognised and acknowledged. Over the years, I have seen many different facets of Alec's contribution to and encouragement of service clubs. He provided leadership in relation to various appeals and activities, whether they were Beercan Regattas, Red Shield Appeals, sporting activities or whatever. On many occasions, my wife and I have been able to share the company of Alec and Norma as a delightful couple but, more than that, Alec's leadership in the community has left us all with a great asset.

From my personal recollections, I recall a trip to Hong Kong that I undertook with Alec Fong Lim in about 1985 to promote the Trade Development Zone. Certainly, that was an eye opener. I am not sure who was the more surprised on numerous occasions when some of the business people whom we were meeting with were confused about whether Alec was a local and where he came from. The language problem that we both shared was interesting as there was a high expectation wherever we went that Alec could converse in Cantonese, the main language in Hong Kong. I do not think that the numerous banquets, the 15-course breakfasts and whatever did either Alec or myself a great deal of good, but certainly they resulted in a great recognition of Darwin and the Trade Development Zone. The work that he did as a Territorian was certainly very effective.

As the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government indicated, in his dealings in council, Alec made it very clear that he was not interested to see party politics enter into the council arena. Of course, the council comprised many varied individuals who sometimes held directly opposite views and had greatly differing interests and talents. He was simply an independent person among them and the way he managed to lead council without exercising any coercion was a credit to his personality, his great understanding of people and, among other things, his great tolerance. As the Attorney-General said, others among us, who do not have the same tolerance, have taken a little bite at others on occasion but Alec's very careful admonition would be well received and would provide a timely warning for us.

I have not heard anyone in the community or any member of this House talk about having any disagreements with Alec Fong Lim. I have never known anyone to have a personal disagreement with him, not that they would admit to it. Certainly in a business sense, in relation to road works and the relationship between the Territory government and the council, we had the odd disagreement. However, the reason why such things probably are not talked about so much was due to Alec's style in handling disagreements of that kind. He employed a great deal of discretion and integrity and the disagreement was kept entirely between the 2 parties. I am sure that, if other members opened up a little, they could tell of occasions on which they had disagreements with Alec. Certainly, he handled those situations with a great deal of diplomacy and would talk you round to his point of view. If you were able to convince him strongly, he would accept that perhaps you did have a point. It was all handled extremely well and with great discretion and diplomacy. I think that also is a measure of Alec. He would not put up with any nonsense. He was quite capable of telling you if he thought you were wrong, but he would do it in the best way possible.

Like other honourable members, I am extremely proud to have known Alec personally and in a community sense. His achievements during his term as Lord Mayor will go down in history. In closing, I would like again to extend my family's sympathies to Norma and to his lovely family.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I did not meet Alec Fong Lim until comparatively recently. In fact, I think it was at a CLP function, the Black, White and Ochre Ball in 1983. I remember my wife and I had the good fortune to sit at Alec and Norma's table. We had arrived fairly early and some people commented that we were to sit with Alec and Norma Fong Lim. They were saying that Alec was running for Lord Mayor of Darwin but they were not too sure how he would go. I do not recall whom we were talking to, but I am sure that those people have long since recognised that Alec Fong Lim took over the role of Lord Mayor of Darwin and did Darwin very proud indeed.

What always impressed me most about Alec was his sheer charm. He was an absolute natural. Wherever you met him, be it interstate, at the Alice Springs Airport, in Alice Springs at mayoral functions or in Darwin, he was always his natural self and it was a very charming self. He was genuinely pleased to see you, proud of Darwin, proud of the Territory and proud of Australia. He was a very natural person who was interested in many things. He was interested in the things which you cared about and were concerned about, and he was interested in the very ordinary things. On one occasion, following a late night function held when Kamahl was in town, we met afterwards and had a very convivial time. We went to his place and Alec provided me with a box of mangoes and a couple of jars of his mango chutney

which was greatly appreciated. I was able to reciprocate by sending grapes to him from time to time.

Much has been said about Alec's sense of humour and I recall that, not long after he became Lord Mayor and following a bout of ill-health, he was careless enough to be quoted as saying that he had some difficulty in chasing the blondes around the mayoral office. Some rather humourless feminist took great offence at this. I remember meeting Alec in the mall and he told me that he would have to be more careful about what he said in the future. However, he still enjoyed the nonsense and the fact that these people were unable to appreciate his sense of humour. He had great humour and charm and everybody that I know holds the memory of Alec Fong Lim in very high regard. Certainly, I have been enriched by the brief encounters that I have had with Alec. He was the type of person who gave you a lift. When things were getting you down, to spend some time with Alec Fong Lim gave you a great boost and you felt better in yourself for having shared his company. I am sure that was the experience of many other Territorians as has been well expressed here today. He was a man with considerable love for his fellow man, and a man who will be remembered.

I would also pay tribute to the influence on his life of his wife, Norma, and of his girls. He loved his family dearly and I well remember the pride with which he introduced me to Lorelei in the mall a year or 2 ago. It was clear that he was very proud of his daughter's success. Alec Fong Lim was a charming, natural, delightful man and we miss him sadly. His passing is regretted, but the Territory has been greatly enriched by the life and influence of this genuinely decent man.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to add my comments to those of other honourable members and to support the condolence motion of the Chief Minister. I had occasion to meet Alec on a few occasions only but listening to the comments of other honourable members about Alec and what he has done for Darwin and the Northern Territory makes me truly respect and admire his achievements. It is quite an achievement in itself to be Lord Mayor of a community of the size of Darwin for some 6 years. He came from a Chinese background and achieved a great deal and I admire him for that.

On the occasions when I met Alec, the things which appealed to me most were his sense of humour and his beaming, beautiful smile. There is no doubt in my mind that he was a worthy ambassador for the city of Darwin. He was always very friendly to me, and welcomed me to Darwin. Listening to the words of other speakers here today, I think that he can be best described as a colourful man, and a colourful mayor at that. Together with other members of this House, I extend my sympathies to the Fong Lim family. Obviously, his passing is a great loss to the Northern Territory.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest sympathies to Norma and Alec's family. I think that I may have met Alec Fong Lim much earlier than most honourable members. I first met him in 1955, although I was closer to Richard Fong Lim as I grew up in Darwin in my early years.

Alec really was a fun person, and I believe that everybody who knew him appreciated that. I recall his colourful early days at the Vic Hotel. The member for Port Darwin might remember the little Chinese restaurant behind the Vic Hotel. The member for Port Darwin also referred to a runner who would race from the Vic Hotel to the Star Picture Theatre to find out what

time the interval was. I think that I may have been the runner on most occasions.

As Alec and I grew up and moved into political life, we would greet each other at various official functions. He was always known as the ABC - the Australia-born Chinese - and I was the ABG or Australian-born Greek. He would greet me in Greek, and I would greet him in Cantonese. Guests and conference delegates would look on in amazement at these 2 political heavies from the Northern Territory speaking in each other's language. It was an expression of our way of relating to this very cosmopolitan city.

Alec will always be remembered as a dapper dresser. I have listened with interest this afternoon and nobody has really made a point of that. I think Alec may have been the first person to introduce the safari suit to the Northern Territory. Many honourable members may scratch their heads and wonder whether I am right about that, but I am going back many years. I think that Alec was the first person to start wearing safari suits in Darwin and I may have been the first person to introduce the rubber thong to Darwin. If honourable members listen to my explanation, they will understand why I say that.

In 1955, when I was a youngster working at the Hotel Darwin, it was in fierce competition with the Vic Hotel. The only other hotels in town were the Don and the Parap. In those years, air crews used to stop over in Darwin, including BOAC and Air India crews. After flying from Singapore, they would arrive at the Hotel Darwin, where they would walk around the swimming pool in their green, red and yellow thongs. We had never seen these rubber thongs in Australia before. I had just arrived from Perth and it amazed me to see these air crews, including the poms with their skinny white legs, wearing these thongs.

As kids, we had to wear heavy leather sandals and I thought that these thongs were fabulous. One day, I went up to a pilot and said that I would like to buy a pair of those sandals. I asked him how much he wanted for them. He said: '10 shillings'. I asked him how many pairs I could buy at that price and he asked me how many pairs I would like. I thought it over. About 50 people worked at the Hotel Darwin in those days and about 50 more worked at the Vic Hotel. I thought that I would be able to sell about 50 pairs among those people for a pound a pair. I can still remember the name of the pilot. When he next visited Darwin, he brought me 50 pairs of rubber thongs in small, medium and large sizes, and I was able to sell them. Alec and Richard and many of the Fong Lims worked at the Vic Hotel in those days and Alec helped me in that venture. I hope that that story is enough to convince any honourable member who did not believe that this Speaker sold the first pair of thongs in the Northern Territory.

Much later, when Alec entered political life, I was a minister with the Northern Territory government. Alec had a very close working relationship with the Northern Territory government, as the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government has mentioned this afternoon. I believe that very few members of the council have had such a close working relationship with the government. There have been others, but I would be inclined to think that the late Alec Fong Lim worked more closely with the government than any other member of the council.

I was probably one of the last members of this Assembly to have seen Alec Fong Lim alive. I was at the Darwin Private Hospital on the Saturday morning before he died and I popped in to say hello. Alec was in good

spirits and Norma told me that she had not seen him so well for some time. One of his daughters had just had a child whose name, I think, is Robert Charles. The child was brought to Alec, who gave him a cuddle. The only disappointing aspect of the moment was that none of us had a camera. The following Monday, of course, Alec passed away.

We will remember Alec as a good friend and a highly respected colleague. We have all moved with Alec in different spheres, in places ranging from Hong Kong to Sydney. In the late 1980s, I was able to join Alec for the commissioning of the HMAS Darwin. Of course, everywhere that Alec went, there were hordes of people trying to find out more about the Northern Territory, especially Darwin. He was obviously one of the best ambassadors we have had for a very long time.

I support the kind thought of the member for Karama who suggested that we ought to be considering an appropriate memorial for Alec Fong Lim. Of course, we have Tiger Brennan Drive. Tiger Brennan was a colourful Mayor of Darwin but I believe that Alec Fong Lim, in his term as Lord Mayor, played a far more important role in the development of our city and its surrounds. I hope that the authorities will be able to find a significant memorial for the late Alec Fong Lim because his achievements, not only as an Australian but more importantly as a Territorian, are deserving of it.

I ask all honourable members to show their support for the motion by standing in silence.

Members stood in silence.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE
Ronald John Withnall

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its deep regret at the death on 16 September 1990 of the honourable Ron Withnall, Crown Law Officer with the then Northern Territory Administration from 26 October 1954 to 5 June 1966, formerly an official member of the Legislative Council from 10 November 1954 to 5 June 1966, elected member for the Legislative Council from 26 November 1966 to 18 October 1974, and elected member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral division of Port Darwin from 19 October 1974 until 12 August 1977, and place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service to the parliament and the Northern Territory, and tender its profound sympathy to his wife, Joyce, and family.

Mr Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to the late Ron Withnall, another holder of public office who made a substantial contribution to the advancement of the Northern Territory. Ron Withnall, who died just over a week ago at the age of 76, had the distinction of serving both as an appointed and as an elected member of the old Legislative Council and as a member of this Assembly. He will be recorded in our history as one of those who fought tirelessly for self-government. In fact, I have often reflected on the fact that those of us who were fortunate to be in this Assembly at self-government, including you and I, Mr Speaker, really were there as a result of the work of many people who fought for self-government over a long period - people of all political persuasions. Ron Withnall was one of those people.

Ron Withnall was born in Townsville and attended the University of Sydney where he graduated in law and rose through his profession to become the Crown Law Officer of the Northern Territory under Commonwealth administration in 1954. In November of that year, he was appointed to the Legislative Council and, for many years, he was one of the most productive appointed members and one of the most effective speakers. In 1966, he took the bold step of resigning his official position and stood for and won election as an independent member for Arnhem. In 1968, again he won election, that time as the member for Port Darwin. In 1974, he was elected as the independent member for Port Darwin in the new Legislative Assembly.

Although Ron Withnall lost Port Darwin to the present member in the 1977 election, he continued to work for the cause of Northern Territory self-rule. His knowledge and experience of legislative and constitutional matters were recognised and respected by members of all parties and, for the first half of 1978, he was engaged on a contract basis to provide advice and assistance on new legislation and on the revision of existing legislation in preparation for self-government.

In 1979, as Minister for Lands and Housing, I had the pleasure of appointing him as Chairman of the Town Planning Board. Later that year, he became Chairman of the Northern Territory Planning Authority and held the position until his retirement in 1985. I might say that he carried out the role of chairman of the authority with great distinction. In my view, the chairmanship of the Planning Authority has always been a sensitive position and he handled it with great care and tact. Ron Withnall fought strongly for the Territory and for self-government for Territorians. The greatest tribute that we can pay to him is to continue the cause until the battle is fully won.

I knew Ron Withnall personally but I would never say really as an equal because he was a man whom I looked up to always. I grew up with one of his sons and he and I sat at school together. I knew Mr Withnall long before I came into parliament. I sought his advice on many occasions as a green member of parliament. He always gave very freely of his time. Many of us were young fellows then who were very green in the art of politics and parliaments. He always seemed to have plenty of time to talk to us and give us his advice. He was very much concerned about the principles of individual freedom. On many occasions in this Assembly, I remember him warning of the dangers of legislators and governments pursuing even more regulation in society. He was forever warning us to be mindful of the power which we as legislators had in our hands.

His contribution is recorded, of course, in many Hansard debates. New or aspiring politicians could benefit from referring to many of the debates that Ron Withnall contributed to during his term of service in the Legislative Council and in this Assembly. My sympathies certainly do go to Mrs Withnall, who is a very fine lady. I have enjoyed the hospitality of the Withnall household on a number of occasions and I have an enormous respect for both Mr and Mrs Withnall. My sympathies go to her and to the children. If not all his children, I think most of his children have stayed in the Territory and contributed in their own ways to our society.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, it is most appropriate and fitting that the Chief Minister move this motion of condolence today because, as he said, Ron Withnall was one of the champions of the cause of constitutional reform. He waged that battle alongside Dick Ward, Tiger Brennan, Bernie Kilgariff and others for many years in this House. He did it at great cost and personal expense to himself in that he could have been off

doing other things and making a dollar in life. However, he chose to take up the cause of promoting the Territory's constitutional reform and he did it with great class.

I well recall the very first sitting of the Legislative Assembly when the Colonel was sitting in the chair where the Leader of the Opposition sits today, and I had the seat next to him. The ceremony was very pompous. The Speaker was in all his robes and the Administrator had come to give us a message. We had been through several formalities during the course of the opening of the parliament. We were about to adjourn for cucumber sandwiches and a cup of tea on the lawn. As you would know, Mr Speaker, on these opening days of parliament, we do not have debates or miscellaneous contributions from anybody. We all have a role to play. We file in and out and do as is writ by the Clerk. We then have sandwiches. Just as the newly-elected Speaker, Bernie Kilgariff, was about to adjourn the proceedings, the Colonel demanded the floor. I would like to read into the Hansard that contribution by Mr Withnall because it really epitomised the spirit of the man. I quote from the Hansard of 20 November 1974. When Mr Everingham moved that the Assembly adjourn, instead of our adjourning to the lawn to have cucumber sandwiches, Mr Withnall rose to say:

> I rise on this occasion to make some pretty large protest about the difficulties that have been imposed upon this Assembly because of the work which has been undertaken by the Department of Housing and Construction in the renovation of these buildings. The roof to these buildings has been condemned for more than 12 months and there has been a requisition for the replacement of the roof for a long time; it has been on the estimates for a long time. The Department of Housing and Construction, in its inimitable way, has decided to wait until the wet season started before it takes the roof off and is taking if off now when irreparable damage is likely to be occasioned to the ceiling if a sudden storm strikes. I accept that they probably cover it after the day's work. But not only do they wait for the wet season, they wait until the Assembly starts to sit. We have had all the interruptions from people, not only on the premises and in the yard, but dragging galvanised iron over the roof and generally making noises which have been quite difficult to bear.
>
> One would have thought that the Department of Housing and Construction would have understood that roofs ought to be removed in the dry season and have stirred themselves to do it some time perhaps in August or September or October and not in November. One would have thought that the department would have understood that, when the Assembly was sitting, it needed a sort of quiet at least, and not the interruption that has been occurring over the last 48 hours.
>
> I do think the protest that I am making is necessary and I commend my remarks to the attention of the Director of Housing and Construction. I trust that he will suitably instruct his officers in the future.

After those few words, Mr Speaker, the rest of us sat open-mouthed at this performance. Not only was it not written in the schedule of important things that were to happen on the opening day, but we certainly did not expect the theatricality with which Mr Withnall delivered it. That speech, its timing and theatricality really epitomised the Colonel and the role that he played in the House. He was never constrained by ideology, party

philosophy or commitments to anything other than the advancement of the Territory. He spoke very forcibly on most issues and, as the Chief Minister said, was always quite willing to give us new boys a little bit of quiet advice on how to do it and perhaps not to do it the same way again if we wanted to do it better.

During the course of his period in the Northern Territory, firstly as an officer in the Department of Law, drafting much of the legislation which is on the books today, later as a member of this House, and later as a member of the Town Planning Board, Ron Withnall made a terrific contribution to the Territory. He is probably among many of the people who will go unsung for the contributions that they made. However, on this occasion, I am more than pleased to be able to support the condolence motion moved by the Chief Minister and to extend to Mrs Withnall and the family my sympathy for their loss. As well as their loss, it is a loss for the whole Territory.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to extend my sympathy to Mrs Withnall and her family. Ron Withnall, like Alec Fong Lim, has played a seminal role in the recent history of the Northern Territory, and it is appropriate that we recognise here the role that Ron Withnall played. As the Chief Minister said, Ron Withnall was a member of parliament in the Northern Territory in 3 capacities: as an appointed member of the Legislative Council, as an elected member of the Legislative Council and as an elected member of this Assembly. That is a record, Mr Speaker, that you can safely say that no one will equal in the future. I think too that he had the honour and the privilege of being the longest-serving member of this parliament so far - 23 years. Mr Speaker, I know that you are reasonably close to eclipsing that mark. Quite clearly, it is a mark of the man that he was able to serve the people of the Northern Territory both as an official member and as an elected member in 2 separate capacities.

Of course, it was not only in that capacity that Ron Withnall made his mark in the Northern Territory. He came here as a lawyer. He was elected to the inaugural Council of the Law Society, and elected president of the society at its first annual meeting. In the development of the legal profession and government in the Territory and the aims of the Law Society, we find the foundation of the man's political career and the causes for which he fought during a fascinating and turbulent period of our history. Some of those aims were to promote the administration of justice and honourable practices in the profession, to consider proposals in law and to aid amendments and reforms to benefit the public.

When Ron Withnall began his parliamentary career, things were very different, and much that we now take for granted was not apparent then. There were no facilities for members and the council sat in the headquarters of the Northern Territory Administration. The physical discomfort experienced by members during their deliberations led him to make a poem about the chairs, and his son, John Withnall, quoted from that poem at the funeral service last week.

A member: I still have one of those chairs.

Mr SMITH: You have one of those chairs. I will not repeat the poem but, in the speech in the adjournment debate in which he recited that poem, he said that he thought that the chairs must have been designed by a mathematician, after long contemplation of the square root of minus one. I think that illustrates fairly graphically his dry and sometimes astringent wit.

As an appointed member and later as an elected member, Ron Withnall became very vigorous in his support for self-government. I join the Chief Minister and the member for Barkly in acknowledging the very valuable role that Ron Withnall played in pursuing self-government for the Northern Territory. It is important that we realise the role that he and other former members played in that. He was involved on many committees, Standing Orders Committees, Privileges Committees and others, through successive councils, and his work took him throughout the Territory. Ron Withnall was a man who pursued change and justice for the whole Territory.

As an elected member, he first stood for the seat of Arnhem. After 1974, with the first fully-elected Assembly, he stood for Port Darwin. As we all know, Ron Withnall was not a man who was afraid to speak his mind. This commitment to the larger issues of the day did not prevent him from paying attention to other needs of the electorate. Ron continued to use his legal talents to draft many of his own bills. He presented legislation to protect electors from the unfair pressures applied by door-to-door sales people. He recognised and spoke out about the special relationship of Aboriginal people with their land. Admittedly with some hesitation, he acknowledged the right of women to sit on juries. He introduced the forerunner of what would become the Kakadu National Park Ordinance.

Even into the 1970s, he continued his battles with the entrenched resistance of Commonwealth public servants. The man's ability to continue the fight for the people he represented was a fine example of his determination. Ron Withnall was a man of strength and determination. He was a man with a dry wit, a great intellect and the discipline a good intellect requires to articulate ideas and dreams. He fostered the best in others and fought well for the Territory. He was an individual, independent, not given to stereotypes, but a man who supported just causes. It is on the foundation that people of his calibre established that we can look forward to a great future for the Northern Territory and look back and acknowledge the fine efforts of those who came before us.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, Ronald John Withnall was certainly a Territorian who was dedicated to the cause of self-government for the Northern Territory. After he resigned as the Northern Territory Administration's Senior Law Officer in 1966, he became an active member of the campaign for self-rule. As other members have said, he was elected as the independent member for Port Darwin in 1968 and he held that seat until 1977, when he was defeated by the present member, the Minister for Education.

Mr Withnall returned to legal practice after his electoral defeat. He was a lawyer of some ability, and I can remember giving evidence as a very green police constable in the late 1960s on a number of occasions when Mr Withnall was the defence lawyer. To be cross-examined by Mr Withnall was certainly a rather trying experience, and he was somebody that all young, green constables held in some awe and a great deal of respect indeed.

On 3 August 1979, he was appointed Chairman of the Northern Territory Planning Authority by the then Minister for Lands, Hon Marshall Perron. Mr Withnall held this post with distinction until his resignation in September 1985, and he is remembered in the department as being a very cheerful and witty man with an excellent knowledge of the Territory, its laws, its history and its people. He is remembered also for refusing to put up with any unnecessary waffle or incompetence. As the first chairman, Mr Withnall was faced with the very difficult task of balancing the differing personalities and attitudes towards planning and development throughout the Territory, and his task was made even more difficult by the

continuing process of change in land tenure and administration that resulted from the new Northern Territory government's much-needed overhaul of the neglected system which it inherited at self-government. Mr Withnall's success during his time as chairman is a tribute to both his personality and his professionalism.

Another characteristic, well remembered by Mr Withnall's many friends and acquaintances, was his habit of creating humorous rhymes and limericks to describe the various situations and issues he encountered, and some mention of that habit has been made by other members. One example is a somewhat dry comment on planning and planners, and I will read this:

> Oh never sell too short any planner's idle thought,
> Lest it become the wonder of the age;
> For ambitious men like Bailey, Kenneth Ward and even Haley,
> Want to end up in the centre of the stage.

Honourable members may well wonder if things have changed so much from the time when Ron Withnall was involved in the planning processes. Mr Speaker, I extend my sympathies to Mr Withnall's family and I commend the motion.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, when I was elected to this Assembly in 1980, a person I soon came to know and to expect to find each afternoon in the members' lounge when the Assembly was sitting was Ron Withnall. My first impression of Ron was that he was a fairly crusty old bloke who looked down somewhat on us new chums, but that impression soon changed as one came to know him. Certainly, some of the most enjoyable times in the members' lounge in those early years were occasions when people like Goff Letts and Ron Withnall were there together and regaled us with stories of Territory history, the Assembly and the Legislative Council. Certainly, one could appreciate the experiences that they were sharing with us and it was evident that we were in the company of men of considerable intellect and capacity.

I believe that much of the legislation we handle in this Assembly that has come through from the days of the Legislative Council was actually drafted by Ron. Not only did he draft it, but he knew it and understood its implications. If a new bill was being prepared, he was aware whether or not it would impinge on other existing legislation.

He was not a person to suffer fools gladly and I think that may be more in keeping with the character of most of us. He was not an Alec Fong Lim. He was not backward in being critical of people on occasion, but you always felt that his criticism was incisive and pretty correct. He had a great sense of humour and, when Goff Letts and Ron Withnall got together, poetry would come out from time to time as they chatted away. I would listen to them and try to absorb their experiences. Certainly, the Territory owes Ron Withnall a great deal.

His memorial is there in the legislation, much of which is still on our statute books. The work that he did and his love for the Territory was always very real. Although he manifested it in a different way from Alec, he had a great love for the Territory and he did a great deal to push us towards self-government, along with many other fine Territorians who have made their contributions. His contribution will be a lasting one. I wish to pass on to his wife and family my respects and condolences on the passing of Ron. In a sense, it does not seem quite possible, but it has happened. Ron will live on in the minds and the memories of those he touched, and I am sure there are many people who will hold his memory in deep regard and who

are grateful for his kindnesses over the years. He will be remembered with pride.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this motion of condolence and to pay tribute to Ron Withnall, the member for Port Darwin from 1968 until 1977.

It was at the 1977 Legislative Assembly elections that I defeated Ron for the seat of Port Darwin. I had known of Ron Withnall for some years but it was not until 1977, the year of the election, that I came to know him personally. Actually, I felt sorry for Ron because, during that campaign, he was bitten by a dog whilst door-knocking in the Gardens Hill area. I know that Ron was not particularly keen on door-knocking and a number of members in this Assembly probably share his hatred for that aspect of the job. We all know, however, that it is a very important part of our profession and must be done. Fortunately, the bite was not as serious as I was first led to believe and Ron was not badly injured. However, I am sure that every member who has been attacked by a dog would acknowledge that such attacks can be very frightening and I know that the experience upset Ron somewhat. I was lucky enough not to be attacked by a dog during that campaign but I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I have been bitten on a number of occasions since then.

Naturally, Ron was disappointed at losing the seat of Port Darwin. He liked his work and did it extremely well. There is no doubt that he will be remembered for his contribution to politics in the Territory. As has been said on many occasions recently, Ron had a particular art of being able to cut through all the nonsense to reach the heart of a problem. He was fiercely independent and he knew where he was going. With those few words, I join other honourable members in supporting this motion, and I offer my condolences to Ron's wife, Joyce, and the other members of the Withnall family.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this condolence motion. I did not know Ron Withnall very well but I did meet him on a number of occasions in the members' lounge in the old Assembly building where I was able to speak with him socially over the odd convivial glass. A mirror with the words 'Ron's Bar' hung over the bar in that members' lounge and I have noticed that it is missing from the new bar. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, you may be able to use your good offices to relocate it.

Mr Firmin: I think it was glued to the wall.

Mr COULTER: If that is the case, we may be able to replace it. Perhaps it did not survive the move. In any case, it would be a fitting memorial to Ron Withnall. Much of the coaching and support which he gave to what might be called the class of '83 was given around that bar.

I would like to pay tribute as well to Ron Withnall as a pastoralist, for his work at his beloved Marrakai Station. Some of his thoughts about brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication would be of interest to both the member for Katherine and the member for Stuart. His opinion differed from both of their perspectives. He spoke about building very good fences constructed of railway iron and cables, to confine buffalo within specific areas. The number of buffalo on that station in the early days was a tribute to Ron.

I am aware that a former member of this House, Jim Robertson, had the utmost admiration for Ron Withnall. I understand that, whilst they clashed

on many occasions, they were the very best of friends and had a great deal of admiration for one another. I know that Jim would wish his sentiments to be expressed on this occasion.

I will be brief, Mr Speaker, as I did not know the man very well. However, in the very short time during which I had dealings with him, I came to have the utmost respect and admiration for him. I understand that he was a very active member of the Darwin Club and indeed president of that club. He was a parliamentarian, a law officer and a pastoralist, and he could move from one role to another with great ease. My condolences go to the family of this great man. No doubt, many stories will be told about him and I would appreciate it, Mr Speaker, if you could find a mirror to replace the one which hung above the old members' bar.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I also wish to contribute to the debate on this condolence motion. From the reports of others, I am aware to a large extent of Ron's contribution to the Territory in all the various ways which have been referred to already in this debate. Unlike yourself, Mr Speaker, and the member for Port Darwin, I did not have the opportunity to compete with him or deal with him in any of the spheres in which he was involved. However, as a newly-elected member, I did have the opportunity to meet Ron in 1981 and on many subsequent occasions, to discuss the issues of the day with him. It was clear that Ron had contributed considerably to the constitutional development of the Territory as a parliamentarian in the old Legislative Council and the first fully-elected Assembly. I believe that it is appropriate for people such as myself, who have to some extent inherited the contribution of people like Ron, to record our appreciation of their efforts. I suppose one always hopes that there might one day be a similar appreciation of efforts being made at present, which will become apparent only in decades to come. I believe that Ron Withnall made a great contribution to the Territory, as previous speakers have indicated, and for that reason I wish to support this motion.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise also to support this condolence motion. I first met Ron Withnall quite a long time ago but it was only in recent years that I came to understand him. When I first met him, I thought him a very dogmatic man. He certainly was an enigma to me. He was very strong-minded about things Territorian. With his legal background and incisive wit, he was able to express his opinion very succinctly. I first met Ron when he was working as a solicitor. He was working for the opposite side in a commercial case in which I had instructed solicitors. He opposed the case, worked very hard and, from memory, may well have beaten us. I found him to be a very fierce competitor in the field of law and in every field in which he worked.

Even though I did not know him particularly well at that stage, I admired Ron. As someone else said a moment ago, he was a long-serving member of the Darwin Club, a club which I have belonged to for some 25 years. I used to sit and talk to Ron at that club on occasions but, as I said, I always found it difficult to get close to him in those early years. It was not until Ron lost his seat of Port Darwin to the present member, Tom Harris, and subsequently became Chairman of the Town Planning Authority, that I really started to get to know him. At that time, I was an alderman of the Darwin City Council and a member of the authority. The authority met every month and, during that period, I came to admire Ron's understanding of the needs and requirements of the Darwin community, his views on how Darwin should develop, and his love of the area.

I used to visit Marrakai and, when Ron bought the property, he allowed me to continue my visits. I was aware of his great love for that area and his plans for it which, unfortunately, were never fully realised. Nonetheless, like myself, he had a great deal of interest in that country and a great deal of respect for it.

During the last couple of years, I found myself spending much more time in Ron's company in various places. We reminisced about historical events in the Northern Territory leading to self-government and discussed his views about full self-government, by which I mean statehood. I appreciated his thoughts and comments, which helped to refine my own ideas. I will miss Ron, and I certainly extend my sympathy to his wife, Joyce, and to his family.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the condolence motion moved by the Chief Minister, I would like to say, firstly, that I had intended to speak to the previous condolence motion in respect of our late Lord Mayor, Alec Fong Lim. However, I was talking to one of the other members at the time and missed my opportunity. I greatly regret that.

In speaking to the condolence motion for the late Ron Withnall, I must say that I did not know Ron Withnall personally very well at all. However, when I first came to Darwin 17 years ago, the name of Ron Withnall was well known all around Darwin, together with a number of other names such as those of the late Dick Ward and the late Jock Nelson. I became very much aware that those people were the movers and shakers in the Territory at that time. They were also the people who were leading the charge in an attempt to drag the Northern Territory out of all those years of Commonwealth control. Indeed, they all played a considerable part in achieving the first fully-elected Legislative Council and, subsequently, self-government in the Northern Territory.

My only personal contact with Ron Withnall was when I first became a member of this Assembly in 1984. We were sitting in the old Chamber across the road and Ron was no longer a member. However, he came regularly to the members' bar in the afternoon. That was when I got to know Ron Withnall reasonably well. Often, we would chat for a few minutes over a drink or two. I thought it was very good that Ron Withnall continued to relate to the Legislative Assembly and continued to feel at home in the place. As a life member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, he was entitled to visit the members' bar at will. He came down often and no doubt enjoyed the opportunity to rub shoulders with the current members of the day. Likewise, as the new chums in the place at the time, we enjoyed the opportunity to sit and talk to Ron about debates and events of the past. I found it quite encouraging to have that opportunity to talk to a fellow of the experience and the political stature of Ron Withnall. Like my colleagues, I offer my deepest sympathy to the Withnall family.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the motion of condolence moved by the Chief Minister, my view is that Mr Withnall was a notable figure in legal circles in the Northern Territory. He had a very dry humour, coupled with his learning. He was a man of varied interests. He was the man in the right place at the right time. He was in the Northern Territory as a member of the Legislative Council through to the fully-elected Legislative Assembly of which he was a member at its beginning. He lived through that very historic time. It is only now that we are realising the importance of people like Ron Withnall, with his very thorough interest and learning, and their contribution to parliamentary development in the Northern Territory.

When Mr Withnall retired from politics, he was appointed as Chairman of the Planning Authority. Because of my regular attendance at Planning Authority meetings relating to rural planning matters, I had occasion to be at meetings of which Mr Withnall was the chairman. In comparing his chairing of the meetings with some of the chairmen who have followed him, excluding the current one, I find that he knew exactly what the job was. He could consider everybody's point of view and come up with a final solution to any particular problem that seemed to satisfy all those people who had gone to the Planning Authority meeting with different views on the matter.

As time goes by, especially as we proceed to statehood, we will appreciate more and more the contribution of Mr Ron Withnall to the development of the Northern Territory. In conclusion, I would like to indicate that my sympathy and condolences go to Joyce and his family.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I too would like to express my sympathy to Mrs Withnall and her family. I concur with honourable members in saying that this former member of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council was a man who really took no nonsense. During the debates on the early legislation in this parliament, I believe that the class of '74, as it is known today, learnt much from Ronald John Withnall. The Deputy Chief Minister and the member for MacDonnell said that Ron Withnall played a very important role in the constitutional development of the Northern Territory. There are other people as well who have been mentioned from time to time - Dick Ward, Goff Letts, Tiger Brennan, Rupert Kentish and others.

Obviously, those who attended the ceremony at RJ's funeral the other day would have heard quite a bit about the man who had first come to the Territory in the early 1950s as a Crown Law Officer. He played a very important role, not only in the development of the legal system in the Northern Territory, but also in the growth of the political sphere in the Northern Territory.

I too remember our first sitting day in parliament in November 1974, after our 19 October election, and his railing at the condition of the parliament building. As the member for Barkly was commenting on Ron Withnall's remarks on that day, I reflected on what had really changed before we moved out of the old precincts and into this temporary parliament. The Chamber was still leaking. There were still obvious problems with the various departments that had the responsibility of maintaining the buildings in reasonable working order. Hopefully, as we move from this place to our final place back over the road, Ronald John may be remembered again.

The Deputy Chief Minister referred to the fact that there was an item missing from the new recreation area of the members' lounge. It had just been brought to my attention that we knew where it was. Obviously, it had been put in a place for safekeeping. Now that we are comfortably ensconced in this building, I ask the honourable Deputy Chief Minister to ensure that this mirror is transported safely to the lounge and put in a place of prominence so that, from time to time, honourable members may reflect on Ronald Withnall's role in the development of this parliament. He put in a great deal of hard work to establish a good procedure. Obviously, in the early days, he had much to do with the framing of our standing orders. He was on many committees. Before we came into the Legislative Assembly, he was in the Legislative Council fighting for the things that we take for granted today.

With those few words, I offer my condolences to the Withnall family. I ask that honourable members show their support for this motion by standing in silence.

Members stood in silence.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL
(Serial 297)

Continued from 23 August 1990.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill. Before addressing some of the issues which relate to the areas under my responsibility, I would like to comment on a couple of projects which are to be proceeded with in my electorate.

For a number of years, one of them has been of concern to constituents in the Larrakeyah area. I refer specifically to the Larrakeyah sewage macerater station. People who have been in that area have noticed a smell on occasions. That particular smell originated from this macerater. I note with interest that, in this year's budget, some $300 000 has been allocated to have that macerater station upgraded. I hope that, as a result, the people living in the Larrakeyah area will no longer have to breathe air which has this terrible smell. I was also very pleased to note in this year's budget that we will be able to continue with the construction of Tiger Brennan Drive. There is no doubt that, in years to come, this road will improve the flow of traffic into and out of the central business district. Those 2 matters are of particular interest to me because I believe that they will improve the life of people in the central business district and the Larrakeyah area.

The gratifying aspect of this year's budget is that, through careful and judicious management of the funds available, we have been able to maintain all existing key educational programs such as staff development and formula staffing in schools whilst simultaneously protecting the education system from major cutbacks in funding. This year, the Department of Education has been allocated a budget of $202.1m, an increase of some $16.5m on its 1989-90 actual expenditure. Similarly, TAFE's budget of $55.8m represents an increase of $5.2m. These increases indicate clearly the government's commitment to the Territory's ongoing educational needs. I do not think that anyone can question the priority which this government has given to education over the years, and our commitment will continue in this financial year.

A major feature of the department's budget is the provision for award restructuring within the Northern Territory Teaching Service, together with funding for the Master Teacher Scheme. Honourable members should note that the Northern Territory has led the states in the introduction of a Master Teacher Scheme and was among the first to reach agreement on the second stage of award restructuring for teachers in government schools. These initiatives will lead to a much improved career structure for teachers and the development of a more productive and efficient teaching service.

The Territory has faced difficulties in the past in attracting and retaining qualified teachers to staff our schools. It would now appear that the news of new conditions of employment has already spread in the southern states. The department has informed me that, during the recent interstate

recruitment tour, the Territory's recruitment officers were overwhelmed by the record level of interest shown by interstate teachers in teaching in the Northern Territory. This is indeed good news for Territory schools and it justifies the time and money which the government has expended in its endeavours to ensure that the Territory's schools are the best staffed in Australia.

Earlier in the year, the government established a departmental working party to look into the adequacy of the per capita allocations made available to Northern Territory government schools. As a result of that working party's deliberations, the government has agreed to increase school per capita allocations in line with movements in the CPI. That initiative will be welcomed by most people. In the non-government school sector, provision has been made in this year's budget for interest and capital subsidies to be provided to St John's College for new boarding facilities for an additional 60 students.

The government has not forgotten the hundreds of Territory secondary students who, because they live in remote areas, must live away from home to undertake their secondary education, and who need specific assistance with homework supervision, recreation and social development. Such students are eligible for the NT Isolated Students Education Allowance. This budget makes provision for the value of this allowance to be maintained in line with movements in the CPI.

For the first time, the government is making funds available to the Territory's 6 mission schools to pay the employer's 3% superannuation contribution. This is in line with the government's policy of maintaining parity, wherever possible, with conditions provided to Northern Territory government staff.

Following the release by the government of the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy, a joint government and private sector task force was established, under the chairmanship of a local business identity, Mr Harvey Fewings, to look into the senior secondary school curriculum. As a result of that working party's efforts, a series of recommendations were forwarded to me. As the recommendations have major budgetary implications and would have an impact on some matters of government policy, I have decided to place the report before Cabinet with a view to addressing some of those issues which have been raised. I should say that many of the recommendations are in line with current policy and resources are available to implement them. Indeed, we will be proceeding to implement some of the working party's recommendations.

The government has accepted a major recommendation of that report, which relates to the need for better career education advice to school students. As a consequence, this budget makes provision for the creation of a new senior position within the department's Curriculum and Assessment Branch to improve career education and provide support for school counsellors who deal with careers information. I believe that this move will be welcomed by many people.

A significant element of this budget is the provision for Aboriginal education. As honourable members will recall, in October 1989, the Commonwealth government released the National Aboriginal Education Policy. Following an intensive period of consultation and negotiation, a Northern Territory strategic plan has been endorsed by both myself and the federal minister, Mr John Dawkins. We are now poised for what should be a giant leap forward in all areas of Aboriginal education.

At the commencement of negotiations, a figure in the vicinity of $6m per annum was mooted for the Northern Territory for the first triennium. Following the negotiations, an amount of approximately $34m has been confirmed for the triennium. The plan has established new goals, priorities and strategies with a central purpose: to give equitable access to primary and secondary education for all Aboriginal children of compulsory schooling age, including those in outstation communities. Significant funding increases will support direct Aboriginal involvement in the education system in the Northern Territory through the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness Program and through the $3m package for employment and training strategies.

There will also be an expansion in the local delivery of TAFE courses to remote communities. This will be done by increasing the number of community education centres, and through the development of new approaches to distance education. The TAFE initiatives will involve the overhaul of all special Aboriginal bridging and access courses to ensure that they are linked to the entry into TAFE award courses. The plan provides arrangements for the provision of independent advice to the Northern Territory minister regarding educational decisions relating to Aboriginal communities. Such arrangements are to be recognised by the Aboriginal communities as being independent of government agencies.

The strategic plan offers additional assistance to non-government providers of education such as the Catholic Education Office, St John's College, Kormilda College and the Institute of Aboriginal Development. A separate agreement will also be negotiated with the Northern Territory University in respect of the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies.

Mr Speaker, 51 Northern Territory Teaching Service positions, created under the Aboriginal education policy, were advertised on 6 June 1990 and it is anticipated that they will be filled in the very near future. A further 65.5 NTPS positions were created and will be advertised as soon as public service requirements are met. Most advertising procedures are expected to be completed by 30 August 1990. Several positions are being occupied on a temporary basis.

On 22 June 1990, $1.5m was received from the Department of Employment, Education and Training as payment for the 1990 Training for Aboriginals Program. This is a supplementary arrangement to the Aboriginal Education Policy and the operational plan has been negotiated with DEET. The total funding provision for the 1990 calendar year under AEP is $12.5m. It is necessary to acknowledge the high level of cooperation between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in this exercise and also the work of FEPPI. At times, the exercise was very difficult. I commented earlier that, had we been able to reach agreement between governments more quickly, we would have been able to put the dollars into action much sooner and would have received a good deal more value for them.

Mr Dawkins said that he was very pleased to endorse the AEP strategic plan for the Northern Territory, established through a cooperative effort involving officials of the Territory and Commonwealth departments, the Territory's Aboriginal education consultative group FEPPI, and all participating education providers. Mr Dawkins strongly supported the establishment of the AEP working group in the Territory as proposed in the Northern Territory operational plan.

The AEP contribution supplements the Northern Territory contribution of approximately $150m for the triennium. The total contribution from both

governments is expected to be approximately $200m. By any standards, this is an outstanding contribution to the development of Aboriginal people. The strategic plan will also provide a basis for addressing the more fundamental issues of Aboriginal education which are the subject of my review. Essentially, the strategic plan identifies and quantifies areas where improvements are required, proposes objectives to clarify the targets for improvement, and outlines strategies to achieve them. The plan is an evolving document and it should be noted here that, following the release of my review into Aboriginal education, which I hope will occur during the course of these sittings, some of its recommendations will have an impact on the future directions of the strategic plan.

As would be expected in a tight budgetary situation, the level of funding available for capital works is lower than in previous years. However, education has fared pretty well. I would like to highlight some of the projects being funded in 1990-91. I am sure that, during the course of this debate, other honourable members will also highlight some of these projects.

In recent times, we have heard much nonsense about an alleged lack of support for Taminmin High School. In a recent newspaper, I noticed that people were starting to talk about Taminmin High School becoming a junior high school again. That is a load of nonsense. The government has clearly identified Taminmin High School as a school which is developing a strand of excellence in the area of agriculture. That will continue. The school will offer full secondary courses. In this budget, $640 000 is being provided for new agricultural facilities and the upgrading of workshops at Taminmin High.

At Nightcliff High School, $1.34m is being provided to build a purpose-built hall for drama and gymnastics and to upgrade the home economics facility. Again, I should indicate to honourable members that the government has amended its policy in relation to the air-conditioning of halls in high schools. It has determined that all high school halls are to be enclosed and air-conditioned.

New, permanent education facilities are to replace existing mobile schools, and these are programmed for a number of communities. In the TAFE sector, this budget will provide $1.6m for site works and detailed design work for Palmerston College. This will be an innovative project which aims to offer senior secondary and TAFE courses to the residents of Palmerston and the Darwin rural area. I might add at this point that I believe that, eventually, students from Darwin will also go out to Palmerston to attend the college that we are building there.

A further $150 000 is being provided to upgrade the facilities at the Tennant Creek Open College. The budget also provides $1.45m for minor new works in various schools and other educational facilities.

As I have announced in some detail, the Aboriginal Education Policy will also have an impact on the TAFE sector. The finalisation of the Aboriginal Education Program Strategic and Operation Plan represents a significant resource injection for the Northern Territory tertiary sector, particularly in terms of long-term development. Significant developments include: funding to expand the Aboriginal Health Worker Program at Batchelor College; the provision of additional lecturers to support the Remote Area Teacher Education program at Batchelor; the establishment of a materials development team within the NT Open College to produce materials suited to the needs of Aboriginal secondary students; funding of a position

to facilitate and coordinate TAFE programs for Aboriginal people in central Australia; and a provision, from 1991, of funding for the development of early childhood specialisation within Batchelor College.

Two new functions which have been included in division 36 of the budget are the Education Resources Unit and the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School. The first is a part of the Distance Education Branch, and the second a part of the Northern Territory Open College. Their inclusion within TAFE will reduce both the cost and time of administrative functions. The amalgamation of the secondary correspondence school with the open college will provide the basis for an expansion and improvement of distance education services, particularly to Aboriginal people.

In many ways, 1990 may be considered a watershed in TAFE, both at the Northern Territory and national levels, a time when the realisation that a fully government-funded TAFE system cannot continue to expand to meet the increasing demands placed on it. It has become essential that governments, administrators and institutions rethink priorities, operations and basic assumptions in the context of rapidly changing local and national environments.

It is recognised that the Northern Territory TAFE system, like those in other territories and the states, is under increasing pressure especially in respect of the new training programs and arrangements flowing from award restructuring. The Northern Territory is a party to the investigations being conducted at the national level into the costs involved and how these will be met. We are mindful of the size of the Territory's resource base, the cost of the delivery of services here and the importance of training to many people who lack the means to contribute to the costs involved. In this context, the government is fully supportive of moves by Northern Territory TAFE institutions to increase their revenue base through entrepreneurial activity. The overall policy direction and necessary administrative arrangements are being developed currently with the full involvement of the various institutions involved and will provide for the formal recognition of institutional initiative and its contribution to TAFE services overall. In this respect, the level of institutional and individual staff participation in overseas consultancies and programs for overseas students will increase significantly in 1990.

The International Project Management Unit's activities in 1990 are likely to gross $306 000 overall. With the Commonwealth's agreement to the Indonesian/Australian Technical and Vocational Education Project Component 'A', Territory TAFE seems well placed for enterprise activities based on its geographic and established educational links in the Asian/Pacific region. This development of enterprise activities is likely to contribute significantly, not only to the resource base of the total system, but also to the career development and opportunities of staff.

As members would be aware, one important area within my portfolio which receives special attention as part of the budgetary process is that of the arts and cultural affairs. Despite difficult times, the Territory government has set out to maintain, and not to undercut, allocations to the arts. Accordingly, the 1990-91 cash allocation to the arts has been maintained at last year's level. However, there is a complicating factor in that funds from the Territory Office of the Arts go to organisations operating on a calendar year, and similar arrangements have caused difficulties for the Northern Territory University in the past. The Territory has moved to correct that problem in the case of the Northern Territory University, and I will address that matter in a moment. However,

in the case of the arts, the differences between our financial year and the calendar year operations of the arts groups has created a hiccup this year which will be addressed as part of the normal budget review process. The problem occurred because funding made available in the first half of the last year was significantly less than in the second half. Although the cash level for the whole year has been repeated, this will need to be reassessed as part of the budget review.

The final issue that I would like to address in this debate is that of the university. Honourable members would be aware of the government's continued support for our university, and I must say that the performance of the opposition in developing our university has been disgraceful to say the least. Despite this lack of support from the benches opposite, we have our own university, but what is a basic right in the states will continue to be a cost to Territory taxpayers. In fact, they will have to pay twice. We will continue to protest to the federal government regarding our treatment over the funding of our university and I wish that, for once, members of the opposition would get off their butts and start to help us to obtain the money necessary to provide to people in the Northern Territory the opportunities that are provided to students in other parts of Australia.

It is not a matter of opposing for the sake of opposition. Members opposite should be in there fighting for Territory people, and they will continue to remain in opposition if they do not start to get their act together and to support the provision of dollars to help with the provision of education to people in the Territory. It really is a disgraceful exercise on the part of members of the opposition. They knock us continually in relation to the university but, as a government, we will continue to support the Northern Territory University and I hope that members opposite will begin to realise that it is important that they fall into line and help us in our efforts to obtain the dollars that are rightfully ours. They should start to pick their game up a bit in that regard or they will remain on the opposition benches for a very long time.

One of the biggest problems that the university has faced since its establishment has been the uncertainty of funding which creates problems with forward planning, and I referred to this a minute ago. This has been for a number of reasons, not least of which has been the fact that the Northern Territory University's academic programs are based on the calendar year and not the financial year. It is ridiculous to have a situation where, if the university sets the program for a full year, depending on our budget and the dollars that we allocate, those programs could be affected. It is something that has created problems in the past, and the government has moved to change that situation. Members would be aware that the normal method for funding universities is not on a year-by-year basis but on a triennial basis. It is important that we give the university the opportunity to plan ahead in a responsible manner and, this year, the Northern Territory government has reached agreement with the Northern Territory University regarding a phasing-out of the NT contribution which we should not be paying - and I emphasise that - towards recurrent funding. As I said, it needs to be emphasised repeatedly that that is normally paid by the Commonwealth. That agreement will enable us to phase out Northern Territory contributions by the financial year 1996-97. However, by having that agreement in place with the university, it is now able to plan ahead and, if there are constraints as far as its budgets are concerned, it will be able to look ahead and acknowledge that it has a responsibility in this regard and it can work within the dollars that are provided to it. At long last, we have been able to come to an agreement which will enable the university to operate in a reasonable manner, even though we are still being

denied the funding from the federal government in relation to recurrent costs and also, I might say, in relation to some aspects of relocation for the university at the Casuarina Campus.

With those few words, I have a great deal of pleasure in supporting the Appropriation Bill. It is a good budget, particularly for education. Indeed, we have been able to maintain the existing formulas that are as good as those anywhere in Australia. We have been able to maintain facilities of a high standard in the Territory and we will continue to maintain that level of dollars going into education. The Northern Territory government will continue to place education as a high priority as far as funding is concerned. I support the Appropriation Bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Appropriation Bill and to comment in relation to my portfolio responsibilities as Attorney-General and Minister for Lands and Housing.

My responsibility as Minister for Lands and Housing encompasses both the Department of Lands and Housing and the Northern Territory Housing Commission. All administrative functions of the Housing Commission are carried out by staff employed by the department, while the Housing Commission budget covers funding for capital and operational expenses for public housing throughout the Territory. The total budget for the 2 organisations in 1990-91 is $160.4m. This is an increase of $10.4m or about 7% over the 1989-90 expenditure of $150m. There are 2 main reasons for the increase. Firstly, funding for Aboriginal housing and infrastructure will increase from the $31.2m spent in 1989-90 to a projected record of $35.8m this financial year, and I will discuss these funding arrangements in more detail later. Secondly, debt servicing increases by $4.8m to extinguish a high interest loan taken out a number of years ago from the Commonwealth. Paying out this loan will reduce the principal and interest payments carried presently by the Housing Commission and free these funds for more constructive use in future years.

Other increases are an additional $1.6m in rental operations and $1.29m in home purchase assistance, both within the Housing Commission, and $1.4m in land management within the Department of Lands and Housing. These increases are partly offset by a reduction of $3m in the department's land acquisition program.

I turn now to land development projects in this year's budget. One of the government's primary objectives since self-government has been the provision of adequate serviced land for residential, commercial and industrial development. Supplies of serviced land are now adequate to meet demand in most Territory centres. The focus of this financial year's capital works program in terms of serviced land is to meet the needs of expanding rural centres for both residential and industrial development. Some 6 industrial lots and 13 residential lots have been programmed for Pine Creek at a cost of $810 000. A further 9 residential lots have been programmed for Adelaide River at a cost of $190 000.

Proper strategic planning to ensure development occurs in those areas where it is most needed is one of the success stories of this government. This program will continue in 1990-91 with a number of land use studies focusing on providing a master plan for the area between Frances Bay and East Arm. Also proposed for 1991 are structure plans for Katherine and Tennant Creek. The Alice Springs and Darwin Rural Area Town Plans will be reviewed this financial year.

Honourable members would be fully conversant with the fact that the Territory's funding from the Commonwealth has been reduced dramatically over recent years, indeed in recent months. The Treasurer has outlined a range of initiatives to be taken by this government to try to ease the impact of these cuts on Territorians while maintaining the high standard of government services that they have come to expect. The Department of Lands and Housing will support this objective by introducing further efficiency measures this financial year which will maintain services at existing levels, but at a reduced cost in real terms. Taking into account national wage case and price increases, the department's efficiency measures will result in reductions in real terms of $430 000 in salaries and $490 000 in administrative costs this financial year. These reductions are to be achieved by streamlining and by using new technology which this government has developed in recent years, and which is now proving invaluable in these difficult economic times. The department's revenue will increase by $6.6m through the sale of a number of government properties and an increased land sales program this financial year. These properties and the land are surplus to present government needs and will be sold by normal public competition.

A small but important program, which will receive continued support this financial year, is the department's Property Management Program. This will receive $443 000 in 1991 which will go towards maintaining vacant Crown land. This is in keeping with the government's commitment to improve the environment whilst, at the same time, reducing health and fire risks. An organisational review of the department's Building Branch has been completed recently, and one of its major recommendations for the regionalisation of functions will be implemented this financial year. The department's mapping program will receive continued support this financial year in order to meet the government's aerial photography and mapping needs.

As I mentioned earlier, the level of funding for Aboriginal housing continues to grow and it will reach record levels in 1990-91. Expenditure on servicing of Aboriginal land in 1991 will be $5.5m, an increase of about $3.3m or about 150% over the last financial year. Expenditure on the rural Aboriginal Housing Program will increase by approximately $1.3m to $20.1m. The Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program will continue this financial year with program expenditure totalling $10.2m. This is a joint Territory/Commonwealth program to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal people living in town camps throughout the Territory.

Honourable members would recall the Memorandum of Agreement negotiated between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister on living area excisions for Aboriginal people on pastoral properties. The Territory government is presently negotiating with the Commonwealth to secure a cooperative funding approach for the community living areas. In the meantime, the Territory government has introduced a new program this financial year, with a program provision of $1m, to provide services for Aboriginal people in community living areas. Funding will be made available this financial year to establish an Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service in Alice Springs. This is an expansion of the existing Advisory Service Program presently operating in Darwin and Katherine which aims, basically, to help Aboriginal people to come to terms with the difficulties and responsibilities of living in urban public housing.

In 1990-91, the Rural Aboriginal Housing Program provides for the construction of 247 new dwellings in communities throughout the Territory. This breaks down to $3.3m for 49 houses and cabins in the northern region, $1.9m for 30 houses and cabins in the Katherine region, $2.65m for 47 houses

and cabins in the East Arnhem region, $1.75m for 26 houses and cabins in the Barkly region and $5.825m for 95 houses and cabins in the Alice Springs region.

Nearly $440 000 has been committed to provide serviced land availability plans for future development of Aboriginal communities. Honourable members would be aware that the SLAP program has already been highly successful in providing plans for 50 communities throughout the Territory. In conjunction with the serviced land program, it acts as the basis for both the Territory government and the ATSIC construction programs in rural areas. Almost $2.6m will be committed to support items such as consultants' fees, needs survey work, pilot programs, advisory services, travel and other costs associated with the construction program.

As I mentioned earlier, more than $10m will be spent this year under TCHIP. I should point out that the Territory government will contribute $18m or 60% of the total funding of this program over its 4-year life. This year's proposed expenditure breaks down to $2.2m in Alice Springs, $2m in Tennant Creek, $1.3m in Elliott, $1.6m in Borroloola, $1.7m in Katherine and $1.2m in Darwin. It can be seen from the commitments for Aboriginal housing, which I have outlined, that this government certainly puts a high priority on the provision of adequate housing and infrastructure needs for Aboriginal people throughout the Territory.

I turn now to general public housing. Successive Territory governments have made massive commitments to public housing over the 12 years since self-government. More than $1500m has been spent up to the beginning of this financial year, about $1000m of which came directly from the Territory government with the remainder being funded through specific Commonwealth housing programs. As a result of this commitment, the Territory government has been able to control the demand for public housing in most Territory centres. Accordingly, the general public housing program for 1990-91 is directed at Alice Springs and smaller urban centres where there is high or increasing demand.

The program for this financial year totals $19.1m which is broken down into 54 dwellings in Alice Springs at an estimated cost of $4.848m, 20 dwellings in Nhulunbuy at an estimated cost of $2.418m, 7 dwellings at Jabiru at an estimated cost of $777 000, 9 dwellings at Batchelor at an estimated cost of $758 000, 21 dwellings at minor centres at an estimated cost of $3.484m, 3 dwellings in the Darwin/Palmerston area at an estimated cost of $265 000 and 4 special purpose dwellings - 2 in Darwin and 2 in Alice Springs - for people with disabilities, at an estimated cost of $385 000.

The redevelopment program for older Housing Commission dwellings in order to bring that accommodation up to standards similar to modern-day dwellings will continue this financial year at an overall cost of $4.7m. This will bring the total expenditure on this program throughout the Territory to $36.2m since it began in 1987-88. The remainder of the general purpose housing program is made up of $1.467m for minor new works and continuing items.

I turn now to the revenue side of public housing. I am delighted to be able to reinforce the Chief Minister's commitment that there will be no rent increases for general public housing this financial year other than in those welfare areas which are pegged to percentages of income. This will mean that the general public housing rents will have risen only once in 3 financial years. When this is added to the rent freeze for aged and

invalid pensioners and supporting parents, which is now nearing the end of its third year, it can be seen that the Territory government is clearly committed to helping Territorians to cope with the high cost of living in these tough economic times. While on the subject of rents, I should point out that the Territory government's Rental Rebate Program now provides concessional rents to about 3500 Housing Commission tenants or nearly 40% of the total throughout the Territory. The rent forgone by the Housing Commission to provide this support in 1991 is estimated at $11m.

The government will continue its support for Territory home buyers through the Interest Subsidy Scheme. This innovative scheme, which has helped more that 600 Territory families to buy their homes since it was introduced, has been allocated $1.6m in this budget. The Home Establishment Grant, which has already assisted more than 1300 Territory home buyers, will receive increased funding of $1.02m. The government believes it is important to provide good support services to Housing Commission tenants. In recognition of this commitment, more than $820 000 has been programmed this financial year for a major upgrading of the commission's tenancy information systems.

I turn now to the Department of Law. The department's budget for 1991 totals $24.03m. This is an increase of $920 000 or 4% over the previous year's expenditure. Essentially, this year's budget will provide for existing government services in the Territory's legal system to be maintained at their current levels with some additional funding for a small number of new programs. Honourable members will appreciate that, in the main, the government's initiatives in the legal arena take the form of legislation rather than capital works projects and therefore are funded through existing allocations.

An important addition to the budget this year is $250 000 for the establishment of the Northern Territory Office of Director of Public Prosecutions. This move will enhance the standing of the Crown before the courts, particularly in important criminal matters, while ensuring that the Crown Prosecutions Unit is clearly seen to be operating independently.

Further funding has been programmed for the continued development of the Integrated Justice Information System in 1990-91. This year's funding of $800 000 will bring total expenditure on this project to $1.76m and take it to the stage of being a workable replacement for the existing PROMIS system. Additional funding over the next 2 financial years will allow the system to be further developed to the point where the technology involved will place IJIS at the forefront of computerised judicial information systems in this country. This year will also see the beginning of the joint Territory/Commonwealth funding arrangements for the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission. This financial year's contribution from the Territory's takeover of legal aid was the establishment of a contingency fund for the new commission. It is hoped that this will enable the commission to assist a wider range of Territorians than would normally receive legal aid through exploring such avenues as cost-sharing with clients. In this regard, I strongly believe the issue of affordable access to the law for the majority of the community will be an important issue to be addressed by governments in the next few years. Indeed, I understand that there is considerable interstate interest in the Territory's contingency fund initiative and the extent to which it is effective in addressing this concern. This is only one of a number of concepts which will be examined over the coming year in order to find ways to reduce the cost to private parties and taxpayers generally of resolving disputes through the courts.

Alternative dispute resolution has become something of a buzz phrase in recent months, but I can assure honourable members that it is a matter that is being taken very seriously by governments around Australia. One of the matters the Territory government will be examining this year is possible methods of increasing use of mediation and conciliation techniques to resolve disputes before they get into the courts. Such techniques have the potential to reduce greatly the burden on governments of long, complex civil and commercial matters which are decided by taxpayer-funded court systems. The financial burdens of legal action are not borne solely by the state. They serve also to deny many people access to the courts because they simply cannot afford it. The present situation is that rich people can afford to take legal action, poor people can obtain legal aid and everyone else - that is, most of the community - is seriously disadvantaged if they wish to have their wrongs righted through the court system. The contingency fund for the legal aid service, which I have outlined, is one initiative we are examining as a possible method of alleviating this situation. Another concept which will be examined is the possible introduction of community justice centres in the Territory. I hope to report more on this matter to honourable members during the course of the year.

To summarise, there is a steady-as-she-goes budget for the Department of Law in 1990-91. It will allow the government to maintain the high standard of service to Territorians from the Territory's legal system while exercising responsible economic restraint at this difficult fiscal time.

I turn now to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. The authority's allocation for 1989-90 was $1.413m. However, actual expenditure was kept down to $1.377m for the full financial year. The authority has been allocated $1.42m for the 1990-91 financial year, an increase of $44 000 or 3.2% on last year's actual expenditure. This funding will allow the authority to maintain its current program in relation to sacred sites protection in the Territory. This program includes responding to requests from Aboriginal custodians for site protection, carrying out surveys to determine the constraints, if any, imposed by the existence of sites on works or the use of the land and, with the approval of Aboriginal custodians, issuing certificates setting out conditions under which developments may proceed without damaging sites of cultural importance.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the authority for the excellent work it has done since the new Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act came into effect on 16 August last year. Although the passage of the legislation was a highly controversial exercise, I am sure honourable members would agree that the authority's operations during its first year have been characterised by high standards of professionalism and an absence of conflict. This is particularly impressive in view of the amount of work the authority has processed over that period. Some 150 applications for authority certificates were received over its first year of operation, of which 19 were subsequently withdrawn by the applicants. Of the remaining 132 applications, as of 17 August, certificates were issued in 108 cases, negotiations were still under way in 22 cases and certificates were refused in only 2 cases. I understand the majority of these applications are processed within a matter of weeks although more complex cases may take some months for negotiations to be finalised. Nevertheless, I am sure honourable members would agree that this is an outstanding record, particularly in view of the controversy and emotion which this subject has generated around the Territory in the past. I can only hope the achievements of the past 12 months reflect the beginning of a more rational and reasonable approach to sacred sites protection by all parties involved with this sensitive issue in the Territory.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my remarks in relation to the Appropriation Bill. I support the bill.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the budget brought down by the Treasurer at the last sittings. I would like to consider the budget from 2 aspects: firstly, in my capacity as Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and, secondly, as the member for Victoria River. I would like first to recall to mind the way the Leader of the Opposition handled his response to the budget at the last sittings. I would add my weight to the condemnation he received for his handling of the budget response at that time. The Leader of the Opposition failed in his duty as a leader of his party when he was given the chance to pass his comments on the Northern Territory budget. He failed his party, he failed his supporters, he failed Territorians and he failed his electorate. Instead of addressing the budget, he wasted this Assembly's time with another regurgitation of his recycled election promises.

From the Leader of the Opposition, we heard not 1 word about the Northern Territory budget which could be backed up with facts. The Leader of the Opposition gave us not 1 word about how the budget would affect his constituents, the people who elected him to represent their views in this parliament. He should - and perhaps he does now, in retrospect - feel ashamed of his actions in this regard. He has failed his constituents and he has failed all Territorians as the Leader of the Opposition. I could go through the Leader of the Opposition's speech point by point and indicate which ideas were lifted straight from the Northern Territory government's policy documents, which ideas were recycled from Victoria and which ones were borrowed from Western Australia. There were elements of all those in the Leader of the Opposition's response to the budget. However, that is not what this debate is all about. This debate is about the Northern Territory budget and how it will affect all Territorians.

The Chief Minister has again given us a balanced budget. It is a budget which looks responsibly at what Territorians can afford and what can be done within that framework. No one will find any Victorian Tricontinentals or Western Australian Incorporateds in this budget. There are no Smith state banks or investment corporations for high-risk money management in this budget. Territorians have much to be thankful for. Our fees and taxes are among the lowest in Australia. We are not facing billions of dollars in debt because of the irresponsible behaviour of our government. We are on a sound financial footing to tackle the challenges of the next decade despite the enormous problems which exist throughout the rest of Australia. Mr Speaker, 4 terms of Country Liberal Party government have delivered these benefits to Territorians and all members on the other side of this House can promise is pie-in-the-sky and expensive social engineering policies which would plunge the Territory into the same disasters as the Labor-led states of Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania have experienced. The indications are that something similar will happen in Queensland, where Labor inherited a very healthy state which is now being plunged into the same abyss as the other Labor states.

One would have thought that the members opposite would have learned some lessons from their colleagues in those beleaguered states. Obviously, they have not. We have seen from Noddy's adventures in Queensland that he believes that the Queensland example is the one to follow. The major lesson, of course, is that responsible governments must live within their means. I know that is a bitter pill for the members opposite to swallow. We have all seen how their party platform expresses their idea of living

within their means. These examples have been quoted on previous occasions but they should be reiterated. The ALP believes that responsible government should 'legislate to provide for the financing of political parties' election campaigns from Consolidated Revenue'. That is one way in which Labor would utilise public funds - to pay for its campaign. It believes also that we should compensate Aborigines who, in its own words, have had 'their land stolen'. I do not believe that many Australians consider that they stole land from Aborigines. In fact, the member for Arnhem has promised that his party will provide that compensation even if the Commonwealth refuses to do so. Here is another example: the ALP will 'support by all possible means union advocacy of a short working week with no reduction in wages and conditions'.

The Leader of the Opposition has tried to avoid talking about these matters. He has tried to hide them away in his bottom drawer because they are the policies of his party, the party which he has to obey, the party he kowtows to in Canberra. He buried these matters and, in speaking in this debate, he regurgitated things which his party knew nothing about. Wait until Mark Crossin hears about this, Mr Deputy Speaker.

According to its platform, Labor 'will review the current system of contracting and subcontracting of work on behalf of the government with the aim of increasing the government's permanent work force'. That is another pie-in-the-sky promise of socialist Labor. That is what we could expect from a Labor government in its first budget. I could read out similar extracts all day. The ALP platform is full of them and, unfortunately, they all lead to the same conclusion - that Labor stands for higher taxes to help pay for its election campaigns, for Aboriginal treaties which will divide the nation, and for making deals with union bosses. The Country Liberal Party's plan for the future contrasts starkly with the ALP's policy of social engineering. We believe in economic growth led by the private sector, and the budget has been framed on this foundation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to spend some time today looking at some of the initiatives which will be carried out within my portfolio responsibilities as a result of the budget. It is no secret that the Department of Labour and Administrative Services suffered a cutback in real terms as a result of the budgetary process. The department's budget allocation has risen from $74.1m last year to $74.9m this year. That is a rise of less than 1.2% in dollar terms, which equates to a cut in real terms. While this cut in real terms was a personal disappointment to me, I accept that we must all take some of the bitter medicine doled out by the federal Treasurer at the Premiers Conference.

The department has taken large cuts in the area of administration to enable it to maintain a high level of services and to put new initiatives into place again this year. As members would be aware, along with all governments and industry, the public service as a whole has been going through the process of award restructuring. We are now well ahead in that process and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has been involved, including the staff of my department, staff in other departments and union representatives. The progress of award restructuring will continue to be the major focus of both the Industrial Relations and Human Resources Divisions of my department in the coming 12 months.

Award restructuring should not be thought of only in terms of wage increases. Our process has included a basic restructuring of the public service as a whole. The number of classifications and levels has been reduced from about 600 to about 30, in 4 occupational categories:

professional, technical, administrative and physical. Together with the rationalisation of the number of awards, this will result in significant administrative savings over the longer term.

The new classification system, which was a major focus of the Industrial Relations Division last year, is now in place and will provide a valuable tool for departments to use in the future implementation of the structural efficiency principle. Work redesign, which will provide employees with access to more varied and interesting jobs and skill-related career paths that are fundamental to the structural efficiency principle, will be the major focus of the Human Resources Division in 1990-91. The division has started work in this area already in consultation with departments and unions. It is most gratifying to witness the spirit of cooperation which is evident in this important area of restructuring. My department has been able to work on skills identification in some administrative levels with a view to developing competency-based training modules during this year, leading to skill-related accelerated progress through the new administrative base grade level.

As members would be aware, training is a major component of the award restructuring agenda. My department has agreed with the unions to establish a joint training council to further develop opportunities within the public service. This council will be ensuring that the competency modules are appropriate and accessible to a broad range of employees.

Recently, the government introduced the Executive Management Program which aims to develop the expertise of our senior managers in the public service. This program is unique to the Territory and has already attracted a great deal of interest from interstate. Western Australia and Queensland have indicated particular interest in the program, which has been developed with 3 main aims in mind: to increase the ability of departments to meet the objectives of the government's economic strategy; to create a pool of effective senior managers with the potential to advance to the CEO level; and to increase the motivation, commitment and abilities of senior managers. The program is more than an upgraded version of traditional management development courses. It is an innovative joint venture between the Northern Territory Public Service and the Northern Territory University. Input has been received from across the public service to design the course to meet the particular needs of individuals and departments. Costs for the program have been contained within existing resources.

Another project of significance in the Human Resources Division of my department this year is the development of a communicable diseases policy for the public service. The policy will be accompanied by an education and awareness campaign for all government employees. Our aims are, first to prevent the spread of communicable diseases and, secondly, to minimise workplace disruptions by effectively managing employees who have contracted communicable diseases. A working party has been formed, comprising representatives of NTPS departments and authorities and the Trades and Labor Council. The working party is in the process of drafting policy and developing education and awareness strategies. It is anticipated that this process will take a further 3 to 4 months.

One of the major projects of the Office of Equal Opportunity will be community consultation on proposed equal opportunity legislation for the Northern Territory. As honourable members know, I tabled a discussion paper on equal opportunity legislation in the Assembly in August this year. The Office of Equal Opportunity has been charged with the task of collating

community submissions and organising a series of public meetings to ensure the widest consultation among all interested parties. Subsequently, legislation will be drafted for presentation to parliament next year.

The Office of Equal Opportunity will also have an important monitoring role in the coming year. It will monitor the implementation of the Australian Women's Employment Strategy in the Territory as well as the implementation of the International Labour Organisation Convention No 156, which prohibits discrimination against workers who have family responsibilities. Australia is a signatory to this convention. The Northern Territory government has agreed to that ratification and will work towards its full implementation in the Territory.

During this financial year, the Property Management Division of my department will put in place a pilot program to devolve energy management consumption costs to user clients. The aim of this devolution of management is to encourage self-regulation and to achieve further cost reductions as a result. Honourable members would be aware that considerable savings in energy consumption have been made in the past 2 years. Also, the Property Management Division will continue its ongoing program of improving access to government-occupied buildings for people with disabilities.

The Government Printing Office will again require no appropriation from Treasury in 1990-91. Its total budget of $5.751m will be balanced by revenue. We believe that the Government Printer will continue to provide savings for departments through its more efficient operations.

The Employment and Training Division of my department is heavily involved in the training agenda which is associated with industry restructuring. The division has forged close links with its interstate counterparts and with the TAFE Division of the Department of Education. It will continue to be heavily involved in the national trend towards competency-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which will replace the current time-served indentures. The Employment and Training Division also supports industry training initiatives, including group training schemes, apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships.

It is still not economically viable to provide all off-the-job apprenticeship training in the Territory. That is why this government will spend $735 000 this year as its contribution to the cost of sending apprentices interstate to gain appropriate off-the-job formal training. This is a significant investment in the future of our young Territorians and is more generous than any such scheme interstate. A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the Apprentice and Trainee of the Year Awards here in Darwin. The candidates for the awards were of a particularly high standard and I am sure that our local winners will represent the Territory well in the national awards. When I see young people like these achieving in their chosen field, it makes me proud of our young Territorians and makes our contribution so worth while.

It would take far more time than I have been allocated today to list all the employment and training programs supported by this government. However, I would like to highlight some of the major initiatives for the information of honourable members. In the past few years, there has been a major shift in the approach taken to training by both government and industry. This change has seen industry play a more active role in providing training opportunities in the Territory. I welcome this commitment from industry and would like to pass on this government's

congratulations to the many industry groups and individual employers involved.

This commitment by industry is reflected in some of the allocations to specific employment and training programs. For example, the allocation to the Work Start Program this year has been reduced to $170 000, a saving of $106 000 in dollar terms. This was achieved on the recommendation of the Industry Employment Training Advisory Council. The council recommended that the allocation be reduced over the next 3 years in line with an increased commitment from industry. The government will continue to honour its commitment to industry-driven training and programs in the coming financial year and 3 group training schemes - Top End Group Training, Central Australia Group Training and the Construction Industry Skills Foundation - will be allocated $120 000 in line with our agreement with the Commonwealth. Industry training committees will receive $100 000, while $35 000 has been allocated to support private sector scholarship programs.

The government's Aboriginal Development Program has been instrumental in providing training for Aboriginal people in some of the Territory's most remote localities. This program is run by the Aboriginal Development Branch whose main focus is providing training for identifiable jobs in remote bush communities. It is our intention that these programs be community-driven. It is the communities themselves that should identify employment opportunities and, in many cases, the people they believe should receive the training. One of the criteria for funding under the Aboriginal Development Program is the existence of jobs at the end of the training. For example, several communities in the East Arnhem region have costly plant and equipment and would be able to bid for contracts if local people were trained in their use. The Aboriginal Development Branch is organising a course to offer those skills, and participants will gain plant operator licences at the end of their training.

That is a clear example of how those courses can be lifted from one area to another. They have been used successfully in other parts of the Territory in prior years. In other cases, local people are trained in office skills so that they can work for their local councils. To assist in the identification of such job opportunities, $100 000 has been set aside in the budget for community strategic planning. This money will be used for workshops with funding agencies and Aboriginal communities and to provide further resources to communities to enable them to develop community strategic plans.

In addition to these remote community programs, for several years, the Aboriginal Development Branch has funded clerical courses for young urban Aborigines. Following representations from the parents of several course participants, I have had some reservations about the effectiveness of these courses. This year, I have asked the branch to complete an evaluation of the clerical course structure to identify changes which could be made to provide better employment outcomes. I am sure this will lead to courses which are more responsive to the needs of both employers and participants. A new budget item this year is the establishment of a scholarship for Aboriginal people undertaking academic studies of special merit. One scholarship will be offered each year with a value of $5000 per annum for up to 6 years.

I would like now to move to the major initiatives being targeted by the Office of Local Government this financial year. The Office of Local Government is a shining example of efficiency in the public service. Since its inception, it has consistently delivered close to 90% of its budget to

the community as dollars on the ground. It is fair to compare the Office of Local Government with, for example, the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs. They both deliver to similar client groups through regional offices, yet that department could manage to deliver only some 50% or less of its budget as grants to communities. A large part of grant funds from the Office of Local Government are untied. This is in line with the government's policy of self-management in the third sphere of government.

Honourable members would be aware that the federal government provides funds to local governments through its Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants Scheme. This year, Northern Territory local government received an allocation of $6.564m through this scheme. This money is provided to state and territory governments throughout Australia on a per capita basis for distribution to local government. Local Government Grants Commissions in each state and territory are then charged with the responsibility of allocating the money on a needs basis.

It has been a concern of the Territory government for some time that, even after the needs of each community are taken into account, there is still not enough money available for the most disadvantaged communities in the Territory. For this reason, we remain the only state or territory to complement these federal grants with further untied grants to community governments and local governing bodies. Without our commitment in this area, there are many communities which simply would not survive. For example, in central Australia, Imanpa receives just $32 000 in Commonwealth funds. The Territory government supplements this with a further $111 000. Maningrida receives $118 000 from Commonwealth funds, plus a further $274 000 from the Northern Territory government. In total, the Territory contributes $11m in untied funds to the communities compared to the Commonwealth's $6.5m and, of course, that is spread across municipal and community governments and other local governing bodies. The community governments receive only about half of that. This is clear evidence of our commitment to local government.

In addition to these untied funds, the government has also a pool of funds available for special purpose grants. These grants are distributed to towns and communities for special purposes which councils and associations have trouble funding from their own budgets. For example, funds have been granted for the replacement of plant and equipment, to fund special studies, to buy key staff housing and equipment, and for other special purposes identified by communities. These funds have proved invaluable in helping councils to increase their revenue-raising capacities as well as their employment opportunities.

As well as our grants to councils and local governing bodies, the government provides assistance to 49 other organisations involved in the local government industry. These include missions, town camp organisations and the RSPCA. The Office of Local Government grants also include $1.489m as part of our ongoing establishment packages to Palmerston and Litchfield councils. These packages were negotiated when the councils were first established to help them to develop necessary infrastructure. Establishment packages of $250 000 each will be available to the new Numbulwar Numbirindi Community Government Council and the soon to be established Coomalie Community Government Council at Batchelor and Adelaide River.

Operational subsidies for the Darwin Performing Arts Centre and the Araluen Arts Centre will continue this year, while a special grant has been given to the Darwin City Council to help fund the development of the East Point recreation lake. This year, the government has set up a fund for

greening subsidies to municipal councils. The money is available to help councils to pay the cost of watering parks and gardens. In addition to a 50% subsidy for existing parks and gardens, there is also a 100% subsidy for watering new, landscaped areas. I am sure these grants will help contribute to a greener Territory of greater attraction and amenity to visitors and Territorians alike.

A special initiative this year from the Office of Local Government is the development of a Field Officers Training Course. This project will provide formally-recognised qualifications through a Northern Territory University accredited course.

I turn now to the Work Health Authority. This year, the government has appropriated $3.446m to continue and expand the role of the authority in administering the very important areas of occupational health and safety, workers' compensation and rehabilitation. In the area of occupational health and safety, the authority will take on the new initiative of monitoring compliance with the Ozone Protection Act. This act came into force on 1 July 1990, and its regulations will take effect on 1 January 1991. The authority's role in this area will be the mounting of a major awareness campaign, the licensing of users of ozone depleting compounds, and close liaison with the Conservation Commission on the effectiveness of the new provisions in limiting the emission of these compounds into the atmosphere.

The Work Health Authority's major goal this year will be a smooth and efficient transition to a significantly amended act. The government has had the Work Health Act under review for some time and is getting very close to presenting a bill to this Assembly. While some aspects of these amendments are still subject to finetuning, I can advise the Assembly that the authority's operational role will be significantly affected by the proposed absorption into the Work Health Act of both the Inspection of Machinery and the Construction Safety Acts. These changes, together with proposals which will affect the insurance, rehabilitation and compensation aspects of the legislation, will present the authority with a major challenge this year and one which I know that it is readily able to meet.

These are just some of the initiatives which will be carried out from this budget in my portfolio areas. As can be seen, we have mapped out a steady-as-she-goes path for the next 12 months. We realise that the Australian economy as a whole has taken a beating in the past few years, but this government has responded by offering efficiencies rather than by making massive program cuts. By doing so, we have been able to minimise charges to Territorians who are already suffering from high interest rates and other federal Labor economic policies. I would like to pass on my thanks to the staff in my department and the Work Health Authority for preparing their budgets this year. They have been able to identify ongoing savings in administration which will contribute to a more efficient public service. I think they deserve this Assembly's appreciation for their efforts.

I would like to spend a few minutes of the time I have left to look at the budget as a whole and how it will affect my electorate. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Victoria River is a large electorate with a diverse range of people and interests. It stretches from Batchelor in the north to Daguragu in the south, west to the Western Australia border and east to Kakadu. When any single group of people is disadvantaged by our budget, along with other members with such diverse electorates, I am among the first to hear about it. However, I believe that the budget has provided something for everyone and I could refer to such items as the new police station at

Batchelor, a facility that has been required for a long time. Some of the programs that the Minister for Lands and Housing mapped out with regard to the development of land and housing in those small communities that make up the vast area of the Territory are programs that augur well for those communities in the near future. The continuing development of Gregory Park and Litchfield Park and, of course, the development of the Territory Wildlife Park and other smaller parks around the Territory, will enhance the growth of our tourist industry and assist our future growth.

There has been significant media comment about the difficulties involved in maintaining reasonable roads in the Northern Territory, given the substantial cuts in road funding from the Commonwealth once again. Commonwealth road funding ought to be increasing, given the enormous windfall profit that it is making from fuel excise at present. We are receiving minimal amounts, and some of the onerous conditions placed on the small grants that we do receive make them difficult for the Territory to accept readily. That is a shame, particularly as the Territory has roads covering long distances, and few people so that it is difficult to raise money to maintain those roads. We probably have a far greater problem in that regard than any of the states, with the possible exception of Western Australia which has large areas also but a much greater population. It is a pity that we are not treated with a little more fairness in that regard because often people in the bush have to suffer the state of those roads for long periods because they are accessible for maintenance purposes on only limited occasions during the year.

I believe that this budget is appropriate for the Northern Territory. It is the result of a great deal of discussion and almost heart-rending dealing to obtain the appropriate balance for the Territory. I believe that it will lead us into 1991 and 1992 with the expectation of continued growth. I do not believe for a moment that even the Leader of the Opposition believed the things that he said. Although he said very little about our budget, what he did say was negative because that is his wont. We are in a position of decreasing funds and I believe that we have made the best of those decreasing funds. We will continue the development of the Territory with what we have. I strongly commend the Treasurer's budget.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this Assembly to advise honourable members of the manner in which this government intends to support the Territory's animal, plant and fisheries industries in the forthcoming year. Combined, these sectors of our primary industries continue to represent a major revenue earner for the Territory. Their monetary value in 1989-90 has been estimated at $198m, a 13% increase over 1988-89. Their intrinsic value, in terms of providing food for Territorians, employment opportunities and export earnings, far exceeds this.

I turn first to the animal industries activity which, this year, receives an allocation of $4.87m for programs in animal production and development, animal health and support services. This figure is exclusive of BTEC, which I shall come to shortly. This year's allocation will support a continuation of work throughout the Territory to assist the further development of the beef, buffalo and smaller animal industries. This work will continue to be developed in conjunction with the industry advisory committees established by this government. Major programs in this respect will include increasing the net unit value of cattle, and this program is focused on producing table-quality beef from improved pastures and crop residue. Mixed farming with cattle and crops is shaping up as an important strategy for Top End agriculture. In evaluating pasture species and

managing improved pastures, there is rapidly growing interest by industry in sowing improved pasture, particularly as stock control increases in importance.

Obviously, improving the reproductive performance and reducing breeder mortality in the Territory's herd will have a beneficial effect on the profitability and viability of the industry. We will develop systems for monitoring the effect of the industry on our rangelands in the Centre, Barkly and VRD, and will advise industry on methods for improving rangeland management. This work is critical in our endeavours to ensure that an environmentally-sustainable industry is maintained and that the knowledge is acquired to support rational debate on our use of the land.

The government remains committed to assist the buffalo industry move from feral harvesting to domesticated herds. Particular attention is being paid at the moment to establishing market interest in cuts suitable for roasting and grilling as well as the more traditional fillets.

The goat, pig and poultry industries have received substantial attention over the past year and this work will continue. I also anticipate that attention to be paid to researching the potential of camel as a meat animal this year could lead to another local industry developing in central Australia. Support to the industry in the form of extension services, pathology, virology and veterinary field research will continue.

At the industry's request, the government intends to extend to the Barkly Tableland the advisory service developed successfully in central Australia over the past 2 years. This service was established at the instigation of the pastoral industry. It seeks to provide pastoralists with a first point of contact with my department and other government specialists, to provide a source of advice of both a general and specific nature to pastoralists, and to help improve communication across the country. Our virology laboratory will continue at the forefront of the nation's monitoring for exotic viruses such as those that cause blue tongue. Its role in protecting not only the Territory's but Australia's valuable animal industries should not be underestimated.

In addition to these activities, $14.576m has been allocated to BTEC. I should not need to remind members opposite that this government remains firmly committed to achieving the goals of BTEC by the national deadline of 1992. I would add too that this figure does not include the industry contributions towards the campaign nor the estimated $10m from the sale of destocked cattle. These will raise the total expenditure this year to $43.5m. In delivering the budget, the Chief Minister outlined the objective of this program, therefore, I will not dwell on it.

The government's allocation to animal industries will allow us to continue along our well-established path of helping the further development of those industries. In this regard, it is pleasing to see that the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics is predicting substantial increases in the price and demand for beef during 1990-91. However, recent international events indicate the need to be cautious, particularly in respect of the Japanese and Korean markets.

I turn now to our plant industries activity. The allocation of $6.114m is sufficient to allow my department to continue its range of programs in assisting the cropping of horticultural industries, for noxious weed control and for plant health services. Horticulture continued to be the star act registering yet another annual increase. Honourable members will recall

that, 10 years ago, horticulture was worth about $1.5m. Its value last year, inclusive of the nursery industry, has been estimated at $23m. Mangoes and melons continue to underpin the industry but rambutans, carombola, jackfruit, pawpaw, pineapple, bananas, vegetable crops and nursery production are all increasing their contribution. I anticipate a substantial increase in mango production in the 1990 season with new trees coming into production. My department will continue to aid growers in improving the productivity of their crops and their market access.

Particular attention is to be paid to implementing the recommendations of the Horticulture Industry Study presented to the government earlier this year. For existing products, such as mango, a new project is funded for increasing the post-harvest handling and product development to penetrate new markets for Territory mangoes. This is particularly relevant to the new mango variety, Irwin, which is relatively unknown to the markets but is a very productive variety from the growers' viewpoint. This product development and marketing will become more critical when the Territory will have to find new markets for our potential future production of up to 8000 t. Currently, we produce about 2000 t.

Evaluation of mandarin and grapefruit potential in the southern areas - Katherine to Ti Tree - will be the subject of a research and development project funded under the new initiative this year. As part of this exercise, 0.25 ha areas each of mandarin and grapefruit will be planted at 4 or 5 locations in cooperation with private growers. Research into a number of crops with future potential, such as pineapple and sweet potato for the Darwin area and asparagus for the Katherine and Alice Springs areas, will be funded this year to further develop production technology. One recommendation still being examined is the introduction of a chair of horticulture at the Northern Territory University. Such a move could well give a boost to post-graduate education in horticulture in the Northern Territory.

Commonwealth assistance is to be sought under the Cooperative Research Centre funding arrangements to develop such a centre for tropical horticulture in Darwin. This has the potential to increase our research and development effort in horticulture and to promote further industry development. Following the industry study that I have mentioned, a Horticulture, Land and Resources Working Party has been established with a broad membership from government agencies. The main purpose of this working party is to facilitate horticultural development in the Territory, make available relevant information on land, soil and water resources and develop a 1-stop shop for potential investors.

A second working group will be reviewing the delivery of services to rural industries in terms of finance and assistance. I am looking forward to the emergence of the date industry in central Australia this year. The government, in cooperation with industry, has imported a substantial number of date palms and identified an area suitable for date growing in central Australia. All in all, $1.441m will be dedicated to improving the value of the Territory's horticultural industry. However, this does not include additional assistance to be made available through the primary industry assistance activity to which I will refer later.

The government has allocated $1.536m to continue its programs in support of the cropping industry. The production of high-value crops, such as sesame and mung beams, will be promoted through the improvement of varieties, production and harvesting techniques and marketing services. Farm management practices that reduce risks or improve stability are being

developed and extended, including: crop rotation; integration of crop, pasture and animal production; conservation cropping; and farm planning which accounts for climatic risks and scaling of operations. The development and adoption of these new crops and technologies by industry will be encouraged through the continuation of the New Crops and Technology Assistance Scheme.

The Price Support Scheme, introduced in 1989-90, will come into full operation in 1991 with the cash out payments of the 1989-90 crop. Service industries producing seed for both pastoral and cropping developments are being fostered through the production of basic seed and seed certification and testing services. Often, during its pioneer phase, cropping has been regarded in isolation but, in the future, it will be viewed increasingly as an essential component of a robust, flexible and efficient mixed farming industry combining crops, pastures and animals. In my view, this will become an important form of agricultural land use in the Top End.

In our more environmentally aware times, the issue of weed control is gaining greater prominence. The Territory has been at the forefront in attacking the Mimosa pigra problem and it is gratifying to see in the media that the CSIRO is also increasing its efforts in this field. I regret that the federal Minister for the Environment, Hon Ros Kelly, has not seen fit to respond to my personal request that the Commonwealth at least match the Territory's expenditure in this area. Nevertheless, any increase in resources is better than none. Almost $1.6m has been allocated by this government for weed control this year. While a major part of this will go towards mimosa control, other noxious weeds will not be forgotten.

Since 1987, the government has conducted a highly-integrated and systematic study of the potential for a pulp industry based on kenaf. The program is now reaching the stage where commercial enterprises are being sought to continue it and to develop a viable pulp paper industry. $416 000 has been allocated to this program this year.

I turn now to industry support. As well as providing technical and advisory services to industry, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries carries out several other important functions. Under an agency arrangement with the Commonwealth, the department undertakes a full range of quarantine activities, through its Quarantine Inspection Branch, covering animals, plants and humans. A major quarantine initiative, started in 1988-89, is the upgrading of surveillance and monitoring for exotic pests and diseases in the Northern Territory. Under the umbrella of the North Australian Quarantine Strategy, the Territory, Queensland and Western Australian quarantine services have developed a plan to achieve this objective. A major awareness campaign will be mounted by my department this year aimed at those persons in the community in a position to assist in our surveillance, including coastal communities, fishermen, pilots etc. Funding of this initiative is the responsibility of the Commonwealth with the operations being conducted by my department.

A total of $202 000 is allocated in this year's budget to support the operations of the Quarantine Inspection Branch. This component relates to interstate quarantine and inspection services, and considerable additional funding is provided by the Commonwealth under the agency arrangements.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries provides an economic advisory service to industry and to government on the economic outlook of rural and fishery industries and commodities. This advice ranges from very broad macro-economic assessment to the individual assessment of specific

enterprises. $860 000 is allocated in the budget to support this activity, together with other support activity, such as land use assessment and statistical services, that will assist in the analysis and publication of research results for industry use.

$3.047m is allocated to enable the operation of the department's research establishment at Kidman Springs, Douglas/Daly, the coastal plains, Katherine, Alice Springs, Ti Tree and Berrimah. Considerable work has been undertaken over the past 12 months in reviewing the department's research and development policies and the large number of research projects being undertaken. The aim is to ensure that this research effort remains relevant and practical and continues to reflect the requirements of industries that we service. Consequently, our programs are considered by industry advisory committees to ensure their relevance to industry.

I turn now to primary industry assistance where we have allocated just over $5m this year. This activity has been with my department for the past 12 months and has settled in very well. The division will continue in its support of industry through activities such as: its support of the NT Grain Marketing Board; the delivery of services through the Rural Adjustment Scheme - this year, in excess of $1m; administration of the Fertiliser Freight Subsidy Scheme which will continue this year at the rate of $95 per tonne, the same as in 1989-90; providing $200 000 to encourage growers to participate in the New Crops and Technology Development Scheme; providing up to $600 000 to grain growers and users through the Stockfeed Grain Price Support Scheme; facilitating our major thrust in rural education using Rural Adjustment Scheme funds and in conjunction with the industry divisions to help improve the financial management skills of primary producers; and, as I foreshadowed, providing financial assistance to pursue some of the recommendations of the Horticulture Industry Study.

In this regard, $250 000 has been allocated to conduct an irrigation research program which has been given high priority by the Horticultural Advisory Committee. The outcome of this program will be critical to increasing the productivity and economics of the annual crops, in particular, and perennial crops in general. The division will also initiate a research program in central Australia for control of parlatoria scale insect on date palms. Additionally, it will carry out a survey of the nursery industry to establish the size of the industry and its research and development requirements. At present, there is no reliable information base other than fragmented information from ABS statistics. This will form a basis for departmental activities in the Ornamental Research and Development Programs. Finally, it will commence with water resource studies in the Katherine area to define availability and sustainability of underground and surface water resources. Minor funding for automating soil information will be undertaken as well.

Also under this activity, my department will be carrying out a review of drought relief arrangements. This review has been brought on by the Commonwealth's decision to remove drought relief from the National Disaster Relief arrangements and the ensuing recommendations in the recently released report by the Commonwealth's Drought Review Task Force. Essentially, the Commonwealth has adopted the view that drought is a normal climatic condition which producers should take into account in their risk management. Northern Territory drought assistance will continue to be available under current arrangements until 31 December this year or such further extensions as are necessary whilst the national and Territory drought policies are reviewed. Industry will be consulted in the review and

assistance to property owners continuing to be drought affected will be addressed in the transition to new policies.

Last, but by no means least, I turn to the fisheries activities. Perceptive members will no doubt realise that this year's allocation of $2.716m represents a substantial decrease of $1.6m over last year. However, they should not conclude that this represents a major cutback in our commitment to the industry. The major reduction relates to there being no specific allocation for the Barramundi Buy-back Scheme this year. Our activities over the past 2 years have left us well placed to continue our high level of service to the industry. Following the success of the Stokes Hill aquaculture hatchery in breeding 6 million barramundi larvae earlier this year, the development program for aquaculture in the 1990-91 financial year is based on consolidating and improving the techniques for breeding, particularly to extend the season beyond natural limits. For the first time in the Northern Territory, it should be possible to provide barramundi fingerlings for on-growing under pilot commercial conditions. This is an important step in establishing a viable fish farming industry.

Part of the aquaculture budget of $411 000 will be dedicated to continuing the Rural Education in Aquaculture Production Program. This is a cooperative program, involving other states, which was begun in early 1990. It has been the source of valuable information to people in the rural communities interested in freshwater aquaculture. The principal species of interest is the red-claw crayfish.

In 1991, the Aquaculture Branch will continue with its programs for fish disease research and extension services to the developing aquaculture industry. Provision has also been made to work with pearling licensees on artificial breeding of pearl oysters. A significant increase in funding this year, from $57 000 to $319 000, will allow for the introduction of the barramundi and mud crab management plans. These will be finalised after lengthy consultation with all sectors of the community, and their implementation will see an extensive education program initiated with public meetings, briefings for fishing clubs and industry organisations, and widespread distribution of new brochures, appropriate signposting and posters. A draft management plan is being prepared to control the fledgling pearling industry after its 3-year development phase.

Major changes to the mackerel, shark and Timor box fisheries will be announced during the year that will provide a firm base for the future development of these important fisheries. The $670 000 allocated to fisheries research will enable the continuation of data collection to assist in the effective management of the Territory's fisheries, both commercial and recreational. These include the barramundi, demersal and pelagic fisheries, mud crab, pearl and prawn fisheries. Emphasis will continue to be placed on gathering and interpreting data useful in developing fisheries and for monitoring established fisheries. A major survey of demersal fish resources is to be initiated.

The Fisheries Development Program, which will receive $727 000, addresses the marketing and technology and recreational fishing areas. This year, marketing and technology will address projects such as passing on to industry the results of recent research into improved handling techniques for fresh fish on ice which has particular relevance to the Territory's developing trap and line fishery, research to improve the quality of fish and frozen fish caught by demersal trawl, studying market opportunities and marketing strategies for cultured barramundi from both Australia and

overseas, and identifying more appropriate packaging materials for air-freighting fresh fish to interstate and overseas markets.

Recently, I launched the 'NT Fishing and Boating Guide' produced by my department. This will be complemented in the near future by the first Northern Territory fishing map. Both are valuable documents and both have been produced by the Recreational Fishing Unit of my department. The unit's work of evaluating the recreational resource potential of waterways within the Territory will continue this year. The budget for my Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, when considered in the context of our current tight financial position, is a clear demonstration of this government's solid commitment to these industries. We have established a sound working relationship and will continue to work together for the benefit of the Territory.

I turn now to my correctional services portfolio. As honourable members know, the Department of Correctional Services was established as an independent department - that is, removed from the umbrella of the Department of Health and Community Services - in September 1989. In a relatively short time, the efficiencies of management and innovation have more than justified the evolution of a separate department. This year, the department will be funded $24.341m which is almost identical to last year's level of expenditure.

Additionally, $4m has been allocated for necessary capital works programs. These are the Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre, targeted to come on stream in mid-1991 at a cost of $2m, and funding for the design phase of the Alice Springs Prison at a further cost of $2m. Correctional services in the Northern Territory has undergone a quiet revolution over the past 3 financial years. From a peak of 500 prisoners in May 1987, imprisonment has now been reduced by around 20% to an average daily holding in recent months of about 400 prisoners.

While the imprisonment trend in the Northern Territory defies the national trend, it must be borne in mind that, in dollar terms, some two-thirds of total budget outlays are related directly to a significant overhead cost - that is, the employment of professional staff who manage corrections programs on a day-to-day basis. That cost will not reduce markedly without a large and proportionate decrease in prisoner numbers below the Territory's prison design capacity of 370. In keeping with government policy of linking reforms and administrative efficiency to community expectations, costs have been kept at an acceptable level and I now detail some of the areas where this efficiency will result in savings over the next 12 months.

In terms of the Home Detention Program, it is not proposed immediately to renew the lease for the hire of equipment which supports the Electronic Surveillance Scheme. Only 8 offenders have used the Electronic Surveillance Scheme since its introduction. Consequently, it has not proved to be cost effective in its first year of operation and we will look at reintroducing it at a later date. In the meantime, this action will result in savings this year of $50 000.

Administrative costs within the Department of Correctional Services will be reduced by a decrease in travel, conference attendance and publicity costs and in other areas, amounting to savings of about $200 000. At a time of national and international trendiness and costly experimentation in prison reform, the Northern Territory's corrections system is a model of efficiency. Innovation has become a major factor in the increasingly

efficient administration of correctional services in the Territory. This innovation extends beyond the introduction of imaginative programs such as the 'fine-option' Community Service Orders Scheme, home detention and the bail assessment supervision service, which have contributed in their own way to improving the operations of the department, reducing costs and promoting community protection and the well-being and rehabilitation of offenders.

Another efficiency which has contributed toward reducing the burden on the taxpayer in meeting the very high costs of running an effective correctional services administration was the introduction last financial year of a new prison industry - the manufacture of prison clothing. Prisoners' shorts, shirts, T-shirts and trousers are now manufactured at the Darwin Prison. Another very successful prison industry is the manufacture of vehicle registration plates at the Alice Springs Prison. Not only are plates manufactured there for the Northern Territory government, but no doubt many people will be surprised to learn that the Alice Springs Prison produces plates for other governments. The ACT and New South Wales governments purchase plates made in the Alice Springs Prison and, in recent days, further contracts for the supply of plates worth about $150 000 have been entered into, adding further testimony to the highly productive and entrepreneurial character of this enterprise. Other prison industries include the maintenance of correctional services vehicles, and the production of food items for prison consumption, such as pork, poultry and vegetables from the Gunn Point Prison Farm.

The Gunn Point facility will be expanded to accommodate an additional 20 inmates with no overall increase in budget allocation. The extra cost involved in this expansion has been supported by a rationalisation of operations within the Darwin Prison. Prisoners at Darwin Prison are to be confined to cells earlier each day. This will reduce overtime and supervision costs and will contribute to overall economic efficiency.

As I stated previously, $2m has been provided for design work for a replacement prison for central Australia, presently estimated to cost some $20m. The prison will be located near Alice Springs on a 60 ha site currently being negotiated and will replace the existing Alice Springs facility which was constructed more than 50 years ago.

A further $2m has been provided for a purpose-built juvenile detention centre to be located on the Darwin Prison reserve and to be known as the Don Dale Centre. This facility will provide secure accommodation for up to 30 juveniles and should be adequate for the Territory's future needs. Construction is expected to be completed this financial year. A further $370 000 has been allocated for the construction of a new industries complex at Darwin Prison, adding further to the self-help programs which reduce dependence on public funding for the upkeep of correctional services programs and property maintenance. The facility will provide work for most sentenced prisoners.

In keeping with past practices, the government will maintain an innovative approach to correctional services and juvenile justice and will continue to investigate new programs in all areas which have placed the Northern Territory at the forefront of correctional services programs in Australia. While our innovations are being taken up by outside jurisdictions, we continue to reject trendy reforms which have softened many prison systems, and which add to the burden of and may even imperil supervising staff.

Before I conclude, I would like to touch on a couple of remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution to this debate, particularly his comments concerning the processing of cattle in the Northern Territory. It was interesting to hear him confirm remarks made previously in this Assembly and elsewhere by the shadow spokesman for primary industry and fisheries, the member for Stuart, to the effect that Labor would wind back live cattle exports if it gained office in the Northern Territory. Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition has no idea of the impact his remarks have on the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. They are very destabilising simply because the live export of cattle has created a floor for the cattle market in the Northern Territory. It has created additional competition and provided additional market outlets for the industry. Mr Deputy Speaker, as a primary producer, you would certainly appreciate that a bull market is the market which provides the best return to producers.

The figures to 30 June this year indicate that live exports interstate from the Northern Territory totalled 100 710 for the year. These comprised slaughter and store cattle. Live exports of cattle and buffalo overseas totalled 16 920, comprising cattle and buffalo. Last year's live exports overseas were valued at approximately $17m. That figure gives an indication of the importance of live exports to the Northern Territory cattle and buffalo industry. The number of beasts slaughtered in the year ended. 30 June was 75 590. That figure has increased substantially since then.

I want to take this opportunity to remark on the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. I believe that his approach is based very much on socialism. I point out to him the benefits of free enterprise and market forces, and the benefits which accrue to producers in terms of increased returns brought about by strong market competition. I implore the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow spokesman on primary industry and fisheries to cease their destabilisation of the market and to support every opportunity which Northern Territory producers have to sell their product, either for interstate or overseas export or for slaughter in the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make some comments about several shadow portfolios for which I am responsible and to reflect on the impact of the budget in my electorate.

I will commence with the portfolio of health and community services. In doing so, I underline the opposition's determination to review the relationship between the Department of Health and Community Services and the independent health services whose concerns have not been addressed by this government. I do not propose to refer to the current coronial inquest into the death of a Tennant Creek woman but I believe that honourable members will recall the context in which the original call for this review was made. Clearly, a substantial number of issues in this regard have not been addressed.

In referring to the question of the coronial inquest process and its implications for the provision of health and community services in the Northern Territory, I want to point out that Labor will develop an appropriate means of ensuring that there is feedback and public advice of action resulting from coronial inquests. I refer the honourable minister to my correspondence with him in respect of the inquest into the death of Sally Bartlett and the government's failure to point out to the community that the inquiry had recommended changes in some areas associated with the Alice Springs Hospital, such as the availability of X-ray machines out of hours and the confidence with which doctors practising at the hospital can

have access. The minister will recall that these matters were the subject of criticism at the inquest. My point is that there is a need for more satisfactory feedback to the community about such matters.

One of the further findings in that inquest concerned the availability of equipment at Yulara in my electorate. My understanding is that no provision has been made for that equipment in this budget. I indicate that the opposition is reviewing this process and that a Labor government will ensure that there is a more appropriate flow of information from the coronial process to the relevant areas of the public service. Of course, these matters are most relevant in the context of the health and community services portfolio.

I turn now to the subject of X-ray services. Questions continue to arise in respect of the government's contract with Toshiba for the provision of X-ray services. The honourable minister will be aware of the question which he answered and the matters of concern which continue to arise in that respect and which need to be addressed. I am deeply concerned to discover, from the Toshiba invoices made available to me, that the government has signed a 5-year service contract for a sum of $600 000. The minister said that this represented a savings in the order of $350 000 over that period, but his answer to the question on notice does absolutely nothing to allay concerns about this contract which represents a private deal made with government money.

The government has refused to inform the Assembly of the terms and conditions of the contract with Toshiba. I believe that, where public money is involved, this budgetary process should uncover the terms of this contract, and I place on record the fact that I am not satisfied with the provision of X-ray services and the funds that were spent in last year's budget in this regard, and I indicate that a Territory Labor government will ensure that there is a full and appropriate explanation of how this money was spent, and which of those jobs are still available in the Territory and which are not. That is my first point. In that regard, I want to point out also that the government's approach to this budget is a farcical one. It has adopted a completely secretive approach and nowhere is that better brought out than in respect of this million dollar contract for X-ray equipment.

The honourable minister sent to me, as all ministers did, a letter suggesting that, for the committee stage of this bill, I should provide him with questions in advance. I point out to the honourable minister, as I do to the Minister for Mines and Energy who wrote to me in the same terms, and to the Attorney-General and Minister for Lands and Housing, that I feel under no compulsion to agree to that arrangement when the government refuses to answer questions. When this government moved to amend standing orders to prevent the asking of questions and the furnishing of information in a sensible way in the committee stage, it ceased to be of importance to provide information on questions in advance. Members of the opposition provided that information in advance only when we were able to be assured that we would have a reasonable opportunity to ask follow-up questions, and that is something that the government has refused unfortunately.

The question of alcohol abuse and the cost to the Territory of alcohol abuse is something I want to record as a matter of great importance in the context of an Appropriation Bill debate. I believe that the cost of alcohol abuse in the Territory is high. Its cost to the hospital system around this country is something like $400m, and I reiterate Labor's determination to implement the findings of the Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by

the Community. I will say no more about that at this stage, except that I would urge the Chief Minister, in particular, and others who want to conduct a debate on this issue by press release to make their representations to the committee which is to hold a session in Darwin on Friday for the benefit of all honourable members. I am not sure how many members will take the opportunity to make representations to the committee at that time. I understand that, at this stage, not all members will but, given the importance of the issue across the Territory in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, I hope that we will have representations from most if not all honourable members.

On the health and community services area, I want to point out to the honourable minister that, in the committee stage, I would like to have information from him about the rate of recruitment of medical specialists. The turnover in medical specialists, both those employed by the department and those employed in private practice, is an important issue. If we are looking at the quality of the health care system, we need to consider turnover, but the issue that I want the minister to refer to in particular is the number of specialist positions, not simply medical specialist positions, but health department positions that are vacant. This issue has been drawn to my attention particularly in respect of Katherine. It is my understanding that a number of vacant positions have not been filled there, and I believe an overall audit of the department's activities must indicate not only the positions that are on establishment, but how they are filled and how often they are filled. I believe that those figures are not currently available in sufficient detail in the department's annual report, and I will look forward to hearing from the minister in that regard.

To pass on to the housing portfolio, I listened with some cynicism to the Minister for Lands and Housing's praise of the CLP government's record on housing generally. He prided himself on the $1500m that has been spent in the 12 years since self-government. I think that that comment indicated a total lack of appreciation of the shape of the housing market in the Northern Territory and showed an abysmal ignorance of the plight of Territory home owners.

In previous debates in this Assembly, I have referred to the shedding of equity in Territory homes that has occurred under the stewardship of the CLP government. I point out that a Territory Labor government will certainly be far more honest in that regard. Mr Deputy Speaker, I notice that you and the Minister for Health and Community Services raise quizzical eyebrows about the expression 'shedding of equity'. In previous debates, I have pointed out that national housing market statistics indicate quite clearly that the affordability of Territory housing has increased dramatically. That means that, whereas a house in Darwin was second only to a house in Sydney in the early 1980s, it is now the second if not the cheapest house in the country. That means that home owners in the Northern Territory have shed equity. If they want to move from the Territory, they are in a worse position in 1990 than they were in 1980 and that has been due, at least in part, to the housing finance policies adopted by the CLP.

I noticed that, in his budget reply, the Minister for Lands and Housing ignored entirely the comments that I had made in this Assembly about difficulties experienced by home owners and unit owners in Tennant Creek where not only has there been a decrease in the value of homes in real terms, but there has been a decrease in actual dollar terms. I recall that I drew a particular situation to the minister's attention but, even in such an important debate as this, he failed to take notice of the plight of the family in Tennant Creek who contracted in 1985 to buy a house valued at

$36 000 and the Housing Commission has determined its present value to be only $31 000 or $32 000. I do not think it takes too much imagination to realise what impact that must have had on a young family. I believe that the failure of this government to come to terms with that indicates the difficulties that it is in. I reiterate that a Territory Labor government will take a conscientious attitude to the plight of home owners in that regard.

I point out in closing that home owners represent about 30% of occupiers in the Territory. Of course, this is a different pattern from elsewhere because of various reasons that are not worth going into here. However, I still believe that it is of great importance because home ownership is such an important aspiration for Territorians, as it is for Australians as a whole.

To turn to the mines and energy portfolio, I note the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in outlining Labor's program in that regard. I point out that a Labor government in the Northern Territory will be in a position to provide the sort of public sector support that will be important for the development of off-shore oil and the use of Darwin as a base for the development of that off-shore oil resource. In the current international context and with the dramatically increasing cost of fuel at the bowser for people who own a motor car, we know that that has become more pressing. Likewise a Territory Labor government will support the LNG project that was announced recently which we believe is of great importance to the Territory.

In his speech on the Appropriation Bill, the Leader of the Opposition referred to a responsibility with which I was charged. He said that I had been asked to develop ways in which government, Aboriginal communities, land councils and mining companies could cooperate in examining the broad range of issues concerning exploration and mining on Aboriginal land. He said that Labor would replace confrontation with cooperation, that we would provide an economic base for Aboriginal communities and, at the same time, increase the Territory's productive capacity. I have no hesitation in accepting that responsibility, and I will look forward to carrying out that task in government. Labor's approach in this regard is in dramatic contrast to that of the government. I point out the very active attempt at destabilisation of the land councils to which this government has lent itself and that Labor's approach is in complete contrast to that.

I have received representations from mining companies which are interested in operating on Aboriginal land in my own electorate. I have indicated to them that I believe that their negotiations with traditional landowners should be unfettered and that those landowners should have the support and advice of officers of the land councils. People like Mr David Avery with the Central Land Council have carried out these negotiations on the part of traditional owners in a responsible and honest fashion. The slurs that government ministers have cast on the land councils and the attempts that they have made to lobby traditional owners in the absence of any advice about the legal and technical complexities of mining have done them no credit. I point out that Labor's approach is different from that. Labor will be seeking a cooperative approach with mining companies, traditional owners and land councils.

I turn to the Department of Law and I have a number of comments I want to make in that regard. When the appropriation for the Department of Law comes up in the committee stage, I will be very interested to obtain a figure from the Attorney-General in relation to the cost of High Court

appeals. There have been a vast number of High Court appeals and these have cost dearly. I will be seeking some figures in that regard.

I noted the honourable minister's comments in respect of the contingency fund with the recently-introduced Legal Aid Office in the Territory. That is an initiative which is supported by the opposition and we will be interested to continue to be advised about the operation of a contingency fund as well as the office overall. Broadly, lest I be seen to be simply antagonistic, I share his concerns about the access of some people to legal advice - the so-called middle-ground problem to which he referred where you have to be either very rich or very poor before you get your day in court.

I am pleased to point out that a Labor government will investigate the implementation of neighbourhood mediation services, based on the Victorian model. I believe that neighbourhood mediation services along the lines of that model have a great contribution to make, both in law and order terms and in terms of the cost of administration of justice. Many disputes that flare into violence can be resolved if there is a more immediate place to which people can take them other than to the courts. With increasing urbanisation, the courts have become more forbidding places. Such neighbourhood mediation centres have much to recommend them.

There are 2 further issues that I want to mention briefly. The costs in court time of construing the Criminal Code and the need for positive rationalisation in that regard will be actively pursued by a Territory Labor government. Further, a Territory Labor government will ensure that crimes compensation payments are available to Territorians in the way they are available to all other Australians. I point out that, currently, that is not the case in the Northern Territory. Of course, a Territory Labor government will ensure that that discretion is left with the courts and we will no longer have the type of absurdity and injustice that we saw coming from the Attorney-General earlier in this session of the parliament. I point out that, in the dying days of this government, he has failed to make good his promise to return that discretion to the courts.

In the time left available, I want to urge the case of a community resource centre at Yulara. The government has not made it clear, and it is not immediately obvious from the budget documents, that that sorely-needed community resource centre will be made available. In debates in this Assembly, I have pointed out why it is urgently needed. I believe that, in a budgetary context, it must be considered.

Likewise, I point out to the Minister for Transport and Works that his road construction program leaves much to be desired. I want to know what happened to the $15m that we voted last year for the Tempe Downs to Areyonga road which, probably for pretty good reasons, has not been built. I point out that, right around my electorate, there are half-completed roads. I point to the Plenty Highway and the Alice Springs to Palm Valley road that has appeared in various budget documents during this decade but is still only halfway there. I point out the need to balance the eastern and western MacDonnells as tourist areas and the need for a balanced road development program in central Australia that just does not exist. We have an ad hoc approach to road development. I believe that that needs to be addressed.

The final issue - and I notice that the Minister for Correctional Services did not have the courage to address it at the appropriate time - is Giles House. I want to know about that.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Appropriation Bill. In doing so, I would like to deal briefly with a couple of matters raised by the previous speaker. I must say that I was hoping for something a little more substantial to respond to. All we heard was a load of unintelligible waffle. I could not quite work out what the blazes the honourable member was talking about. He made a series of strange, unquantifiable comments that are incapable of being responded to because they mean nothing and were directed nowhere.

For example, a Labor government would develop better relationships with the independent health services. Whilst that does not tell us how or what issues should be addressed, it would seem to indicate that we are doing nothing. Honourable members would know that there has been some comment about the delivery of rural health services in central Australia. We have been in long and close consultation with the Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association. In cooperation with that association, we have determined the terms of reference for a major review of our rural health services in central Australia, including those of the independent services. Professor Kerr from Sydney University has agreed to head that review. This is part of the rational, comprehensive, organised approach to the delivery of health services that comes from a Country Liberal Party government, not the mindless waffle we have from the members opposite. All we know is that they make numerous promises which, when you try to quantify them, add up to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am not sure that I appreciate being called 'mindless'.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I was not referring to the honourable member. I used the word adjectivally in respect of the waffle.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr HATTON: One matter of particular concern to me is Yulara. In fact, I was in Yulara last week. The government, the Yulara Corporation and the Royal Flying Doctor Service are in close negotiations in respect of a significant expansion of the health facility at Yulara. The Yulara Corporation is to be congratulated on providing a facility for a community resource centre in Yulara. However, it was looking for some financial assistance for the employment of a counsellor in the area. Particularly since 1988, the Northern Territory government, the Yulara Corporation and the employers have been working to change the nature of employment at Yulara with a significant increase in the number of families there. Inevitably, that has brought with it family problems and stresses. However, there is a more stable population at Yulara because we no longer have the young singles coming in for a few weeks and then moving on.

I can advise honourable members that, this evening, I have approved formally the granting of $20 000 to fund the counselling service at Yulara this financial year. My department in Alice Springs has been working very closely with the people in Yulara. I had discussions last week with people in Yulara to address that issue. To some extent, it flows back to work by the Women's Advisory Council and the study into the needs of women in remote areas done some years ago. It goes to show that we actually can deliver on promises. I hope the honourable member goes back to his electorate and catches up on the advice and adds congratulatory comments for the work of the Minister for Health and Community Services in ensuring that those services were provided.

Mr Bell: I will encourage them to vote for you if they ever get the chance, Steve.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer to one particular matter relating to my electorate. I noted in the capital works program an allocation to provide a purpose-built hall for drama and gymnastics and to upgrade the home economics facilities at Nightcliff High School. That is a welcome and long-sought facility. It is one of the oldest high schools in Darwin and it has never had an appropriate gymnasium facility. Certainly, the home economics area at that school has needed upgrading. This will top off excellent development of facilities over the last 6 years at Nightcliff High School. There has been provision of manual arts facilities and workshops, the upgrading of the air-conditioning system, furnishing and refurbishing of the building and general upgrading now as it is coming towards its 21st birthday this year. It is very satisfying finally to achieve something which was first placed on the capital works program in 1981. I can say that the decision has been warmly welcomed by the school council and Nightcliff High School generally, and I thank the minister and his departmental staff on their behalf. I recall an occasion a couple of years ago when the secretary of the department and the minister were present at a presentation night at Nightcliff High during the wet season. They certainly gained a clear understanding of the need for such a facility.

I turn now to the areas of my budgetary responsibilities: the Department of Health and Community Services, the Conservation Commission and the Museums and Art Galleries Board of the Northern Territory. I will begin with the Conservation Commission which has been allocated $36.21m. This substantial amount reflects the Northern Territory government's continuing commitment to addressing environmental issues, among the most serious of which are the Greenhouse Effect, the depletion of the ozone layer and land degradation. It also demonstrates this government's clear intention to implement sound and sensible strategies to protect and preserve the Northern Territory environment for the enjoyment of locals and visitors, and for future generations. Park upgrading and development, both in central Australia and the Top End, is high on the list of Conservation Commission priorities this year. A program provision of more than $5.7m is included in this year's budget to ensure that this important work proceeds.

In this Year of Landcare, which begins the Decade of Landcare declared to raise national consciousness of the condition of our land resources, the Northern Territory will continue substantial developments in this area. Landcare NT will coordinate public awareness efforts in the Territory aimed at highlighting landcare issues and achievements in order to encourage sustainable use of the land. As part of the initiative to recognise and address landcare, 8 landcare groups, including 4 Aboriginal groups, have now been set up across the Northern Territory. The work of the commission in landcare will include surveys of land degradation in the coastal zone, resource surveys in the Victoria River District and land resource monitoring in central Australia.

The Northern Territory government is providing $332 000 in support of National Soil Conservation Program projects, which will also receive federal government funding of $403 900. Further submissions, totalling $830 000, have been made to the federal government for new Territory-based projects to begin under the umbrella of the National Soil Conservation Program. Included in this will be more than $170 000 for Territory landcare groups.

There will be continuing emphasis on the Wetlands Rehabilitation Program this year, including $30 000 to continue a consultancy to study the

dynamics of the Mary River system. Work will continue on the Wetlands Strategy to promote multiple land use through the integration of biological and environmental land conservation and sound land use management, allowing pastoral land use, conservation and tourism to continue in these highly productive wetlands.

The Conservation Commission's computerised geographic information system will be upgraded this year and expanded to Alice Springs. As well, plans are under way to introduce the system to the Katherine region in the near future. The system plays an integral role in the overall delivery of Conservation Commission services including planning and development of parks, provision of land resource information to land managers, provision of biological and environmental information to developers, and the conservation and management of wildlife.

The continuing universal concerns about issues such as the Greenhouse Effect, ozone depletion, and general wastage of dwindling natural resources will be reflected in the significant expansion this year in the role and activities of the Conservation Commission's Environment Protection Unit. As well as its efforts to address pressing global issues, and its heavy program of environmental impact assessments, the Environment Protection Unit will increase its activities in the areas of recycling, environment protection, pollution control and general waste management. Substantial funding has been allocated for additional staff and resources to develop and implement a comprehensive environmental protection strategy including waste management and pollution control programs.

Work commenced last year will continue on the investigation of the potential implications of the Greenhouse Effect for the Northern Territory, reflecting the government's strong commitment to come to terms with this complex issue which has the potential to impact on many aspects of our way of life. The study launched last year, in conjunction with the CSIRO, to identify specifically and assess regional climate changes and impacts in the Northern Territory as a possible consequence of the Greenhouse Effect will also continue. Last year, the Northern Territory government earmarked a total of $380 000 for the climate study to be spent over 4 years. $100 000 of that money will be spent this year. Work will also proceed on the development of a greenhouse strategy for the Northern Territory in parallel with the preparation of a national strategy.

Ozone protection will continue to be the subject of significant attention this year. Regulations under the Ozone Protection Act are being finalised and will come into effect on 1 January 1991. The government has established the Ozone Protection Consultative Committee, incorporating government and industry, to oversee the implementation of the new legislation and to advise the government on related matters.

The review of the Environmental Assessment Act will be completed this year. The existing legislation and procedures are being reviewed with a view to releasing a discussion paper for public consideration and comment. New heritage legislation will be implemented during the current financial year and a Heritage Advisory Council, with representatives from both government and community interests, will be established. Support for the National Trust and the NT Heritage Grants program will be maintained this year.

The government will pursue the development of its Northern Territory Conservation Strategy. A steering committee has been appointed, comprising

representatives from a wide range of government, industry and community interests, to prepare a draft strategy for public consideration and comment.

More than $400 000 has been allocated to the Strehlow Centre Project in Alice Springs. One of the project's most important initiatives this year will be to preserve more than 40 hours each of unique film and videotape recorded by Professor Strehlow depicting traditional ceremonies in central Australia from the 1930s to the 1970s. Construction of the Strehlow Centre is scheduled for completion in December, and part of this year's budget allocation will go towards staffing and fitting out the building's display and research areas.

The Conservation Commission's capital works program in the Northern region this year will include further substantial development and upgrading of the Territory Wildlife Park, Litchfield Park, Wildman River, Nitmiluk National Park and Gregory National Park. More than $2m programmed for the Territory Wildlife Park this year will be for new works including extra exhibits, a birds-of-prey display, an amphitheatre, a diurnal display, an education area and another food outlet. A $600 000 program for Litchfield Park this year will see further development of roads, park infrastructure, and visitor facilities such as picnic, camping and swimming facilities. Special attention will be paid to the historic Blythe Homestead and Aida, Walker's and Bamboo Creeks. A fully-equipped ranger station, visitor facilities and further park infrastructure will substantially enhance the Wildman River project and $500 000 in joint funding from the Conservation Commission and the land and housing program will be committed for this purpose.

The Darwin Urban Enhancement Program, a Northern Territory government initiative to beautify and establish future development directions for the Darwin environment, will receive $1m for new works this year. The Mindil Beach area will be upgraded to cope more adequately with the large numbers of people attending the sunset markets and to protect dunes from further erosion. Following the transfer of the Botanical Gardens, its staff and assets from the Darwin City Council to the Conservation Commission, plans will focus on developing a management plan for the gardens. Special attention will be paid to the areas adjacent to Gilruth Avenue and to the landscaping of Bird Song Gully.

In the Katherine area, $313 000 has been earmarked for development and upgrading works at Nitmiluk National Park and work will continue on improving ranger facilities at Edith Falls.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about Katherine Gorge?

Mr HATTON: Katherine Gorge is part of Nitmiluk National Park.

Development work will continue on new cave and visitor facilities at Cutta Cutta Caves.

Gregory National Park has received nearly $530 000 in government funding for a continuing development program this year to include further road works, tourist facilities and park infrastructure.

In central Australia, development will proceed on a major national park in the West MacDonnells, with the government committing a total of $600 000 to upgrade visitor facilities in this increasingly popular area. A National Estate grant of $25 000 will go towards restoration of historic buildings at the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station.

Wildlife research and feral animal control are 2 other principal areas of interest for the Conservation Commission. This year, budgetary allocations have been made to continue research into rare and endangered species, including reintroduction programs and feral animal control.

Another area of my ministerial responsibilities is the Museums and Art Galleries Board of the Northern Territory. Recurrent expenditure of $5.7m has been allocated for the board for the 1990-91 year. These funds provide for staffing and ongoing costs for museums and art galleries in Darwin and Alice Springs. The Museums and Art Galleries Board currently administers 3 museums in Darwin: the Museum of Arts and Sciences, Fannie Bay Gaol and BAT House, otherwise known as Lyons Cottage. It administers 4 museums in Alice Springs: the Spencer and Gillen Museum, the Central Australian Aviation Museum, the Stuart Auto Museum and The Residency Museum. Under the 1988-89 capital works program, provision has been made for the construction of a maritime gallery at the Bullocky Point complex at a cost of $3.1m. It is anticipated that a major part of the museum's display resources this year will be applied to the new gallery. The public opening of the gallery is planned for April 1991.

I turn now to the final area of my ministerial responsibilities - the Department of Health and Community Services. This year, the Department of Health and Community Services has been allocated over $221m - or $1400 for every man, woman and child resident - to promote the health and well-being of Territorians. This significant outlay represents 15% of the total Northern Territory government budget.

The department provides services to Territory citizens and visitors through facilities across the Territory. These include 5 hospitals, 11 urban health centres, 36 rural health centres, 49 rural community clinics, 9 dental clinics, 42 school dental clinics and 22 shop front locations. Other services include child protection, aerial medical services and the protection of the public through the monitoring of health standards and the environment, and through safeguarding their rights as consumers. Our direct service delivery is achieved through 3400 departmental staff. The department also administers funding to some 200 grant-in-aid organisations which employ a further 565 staff in providing essential services to the community. The 1990-91 expenditure allocations will meet the cost of existing essential services and programs provided by or through the department. There are, however, a number of areas where additional funding has been provided to meet priority needs.

Departmental statistics indicate that Aboriginal Territorians are hospitalised more frequently, stay longer in hospital and are generally sicker on admission than non-Aborigines. Much of this disease is preventable or treatable, and it is for this reason that expanded rural programs, costing in excess of $1.2m a year, have been introduced in the 1990-91 budget. Expanded programs relating to the health of women reflect current concerns and issues.

Other significant aspects of this budget include more effective policy and planning, better use of statistical and epidemiological information, and emphasis on management and development of our most valuable and costly resource - the employees of the department. In a tight budgetary situation, this can be summed up as an attempt to target key needs of the Territory's population through increased emphasis on prevention and community-based service delivery. This will be achieved through better use of our human resources and will complement our already extensive range of health and community services programs. The outcomes will be more effective and

efficient service delivery, healthier Territorians and better use of resources both now and in the future.

I turn now to details of the individual activities and supporting programs. All public inpatients and outpatients receive free treatment at the 5 Northern Territory hospitals and these services take up $108.376m or 49% of the department's 1990-91 allocation. The Royal Darwin Hospital, with a capacity of 311 beds, receives $60.634m. New facilities include a reproductive medicine clinic to assess and manage infertility problems and to provide a pilot study for 6 months to assess the extent of patients and the need for a local infertility program, a hyperbaric medicine unit and measures to ensure that the Northern Territory has an up-to-date facility for screening donor blood products through the pathology laboratory.

The allocation for the Alice Springs Hospital is $27.297m. The budget includes funding of $200 000 for 5 additional staff for key positions at Alice Springs Hospital, and this increase is aimed at addressing the difficulties which the hospital is experiencing in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of adequately experienced and skilled nurses. Further expansion of the hospital's day surgery program will occur in 1990-91 and provision has been made for a substantial upgrading of the hospital's radiological services.

It is Northern Territory government policy that Territorians should be given the choice between public and private medicine. The Darwin Private Hospital is now in its third year of successful operation and it is confidently expected that announcements on a similar venture for Alice Springs will be made later this year.

The allocation to the Katherine Hospital is $8.773m. Since 1986-87, the government has pursued a 5-year construction plan at the Katherine Hospital. Presently under construction, and due for completion in October, are renovations to casualty, outpatients and Ward 1, at a cost expected to exceed $1.2m. As well, the Jack Roney Wing is being refurbished, at a cost of $400 000.

The East Arnhem region is serviced by the Gove District Hospital, the budget allocation for which is $6.533m. Capital works projects allowed for this year include upgrading of staff accommodation and a new hospital boiler. The Tennant Creek Hospital will receive $5.139m. This takes into account the full-year operational funding for a recently-opened paediatric ward.

A major development affecting Territory public hospitals is the implementation of a Territory-wide hospital information system which will greatly improve access to patient information and provide a faster and more accurate analysis of hospital data. This project will cost in excess of $3.5m over the next 3 financial years. Emphasis has also been placed on post-acute and palliative care programs, the aim of which is to reduce the length of patient stay in hospitals. In 1989-90, the emphasis of programs within the Northern Territory was to plan for early discharge of patients, allowing a return to their familiar surroundings following the acute care phase, while still providing professional care. In the Alice Springs Hospital and the Katherine region, it is planned also to place an emphasis on reducing the incidence of diabetes as well as instigating educational and counselling programs for those suffering from the disease.

I turn now to health services. A wide range of programs, costing $60.12m or 27% of the departmental expenditures, is included in this

activity. A comprehensive and integrated Mental Health Service has been developed in the Northern Territory. Expenditure this year will total $6.667m. Community services and outpatient services are provided in the 4 regional centres of Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy. In addition, specialist wards are located in Darwin and Alice Springs hospitals and, where possible, the service aims to maintain clients in their home environment. As a measure of the importance the government places on the mental health services, honourable members will note that expenditures have doubled since 1986-87 and occasions of outpatient services have more than trebled over the same period. An Outpatient Sexual Offenders Assessment and Treatment Program has been established successfully.

In March this year, the government approved a policy outlining the goals and strategies for the Mental Health Service in the Territory. The current forensic facility is experiencing increasing demands placed on it by the courts and the Department of Correctional Services, including probation and parole. The 1990-91 capital works program provides for the construction of a 26-bed secure residential facility at an estimated cost of $3.5m. The allocation of the $3.2m for the Alcohol and Other Drug Services Program in 1991 reflects government concern about the effect on the community and the social and economic costs of alcohol and drug abuse.

1991 will see the commencement of construction of a sobering-up shelter in Darwin costing $530 000. Grants to community organisations providing services in relation to drug and alcohol abuse will exceed $2m this year. There are particular problems in the Alice Springs region. To address these, the department provides courses and counselling for adults and young people who are alcohol or drug dependent, or for youths whose families are affected by drinking or by drug dependency, adults living with or close to an alcoholic or drug dependent person, gamblers and smokers. An intervention program for Alice Springs Hospital has been trialed and will commence on an ongoing basis in November 1990. Aboriginal counsellors are working and training at the Dependency Resource Services Unit.

The viability of treatment facility development is being surveyed, with particular emphasis on the special needs of the rural areas. The Holyoake Co-dependency Program has developed and has now sufficient support to move away from the department to become community based. Funding has been approved for this program through the grant-in-aid allocation.

The Communicable Diseases Program has been allocated $3.972m. Increased allocations are included in this budget for tuberculosis programs. The highest incidence of tuberculosis in the Territory is found in Aboriginal communities, particularly in the Katherine region, and in migrants arriving from high TB incidence countries. Staffing for TB monitoring and treatment throughout the Territory rose from 1.5 positions at the beginning of 1989 to 11 positions by mid-1990. Additional funding allocations this year will allow for staffing and equipment to carry out the task of reducing the incidence of TB in the Territory.

Increased allocations are also provided for AIDS programs. Through its AIDS/STD Education and Prevention Programs, the AIDS/STD Unit aims to create a supportive community environment for a range of behaviours which prevent transmission of STD/HIV. These programs cover general urban and Aboriginal communities as well as health care workers and other professional risk groups. Total AIDS funding in 1990-91 is in the order of $2m of which the Commonwealth makes a contribution of $608 000.

A joint program, involving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), Aboriginal Medical Services and the Department of Health and Community Services, will focus on the prevention of hepatitis B. ATSIC, through the Northern Territory government, is to provide funding of $450 000 for a vaccination program in 1990-91. The program will target prevention of hepatitis B infection in Aboriginal children in the Alice Springs and Barkly region. Approximately 1575 children under the age of 6 years will be covered out of a total population of approximately 4000 Aboriginal children of this age group. I must say that, during the last sittings, I indicated that I was somewhat disappointed that the ideological position was adopted of requiring a proportion of funds to go to the independent services, the effect of which is that some 2700 Aboriginal children will not be vaccinated because of the higher per-service costs of the independent health services. I think it is a real shame to let ideology get carried away in that way.

The allocation of $24.977m is provided for the Rural Community Health Services Program. Over the past 25 years, the department has been obliged by necessity to focus the majority of the resources available for primary health care on the directly curative and interventionist aspects of the global health responsibility. Whilst it is clear that vast improvements have been achieved in relation to Aboriginal health, the increasingly finer improvements gained over recent years indicate clearly that, to achieve further meaningful reductions, it is necessary to realign the focus of strategic resources to the area of community-based primary health care with particular reference to preventive health education initiatives.

The Rural Services Unit in the Darwin region provides primary health care and welfare support to the rural areas of the Darwin region. The Aboriginal Women's Program, established last year in the Darwin region, will continue to be supported. The program has been well received by most Aboriginal communities. Some 800 women have been screened for cervical cancer in the last 9 months and 47% of these women were having their first Pap smear.

There has been a major push to improve services to all rural health centres. Larger communities in the Darwin region are now visited by both male and female doctors. The doctors reside for 2 to 3 days during each visit instead of conducting single-day clinics. Dieticians have established a monitoring system for rural community stores that examines the prices and availability of essential food items for good nutrition. The amalgamation of health and welfare services has enhanced the early identification and management of welfare issues in Darwin regional Aboriginal communities.

I mentioned at the outset that funding for expanded programs for rural services has been introduced in this budget. In the East Arnhem region, the department is supporting a community council initiative to establish a medical officer at Galiwinku on Elcho Island and for an additional health promotion officer to provide information suitable for children and families in the East Arnhem region. In the Katherine region, funding is included for 3 additional medical staff to specialise in public health and preventive medicine. The expansion of the Tuberculosis Eradication Program will result in a further 2 additional staff for the Katherine area and 1 in East Arnhem.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the minister from completing his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, in Alice Springs, an additional 5 Aboriginal health workers will be employed to increase cultural relevance of hospital services to Aboriginal patients. In addition, through grant-in-aid programs, the government has progressively increased support for community-based primary health care services. In the past 3 years, the allocation has risen by over one-third, from $2.97m in 1988-89 to over $3.8m in the current year. These services are being further expanded to provide health care programs to the increasing homelands population.

The ongoing program of upgrading rural health centres will continue with Port Keats, Peppimenarti, Bulla Camp, Robinson River and Hodgson Downs being programmed for 1990-91 at an estimated cost of $1.4m. Funds for the Urban Health Services Program total $14.630m, and major expenditure areas include: for urban health centres - $5.7m; for the NT Hearing Services - $700 000; renal dialysis - $1m; the Palmerston after-hours medical service - $0.5m; Allied Health Professionals - $700 000; Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service - $800 000; St John Ambulance - $3.9m; and other grants-in-aid - $0.5m.

Because of the increased number of persons with renal failure in the Territory, it has been necessary to extend the current renal dialysis facilities. Existing facilities in Darwin allow the dialysis of only 6 patients at any one time. New works currently in progress will provide accommodation to dialyse 10 patients at a cost of $177 000 in this year's budget. In Alice Springs, additional funding for haemodialysis has been provided because the number of regular clients on the program increased from an average of 9 to 15 at one point during 1990.

This budget incorporates significant measures relating to the health of women in the Territory. A number of women's health programs have been developed and expanded to meet the growing needs of women in the Territory. Programs that were available previously only through the Darwin Central Community Health Centre and the Casuarina Community Health Centre are now being offered through a number of other venues as well. The weekly clinics concentrate on such issues as breast examination, cervical smears, information on post-menopause and ageing, nutrition and diet, mental health, self-esteem, reproductive health, and parenting skills. This service will be expanded to all major community health centres in the Northern Territory.

In June 1990, a joint Commonwealth/Territory agreement was signed for the provision of women's health services under the National Women's Health Program, and $100 000 was committed to this program for the first year. Projects funded for this year include a community-based Aboriginal and Islander Women's Health Centre in Darwin, and 3 Family Planning Association programs are planned to target urban Aboriginal women in Darwin, isolated communities, and Darwin and Alice Springs young women.

Negotiations with the Commonwealth government have resulted in a $400 000 grant for a mobile mammography unit to provide breast cancer screening services to women in rural and remote areas in the Northern Territory. An implementation plan is being developed, taking into consideration the geographical and demographical difficulties associated with the Territory. A broad range of options is being investigated to ensure that the service will be available to all women in the Territory.

Coordination of the department's health promotion program will cost $973 000 in 1990-91. The health promotion service aims to improve and

maintain the well-being of the Northern Territory community by facilitating processes whereby individuals and groups are able to exercise control over and improve their quality of life. Under a cost-share agreement with the Commonwealth government, the National Better Health Program will provide $181 000 for the development of an Aboriginal health promotion program in the Territory, and 4 Aboriginal health promotion officers will be employed to work with Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal communities. Local priorities will be established by consultation, and health promotion programs will be developed to meet local needs.

The Dental Health Services Program aims to improve the oral health status of all Territorians and therefore to enhance their physical well-being and quality of life. This year's allocation is $3.685m.

The community services activity represents 14% of the department's budget with an allocation of $30.549m. The Consumer Affairs Program, which includes weights and measures, will receive $1.081m. The weights and measures facility at Winnellie will be expanded in 1990-91 at a cost of $250 000. The allocation for the Family and Children's Services Program is $15.304m for activities including children's services, homemakers services, adoptions and substitute care, welfare services and supportive accommodation assistance.

A range of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program projects provide crisis accommodation and support services for homeless men and women, families in crisis, lone women and their dependants, homeless young people, victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, and Aboriginal women and their dependants in crisis. Currently, 24 SAAP projects operate throughout the NT. SAAP is a joint cost-shared program between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth. A total of $3.357m will be expended on SAAP in the Northern Territory this year.

In response to the Burdekin National Inquiry into Homeless Children by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, the government has agreed to match funds offered by the Commonwealth government. A total of $269 000 will be available for expenditure under this program this year. Development work on an Alice Springs youth accommodation project has already commenced and a youth crisis refuge and medium-term accommodation service are to be operational by October this year. In central Australia, work with families, youth and children in rural areas will be greatly extended with an innovation which has established a team of preventive welfare workers at Yuendumu. A rural areas officer and an Aboriginal worker will provide supportive services in the community.

Children's services encompass child day-care centres, after-school and vacation care programs, family day-care schemes and playgroups. In 1983, the Territory government announced the introduction of a subsidy based on 20% of the operational salary costs for both government-sponsored and private child day-care centres. Funding through the program is available to all licensed child-care centres in the Territory which operate for at least 48 hours per week to a maximum of 12 hours a day. From 1 July this year, financial assistance has been based on a per capita funding arrangement. The total allocation for 1990-91 will be $865 000.

This government has been active in a joint program with the Commonwealth for the capital development of child-care centres. Under this agreement, provision for one 40-place, jointly-funded child-care centre has been budgeted for 1990-91. Only $191 000 will be provided by the Commonwealth. The balance of the $530 000 total will be provided by this

government. Because of the demand for new services, this government has approved another $543 000 for a second 40-place, child-care centre to be built this year. The 2 centres will be on our priorities listing - 1 for Palmerston to serve Palmerston and the rural area, and the other for Nhulunbuy to replace the centre which is due to close down because of the state of the building.

The Aged and Disability Service Program will be allocated $14.164m. Major allocations include: pensioner concessions - $3.1m; Home and Community Care Program - $2.2m; geriatric assessment - $600 000; grants-in-aid - $3.8m; and rehabilitation services - $600 000. The Home and Community Care Program was introduced in 1985 as one of a number of initiatives designed to restructure government assistance for frail aged people, younger people with disabilities, and their carers. Through the various services provided by HACC, the frail aged and younger people with disabilities, and their carers, will be encouraged to live an independent life at home rather than being prematurely institutionalised. The Aged and Disability Services Program includes funding for the Darwin Rehabilitation Centre. The role of that service is to provide services for people who have suffered some loss of natural ability due to injury or disease. I must say that, this year, the Commonwealth withdrew from the funding of primary and secondary rehabilitation services, and that these areas have been picked up by the Northern Territory government. I believe that the bringing together of our rehabilitation services will lead to significant improvements during the course of this year.

The corporate management activity, involving the management of the department, policy and development, planning and corporate services such as accounts and salary processing, is allocated $22.426m, about 10% of the department's budget. The development of the department's human resources is a prime target for this year. Moves to adopt award restructuring and structural efficiency principles have raised the awareness of managers concerning the need to consider carefully the use of human resources and to provide a safe environment within which employees will be encouraged to work in more productive and effective ways. An important aspect of the structural efficiency principle is the provision of training and development to enable employees to gain and use additional work-related skills. The Department of Health and Community Services has a strong commitment to the development of its human resources. This has been demonstrated in the provision of additional funding in this budget for staff recruitment, retention and training.

The funding in this budget provides also for further enhancement in the area of departmental financial management. Program budgeting has been further developed across the department during the year. The role of program coordinators has been clarified to ensure that global policy perspectives are taken into account in departmental expenditure decisions. This budget sets the scene for more effective management of the delivery of health and community services. It targets specific problem areas and puts strategies in place to deal with them. Costly but essential acute institutional services are maintained whilst an injection of funds is provided for preventive programs which may reduce the costs of the health system in the longer term.

I believe that Territorians have every reason to be satisfied with the funding provided for the Department of Health and Community Services, the Conservation Commission and the Museums and Art Galleries Board in this year's budget. We have sought to provide the level of services we would like whilst keeping a tight rein on public spending. This has not been

easy. The fact that we have been able to achieve so much with the resources available is a tribute to the public servants employed in the department, the commission and the Museums and Art Galleries Board, and I wish to take this opportunity now to thank them for their contribution to this budget.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the 1990-91 Northern Territory budget and to endorse the remarks which the Treasurer made during his second-reading speech. He said:

> Territorians still want the controlled growth that Country Liberal policies have been delivering. They want their political leadership to be sensitive to their needs for services, their needs for jobs and the enhancement of the best lifestyle in Australia.

He went on to say:

> We have never mortgaged hope for the years ahead by spending more than we can afford. In every year the Country Liberal government has been in office, we have honoured the trust of Territorians by responsibly managing their money.

Mr Speaker, in his response to the budget, the Leader of the Opposition spent only 2 pages of a 33-page speech in commenting on the CLP government's budget. I thought that that was shameful, woeful and pathetic. He spent the remainder of his speech effectively launching the Australian Labor Party election campaign. If one reads his speech page by page, that is exactly what it does.

At page 2 of his speech, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'A Smith government is ready to accept that responsibility'. He was referring to taking over the government of the Northern Territory. He continued: 'We have explored the vast and rich estate of our inheritance. We know the wealth that lies within and beneath our soil'. That is fascinating stuff, coming from the Leader of the Opposition. I can recall numerous occasions over the last 4 or 5 years when the House has debated matters relating to our mineral wealth. We have debated mining in Kakadu and the World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 3. The Leader of the Opposition talks about the wealth that lies beneath our soil and the rich estate of our inheritance, but what does his party do? It locks the whole jolly lot of it up in a World Heritage area, and a commission of inquiry under Justice Stewart is in Darwin investigating the issues at this moment. If ever there was a misleading statement, that is it. The Leader of the Opposition talks about the wealth that lies beneath our soil, but one has only to read the policy platform of the Australian Labor Party to realise that he is trying to do a snow job on Territorians.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say: 'We have pastures and farmlands that could feed a nation, mineral supplies for generations of industry and energy stockpiles for all of our future needs'. It is fascinating stuff. I refer you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the fact that the federal government has placed 49% of the Northern Territory under the control of one section of the community. I do not see any development of pasture and farmlands in those areas. I do know that pastoral properties have been purchased with money from the Aboriginal Development Commission, subsequently to become inalienable Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I also see those properties becoming quite unproductive.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about mineral supplies for generations of industry. How does that stand up in the light of the ALP's 3-mine uranium policy? The Northern Territory Branch of the ALP almost choked on that because its policy is to close down uranium mining altogether. The Leader of the Opposition actually referred to 'mineral supplies for generations of industry and energy stockpiled for all of our future needs'. What about Jabiluka and Koongarra? What about those great stockpiles of energy which are locked up in the ground and will be for generations to come because of the policies of the ALP? What about Coronation Hill? As I said a moment ago, an inquiry is now considering the matter. It has come about as a result of a snow job by the federal Labor government which wanted to woo the greenie vote prior to the last federal election. The Leader of the Opposition talks about our vast resources but, at a time when our foreign debt has increased from $23 000m in 1983 to $130 000m today and is increasing like you would not believe, it is an absolute disgrace. How these people can sit here and how this Leader of the Opposition can present such hypocrisy in his speech is beyond my comprehension.

He went on to refer to 'the wide horizons of such natural physical beauty that thousands more people come every year to see and to say that they have seen'. I totally support that. But what did he do when the pilots' dispute was on last year, Mr Deputy Speaker? What did he and his mates, Mr Hawke and Mr Keating and their friends, do when there was not a flight into Yulara for 106 days or thereabouts? What happened to the business people in Alice Springs, all the way up the track and here in Darwin while they sat on their hands and did nothing about the pilots' dispute because they were trying to break the Pilots' Federation in the knowledge that deregulation was rapidly approaching? I think it will come into effect at the end of October this year. They wanted the Pilots' Federation done away with before deregulation came in, and that was what it was all about.

For the Leader of the Opposition to utter these glowing words in soft dulcet tones and to try to con the Northern Territory electorate is a sham. He went on: 'Above all, we have our people, the richness of our cultural mix, the combined strengths of our Australian heritage, Aboriginal culture and Asian tradition'. I totally agree with that comment. That is one of our real strengths.

He went on to say: 'This decade will see the Territory become the pivot of movement and economic power from the south to the north of Australia and, as the power swings around and as the rest of Australia sees that its future is with Asia, it will see that the Territory, through its people and its position, is already there'. Of course it is. Those comments are absolutely correct, but it is the policy of the Country Liberal Party Northern Territory government that has brought that about. We have been implementing that for the last decade. That is common knowledge. It is on the public record, not once or twice but a dozen times, when successive Chief Ministers have stood up and espoused that policy. It is well known that that is the policy of this government, and we have been implementing it very successfully.

He went on to say: 'The next decade will see land rights mature from an issue of cultural survival into the basis for economic power for Aboriginal Australians ...'. I hope that is true but, until the federal government decides to amend the Land Rights Act into something that is reasonable and acceptable to the whole of the Northern Territory community and until such time as ATSIC, this new fourth tier of government, to use the

Chief Minister's words, has been proved to be better than what we had before - and that was bad enough - I do not think that we will see that maturity achieved. But let us see if this fourth tier of government that the federal government is attempting to establish actually works.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say: '... and it will impose on government an absolute responsibility to provide all Territorians with the social standards of housing, education and health, consistent with our wealth - in other words, to treat all citizens equally'. I can recall the Minister for Lands and Housing standing in this House earlier this year and telling us how the federal government had slashed our housing budget by something like $100m over the next 3 years or so. Once again, we have had the rug pulled out from underneath us.

Let us move on to education, which the Leader of the Opposition referred to. Without a doubt, the Northern Territory has one of the best education systems in this country. However, we have had to go out and do it alone. We had to do our own thing to establish a University College some 3 or 4 years ago. We had been going to Canberra, cap in hand, putting forward proposals and pleading for assistance to get a university off the ground. Time after time, we were shown the door. We had to bite the bullet and, in the first year, we had to commit something like $12m - $6m to provide the capital infrastructure and another $6m for the operational costs - and we had to commit a similar sum for operational costs the following year. In this budget, some $6m is allocated to meet ongoing operational costs and I believe there is a further $5.5m for capital works on the Casuarina campus, for a centre for multi-skills training. I understand that, begrudgingly, the Commonwealth did come to the party with some funding in this current financial year. However, the responsibility lies with the federal government. As I understand it, the federal government funds tertiary education all around this country. It is not the responsibility of the states to do so. Nevertheless, once again, the federal government has been vindictive.

The Leader of the Opposition went on: 'In this shift, in these achievements in this decade, we will establish our right to statehood, and this is why Territorians everywhere can feel that the time has come to steady, strengthen and prepare'. That is fine. That is wonderful, but why has the Prime Minister not replied to the Chief Minister when he wrote to him 12 months ago and asked for the transfer of the remaining state-type powers? We do not have full self-government in this Territory; we have partial self-government. There are several state-type powers that we do not have. When the Prime Minister transfers those state-type powers to us, I will be happy to endorse the Leader of the Opposition's comments. However, until those remaining powers are transferred, we will be unable to move much further down the road and 'establish our right to statehood'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a bit of a sham, isn't it? It really brings a lump to my throat when I read the next paragraph: 'Only a Smith government can supply that steadiness, strength and certainty of purpose. Only a Smith government can combine our commitment to social development and economic growth based on a healthy and growing private sector, an efficient and focused public sector, and a caring and just society'. The headline in today's NT News reads: 'Unions warn of ALP split'. The Trades and Labor Council Secretary, Mr Mark Crossin, himself a strong Australian Labor Party supporter and one of the people, I am sure, who is responsible for siphoning into the ALP coffers many thousands of dollars from union funds for the ALP's election campaign ...

Mr Bailey: Where does yours come from, Rick?

Mr SETTER: Certainly not from the ALP gifts and charities.

The same Mr Crossin has accused the Northern Territory ALP conference delegates, Mr Terry Smith and Mr Brian Ede, of betraying Territorians, and he is reported as saying: 'I expect they will stay in opposition after the next Territory election'. The article indicates that Mr Crossin said this morning that 'this is going to cost them votes'. How can a party in opposition claim to be able to do all the things that the Leader of the Opposition indicated in his speech in reply to the budget when that party is falling apart? We all know that the ALP in the Northern Territory is controlled by the left and, of course, the 2 delegates, the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy, belong to the centre left. I predict that the long knives are being sharpened already because, the next time that the left wing gets them behind closed doors, it will be thrust, slash and it will be all over. I am not sure who will follow. I do not think that it will be the member for MacDonnell because he is a well known right-winger. He belongs to the Prime Minister's faction. The member for Nhulunbuy is about to leave us, therefore, it can only be the member of Wanguri. I am told that he comes from the left. Yes, I think the member for Wanguri will be the next Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bailey: Get your facts right, Rick.

Mr SETTER: I am trying to get my facts right, but it is pretty hard when I read this speech from your erstwhile leader.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to tell us that Labor will open the books, and he criticised what he called the subsidy deals with the Sheratons, Yulara, the Darwin Joinery etc. We have heard it all before. He was regurgitating things that had been said here a thousand times before, but he might be interested to know that the same Yulara and the same Sheratons have created over 750 jobs. That is 11 out of every 100 tourism industry jobs and nearly 2.5 jobs for every 100 in the Territory. The people opposite would close those facilities down. They would get rid of them.

I will give a few more facts. It is very important to distinguish between facts and rhetoric which cannot be backed up by facts. From these enterprises, about $33.2m a year or $640 000 a week in cash earnings flow to Territorians and $41.5m a year or $3.5m a month goes directly into other Territory businesses. That is the sort of flow-on effect that is created by Yulara and the Sheratons. As well as that, and this is the real payola, $23m a year is paid in government taxes and charges. That is almost $2m a month, but these people would destroy that.

Of course, when they moan and groan about contingent liabilities, we must remember that this is the same opposition party which intends to turn the Territory around. When we talk about Yulara and the Sheratons and contingent liabilities, what we are really talking about is contingent assets. Those buildings are bricks and mortar, unlike the investments in WA Inc or Rothwells or the $400m petrochemical plant and other shonkies in Western Australia. Let us have a look at that pillar of the financial institutions in this country - Victoria. The Labor government has absolutely bankrupted it. It has ruined its own state bank. That has gone down the gurgler. Tricontinental and the Pyramid Credit Society have gone and every Victorian taxpayer is paying through the neck.

What about Tasmania, Mr Speaker? There is to be a $90m increase in its taxes and charges this year. Fascinating stuff! Let me give you some more facts. I know that the Leader of the Opposition went to Queensland and spoke to Premier Goss, who told him how to do it. Subsequently, we saw a type of a silent movie on the television when they were trying to crank up the Leader of the Opposition's popularity. From what I have heard, it failed pretty dismally. I suppose it was the material they had to work with, Mr Speaker.

In Hobart, the Saturday Mercury of last week carried a headline: 'Schools worry as top 12 quit'. I quote from the article:

> Redundancy packages will wipe out almost the entire top echelon of the Department of Education. The Tasmanian Teachers Federation yesterday expressed alarm over the vacuum of leadership at a time of drastic change. 12 top administrators, including 1 of the 3 Deputy Secretaries of the department will take redundancy packages by the end of the year and, at a time of upheaval within the department, an industrial officer, Mr Tony Beckeratch, has left and has not been replaced.

That is what Labor has done to Tasmania. The Leader of the Opposition is on record as saying, about 6 months ago, that anybody within the public service who does not share his point of view will be moving on. Of course, that is what happened in Tasmania, where Premier Field put the cleaners through the public service like you would not believe. Mr Goss did the same when he came to power in Queensland. If the Leader of the Opposition ever becomes Chief Minister, he would do the same thing here. We would see a shake out in the public service like has never happened.

Mr Palmer: Tilting at windmills.

Mr SETTER: Of course, it is tilting at windmills because it will never happen in my experience, Mr Deputy Speaker. I can assure you of that.

The Goss government is held up as an example of a wonderful state Labor government. Of course, it has inherited a treasury where the coffers are brimming over. There is money pouring out everywhere. But, you mark my words, Mr Deputy Speaker. Give them a term and I bet they will put that state on the slide as Labor has done in every other state in this Commonwealth. They will be on the slide down the gurgler like their mates in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, South Australia and, before Nick Greiner came to power, in New South Wales as well. Nick Greiner inherited a massive debt in that state. He has turned that around, albeit that they have done it tough.

There are a couple of things that I would like to quote before I close. There was a letter in Australian Business of 19 September 1990. It was written by a Mr Ken Humphrey of Roy A. Humphrey Pty Ltd, Sydney, New South Wales. There is a little by-line here: 'Listen, Mr Keating, I have been in business for 44 years, and it has never been so tough. Or am I getting weaker? Has Mr Keating read this lately?' He quotes Abraham Lincoln, who was President of the USA 1861-65. He was born on 12 February 1809 in Kentucky, of obscure parentage. His father could neither read nor write.' He died from an assassin's bullet on 15 April 1865. In an address delivered shortly before he died, he said, inter alia:

> You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot establish sound security on borrowed money alone. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help a man permanently by doing for him that which he can and should do for himself.

That is what should be happening in this country. We have a situation now in which 30% of the federal budget is being used to support social security. That is what has happened. We have seen this complete turnaround. The resources of this country have been redirected from productive areas, where they were always directed under conservative governments, into welfare. To try to solve this shortfall in funding that they vitally need for what were public resources, they have been forced to move into - dare I say the word? I might have to wash out my mouth afterwards - privatisation. Our 2 delegates from the Northern Territory were agonising over this in Canberra in the last couple of days. We are seeing a shake up in the Australian Labor Party like you would not believe because it has realised that the socialist policies that it has been forcing on this country for the last 7 years cannot be sustained. It has had to rethink. I refer back to the words I have just quoted from Abraham Lincoln: 'You cannot help a man permanently by doing for him that which he can and should do for himself'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in considering the budget brought down by the Treasurer, it seems to me that it is much as one would expect a budget to be in an election year. It is as good as we can expect. As one of only a couple of Independents in this House, I am in a position to look at this budget more objectively than others. It is not the best possible budget, but it is not a bad budget. It is well thought out and, given the fact that Australia as a whole is passing through pretty traumatic financial times, it is the best budget that we could expect.

The Northern Territory will be behind the rest of Australia in feeling the effects of the recession that is hitting business and others everywhere else in Australia. I do not believe that we have reached the bottom of the curve as yet. I think that we have to go down a bit further before we go up. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory will follow the rest of Australia and go further into recession before we recover. I do not believe that the fault for this can be laid solely at the feet of the Northern Territory government. Only one man is responsible for this, and that is the man who calls himself the federal Treasurer. Without his policies, without his theories and without his experiments, Australia would be a much more financially-viable country and we would not be the banana republic we are today which Mr Keating himself forecast some time ago.

In these difficult financial times, we should be economising not only in respect of large expenditures but also in respect of small expenditures. I was raised the hard way and one tends to keep the thoughts of one's youth with one for the rest of one's life. I was brought up pretty hard at a time when every shilling and every pound had to be accounted for. The Northern Territory government could do much worse than look at saving on small expenditures as well as on large. The Treasurer is not known for his munificence in public spending, and good luck to him. I agree with him on many things - not everything, but on many things. I would not say he is as

mean as cat's meat but he is pretty mean when it comes to spending the public dollar. I believe the government sector could go even further and pinch every dollar before it spends it.

If we save money on little things, all of those little savings add up to big savings. It would be worth considering having an economy drive. We could ask for community support. I am only talking about small things. We could look at reducing the amount of power that is spent on lighting in government buildings and on heating. We could reduce the proliferation of buses to every 'deserving' group as against the use of government buses. We should try to rationalise the use of vehicles for government use. We should examine the use of discardable items in government departments. If enough thought were given to the subject, we would find many more little things on which we could economise. The community must be asked to help and to put forward ideas. It is not something that can be imposed on the community by the government. The 2 little economies that the government has adopted already are the use of recycled paper and the printing of the Daily Hansard on both sides of the pages. These are both small things, but they represent a step in the right direction.

I was rather disappointed by the capital works program because there is double talk there. I do not know whether a sleight of hand was intended or trickery or confusion. It was not even pork-barrelling. I believe it was a sleight of hand. I want to make a few brief points about it. I have already sent questions to the relevant ministers.

The first item is for the provision of a duplicate microwave bearer from the Hudson Creek control centre. In 1989, the budget for new works was $250 000. In 1990, the budget for works in progress is $250 000. Who is kidding whom? Has the $250 000 been spent? Has another $250 000 been allocated? My bet is that the $250 000 was not spent and is in the budget again this year. We were led to believe last year that it would be spent during that year, but it was not.

The same applies in respect of the installation of an incinerator for general pathological and cytotoxic waste at the Royal Darwin Hospital. An item of $250 000 for this facility appeared in last year's budget and the same amount appears this year. Last year's budget contained an amount of $3m for the construction of factory space at the Trade Development Zone. This year's budget has a reference to $2 982 571, which makes one suspect that it is the same amount of money.

In correctional services, we have the construction of the Don Dale Centre for juvenile offenders. The 1989 budget allocated $1.5m for that centre. This year's budget allocates $1 999 104 which appears to be the same item with the addition of some extra funds. We expected it last year but we did not get it last year.

I could talk about a similar situation in respect of the bus interchange at Palmerston and the Stuart Highway duplication between Bees Creek Road and the Arnhem Highway, an item drawn to my attention by a very concerned constituent. In the 1989 budget, the allocation for that duplication was $1 920 000. In the 1990 budget, it is $1 938 858, which is the same item with a little extra funding. We were led to believe that the work would be accomplished last year but it was not. I could go on and on. I could talk about the Batchelor Area School, the Coconut Grove sobering-up shelter and the weights and measures facility in Darwin. I hope that, when the honourable ministers answer my questions on those matters, they can give me some constructive information rather than simply waffling on.

I support the government's initiatives to provide infrastructure to support tourism ventures. That is very important, given that the depredations of BTEC have reduced our level of income from pastoral activity. Nowadays, we have to rely more and more on the tourist industry, whether we like tourists or not and whether they interfere with our normal lives or not. Tourism has to be supported and I support the government's moves to build infrastructural support.

I support the sale of some government assets, and I support the rationalisation which has been in progress for some time in respect of land, buildings and other assets. Of course, I do not expect the government to clean everything out of its store of land and buildings. One must always keep something in reserve for future use. However, I know that the government has many assets which it can sell for the benefit of the community.

The situation of the uranium industry in the Northern Territory is a continual source of irritation to myself and other thinking people in the community, particularly in respect of the amounts which ERA pays to the federal government for its mining operations at Jabiru. Everybody knows that, if the Territory received those amounts like a normal state, many of our financial worries would be solved. If those amounts accrued to the Northern Territory government, we would be a state and the Pancontinental project would be under way, together with Koongarra. Enough work has been done on environmental impact statements and control of damage to the environment to ensure that such ventures can be undertaken safely.

I was very pleased to hear the Treasurer say that no land tax or fire service levy will be introduced. Both of these matters are very relevant in my electorate and I believe that the introduction of such imposts would permanently alienate many people in the community. I do not believe that it would be to any government's advantage to introduce them. I might say here that, if a land tax were to be introduced - and I hope that that will not occur - I would hope that all people in the community would be treated equally. Such a tax should be levied at the same rate on land owned by white people and land owned by black people.

Whilst on the subject of fire service levies, I will say that both paid and volunteer firefighters have been very active recently in putting out fires in the rural areas. Many people suspect that fires have been lit by arsonists but, for the suspicion to be proven, one has almost to catch people in the act of lighting fires. Nevertheless, I believe that the NT Fire Service and the Bushfires Council could do well to look at tightening their legislation to provide for very heavy penalties for people caught lighting fires indiscriminately and without permits. Frequently, these illegal fires turn into wildfires. In such cases, arsonists are virtually potential murderers. Certainly, recent wildfires in the Darwin rural area threatened houses with people inside them. Although I was not present at the time, I have been told that many police officers, Fire Service personnel and volunteers had to be called in to put out the fires. I am sure that everybody thanks them for their efforts.

In the Regional Highlights for the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services mention is made of an amount of $128 000 for expansion of the Neighbour Watch Scheme. It seems that the government and the police are encouraging Neighbourhood Watch Schemes everywhere but in the rural area. Admittedly, I made inquiries and we have held a couple of meetings ourselves already. I received some help when the police sergeant in charge of community policing attended a meeting in the rural area. We have also

received help from the police through the loan of an engraving tool to identify moveable valuables, and I have received verbal advice from other police officers. However, that is as far as it goes. We cannot become part of an official Neighbour Watch Scheme and, if we want to develop a similar scheme, we cannot even use the name. If we want to put notices on our gates or our houses, we have to do it at our own expense.

Mr Firmin: Call yourself the rural policing program.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If the situation continues, we may have to take more drastic action than we have taken so far.

During the past year, for the first time, theft and other unusual acts have occurred on blocks in the area where I live. I do not want to suggest that the culprits necessarily come from Palmerston but they are certainly not local people. Cars have been stolen and other items have been stolen from blocks. There was a hint of taking drastic action but we believe it is much better to stay within the law.

I will be pursuing this matter further. We have been told that, because the number of official reports of crimes in the rural area is not as great as in other areas, the official position is that there is less crime in the rural area. That is one of the reasons put forward for us not being part of the official Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The problem is that, because of the distance which separates the rural area from Police Headquarters at Berrimah, people tend to put incidents of theft down to experience. Nevertheless, I will be pursuing the matter. I win a few and I lose a few but I win more than I lose. I hope that the rural area will be included officially in the Neighbourhood Watch scheme at some time in the future.

I am pleased to see in the capital works program that the Taminmin Farm School is to received $640 000 to upgrade workshops and to provide agricultural facilities. This is only the due of Taminmin Farm School, considering that it is now - and has been for some time - the premier rural education facility in the Northern Territory. It certainly has the greatest number of students, many more than the NT Rural College at Katherine.

I was pleased to see in the allocations for the Department of Health and Community Services that $400 000 will be provided for the National Breast Cancer Screening Program. Last week, a lady politician from Canberra asked me to add my support by writing a letter to the federal Minister for Community Services and Health, Hon Brian Howe, asking him to lower the age limit at which women could participate in the National Breast Cancer Screening Program, especially for women who come from families which are prone to this disease. The present age limit is 40 years. I have not yet received a reply to my letter. It is a bit early at this stage, but I hope that the answer will be in the affirmative. I do not believe that allowing younger women, who have grave worries about their health, to participate in this national screening program will add significantly to the financial burden.

It is interesting to see that a considerable sum will be spent on the Territory Wildlife Park. I believe that the park is second to none in Australia. However, last week, on the second day after my return from holidays, a grave deficiency was drawn to my attention. A young chap came into my office. He happened to be German and he was talking about staying at the Howard Springs Caravan Park. In the course of conversation, I asked him what he was interested in seeing. He said that he would like to visit

the Territory Wildlife Park and he asked me how to get there. I was about to tell him that he should go by car when I realised that he did not have a car. If you do not have a car, you cannot get to the Territory Wildlife Park. I believe that a couple of companies have been approached to provide bus services to the park but they were not interested. Backpackers are tourists, just as are those people who can afford taxis and hire-cars. Everybody should be encouraged to visit the Territory Wildlife Park. If the honourable minister and his predecessors had paid attention to my requests and established a board of management, it would have considered such matters.

Mr Reed: We would end up subsidising a bus service.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It would pay for itself if I had anything to do with it.

While we are on the subject of bus services, I have something else to say. The community is constantly requesting more public bus services and the government constantly replies that they cost too much, that the buses are not used, and that the runs are not profitable. However, one reason for this struck me the other day. Of course public bus services are not used adequately when every small group in the community that needs a bus - and they are all needy groups - is able to obtain a small bus or minibus. Every school has a bus and nearly every organisation in the Northern Territory has a bus. With all these little private buses on the roads, who is going to patronise the government buses?

Mr McCarthy: That is good. There are private buses in the community, not government buses.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They are not private buses. They are paid for by the taxpayer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I query the budget allocation for Palmerston College. Of course, we all know why it is included. The reality of the situation is that there are plans to build a college at Palmerston. However, Taminmin does not have all its places filled and I believe that is the case also with 2 high schools in the northern suburbs.

Mr Perron interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For the benefit of the Chief Minister, the population of the Northern Territory is falling not rising.

Mr Perron: Not at Palmerston.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if the population at Palmerston is increasing, why can't the children of Palmerston do what the children in the rural area had to do for a year? Until the government was 101% certain that there were to be sufficient numbers to attend a school there, the children were bussed into Darwin. Why can't the government do the same with the children of Palmerston, and save money?

The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries mentioned continuing support for BTEC. This is a bit like hanging on to the tail of a tiger. He cannot let go because it has gone too far. I have been asked to give my support for the final eradication phase in the rural area and I gave it on the condition that the government test rather than shoot out. There are not many buffalo and cattle in the rural area but they are in isolated situations. I must confess to having a personal interest in this. I have

spoken at length to various people in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries who are involved with BTEC and they have assured me that they are testing and not shooting out. Not only is compensation paid for infected animals that have to be slaughtered but replacement animals are provided also. I was very pleased to hear that from the veterinary officer in charge of BTEC the other day.

It is interesting to note that the government is continuing its support for aquaculture and horticulture. However, I will be pursuing further the ridiculous conditions that are imposed on applicants for a permit to grow things like red-claw crayfish on their blocks.

Mr Reed: I wrote to you yesterday. The cheque is in the mail.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am pleased to hear that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Reed: As a result of your inquiries, you will find there have been some changes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you. I am very pleased to hear it. As I said before, I win a few and I lose a few, but I win a few more than I lose.

I am pleased to hear the government is continuing its support of horticulture. I know that we have a very active Northern Territory Horticultural Association. The Treasurer referred also to continuing interest in kenaf farming. I am interested in that and I would like to hear a progress report from the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries at some time.

With the interest shown in crocodile farming, I would like to think that more crocodile farms will be established. As we have aquaculture, horticulture and agriculture, I call this 'saurian culture'. I think that sounds much better.

In general, I support the budget. However, I have a few questions to ask honourable ministers and I have provided those to them. It is about as good a budget as we could expect in the current Australian financial climate. I hope it prevents the Northern Territory from sliding too far down the recession hill with the rest of Australia. I believe it is a budget brought down with the expectation that we will have an election in the next couple of months, if not in the next couple of weeks.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the budget presented by the Treasurer. However, first, I would like to comment on a matter raised by the member for Jingili. He stated that the 49% of land in the Northern Territory owned by Aboriginal people is lying idle and unused. The member for Jingili must be either dumb or unable to read. Recently, there have been reports in the media of joint agreements between the Territory government and people at Kings Canyon in relation to a $15m development involving Aboriginal land. That is a very remarkable achievement.

Mr Tuxworth: It is not Aboriginal land.

Mr LANHUPUY: I would like the member for Jingili to state which properties in the Northern Territory are sitting idle.

Mr Palmer: Kildurk. Robinson River.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that there are communities that are willing to consult and to operate such properties to the best of their ability. If the Northern Territory Rural College at Katherine would do its job of implementing appropriate training for people in rural areas to work as jilleroos and jackaroos, we would have those properties operating. I thought that I would put that on the record because the member for Jingili was misleading the House when he said that Aboriginal-owned land was sitting idle without any work being done on it.

In relation to the budget outlined by the Chief Minister, there is not much I can say in respect of my electorate. However, we have ongoing projects such as the new police station at Alyangula and new houses in Ramingining, Numbulwar, Lake Evella and Ngukurr. The announcements by the Chief Minister in his budget speech reflect a remarkable step in relation to improving some of the water facilities and housing programs at these communities. Even though honourable members opposite might rise in this House and indicate that they are delivering 5 houses to Milingimbi, 6 house to Roper River, 6 houses to Galiwinku and Lake Evella etc, they do not realise that 1 house will accommodate more than 1 family. The new house usually replaces an old, dilapidated building. Because of the lack of proper water facilities, there is overcrowding. This opposition is always urging the government to provide better services for these communities.

I was pleased to hear the Treasurer announce that Housing Commission rents will not rise in this financial year. This was welcome news to many people. Many people are finding it difficult to survive. I know many urban Aboriginal people living in Alice Springs and Darwin who, because of their extended families, find it very difficult to meet extra electricity charges and housing rents. I am sure the announcement by the Treasurer in relation to rents for the Housing Commission dwellings in the Northern Territory was very much appreciated.

I congratulate the government on not increasing water and sewerage charges and on not introducing a land tax. There was considerable speculation about that among people in the industry prior to the announcement by the Treasurer. A fire service levy was not introduced, and that was welcomed. I am sure that people in rural areas and remote communities would find it difficult to establish a fire service. For example, at Barunga, a house caught fire and a child died in the process before a fire engine could arrive from Katherine. Certainly, in that case, I think that a levy would have been very hard for that community to meet anyway. I was very pleased that, in his wisdom, the Treasurer did not introduce a levy.

In relation to capital works, ongoing projects like the erection of a police station at Alyangula will benefit that community considerably because it has been operating in very difficult circumstances. At times, it has been necessary to take people to Darwin and that has involved chartering a DC-3. It was expensive to convey people from the detention yards where they were held in Alyangula. I am sure that the Minister for Correctional Services would appreciate that that was a very costly exercise. Planes had to be hired from Darwin to collect prisoners. That occurred particularly during the Christmas period when schools kids do not have much to do. They tend to commit break-ins and cause damage in the community.

I was very pleased to hear that, under the capital works program, the Power and Water Authority will be providing services to remote communities to the tune of some $20m, over a period. We have said repeatedly in this House that people in remote areas require services. They are Territorians

and I believe the government has an obligation to provide those services to those people, whether they be in remote communities or at places like Bickerton or some of the outstations. I was happy to hear that much of that $20m will be spent on upgrading services in the remote communities of the Northern Territory.

The Minister for Lands and Housing spoke at length about the housing program that the Commonwealth has with the Northern Territory for the supply of housing not only in urban areas but also in remote areas. This will certainly help. As I have explained earlier, recently I returned from Alice Springs where many people see the need for housing programs in town camps. I believe that programs that have been nominated specifically by the federal government to assist Aboriginal housing programs in urban and remote communities will assist the proposals that the Minister for Lands and Housing outlined in his statement. I welcome that because, come Christmas time, people would like to be out of the rain and accommodated in some type of housing. It will assist them enormously if they have a roof over their heads so that they can camp and hopefully enjoy Christmas, as many other people in the Northern Territory will.

I was very pleased by the announcement from the Chief Minister, who is the minister responsible for police, that he will be creating an extra 10 positions for police aides in the Northern Territory. I welcome that news. As I said before, I support the idea of police aides being recruited into the system because I believe we have a very successful operation in train. We need to be able to change the type of relationship that Aboriginal people have with the police, which is very delicate at times, and I welcome the move by the Chief Minister to ensure that there are more police aides within the Northern Territory Police Force. I would like to stress also that, hopefully, those police aides will have the opportunity to have further training to provide them with the possibility of becoming regular police officers within the Northern Territory Police Force. I believe that type of opportunity does exist now.

It was very pleasing to hear the announcement that the Marrara Sports Complex is to receive $5m. I am sure that will benefit the people of the Northern Territory generally, particularly those people who have some appreciation of the sporting aspect of our lifestyle. With the initiative that has been shown by the Northern Territory government, I am sure we will be able to attract more international competitors to come to the Northern Territory and use our facilities. I am sure that the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation would appreciate the fact that comments were made by top cricketers who were in the Territory a month or so ago about the suitability of the Territory for that sport because the climate is good and the place is attractive. Injecting funds into our sporting facilities will certainly help the Northern Territory's image and that will benefit our children in years to come.

I have spoken often on matters relating to national parks in the Northern Territory. I am a very strong supporter of the establishment of parks, wherever they be, whether it be in Arnhem Land, in Alice Springs, in Katherine or wherever. I was glad to hear of the declaration of the Gregory National Park. Although I have not been there myself, I am happy that funding of $1.5m is to go towards its development. Nitmiluk will receive more funds with which to expand visitor facilities within the park.

I would like to echo the comments made by the member for Koolpinyah who said that many people hear a great deal about the Territory Wildlife Park at Berry Springs but that, unless they have their own transport, their chances

of visiting it are minimal. I would suggest that the Minister for Conservation come to some arrangement with coach tour operators around Darwin to ensure that people are able to get to the park. I am sure we would not want to miss out on those opportunities.

I would like to hear from the honourable minister how negotiations have been going with people at Yirrkala for the use of Cape Arnhem as a proposed national park. I have heard that these negotiations are under way but I have not heard how they have progressed recently. I would very much appreciate any advice that the honourable minister can give me in relation to the establishment of parks in that part of the country.

The other area that I will comment on generally is Aboriginal education. The Minister for Education gave a very detailed account of the Territory government's plans for Aboriginal education. In due course, I will be able to sit down and read his statement and I will be particularly interested to read about the strategic planning which he announced this afternoon. With FEPPI's advice and guidance, I am sure that the honourable minister has embarked on a venture which will be of benefit to many Aboriginal people, whether they live in urban areas, remote areas or out in the sticks.

Given my shadow portfolio responsibilities for correctional services, I was very pleased to hear the Minister for Correctional Services mention a $3m, high-security facility for the mentally-ill in Darwin. Whether that is located in the grounds of the Royal Darwin Hospital or wherever, that is welcome news in terms of the fact that so many people have escaped from Malak House at various times. Some have been serving community service orders or whatever, and they have caused considerable difficulty for the staff. I remember visiting Malak House at one stage and I was very surprised to see the number of children held in custody there as a result of detention orders. I am sure that this new facility will prove very useful.

The announcement of $2m for the design stage for the prison in Alice Springs was good news. The existing prison at Alice Springs is right in the middle of the town and, with the barbed wire surrounding it, it does not make a very pretty sight, especially for tourists travelling through from the Gap along Larapinta Drive. Many people traverse that road, and I am sure a different facility there would improve the scene.

I would like to be assured that the honourable minister will take into account comments that have been made by the Tangentyere Council in relation to the distance for people returning from the prison because of relatives visiting there ...

Mr Reed: So we want a bus service there too, do we?

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not trying to be smart. If the honourable minister wants to be smart about it, he does not have to supply a bus service to anyone. It happens elsewhere. In Darwin, many people, especially Aboriginal people, walk from Berrimah Prison all the way into town. I have seen it happen quite often. Given the type of racist attitude that people have, anything could happen to them on the way. People have expressed that fear to me. The Tangentyere Council has expressed that concern specifically. With so many tourists, anything is likely to happen to people. After they have been released, it is a long walk without water and they could suffer dehydration. There is no traffic. Those are the concerns that have been expressed.

Certainly, the promise by the Northern Territory government to build the Don Dale Juvenile Justice Centre to replace Malak House is very welcome news. I commend the honourable minister for ensuring that the centre will bear the name of Don Dale. I believe he deserves to be honoured in that way because he was a pioneer in terms of his service to correctional services in the Territory.

I commend the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government for the legislation that is to be put in place to ensure that there is no sexist attitude towards the employment of women. That is a very positive step in terms of this government's attitude. As the honourable minister would know, we have been pursuing that line from this side of the House for a long time and I certainly welcome the move.

The minister's announcement about training initiatives in relation to local government are also very welcome. I am extremely pleased with the type of training which officers of the minister's department are offering to people in remote areas through the local government scheme. Hopefully, when people are trained, the government will ensure that the local government councils in those communities have enough funds to employ them. At present, there are many training opportunities and training centres throughout the Northern Territory for Aboriginal people, and we have to ensure that positions are available for the people who receive such training. A number of people have said to me that stable jobs and families are what is needed most. I am sure that the minister's announcement in relation to the training program will be well received in remote communities. A number of people I know have commended the training programs being provided by the minister's department.

There is another matter which I would like to raise in respect of the Department of Correctional Services. We have not heard anything about the Wildman Wilderness Camp and I would like the minister to confirm that such camps will continue to exist. I am aware of a recent meeting at Gunbalanya, at which Aboriginal families of young people who were being held in either Giles House or Malak House at present expressed an interest in establishing a facility like the Wildman Wilderness Camp in their area. I would like the honourable minister to give me some indication as to how the wilderness camp programs are going and whether they are still supported.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate. I would like to begin by addressing issues relevant to my electorate. There are a number of matters that either have not been covered in the budget or are covered inadequately. The extension of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve was a suggestion that had been proposed by myself. There is a need for the Conservation Commission to begin negotiations with the relevant owners of the land, largely the Commonwealth Defence Department, in order to extend the Casuarina Coastal Reserve down to the Buffalo Creek area to bring it in line with the Australian Heritage identified area that is currently at the extreme end.

Dripstone High School has been open for 10 years. The original plans included provision for an all-weather gym. Even though successive ministers have indicated their support for the idea, again we note that there is no funding. Nevertheless, the honourable minister managed to find $1.3m to fund a similar facility at another school.

Hr Harris: They do not even have a hall. What are you going on about?

Mr BAILEY: They have a hall.

Mr Harris: Come on!

Mr BAILEY: My understanding is that a commitment was given to Dripstone High School for funding for a gym. Once again, Dripstone High, which is in my electorate, misses out.

Another matter which we have been pursuing is the buffer zone along Lee Point Road at the back of Woodleigh Gardens. The Department of Lands and Housing indicated that the upgrading of that area would be funded. I am not able to identify the funding. Perhaps the honourable minister will bring it to my attention when he speaks tomorrow.

One of the major concerns that has come to my attention over the last few months involves many of the schools in my area. Of 5 government schools, 4 are experiencing either staffing cuts or staffing changes that are of concern to the schools. I attended a meeting only last week of a parent council at the Wagaman Primary School. The parents were concerned that the school's principal, who has been there for almost 2 years, and 1 of its 2 senior teachers were being moved out of the school. I understand that the principal is being moved because he has been acting in the position for 2 years and the substantive holder of the position is returning. However, the concern caused within the school about that cannot be underestimated. I am aware that, in recent days, a commitment has been made by the department that the principal, Tony Jackson, will be retained within that school.

An interesting comment was made at that school about the loss of 1 of its Band 2 positions. Even though its enrolment numbers were greater than they had been in previous years, the reason given for the position being abolished was that there was not as much fat in the system as there used to be and therefore the staffing formula needed to be more closely implemented so that positions that might have been granted before would no longer be granted. What we are seeing is a reduction in the ratio of staff to students in our school, not in actual numbers on paper ...

Mr Harris: It is based on the curriculum as set by the NT Board of Studies, and you know it! Teachers will be provided to cover that.

Mr BAILEY: A clear statement was made by the departmental officer that the staffing levels could not be maintained at previous levels because there was not as much fat in the system as there used to be.

Mr Harris: It is not about previous levels. It is about what is required to teach the approved curriculum.

Mr BAILEY: We are seeing a reduction in staffing levels in some of our schools.

The principal at Tiwi is gaining a substantive position at another school whereas the principal who actually owns the position at Tiwi, but who has never been there, will come to take up the position after the departure of the existing principal, who has been there for 2 years. It would seem common sense to me that those 2 principals could swap their respective positions rather than cause this dislocation. We are seeing a situation where school councils are asked to take on more and more responsibility. However, often, they are not given the support that is needed to maintain the programs that they are trying to develop.

We have written to the honourable minister on other issues that affect schools in my electorate. I am aware that at least 2 schools in my area are

experiencing problems as a result of low enrolment numbers and that an increase in their numbers could be of benefit in maintaining staffing levels and curriculum options within those schools. We wrote to the Minister for Education suggesting that consultation between himself and the Minister for Lands and Housing could lead to some cooperation in respect of the way in which people are allocated Housing Commission houses. In relation to areas where school populations are decreasing to a point where that may affect the viability of some schools, the possibility of putting families with school-age children into Housing Commission houses in those areas may provide a means of maintaining the viability of some of those schools.

Mr Collins: What are their parents going to do for a living?

Mr BAILEY: What a ludicrous question. Does whether they live in Tiwi or whether they live in Nakara make any difference to where they may be employed? I am not sure that that question even warrants an answer. However, to put it very simply, Housing Commission houses are allocated to people who wish to reside in Darwin, and some of those people have children and others do not. By and large, the schools are located in suburban catchment areas. If families with children are located in Housing Commission houses in areas where the schools have less than adequate numbers, it may be possible to maintain the enrolment numbers at a viable level at those schools. Whether you live in Tiwi or Nakara does not make a great deal of difference in getting a job.

Mr Reed: It might make a difference to the person concerned.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Housing Commission tries to locate people in Tiwi who need proximity to the hospital. It is a commonsense approach. If you have a family with 3 or 4 children and 1 area has a problem with a low enrolment rate at its school, it would be common sense to locate the family there, if there is a vacant house available.

Another issue that has caused concern within my electorate relates to the hospital. This matter has been of concern for months. I refer to the provision of a permanent ENT specialist for the Top End. We have had commitments, promises and excuses from the honourable minister ever since I have been in this House, that he will find someone to fulfil that role. We are now holding on to a doctor who has wanted to retire for a considerable period. It is only as a result of his agreement to fulfil the role that we have an ENT specialist working for the government at all.

On the radio yesterday morning, a gentleman from the Menzies School of Health Research was commenting on the effect of middle ear infection on Aboriginal children and its effects on learning. I would like the Minister for Health and Community Services to comment on the extent of the specialist services that are available to communities in the north of the Northern Territory, and to explain the length of queues waiting for ENT specialist services.

Other concerns in my electorate include the implementation and control of Neighbourhood Watch. For example, it was announced recently that a meeting would be held this evening to establish Neighbourhood Watch in Wagaman. It is interesting to note that, 10 days or so ago, the member for Jingili issued a notice to his constituents that the meeting would be held. When we rang Police Headquarters to ask how the order of implementation of Neighbourhood Watch was determined and why a member who had an interest in Wagaman was not informed that such meetings would occur, we were told that decisions on the timing of the implementation of Neighbourhood Watch in the

different areas were made by Cabinet. The implication is that members on the government benches are aware of when these projects are about to start whereas other members are not notified ...

Mr Hatton: You have it in Wanguri.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I also represent electors in Wagaman. I would have thought it a normal courtesy that all sitting members who have an interest in a given electorate should be notified 2 or 3 days before such meetings are held. It is interesting to note that such matters as the implementation of Neighbourhood Watch are decided by Cabinet. I would have expected such decisions to be made within ...

Mr Hatton: It does not determine specific dates. I think you might find it determines the general order of events.

Mr BAILEY: Yes, the order in which it is to be implemented in the different suburbs is decided by the Cabinet and not by the police.

In relation to my shadow responsibilities, I would like first to address matters relating to the portfolio of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. Even though we have not heard the honourable minister's speech, and it is likely that we never will unless he gets up and ...

Mr Hatton: He probably will.

Mr BAILEY: Will he? I thought he intended to table it.

Looking at the budget, perhaps the honourable minister can explain why almost $100 000 has been cut from the ethnic affairs allocation and whether that is taken up somewhere else.

Mr Perron: Why do you think the Commonwealth cut us by about $33m? Maybe that could be a reason.

Mr BAILEY: Some allocations will go up and some will go down. Thus, ethnic affairs has been identified specifically for a reduction of something like 10%.

Mr Perron: I can assure you that it did not happen by accident. Most of the decisions are made deliberately.

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

I am concerned that the priorities of this government have resulted in a cut to the ethnic affairs allocation in this budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to expand on suggestions that the Northern Territory ALP has put forward as initiatives in the area of ethnic affairs. The first is a commitment to introduce an interim community broadcast of SBS until ...

Mr Finch: Tell us about full SBS.

Mr Perron: We do not want Clayton's television stations.

Mr Finch: No more mickey mouse politics. Give us some real stuff.

Mr Hatton: Palmerston wants to hear it too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Vale: Make your federal mates deliver.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up a few of those interjections.

Mr Vale: Did you used to be a psychologist?

Mr BAILEY: Do you want me to assess you, Roger?

Mr Vale: A person would have to be mad to go and see you.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite prepared to take up the interjections on SBS. The research was well-founded and supported. There is a commitment for a full, direct service of SBS by satellite for 1992-93. Unfortunately, the service cannot be provided to Darwin until the second generation satellite is put up.

Mr Manzie: They could turn it on tomorrow.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is true. If any member opposite can prove differently, I will withdraw my statement.

Mr Hatton: Are you accusing the minister of misleading the House?

Mr BAILEY: Which minister?

It is not technically feasible at the moment. The microwave link ...

Mr Reed: It might not be feasible, but is it possible?

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to waste the remainder of my time. It is not technically feasible for a direct broadcast of SBS to Darwin at present. The Labor government has made a commitment that it will introduce an interim SBS service within months of getting in.

To pick up the earlier interjection, the reason why Palmerston could not receive it is that the transmitter that is being put up - and which the Minister for Mines and Energy himself has spoken about and said could be used for SBS - does not have a wide enough coverage to include Palmerston. If it were rotated a few degrees so that it would just miss Doctor's Gully, probably it would actually take in Palmerston. That may provide a way of overcoming the difficulty.

Labor has an initiative to provide for the establishment of an ethnic community resources facility based in the northern suburbs - referred to in some discussions as an international house - whereby facilities that at the moment are used by different ethnic groups would be grouped together in one location close to where they live. By that means, the small ethnic groups, which would never have the resources to have separate buildings, would be able to share in community resources.

The last of the 3 initiatives Labor has for ethnic affairs is a commitment to supportive funding in Alice Springs for the Migrant Resources Centre.

Mr Hatton: Are you going to tell us how you will pay for it? Or don't you want any money to do it.

Mr BAILEY: From savings in other areas.

In relation to youth sport and recreation, I must give credit where credit is due and support the minister's concern for the introduction of a youth advisory council. It has been of concern to me for some time that youth, sport and recreation were grouped together which seemed to indicate that the only concern of youth was sport and recreation. I hope that, by implementing the proposed youth advisory council idea, the government may look at other issues of specific concern to young people which are not catered for or are catered for only at the end of the line by other departments.

In relation to sport and recreation, the way in which grants are handed out at present to different groups should be controlled by an independent review body and the decisions for funding should not be made by Cabinet in the way that the major ones are now. It should be done at arm's length so that there is no way that there can be seen to be a conflict of interest involving vested interest groups that receive major funding.

As a result of interjections during the course of my speech, it seems to have taken me longer to reach this point than I had anticipated. I will have to speak rapidly in relation to conservation matters. My shadow portfolio includes planning and environment, and there are a number of areas that have to be addressed before we can say that we have adequate environmental and planning processes within the Northern Territory. I have spoken in this House at length about the way planning and environmental matters will be integrated. Throughout the 12 months during which I have been in this House, the government has made noises about numerous ways in which it will deal with environmental issues. Very little has happened. We have waited for years for heritage legislation and draft legislation was tabled 12 months ago. In January this year, we attended a meeting at which officers of the minister's department made a commitment that, within a few months, there would be public workshops to discuss amendments to the draft heritage legislation. In May, the minister said that those discussions would be coming up soon. However, it now appears that he may or may not table draft or amended legislation in these sittings. When will we have the public workshops and debates that he promised so many months ago?

Is the government really concerned about the environment or does it simply want to continue to issue glossy publications about concepts to which it has no real commitment? Why doesn't it table documents such as the Mangrove Management Plan, the Coastal Management Plan or the study on the low-level radioactive waste dump in the Tennant Creek area? The federal government contributed $100 000 towards that last study, instigated by this government, and the report and recommendations have been completed. Correspondence from the Northern Territory government to the federal government suggests that it does not want to release that document because its implications may give rise to public concern. Why not release that document before the election so the public will be able to know what decisions this government will make in relation to a radioactive dump in the Northern Territory?

Mr Hatton: We are not going to build one.

Mr BAILEY: You are not going to build one? Why not release the report and state that you are not going to build one?

Mr Hatton: What report?

Mr BAILEY: The report commissioned by ANSTO and funded by the federal government to the tune of $100 000. The report which the Minister for Mines and Energy has.

Mr Reed: Why doesn't the federal government release it?

Mr BAILEY: It is not allowed to release it. It is your document.

Mr Reed: I thought you said that it funded it.

Mr BAILEY: It funded a study that the Northern Territory government commissioned. It is not allowed to release it without the Northern Territory government's permission.

We also have the ongoing matter of secrecy within the Northern Territory. There is a proposal for a 50 km^2 recreation lake above Butterfly Gorge on the Douglas River. My understanding is that the PER for the proposal is due to be released any day now. Why is it that the end of the environmental assessment procedure for such proposals can be reached before the public is even aware that they are being considered? Will we have a commitment from this government for a full EIS on projects of such magnitude or will we continue to hide behind the secrecy of PERs, saying that all decisions are made at that level?

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! It is very difficult to understand what the honourable member is saying, but he did accuse a minister of misleading the House. I believe that that is a breach of standing orders. Such matters must be dealt with by way of substantive motion. I ask that the honourable member withdraw his remark.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Wanguri will withdraw that remark.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, given the economic circumstances of this country, I believe that the government has brought down a pretty responsible budget. Like the member for Arnhem, I am pleased that rents have not risen and that electricity costs have not increased. These things affect every family and it is good that the government has seen fit to keep these charges pegged at their present level for some time. Yesterday, I was told of a person who had left the Territory and gone to Queensland. The housing which he was able to obtain through the Queensland government cost him $70 a week more than he was paying in the Territory and he had to take a $50-a-week cut in wages. He was $120 a week or $6000 a year worse off in the Queensland of Mr Goss. The person who was telling me the story hinted that the person who made the move wished that he had not done so.

The most exciting aspect of the budget for me is the decision to proceed with flood mitigation works in Alice Springs. I have been on about this for 9 years. Some people there are trying to argue that we do not really need the flood mitigation works. Last Thursday week, I spent some time with Alan Field, his wife, and his wife's father, Arthur Burfield. Alan was the principal of Alice Springs High School, where I was a colleague, and Arthur was the principal of Victor Harbour High School, which I attended as a student. Arthur is 85 years old and a very fine and sprightly gentleman. They were visiting the Territory and they wanted to go

to Boggy Hole which is part of the Finke River system. You head out towards ...

Mr Reed: Do you want a bus service there too?

Mr COLLINS: No, I definitely do not want a bus service there. In fact, I tend to be against bus services. You ought to know my record. I suggested that the Alice Springs bus service had dubious prospects and I was not far wrong. Probably, the minister wishes that he had listened to me a bit more closely on that particular matter. I do not resile from my comments in any way, shape or form.

We went out towards Hermannsburg, turned down the Ellery Creek and followed it down to the junction with the Finke River, then along the 10-odd kilometres to Boggy Hole, which is a permanent waterhole on the Finke River system. On the sandy bank there, about 20 ft above the water level, we saw debris caught in the forks of the gum trees. That was from the flood in 1988. If I recall correctly, 15 inches of rain fell in 12 hours in the Hermannsburg area.

Mr Hatton: Did they find that motorbike?

Mr COLLINS: I did not know that they had lost a motorbike. I did not see it in that particular tree.

The sight of that debris made me realise just how high the waters had been in the Ellery and the Finke. It does not take much imagination to realise that, if they had been that high in Alice Springs, we would have had a huge disaster. If the rains which fell in the Finke area had fallen to the north of Alice Springs, the consequences for the town would have been horrendous. Seeing that debris in the trees near Boggy Hole made me quite certain of that. Many people from Alice Springs go to Boggy Hole on weekends and I am sure that, when I bring this matter to their attention, they will understand exactly what I mean. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that we came within 100 miles of having a flood which would have devastated the heart of Alice Springs.

I have been talking about flood mitigation in Alice Springs for a good 9 years. In the 1980 election campaign, the then Chief Minister, Hon Paul Everingham, announced the proposal for an Alice Springs recreation lake. I must confess that, at the time, I thought that it would just be a small dam when, in fact, the lake proposed for the Telegraph Station area would have been quite a massive body of water. Of course, it did not eventuate because of sacred sites. I have long believed that an appropriately built dam would mitigate the effects of flooding in Alice Springs. Such a dam, with a high wall above a spillway, would be able to hold back flood waters as they came down from the catchment area. Working models on display at the Adelaide Show and at various other places over the years have shown that such a dam can and will work so that a flood which would normally move through Alice Springs in 12 hours would be slowed considerably, thereby protecting the town.

I watched last Thursday's ABC 7.30 Report which sank to one of its lowest levels ever. It certainly annoyed me greatly. The only positive aspect of the matter is the response I have received from many people in Darwin when I have spoken to them about it. They say: 'Oh, the 7.30 Report. We do not bother to watch it'. There was a great misinformation campaign on the program. The Central Land Council said that it had been approached by some traditional owners and had called in some

engineers from Sydney, and a Dr Webb had completed a report. That report is one of the most ridiculous documents that I have come across in a long time. One would think that engineers would at least mention things like megalitres and so forth. There was not a single figure in the report. It tries simply to condemn the environmental impact statement by assertion. There is not one shred of evidence to back up the assertions. You could drive a tank through the holes in the arguments that have been put. Nevertheless, this has been spread around Alice Springs as if it were gospel. It really does need to be countered. This project is one of the most important that Alice Springs will ever see.

I am reminded of Mr Leo McLeay, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, when he was talking about the third runway proposal for Sydney. He said: 'Anybody who is asked to do an environmental impact statement on a particular project subconsciously will undertake it on the basis that the project is able to proceed'. This is a nonsensical, political document. It needs to be exposed. It is about time the ABC woke up and redressed the disgustingly biased, ratbag report that it presented on the 7.30 Report last Thursday night.

I would suggest most strongly that, because of the nature of this report, Dr Webb be invited to come to Alice Springs and talk not only to the traditional owners but to all the people of Alice Springs. Let us have a night whereby we demonstrate how the lake will work so that people will understand. Let us have a debate about the issues that Dr Webb is raising and demonstrate that he is way off beam. He cannot understand the necessity for a mid-level spillway. The answer is very straightforward. Those high walls are needed to reduce the force of the water as it rushes into the lake. The water coming in not only flows over the spillway, but also spreads out over the lake. At the maximum height, it will cover some 420 ha of storage area. Once the flood stops, it will flow out of that area, through the spillway and through the town. However, it will do it over days instead of hours, and we will be protected. I hope the government will be in a position soon to announce whether it intends to go ahead with the project. I hope there is a very strong rebuttal of the nonsense in this Webb Report.

It is quite obvious that the government is in a very tight situation. Obviously, it has had to set its priorities and screw down each department quite heavily. There are some possible problems. Certain things have come to my attention in the last couple of weeks. For example, I have written to the Minister for Health and Community Services about a particular matter of concern. I do not intend to raise that matter here. However, I made it clear that Alice Springs Hospital is 2 physicians short and that it had taken a great deal of effort on the part of the administration to persuade one physician not to resign. It seems that he was being grossly overworked.

In relation to the situation that I put to the minister, I have been assured that the matters are being examined most carefully because they are of a delicate and sensitive nature. If we are short on specialist staff, I know that it is not always easy. ENT specialists are hard to come by and we have always had a problem in attracting specialists to the Territory. I ask the minister to look at this problem. If we are overworking our hospital staff, that is a matter that must be addressed. I look forward to a careful assessment of the questions which I have put to the minister so that I can pass on the information to the family who raised them with me.

Another example of where the screws have been applied almost to breaking point relates to the police numbers in Alice Springs and the duties

that we expect of them. This was first raised with me by the Salvation Army Captain who is chaplain to the police force. He was quite concerned about the amount of overtime that officers were required to perform, the high incidence of sickness in the force and the general rundown feeling that pervades it. I made a few inquiries around the traps. It may be interesting for members to know that, since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, it is required that there be 2 people on duty at the watch-house cells 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That requires 5 shifts of 2 people. In other words, 10 officers are being tied up as a result of this emotive issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody. This seems to be a tremendous waste of police manpower, particularly when there are only 2 reactive police patrols - 2 cars with 2 people on duty at any one time. According to one of the older officers, this is the same level as was provided in 1969. Of course, our population has almost tripled since then and we have many thousands of tourists. The policing is purely reactive. The police are unable to maintain a presence in the community and thereby influence people's behaviour. During a shift, the police are attending to anything up to 40 calls. This means that they do not have lunch breaks. These things are having an effect on morale. We have lost a number of people from the service.

Another matter of concern is that of Mall patrols. There were 4-wheel-drive patrols of the Mall and up and down the Todd River. These are virtually non-existent now. I did see one the other day, but I am informed that the police do not have the numbers to undertake these patrols in the way that they would like. There is also the matter of policing the 2 km law. I was staggered to learn that, from July to December 1988, there were 543 incidents - involving taking into protective custody or tipping grog out - related to the 2 km law. From July to December 1989, 12 months later, there were about 15. The police do not have the time or the manpower to police the 2 km law in the way that they were able to do previously. The question that I want to ask the Chief Minister is whether the cost of overtime is possibly more than the cost of appointing more permanent officers. That would increase the morale and lower the amount of overtime that officers are required to do.

Another matter of concern to the police is road patrols. They do not have the funding or staff allocation to undertake the road patrols that they believe are necessary. I understand there are no patrols whatsoever on the Lasseter Highway even though this is a busy tourist road. Touch wood, we have not had too many problems there. However, the police do not feel as though they are able to do their job properly. I ask members from the Alice Springs area and possibly also those from Darwin when they last saw a breathalyser station. It does not seem that they are in operation too often. Is this a matter of staffing? This House has decreed that this is an important means of making people curb their unacceptable behaviour so that our roads are a little safer.

As chairman of the Old Timers Auxiliary, which runs the fete with a great deal of help from the staff of the Old Timers and the whole of the Alice Springs community, I have been asked to thank the Chief Minister for allocating a dollar-for-dollar grant to the auxiliary to provide a bitumen road around the back of the Old Timers. This is something that they have wanted for a long time. It will provide better access for the folk who live there and allow visitors to take relatives who may be in wheelchairs for a stroll in the grounds quite safely. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all of the Old Timers, the staff, the auxiliary and many people in Alice Springs who have relatives there when I say that this is appreciated.

One could say perhaps that the government could have been generous and paid the entire cost. However, I think that those who help themselves tend to deserve those dollars more. On one occasion, I heard Sir Thomas Playford speak at a school in a country town in the Adelaide Hills, not far away from where Tom himself lived. He had been asked to open the oval. He said that it was a pleasure to open it and to know that the local people had levelled the hill with their own gear to make the oval. They had raised some of the funds and put their own efforts into the work. The government provided a dollar-for-dollar grant. Because they did so much for themselves, the people better appreciated the contribution from the government and the government was pleased to be a part of the project.

I will be asking the Minister for Education the perennial question about the future of Traeger Park School. Its numbers seem to be dwindling yet it is a very fine school and has a very fine staff. How long will it be before Sadadeen Secondary College proceeds to its second stage? I have not had any pressure from the community in relation to that and therefore I presume that numbers must be pretty right.

I am pleased to note that there is money in the budget for a switching system which will help in the redistribution of electricity in Alice Springs. We have had some outages which apparently have been caused because there was no capacity to switch. A vehicle will knock over a light pole or a tree will fall on powerlines and there has been no capacity to re-route the power. As a result, parts of the town have experienced outages for a longer period. It is appreciated that there is money to upgrade the switching system.

I am concerned about the capacity of the Ron Goodwin Power Station to meet peak demand. Peak demand periods are December, January and February, over the summer months. I am told that we have the gas turbine No 9 generator which has 14 MW capacity. I asked PAWA officers what would be the result if this were to break down in a period of peak demand. The answer was that, if they have been able to do all the maintenance in the program, they would be just okay. However, if the maintenance program is not carried out and 1 of the 8 MW or 9 MW units fails, they will be in real trouble.

I am sure that members will be aware that there is an industrial dispute occurring which relates to the fact that PAWA workers on Channel Island appear to be receiving some $30 per week more than their counterparts in Alice Springs. That has rankled with those workers. I have raised this matter in this House on a number of occasions and have been told by the minister that the workers have the right to go to arbitration. They have been there and it would seem that they are starting to jack up. They are a pretty loyal band. I remember the days when the Stokes Hill Power Station staff used to strike at the drop of a hat but the Alice Springs fellows would not support them. I would like to think that, at this stage, their grievances result from a sense of frustration that they have been treated as though they are not equals with their counterparts in Darwin. I hope that this matter will be resolved in the near future so that they can get on with the maintenance program.

At the moment, apparently there are some 3 sets which should be out for maintenance. In fact, some are down and they are not being worked on. At the moment, we have a gentleman from Sweden, at a cost of $4000 a week, who is here to assist with maintenance of the gas turbine. However, until work on these other sets has been completed, No 9 turbine cannot be taken out of service. This is of real concern because there will be the possibility of serious outages during peak periods in the summer months. As members know,

Alice Springs obtains all of its water from underground which means that it has to be pumped. A fair amount of power is required to pump the water into town and up into the tanks from which it is reticulated. Thus, there is also a possibility of water supply interruptions. I hope these things do not happen. I hope that every effort will be made to settle this dispute and to get things back on line.

There are a few other matters about which I would like to ask the minister, and I think the committee stage will probably provide the most appropriate opportunity for that. However, one particular matter comes to mind and that is a claim on the ill-famed 7.30 Report last Thursday that there would be power for certain people, presumably the Central Land Council or some of its traditional owners, to have an injunction issued to stop the flood mitigation works that are proposed for Junction Waterhole. I will be asking the Minister for Mines and Energy to have this claim investigated because it would be criminal if that were to occur when the government has been able to find a way around the sacred sites problem, has the determinations, and is prepared to allocate funds in the budget. It would be criminal if this life-saving dam, and that is what it will be, were to be delayed in any way whatsoever. Certainly, I will be doing my best to convince the people of Alice Springs and to condemn roundly anybody who tries to stop this vital work from going ahead.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill. In a few minutes time, it may prove necessary for me to seek leave to have my speech incorporated in Hansard because of the state of my voice. However, there are a number of points I would like to make.

The first concerns some of the ill-informed comments of the member for Wanguri. I think someone should take him outside and give him a lesson, not in speaking, but in who pays for what, where and how much. He made an attack on the reduction of the ethnic affairs budget by $100 000. It should be pointed out to him that, among other things, the federal government tends to come into jointly-funded projects with states and territories, make a big announcement and then back off at 100 mph, leaving the states and, in this case, the Territory to hold the baby. In this instance, I refer to the interpreter service provided in the Northern Territory. This essential service is now funded almost totally by the Northern Territory government while the federal government is backing away at 100 mph.

Similarly, the member for Wanguri pointed out a need for a migrant resource centre in central Australia similar to that in Darwin. Someone should point out to the member for Wanguri that the Migrant Resource Centre is funded by the federal government and therefore he should make an approach to that government, as we have done in the past.

Mr Perron: I think you had better have your remarks incorporated because your voice is running out fast.

Mr VALE: So do I!

Mr Speaker, at no stage did the honourable member comment on sport, a fact which reflects his failure to appear at major sporting functions during the last 12 months. I have attended dozens of them in Darwin and elsewhere in the Territory but on only one occasion did I see the member for Wanguri in attendance.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the level of funding for the Tourist Commission. It should be pointed out that that allocation is $3m

higher, in round figures, than it was in 1988. What the Leader of the Opposition and other residents in the Territory do not seem to realise is that that is not all the funding that goes into tourism. Millions of dollars are expended by the Northern Territory government on the development and construction of roads and infrastructure such as parks and reserves. Indeed, I was in Alice Springs on Monday of this week for the joint announcement of the Northern Territory government's involvement in a multi-million dollar development at Kings Canyon. I do not have the relevant figures at my fingertips but it is somewhere in the order of $5m. The government is concerned not only with the marketing of the Territory but also with the continuing development of infrastructure, roads and other facilities to service our parks and reserves.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated into Hansard.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, tourism is the lifeblood of many in the Northern Territory. Small businesses and large corporations, together with the Northern Territory government, have invested heavily in the industry for the very reason that tourism has a predominantly strong and vital future. Tourism is a growth industry of enormous potential. It is more than a decade since the Northern Territory government realised the extent to which tourism could benefit Territorians. Since then, this industry has expanded rapidly due to the government's long-term policy initiatives. The Northern Territory government was the first to establish a separate tourism ministry in Australia. The inception of the Northern Territory Tourism Commission 10 years ago reflects the government's serious commitment to the effective implementation of these initiatives.

The pilots' dispute represented the type of challenge which can unexpectedly confront the tourism industry and threaten the validity of such an approach. By the same token, such a challenge also highlights the zealous combat deployed by the Northern Territory government and the industry to thwart such problems and surge ahead. The continuation of such determination and commitment, during and after the pilots' dispute, has resulted in the excellent performance of Northern Territory tourism particularly this year. Our recovery was second to none which is even more remarkable given the fact of our remoteness.

Tourism remains one of the Territory's most important industries, second only to mining. The industry directly employs over 10 000 Territorians. Recently revised estimates indicate that the value of tourism to the Northern Territory's economy for 1990-91 will be $460m. This budget reaffirms the government's commitment to this vital employment and growth industry with an allocation of $20m. This year, the unprecedented success of Northern Territory tourism will ensure its significant role as the most rapidly expanding industry in the Territory.

A recent survey by the consultancy firm Pannel Kerr Forster shows that the Northern Territory is the most popular tourist destination in Australia and can look forward to buoyant demand in the decade to come. 88% of those people surveyed who had visited the Northern Territory recommended it as a holiday destination and expressed a desire to return.

Sales by the Northern Territory Government Tourist Bureaus for 1989-90 total nearly $21.5m, representing an increase in sales of 11% on the previous financial year. This is a significant increase when it is remembered that this growth occurred during a year in which the pilots' dispute had seemingly crushed any hope of expansion in this sector. The figures achieved actually surpass the revised estimates by 9% almost reaching the original pre-dispute target and can be viewed with safe optimism as a taste of great things to come.

This level of performance can be maintained only through knowing how to target the market and approaching this ruthlessly competitive sector with foresight and aggression. The Northern Territory government has recognised its responsibility to sustain growth and employment by gaining that competitive edge. This is reflected not only in the bureaus' success stories but in long-term investment strategies like the Yulara Corporation and the Sheratons. The continued development of facilities like these internationally acclaimed hotel corporations is an example of the Northern Territory's commitment to high quality infrastructure to attract international and domestic tourists, as well as the increasingly vital corporate meetings market.

The Territory government's investment in Yulara and the Sheratons provides jobs and incomes for 1750 Territorians, and cash earnings of $33m a year or $640 000 a week flow to Territorians. There is direct spending into other Territory businesses of $41.5m a year or almost $3.5m a month and taxes and charges amount to $26m a year.

The Yulara resort now boasts a wide range of accommodation, from camping facilities to a 5-star hotel. The recent opening of the Red Centre Motel will further increase the choice for visitors to Yulara and effectively cater for the demands of a wider section of the market. Mr Len Taylor, Chairman of the Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, who represents more than 350 industry organisations said:

> The worth of the Territory government's support for the Sheratons and Yulara to the tourism industry is immeasurable. It is absolutely vital to have them. For years you did not have 5-star accommodation. That turned a lot of people away.

This 'across the board' approach to the tourism market has been well researched and planned to see that every corner of consumerism is covered and accommodated.

The government acknowledges the significance of the wide range of visitors to the Northern Territory. As a result, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has implemented a marketing strategy that caters for specific requirements of different groups.

For the purpose of maintaining widespread visitor satisfaction, the Northern Territory government has allocated $5.1m to national marketing campaigns which reinforce the many and varied facets of a holiday experience in the Northern Territory. The marketing campaign will include an extension to the sales training scheme established for the bureaus' staff. This is in keeping with

planned government policy to ensure the commission affords its bureaus' staff the best possible advantage as a selling team in the marketplace.

An Aboriginal liaison officer will be appointed to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. This is in response to the outstanding reception by the tourist industry and the Aborigines for the Aboriginal Liaison Service established in Darwin. This officer will work from Alice Springs and represent central Australia. This service will continue to provide a specialised marketing direction to maintain and expand the high profile Aboriginal tourism product. This initiative supports and promotes the establishment of small businesses primarily for the benefit of Aboriginal enterprises throughout the Territory.

The Northern Territory government continues to promote Aboriginal involvement in Northern Territory tourism: by directly involving Bathurst and Melville Islands, Cobourg, Kakadu, Uluru, Hermannsburg and other interested communities in marketing projects relevant to the provision of an accurate and authentic experience for visitors; by including tourism awareness programs in Aboriginal communities; by seeking advice and assistance on tourism projects and joint projects with tour operators; by providing financial backing for cultural events such as the Barunga Festival; by promoting Aboriginal culture both overseas and interstate; and by fostering of joint management of Conservation Commission parks and the employment of Aboriginal rangers. Due to such involvement some 3000 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are deriving the bulk of their income from the tourist industry.

The government has successfully annexed the vital domestic market, which comprises 80% of our total visitors numbers, by ensuring that diverse requirements are targeted and met. Specifically, the Territory's winning performance in the national tourism arena is a result of 13 weeks of television coverage with award winning, animated Aboriginal painting commercials supported by a press campaign addressing immediacy (for visitors) and further placement of the award winning market segmented magazine campaign to reinforce the diversity and variety of the holiday experience available within the Territory. Specifically targeted efforts to secure for the Territory the lion's share of the lucrative corporate meeting market, which adds to the personal and unique attributes of the marketing strategy, have contributed to the Territory's successful performance in tourism. Promotion of the Northern Territory by national celebrity Major Les Hiddins, of Bush Tucker Man fame, with the Bush Tucker Man videos have gained overseas recognition, reportedly infiltrating the Kremlin, no less, at the request of Mikhael Gorbachev. This widespread intrigue with the man and the land will serve to promote the experience of the Northern Territory landscape.

The important international market has also been captured by the government's well planned and researched marketing strategy. The commission is attuned to the changing needs and attitudes of visitors from overseas. Research shows a significant group of interstate and international consumers are bored with consumerism and tourism products that are overtly status oriented. The Tourist Commission has reacted to this by encouraging a wider

range of adventure activities, outside the realm of the consumers' everyday routine. The tourism industry in the Northern Territory provides the diversity and depth in product demanded by the American, European and Asian markets. The competitive outlook of the Northern Territory government in relation to tourism has provided the incentive for industry representatives to cater for the demand for authentic experiences.

The American market continues to be a major source of the Territory's international business. In 1988-89, 40 000 American visitors came to the Northern Territory, representing an increase of 18%. During the same period, there was little variation to the number of Americans who came to Australia. This indicates a significant rise in American visitors to the Territory in particular. The expenditure by American tourists in the Northern Territory in 1988-89 was $23m - 13% of the total overseas visitor expenditure of $171m.

The Northern Territory government also recognises the importance of backpackers. A survey funded by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the Department of Industries and Development shows approximately 71 000 backpackers visited the Northern Territory in 1989-90, spending $27m. More than 90% of the 1200 surveyed were from overseas. 50% of their money was spent on transport and touring, with 62% of them going on some sort of tour. This highlights the validity of the government's differentiating approach to the visitors' experience. A diverse perspective on a market that is so fiercely competitive and crowded will be maintained as long as such varied requirements exist.

The $20m allocation to the Tourist Commission does not represent the government's total commitment to tourism. The multi-million dollar infrastructural developments such as roads, parks and airports are determinants of tourism's continued success in the Territory. This government's ongoing commitment to this crucial aspect has boosted, and will continue to boost, the growth of tourism.

The inherent disadvantages of living in a remote area and the difficulties experienced in marketing an inaccessible area have been addressed by this year's budget. This government has paved the way for Territorians to benefit from tourism's great future, through its progressive approach to marketing and infrastructural development. The Northern Territory Tourist Commission, secure in this thought, has continued to encourage international airlines to include the Northern Territory in their network of destinations. Singapore Airlines, Qantas and Garuda have realised the significance of the Territory as a lucrative destination for international airlines. Recently, Malaysian Airlines announced a direct flight service from Kuala Lumpur to Darwin to Adelaide return to start in November this year. The government will continue to support further negotiations with international airlines to secure their access to the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude by reinforcing the government's responsible attitude to maintaining the Territory's natural tourism assets. We are proud of our natural attractions and we will preserve, protect and promote them for the benefit of all Australians and international visitors. Tourism is the

Territory's most exciting and fastest growing industry. It is labour intense and promises a wide-ranging selection of jobs for many Territorians for years to come.

Mr Speaker, you may recall that, at this time last year, the responsibilities for youth, sport, recreation and ethnic affairs involved the formation of the administrative unit, the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, which I indicated would assist in raising the profile of these important community functions. In order to provide a truly integrated approach in achieving this objective, the office has unified its youth, sport, recreation and ethnic affairs functions into all areas of departmental responsibility, Territory wide. Although the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs is only a small department, it continues to be a very active and achievement oriented unit. During the past year, some significant goals have been achieved in all areas.

I will start firstly with area of ethnic affairs. The provision of language services is being expanded to include Katherine and Nhulunbuy, to complement the existing services in Darwin and Alice Springs. This year, the Northern Territory Interpreter and Translator Service has been provided with an additional $24 000 to compensate for the Commonwealth's reduced level of funding from $71 000 to $53 000. From 1989-90, the Commonwealth government started phasing out the former cost-sharing arrangements. Its contribution will be reduced by 20% each financial year. This brings the total provision for the program by the Northern Territory government to $274 000 in 1990-91 and further demonstrates the government's initiative to improve language services to the community.

The research project into language services needs in export and tourism will continue to be funded at a cost of $75 000. The project will enable all pilot tourism projects commenced in 1989-90 to be monitored, fully evaluated and tested to harness and improve interpreting and translating skills in the export and tourism industries. The ultimate benefit of these programs will be in the competitiveness of our tourism and export industries overseas, especially in South-east Asia.

While raising the point of South-east Asia, it is appropriate that I should mention the Arafura Sports Festival. The inaugural Arafura Sports Festival is to be staged in Darwin from 18 to 25 May 1991. The Arafura Sports Festival, unlike the Honda Central Australian Masters Games, is aimed at open level competition with a target area of South-east Asia and northern Australia. It is anticipated that 2000 competitors will compete in the inaugural festival, competing in 20 different sports. The festival has a budget of $750 000. However, this is expected to increase to around $1m when sponsorship is taken into account.

The economic impact that the festival will have on the Territory's economy is expected to equal that of the Masters Games and, in addition, will strengthen further the Territory's ties, both sporting and economic, with our South-east Asian neighbours. The effort the government is putting into these events will be rewarded many times over, not only in the economic sense, but also in the promotion of the Territory as a tourist destination. The

Arafura Sports Festival will also be a wonderful opportunity for the many ethnic groups in Darwin to add a real multicultural atmosphere to the occasion.

Countdown for the Third Honda Central Australian Masters Games has commenced with the opening ceremony in Alice Springs on Saturday 13 October. It can be expected that the third games will surpass the previous 2 successfully staged events, with 2500 athletes attracted to the Centre for the event. Based on the experience of previous years, it is anticipated that, as a result of the games, an estimated $2m will be injected into the Alice Springs economy during the games, at an overall cost to the government of $375 000 over the period 1988-89 to 1990-91. The continuing sponsorship of the games by Honda is indicative of that company's faith in the future of Territory sport and the ongoing success of this event.

The hosting of the World Water Ski Racing Championships from 14 to 26 August 1991 will be the first international event staged in the Northern Territory. A world championship such as this has wide-ranging benefits for the tourism industry and the Northern Territory Water Ski Association. It is appropriate that the Northern Territory government lend strong support to the association in hosting the championships.

Another major event currently under way in the Territory is the 1990 Australian Safari which involves 85 motor vehicles, 80 motorcycles and is drawing around 800 people, of whom 102 are international media, through Ayers Rock, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin for the finish.

A total of $5.84m is included in the Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs 1990-91 budget for sport development throughout the Territory. In addition, there will be a transfer of an additional $2.5m from the Lotteries Trust Account to the Consolidated Fund to assist in the development of sporting facilities throughout the Northern Territory, bringing the total funds provided in 1990-91 for the development of sporting facilities to an estimated $9.175m. This will ensure completion of facilities at the Marrara Sports Complex, including the grandstand, soccer/athletics ground and associated car parking and amenities totalling an estimated $7.16m.

I am pleased to say that the Marrara Indoor Stadium continues to gain positive responses from visiting Australian and international teams. This was reinforced during the recent visit by the Australian women's basketball team, on their way to the world championships in Malaysia, at which time the team acknowledged that the stadium was the best venue they had played at in Australia and equal to world standards. Similar compliments were made by cricketers Lillee, Border and Marsh regarding Gardens Oval during the 'Over the Top' match. In this regard, special mention must be made of the excellent work undertaken by Craig Coleman as curator in preparing the excellent turf wicket.

An estimated $775 000 has been committed for facility development in Alice Springs for the lighting of ovals and the development of the new Alice Springs tennis complex. Also this year, an estimated $170 000 will be expended on facilities development in Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory. Other

facilities to gain support this year will include $30 000 for the construction of baseball facilities at Purkiss Reserve in Tennant Creek, $76 000 to the Katherine Town Council for stage 1 development of the showground amenities and $140 000 in Nhulunbuy for the provision of playing lights at the town oval.

The economic consequence of the social benefits of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs cannot be under-stated, even though they cannot be measured financially as simply as the economic impact of an event. Young people, whose lives are enriched a little by sport or recreation, may be less likely to vandalise or act anti-socially. Active participation can reduce the incidence of alcohol consumption. A sporting role model can influence his or her admirers to a healthier lifestyle and, with over 100 sports available, may affect a person's decision to stay in, or to leave, the Territory. The Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs is very conscious of these facts and has put into effect programs designed to assist young Territory sportsmen and sportswomen to reach their maximum potential in their chosen sport.

An amount of $232 000 has been allocated to continue the highly successful coach-in-residence scheme in 1990-91. The coach-in-residence program was introduced by the government in 1985. Since that time, the following sports have benefited from the scheme: hockey, basketball, Rugby Union, Rugby League, cycling, equestrian, baseball, athletics, and badminton. Five sports will continue in the scheme during 1990-91: basketball, badminton, athletics, netball and ten pin bowling. Northern Territory representatives in Australian teams are increasing, as their sports' development proceeds.

In addition to this program, the Sports Performance Unit continues to be involved in many educational programs, such as fitness testing, the national coaching accreditation scheme, Austswim, numerous seminars, and sports injury prevention, aimed at assisting to improve the quality of sports coaching and administration in the Territory. Further, the NT Sports Scholarship Scheme will be extended in 1990-91 to $51 000 in recognition of the demands placed on it due to the success of Northern Territory sports people at the higher performance levels. Last year, 14 athletes were awarded scholarships to assist with their training at national and international levels. The government is continuing to help Territory youth achieve their dream in sport.

Funds for administrative support are being increased to meet the growing needs of professionalism in the ranks of the Territory's sporting administrators. Under a refinement of the salary assistance support guidelines, an additional $95 000 has been made available this year to boost salary subsidies for full-time coaches, development officers and administrative officers.

The Sports Travel Subsidy Scheme continues to be an area of major support to sports, with 50% of their representative teams' air fares assisted by the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, to compete at approved Northern Territory and national championships. Nowhere else in Australia is there assistance available on this basis. In 1990-91, an amount of $778 000 will be available to assist with this program.

The future of the Territory lies in our youth and there is an ongoing need to provide our young people with opportunities to excel and develop through youth, sport and recreation programs. The Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs has appointed a Youth Affairs Manager. This will have the effect of emphasising the importance of attention paid to the 25% of Territorians who are between 12 and 25 years of age. The coordination of expertise brought to the field will facilitate improved services utilising the $624 000 approved for programs for youth organisations Territory-wide in 1990-91. I am also pleased to advise that the office will investigate another approach to establishing a Youth Advisory Council to operate as a mechanism to support young people across the Territory, between the ages of 12 and 25 years, through consultation.

A further initiative this year, in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission, is the placement of Youthsport Coordinators, one based in Darwin and the other in Alice Springs, to build on the excellent work already undertaken by Aussie Sports. The Northern Territory contribution will be $30 000 in 1990-91 to augment the $105 000 to be provided by the Sports Commission.

In conclusion, I would particularly like to pay tribute to all the people who work in the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs for their untiring efforts, which often include extra hours and weekend commitments, to ensure that services and support are maintained to their clients. Given the achievements of our sportsmen and sportswomen to date, the next decade will be one of the most exciting and rewarding as we step from the national into the international arena. I support the Appropriation Bill.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, in my contribution to this debate tonight, I begin by saying that I believe that the Treasurer should be complimented on the fact that this is a balanced budget. I am still trying to learn what governments really mean by a balanced budget. I believe that, one day, someone will write a book which will be a best seller and will make fascinating reading on how governments balance their budgets, but that is another story.

If I were asked to describe what this budget is, I would call it a steady-as-she-goes budget or a budget that has been designed with an election in mind. I would call it a low-key budget and, certainly, with the expenditure increases of 6.6% and receipts up by 5.9%, it is non-threatening. In a debate of this nature, where we are looking at the overall budget, we need to look at the overall economic scene as well. I do not think that I would win too many fights in this Assembly by saying that we are in a contracting economic environment. I certainly believe that Australia, in particular, is in a recession. This week, I read in the Business Review Weekly that Peter Boyle, the President of the Australian Small Business Association, said that 100 000 small businesses had closed their doors in the last 12 months in Australia. I believe that that is the climate in which we are dealing.

We have heard of the failure of a large number of companies such as those owned by Bond and Elliott. There is no doubt that major companies in Australia today are laying off staff. They are looking at all sorts of cost-saving schemes, consolidating, paying off loans, selling off assets etc. It is certainly a constricting environment. We have evidence of this

in Alice Springs as well. Recently, a building company failed, leaving debts of $700 000. That impacts throughout the community. I would hesitate to guess how many small businesses were and are affected by that substantial failure, but there would be quite a number. The effect permeates throughout the community. Given that background, I believe the government's figures in respect of estimated revenue receipts are probably a little rubbery. I would not like to be the Treasurer in 6 months time, when he reviews his budget.

I would like to comment now on what is happening to the average Territorian. I believe that most people, even those on higher salaries, are unable to save money these days. There is evidence to indicate that families are considering leaving the Territory and looking for greener pastures - and I am not so sure that those exist. Certainly, I would say that the confidence of the average Territorian is very low at the moment. Budgets should be designed for a purpose and, in the current economic climate, the budget should be designed to restore both the business and the individual confidence that appears to be lacking at the moment.

I believe the Territory has a noose around its neck in the form of Yulara, the Sheratons and the Trade Development Zone. We are putting large amounts of money into those ventures. Recently, I received some documents through the mail which offered a night's accommodation at the Sheraton Alice Springs at $50 for local Territorians, with discounts on food and so on. That is all money that has to be made up by the taxpayer, and that has a direct effect on our budget. Whilst we have that noose around our neck, the government will not be in the position to do what it really needs to do in terms of the restoration of confidence. More importantly than that, it is a disincentive for investment coming into the Territory. I could not imagine anybody building accommodation in Alice Springs to compete with the Sheratons 5-star accommodation at $50 a night. They would not be able to make it.

In the Top End, we have put money into the Darwin furniture factory. Who would go into any enterprise that would compete directly with the Darwin furniture factory? It would not be on. I believe that the strategy of the Territory government in building the new Parliament House is wrong. To my mind, the loan moneys that are being used for this project would have been much better used to meet other community needs and could have been spread over a much broader range of projects.

In a nutshell, what is needed is a private sector that is healthy and growing, and I cannot see any evidence that this budget will encourage that. What I perceive to be a flaw in this budget is that the government should be showing some lead in terms of its cost savings and improvement in efficiency. I do not think that the word 'efficiency' is used in this budget even in relation to the public sector. The greatest flaw in the budget is that there is no long-range planning. If we are to restore confidence, we have to give people hope and the way to give people hope is to have some practical, long-range plans. There is no mention of any such plans and I would like to touch on a few that might help this government.

The first is that there are enormous, potential markets in the ASEAN region and there is a total absence of any long-term plan to tap into those markets. Darwin should be gearing itself to become a key regional centre in the area. In the last sittings, a minor mention was made of this, but there does not appear to be a long-range strategy to make Darwin a regional centre.

We should take into account the fact that we have enormous reserves of gas. We should be moving towards establishing a gas industry that is the best in Australia. I do not see any evidence or planning for that, and certainly no mention of it appears in the budget documents. We have oil from central Australia and we have oil in the Timor Sea. One would expect that we would be building an industry around that. However, we seem to be obsessed with simply selling oil. What about the industry that goes with it? Again, I do not see any long-range planning. In relation to the pastoral industry, we have the beef but surely we should be talking about product processing. I have not heard any mention of leather or canning factories.

This brings me to the end of my contribution to this debate. The reality in the Northern Territory today is that households need relief and I do not see that this budget offers that. I believe that businesses need a restoration of confidence and I do not see that flowing from this budget either. Whilst I congratulate the Treasurer for producing a balanced budget, I believe it is an election budget and a steady-as-she-goes budget. The serious flaw is that there are no major initiatives to give hope for the future, and there is little long-term planning.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, it is late in the evening and I will keep my remarks as brief as possible. I would like to refer to some aspects of the budget as they relate to Tennant Creek and the Barkly electorate. There are some pleasing aspects of the budget for our region and there are some very disappointing aspects where issues simply have not been addressed.

I have said in the House before and I will say again tonight that there is a very serious need to commit some substantial funding to the restoration of the 7-mile repeater station at Tennant Creek. From time to time, funds are allocated for minor rehabilitation works but there is a desperate need to ensure that complete restoration takes place in the near future, and I believe that the National Trust has written to the minister about that. It is one of the few remaining telegraph stations in the Territory and it is likely to disappear before our eyes if the work is not carried out very soon. I do not know what will be required to motivate the government to take action on this matter. Despite the efforts of the Friends of the Telegraph to do what they can with limited time and resources, there is a need to restore the repeater station buildings, if for no other reason than because they are a very important part of the Territory's heritage. Every effort should be made to return them to a decent standard as soon as possible.

There is also a great need for a development plan for the Devil's Marbles region. The Conservation Commission has done a considerable amount of work in the area during the last couple of years, but the water and power facilities are insufficient to meet the needs of bus and caravan campers who visit the Devil's Marbles. It has now reached the point at which amenities at the Devil's Marbles are so poor and scarce that people rush into the nearest roadhouse on the morning after camping there, to take advantage of the showers and toilets and to complete their ablutions before travelling on.

I do not know whether any member has visited the Devil's Marbles recently. There is a considerable camping area and 2 small toilet facilities. There is virtually no running water and very little in the way of garbage disposal facilities. At daybreak, the buses load up and head off to the nearest roadhouse where they stop for a comfort break. Everybody piles into the toilets and the ablution facilities. Usually they spend very little in the shop before they toddle off again on their holiday journey.

In fairness to the roadhouses, it is not their job to be providing public facilities for the campers at the Devil's Marbles.

Something needs to happen very soon if the Devil's Marbles is not to become a tip. The facilities there simply cannot cope with the number of people who are using them in a way for which they were not designed. The Conservation Commission facilities at the Devil's Marbles comprise, basically, a viewing facility and a rest area for people during the day. They are not designed for overnight campers or for 4 or 5 busloads of people at a time, and they are not designed to cater for caravan campers who want to pull up for a couple of days. I indicate to the government and the minister that the matter needs to be addressed.

People down the track hear from time to time of the government's massive investment in the 'Red Star People's Furniture Factory' and other such facilities. I would like to refer tonight to the need for a facility in Tennant Creek which is not only important to the town but also to the bus industry and the tourist industry as a whole. The facility is a transit centre or bus transfer point. Over the years, buses have moved between various places in the town and at Threeways in an effort to provide the best possible arrangements and transfer facilities for their customers. It has not worked terribly well at all. It had reached a point now at which the industry itself and the tourists who use it are being done a great disservice because we do not have a basic transfer facility for buses which use Tennant Creek as an interchange. It seems pretty pointless to spend millions of dollars to attract people to the Territory only to put them through the unfortunate experiences they are faced with in existing transfer facilities at Threeways and in town. Whether the government sees such a facility as a private enterprise project or something which could be achieved in cooperation with the council or in some other way, the need is quite critical and the industry will suffer if something is not done.

As fas as tourism is concerned, the continuing development of the battery and other mining exhibits will be most important. Very little has been set aside in this year's budget for the expansion of those facilities. The government could also make a considerable contribution to the development of tourism in Tennant Creek and the Barkly region by providing a facilitator in the area. I use the word 'facilitator' in the broadest sense because it is a position that is not common in the Territory although persons have been employed in such positions elsewhere in Australia. Such a position would have a very useful function in Tennant Creek. A facilitator would work with business, the council and the tourist industry on a Territory and national level to ensure that the right tourist facilities were available for people visiting the area. Tourism in our town is still relatively new compared with that in some other centres. Tourism volume is not as high as in some other centres but, nevertheless, there is a strong will in the town to improve performance in this area. A facilitator could play an important role in that. Applications have been made over the years for funding for this position but it has not yet come to fruition. The matter should be addressed as quickly as possible.

The budget papers show that approximately $6.1m has been set aside for the rebuilding of the Stuart and the Barkly Highways in the coming 12 months. That expenditure is, of course, the mop-up of the Bicentennial Roads Program and it is very welcome. The road-widening and rebuilding was desperately needed in some areas and certainly will not go astray at all.

I would like to comment briefly on the need for a bypass road. That need will not go away. It will constantly crop up for consideration by

Territory governments. The issue is very simple. Do we want the Tennant Creek economy to thrive and benefit from the through traffic or are we quite happy for the community to struggle on with the through traffic following the existing route? I have always held the view that the bypass road into Tennant will come. It is simply a matter of when it comes and who builds it. The essential ingredient is discussions on what will happen to the infrastructure at Threeways. It would be fair to assume that Shell would have $5m to $6m invested at the Threeways site. It might be a bit more or less but it is the sort of investment which cannot be ignored and which has to be dealt with in some way. I have spoken to Shell management in recent weeks, and was advised that it had not received any representations in relation to the realignment of the road and ...

A member interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: In response to the minister's interjection, I spoke to the manger in Sydney. His advice was that Shell had received no communication whatsoever in relation to the matter. If that is the case, there is obviously a need for dialogue to resolve the issue. I support the construction of the bypass road at an appropriate time. It will not happen overnight but it ought to come in time because it will be important to the community's well-being and financial strength in the long term.

The budget papers refer also to an amount of $200 000 or $300 000 for construction of the Aboriginal transition unit at the old Tennant Creek Primary School. It is interesting to note that the building which is being renovated was condemned in 1958, 1964, 1972 and in 1978 or 1979. On each occasion, it was reclaimed with expensive rehabilitation works and put back into use.

Mr Coulter: It will be a heritage building soon.

Mr TUXWORTH: It almost is. It was built in 1954 or 1955, in the days when we had timber and fibro and the white ants ate out the timber as fast as it could be put it.

I believe that the Aboriginal interest in the transition school is encouraging. Whatever we may think of having separate schools or whether the Aboriginals are believed to be interested, parents of Aboriginal children in Tennant Creek have a very genuine belief that the children are not fitting in well at the other schools and will benefit from attending this school. Whilst only time will tell whether that is the case, we certainly have no monopoly on wisdom and knowledge in terms of educating Aboriginals. If this new project is likely to get kids into school to give them an education and a start in life, it will be very worth while. The proposal to have a separate school is not really being promoted by a bunch of ratbags and extremists who want to have black schools, separate education and so on. Many of these people are parents who are quite desperate in their belief that their kids do not fit in. They want their kids to have an education, and they see that this may be the way to achieve that. I will not go out on a limb and say that it will be the solution, but it is certainly worth a try.

It is very good news that the Elliott Power Station is to be converted to gas. That raises the question of whether, ultimately, a powerline will run from Elliott to Newcastle Waters. One of the great follies of the time when the Newcastle Waters Power Station was built was that we did not bite the bullet and run a line across from Elliott. The problem was that the Elliott Power Station had so much trouble handling capacity that it would

have meant rebuilding it as well as the powerline and that was a bit more than resources would stand. Now that the Elliott station is to be converted to gas, I would encourage the minister to consider the line from Elliott to Newcastle Waters Power Station. There is no doubt that the latter would be burning heaps of fuel and, at the rate at which fuel prices are rising at the moment, that is an added burden on the taxpayer. I simply raise the matter for consideration by the minister.

During the last couple of weeks, there has been much media coverage concerning cuts to Aboriginal groups including Bagot, Gwalwa Daraniki, the ADF, Tangentyere, Julalikari and Kalano. Whilst I am not particularly au fait with some of those, I would like to put in a word for Julalikari, whose funding was cut by about $17 000. On a per capita basis, Julalikari is probably funded better than most of the other organisations. However, it is not unreasonable that it be recognised as a group which is trying pretty hard and not doing too badly. Like others, I have had my run-ins with Julalikari, including a couple of major public brawls on certain issues. Nonetheless, it is only fair that Julalikari be acknowledged as an Aboriginal group which is working very hard to do the right thing, to be prudent with its money and wise with its resources, and to obtain the best value out of every dollar.

Mr Speaker, when you are travelling through Tennant Creek at some time, it would be worth your while to have a look at the training that Julalikari offers and the services it provides. I am sure that you would have to agree that Julalikari is worthy of some additional support rather than a cut across the board. There are not many Aboriginal groups in the Territory which are doing so well that we want to help them do a little better, but Julalikari is one of them. It is fair to say that Jurnkurakurr, which does not feature heavily in the Territory budget allocations, is another. It is an Aboriginal organisation which is heavily involved in running a nursery and training people. It lives from hand to mouth and it does not have a great deal of money. It is working in an area that is unlikely to bring in dollars but, nevertheless, it seems to be doing pretty well and should receive credit for its efforts.

I want to return to the question of fuel costs. Whilst the government does not have much control over what is happening at present, it will certainly take a lot of stick simply because it happens to be in power. There is a feeling in the bush at the moment that, if fuel prices keep rising, even to the level of $1 per litre, it will be impossible for cattle properties, particularly the marginal ones, to continue to operate. I can name a dozen property owners who would sell tomorrow if they could get buyers. They believe that they are between a rock and a hard place. The cost of fuel has now reached a point at which there is no profit left in what they are doing and they would get out if they could.

In this context, it would be timely to implement a program which would make liquid natural gas facilities available for properties in the Northern Territory and which, over a period of years, would move them on to gas, if for no other reason than to maintain the viability of the cattle industry. Already, the industry has to deal with the vagaries of drought and variations in market prices and, if we add to those the spiralling costs of fuel to pump the bores and run the power plants, inevitably many properties will fail to survive. One way of providing some relief would be to commence a program of moving all our pastoral properties which have to maintain stationary engines on to a liquid natural gas generating system. Regrettably, human nature is such that people do not take action until confronted with adversity. I think that $1 per litre for fuel is adversity

by anybody's standards and we had better do something about the situation if we have any interest in our future.

Mr Speaker, most of my other points have been covered at some stage in this debate and I will save my other comments until the committee stage of the debate.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, in closing the debate, I propose to respond to the Leader of the Opposition's comments in response to the budget, which he made during the last sittings. At that time, he made what was virtually a campaign speech which touched only indirectly on budgetary matters. It was a fairly weak attempt to present alternative budget proposals to the community rather than what we have traditionally seen from the opposition - direct criticism of the budget with no alternative proposals. I have in front of me a copy of the Leader of the Opposition's speech. The interesting thing about it is that it does not contain any figures. It is a bit hard to put forward a realistic alternative budget without putting any figures in it. The Leader of the Opposition makes sweeping statements about what he would do, but he does not say how or at what expense. I should point out also that many of the things he spoke about were in fact fairly straight lifts from initiatives which this government has been involved in for many years.

The Leader of the Opposition began by making some play about how he would 'open the books'. Mr Speaker, the books are already open in every respect except for details held in commercial confidence. No other government provides such a consolidated and comprehensive picture in the framework of the budget. We provide this information in several different formats so that the House and the people of the Territory generally can see what we are doing with the dollars that they have trusted us to manage.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say that taxes and charges would not increase beyond inflation in the first term of a Labor government. Unfortunately, I do not have them with me at this stage, but I have asked Treasury to give me the figures in respect of increases in Territory taxes and charges in the years since self-government. I am quite sure, even without having them checked, that the rises will be well below inflation. If he is simply promising that he will not raise taxes beyond inflation over the next 4 years, really he is telling Territorians that he reserves the right to raise some $200m more than we are raising today whilst still remaining within inflation. That is not much of a promise in my opinion.

He then said that a Labor government would institute program budgeting. We already have program budgeting. We have a detailed sophisticated budget review process before, during and after each year, and that is always improving. We have presented program information for 3 years now, with appropriations by activities for the last 2 years.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say that this government's budgets are based simply on last year's expenditure plus a percentage for inflation. I have news for him. Most people are not getting too much for inflation these days. Our budgets do not simply take last year's figures and add inflation. The previous year's expenditure is merely a starting point from which the budget is developed. Account is taken of the full and part-year effect of programs commencing or ceasing, cyclical variations and new, revised or expanded programs. I would suggest to him that probably most governments adopt a similar starting point in developing their budgets.

He said that a Labor government would introduce triennium funding. It would be great to introduce triennium funding for everyone. I would like to introduce triennium funding. All I would need to know is how much I will receive for the next 3 years. I would be delighted to introduce triennium funding, but the Leader of the Opposition is being quite unrealistic. $1000m of our budget comes from the federal government. We never know how much we will get from one year to the next and it is impossible to rely on the stabilising of that large component of our budget. Triennium funding, unfortunately, is not likely on a significant scale. Of course, it would be possible to introduce triennium funding for particular aspects of government funding, and just to lock ourselves in.

According to the Leader of the Opposition, a Labor government would manage debt. He has not been listening of course. I delivered a statement on the first day of the last sittings which showed that this government has been managing its debt situation very responsibly, and we will continue to do exactly that. Our debt is managed, and we are quite proud of that. He said that Labor would develop a register of all government assets. Departments already have asset registers which are subject to regular audit. Furthermore, in the last 12 months, the government has introduced a sophisticated computerised asset management system which is now operating.

In relation to education, the Leader of the Opposition said that Labor would ensure that our retention rates moved towards the Australian average. There is little chance of the Territory's retention rate approaching the Australian average in the near future because nearly a third of our students are traditional Aboriginal people who, despite our best efforts, do not tend to stay at school until Year 12. Despite this, the Northern Territory's retention rates have improved significantly over the past few years as a result of the government's secondary college strategy and the decision to provide additional teachers in some other high schools to enable them to offer a wider range of courses. In fact, there has been a 5.5% increase on the 1989-90 figure, with a retention rate of 47.7% in 1989-90.

The Leader of the Opposition said that local recruitment of teachers will be increased. That is a pretty bold promise. You cannot increase local recruitment of teachers unless you have trained them first. Already, preference is given to graduates from the Northern Territory University and Northern Territory scholarship holders when recruiting teachers and, as this program progresses, further savings in recruitment expenses will be realised. Labor says that it will take action to get teachers to stay in remote area schools. This has always been a difficult problem and recently the government introduced a remote area package to make it more attractive not only for teachers but for other public servants as well to stay in remote localities. I predict, however, that we will always have a fairly significant turnover in some of those areas which people simply do not look on as desirable locations in which to spend the rest of their lives.

The Leader of the Opposition said that a Labor government would increase the number of fully-qualified Aboriginal teachers. It is not a very significant promise. Over the years, Batchelor College has produced over 40 trained Aboriginal teachers and has over 50 enrolments in the teaching course in 1990.

The last one that I will touch is that the police will have cars that they can rely on. It is true that the police have been running cars at much higher mileage rates than we would have liked. In this budget, we have provided for the replacement of about $3m-worth of police vehicles. That is approximately $1m over and above the normal replacement program. Police

vehicles are run continuously every day by several shifts and they run up high mileages very quickly. We aim to have police patrol vehicles replaced at 40 000 km. That is what this funding arrangement is designed to do.

I would like to touch very quickly on some of the tax measures that the states have adopted since our budget was handed down. After the states received their bad news at the Premiers Conference, as we did, they all went home to work out how they could make ends meet. I will pick out those items that are significant in relation to the Territory situation. In South Australia, the financial institutions duty rate has been increased to 0.1%. Honourable members will be aware that our rate is 0.025%. Thus, the Northern Territory levies 2.5¢ per $100 and South Australia levies 9.5¢ per $100 or about 4 times our rate.

There is an interesting new trend in payroll tax. South Australia and Tasmania have both brought fringe benefits into the payroll tax calculations. They are taking the Commonwealth definition of 'fringe benefits', adding it to the payroll of a company and applying payroll tax rates to the total figure. Obviously, it is a grab by governments to expand their revenue. In addition, payroll tax rates in South Australia are up to 6.25%. Honourable members will recall that ours is 6% for payrolls over $1m with a sliding scale up to that.

South Australia has a stamp duty on compulsory third-party premiums, which we do not have. Theirs has been increased from 0.5% to 8%, which is about a sixteenfold increase. For certificates of compulsory third-party insurance, duty has been increased from $3 to $15. I am not quite sure what that tax is. It is a new one to me.

In Victoria, FID has increased from 0.03% to 0.06%. Payroll tax has increased to 7%. Petroleum licence fees have increased by 1.7¢ per litre. The new fee will be, therefore, approximately 6.4¢ per litre, as compared to our 5¢. Victoria was the first of the states to introduce a tourism marketing duty similar to ours. It goes into a special trust fund for marketing tourism. Theirs is also 2.4% of accommodation charges. Unlike ours, they are levying the duty only on accommodation which is $100 per night or more. However, it will raise a great deal of money because, in a place like Victoria, it is probably hard to find a pub that charges less than $100 a night. The dollars would come from the cities where the majority of people would be staying at the large hotels such as the Sheratons or the Hyatts.

In Victoria, conveyancing duty, which is paid on property that is bought and sold, has been extended to cover the transfer of businesses. The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction which limits the imposition of this duty to the conveyance of rural property. If the Northern Territory adopted the same practice as the states, conveyancing revenue would be expected to increase by approximately $1m per annum. They are levying the duty on the goodwill component of the business as well as the real estate. We levy it only on the real estate value of the transaction.

In Tasmania, FID has been increased to 0.06%. Payroll tax has been increased to 7% and also covers fringe benefits. The sale of a business and associated goodwill will be dutiable in future. Accident insurance policies - I am not sure whether that refers to motor vehicle accident or personal accident insurance - are now dutiable at 8% of the premium. In Tasmania, the rural land tax rate has been increased threefold. In New South Wales, payroll tax has increased to 7% and FID has doubled from 0.03% to 0.06%. In the ACT, payroll tax has increased to 7% and FID has doubled

from 0.03% to 0.08%. If any honourable member is interested to see them, I have had a series of simple graphs prepared. These indicate how the Northern Territory compares with the states. I can assure honourable members that, in many cases, we rate most handsomely.

To conclude, the national economy does not look good to me nor to anybody else. The coming year and probably beyond will be a pretty grim time for Australian business and, therefore, employment. The oil price shock of late will not help anything at all. Business failures are becoming regular. We notice that, when a big company crashes, there is a chain reaction all the way down. Some of the people to whom they owe money crash and so on down the line. The lesson is that businesses depend all the way up the line on big business. That really reinforces the statement that was made by someone recently that what small business needs is big business.

The member for Flynn and others made the point that we should not be spending money on the Sheratons and Yulara. It was the same old argument. What he is saying really is that they should not be there because they would not be there if we had not entered into the agreement to support the financial arrangements. If they were not there, how many other businesses in the Northern Territory would not be there today? We know that they employ 1700 people between them. They have a payroll bill per annum of about $30m and a tax bill to the Commonwealth and the Territory of about $22m a year. Goodness knows the figure for their consumption of coke, booze, food, cleaning and whatever. These things ought to be considered when people like the member for Flynn make bald statements that we should not be spending money on the Sheratons and Yulara. The place is as it is today because of what is out there. Those Sheraton hotels at $35m and $45m apiece and $200m for Yulara are big business, and little business lives off big business.

It is a hard budget in some respects. As I said in the budget speech, we are requiring cuts and efficiency dividends from the public service in the order of $30m. It will be a difficult budget, despite the fact that it was an election budget in the sense that it was the last budget that could be brought down prior to an election. There will be ramifications on services to citizens as the year goes by and the public service managers try to get by with that much less. However, it is also a budget that is easy on taxpayers in the Territory. Some taxes increased but most of them were held. Most of the charges have been held. We are trying to stay out of people's pockets as best we can and, by any comparison at all with the states of Australia, we are doing very well.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr REED (Primary Industries and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

In the adjournment debate tonight, I would like to take the opportunity to place a couple of matters on the record. The first is the meeting in Canberra yesterday that we have heard so much about with the party politic of the ALP discussing the future of the communications industry and other issues. At the outset, I would like to express my utter distaste for the way in which this was done. In Canberra, we have representatives from all parts of Australia in the parliament. These were elected by the people and,

in their turn, some of those members formed a government. Ministers were appointed to run the government and the country and to make the very difficult decisions that sometimes face government. What I find absolutely distasteful about the whole scene is that that government did not have the intestinal fortitude to make those decisions itself. It deferred its responsibility to the party politic and the unions in this country, who do not represent the people of Australia and who should not have the ability to influence the future direction of a very important industry - the communications industry in this country. That decision should have been made by the government of the day, and I think that it is a very sad indictment on the government of Australia. Indeed, I guess it reflects on us all that the government did not have the ability, the intestinal fortitude or the will to make the decision itself.

Another aspect that I find most distasteful is that 2 self-appointed representatives supposedly were to represent the Northern Territory at this conference. I find neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the member for Stuart to be at all suitable as a representative for the Northern Territory. It is of interest to note that a great number of union members in Darwin, and no doubt members of the ALP, have since agreed with that finding and have become aware that their views were not represented in Canberra as perhaps they thought they would be. I find little comfort at all in the assurances from the member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition that all will be well.

I wish to refer now to some comments made by the Leader of the Opposition on the 7.30 Report on the ABC tonight. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked by Dennis Driver whether the rate for the major trunk lines in the Territory would be the same as in the states or whether some inequitable system would apply, he answered:

> That pricing structure will continue on the same formula as presently exists. The advantage we have got now is that these things are written into the party platform to protect the community service obligations for the Territory, for the remote and rural areas. It will be in legislation.

The honourable member is telling Territorians that they can rest easy because their rights have been taken care of by enshrining them in the platform of the ALP. We are told that there is no cause for concern because, once it is in the platform, everything will happen as we would wish.

It sounded good, but I am afraid that I was not reassured. I was not reassured because, notwithstanding the range of positions stated in his own party platform, the Leader of the Opposition has chosen selectively to ditch a whole range of them. On one occasion, he introduced a transition to government policy, only to ditch parts of it in the following week. As I recall, it was introduced during the May sittings of this Assembly. Very quickly, he decided that perhaps he would not support the funding of elections from the public purse when he found that there was a rather unhealthy reaction to that policy. Very smartly, and probably wisely, he decided to ditch that policy.

We can take little comfort from the communications debacle that we now face. In the very same program in which the Leader of the Opposition stated that we need not have any fear because something had been enshrined in the Labor Party platform, the reporter went on to ask whether the ALP would decriminalise marijuana. The Leader of the Opposition replied that it was not on their list of priorities. The reporter said: 'It is in your party

platform'. The Opposition Leader responded: 'We won't be doing it in the first term of government. It is not a priority'. There is another example. Something can be in the platform, but it has then to be a priority of the Leader of the Opposition. It depends on how he is feeling when he gets up in the morning.

The reporter then asked: 'How can you decide what the priority is in your party platform? The Leader of the Opposition replied: 'Oh, it is easy, Dennis. You go through the party platform, the parliamentary wing'. The parliamentary wing decides what to keep or what to ditch from the party platform. You can imagine them in a caucus meeting after breakfast, Mr Speaker, deciding what part of their platform they will ditch that day and what part they will run with. How would Territorians feel any sense of security under a Labor government when this is its approach to its own platform? That approach is leading to widespread confusion and is constantly expanding the credibility gap between what the Leader of the Opposition says and what he means. I call on the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite to state what parts of their party platform they now support and what parts they have ditched. They owe it to Territorians to make it quite clear just where they stand. They have now ditched the marijuana legalisation from the party platform for the time being because it is not a priority - or perhaps because the parliamentary wing has to give it a little more thought.

The reporter on the 7.30 Report asked a further question: 'What about the 35-hour week?' We should bear in mind that, earlier in the program, the Leader of the Opposition had assured us that our rights are protected because that is enshrined in the ALP platform. The 35-hour week is in the ALP platform. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition replied: 'Well I think the 35-hour week - time has passed that by, and that certainly won't be part of any commitment that we make in the first term of government'. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is here tonight, and it is no wonder that he is bowing his head. It is no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition is not here. He is probably at home in absolute disgrace. The marijuana question is in doubt, the 35-hour week has gone and the government funding of elections has gone.

Last week, I issued a press release in relation to donations to political parties. A letter was sent by the ALP, under the name of Dennis Bree, seeking donations from businesses in the Northern Territory. One of the policy items in the Labor Party's platform document says that it will ensure that all donations are made public. The Leader of the Opposition has made a firm and public commitment to open, honest government. He has said that all donations will be indicated publicly. After he has said that on the 7.30 Report and in this House, one would expect him to honour his principles. If you cannot stand by your own principles, you cannot stand by anything.

Mr Speaker, allow me to quote from the form that is attached to the letter seeking donations. It is headed: 'Yes, I will support Terry Smith's Labor Team'. The person ticks $1000, $500, $100 or 'other'. However, it is the note at the bottom that indicates that the ALP has ditched its principles and that demonstrates that its members have no respect for their own beliefs. It reads: 'I undertake that the donations will only be used for the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly elections campaign and is therefore not subject to the disclosure provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act'. If they had any principles at all, they would be applying in opposition what they intend to introduce in government. If they cannot stand by their own beliefs and philosophies in opposition, they will never

be able to do so in government. There are 2 reasons for my saying that. Firstly, they do not have any respect for their own beliefs and, secondly, they will not have the opportunity to do so because the people of the Territory are waking up to this charade and this absolutely disgraceful behaviour.

I cannot believe that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart can walk down the street. They have the temerity to face the people of the Northern Territory notwithstanding the fact that they do not stand by their own principles and beliefs and are unable to demonstrate by their own actions that they support their own policies and party platform. For the Leader of the Opposition to appear on television tonight and indicate that, because an issue in respect of communications is enshrined in ALP policy, people's rights will be protected and, in the same program, disregard his party's platform entirely, as he has done for some weeks, confirms in my mind that members of the opposition are totally cynical in their approach to Territorians. They cannot expect any respect from Territorians as, I am sure, will be demonstrated by the electorate when we go to the polls.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to touch on 2 subjects. The first relates to an article that appeared in the press in respect of a gas project that the Japanese expressed an interest in building at Middle Point. When I read the report, I was rather confused because the only Middle Point that I knew was out by Beatrice Hill and the Coastal Plains Research Station. I thought that project would affect the countryside a bit and I wondered what the people there would think about it. There are quite a few farms and an established community there. I thought it rather strange that I had not heard a whisper from anybody about this big development at Middle Point. I examined it further and I found that the Middle Point mentioned was the Middle Point in Darwin Harbour. This is where the confusion arose.

I have had telephone calls from several people at Middle Point who were concerned about this. If the project had been proposed for the Middle Point by the CPRS, there would have been gross disruption to people's lives. Nobody at our Middle Point had any objection to this gas plant being at the Middle Point in Darwin Harbour. The confusion arises because of 2 places having the same name.

Mr Hatton: Middle Arm.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is Middle Point at the end of Middle Arm.

Mr Manzie: Why is it called Middle Point?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Because it was called that in the newspaper and I am believing what is written in the newspaper. I do not know the historical reason why it was called Middle Point, but it has been called Middle Point for about 30 years to my knowledge. Our Middle Point has prior use rights.

To try to resolve the matter, I have written to the Place Names Committee requesting that it rename the Middle Point in Darwin Harbour. Nobody lives there and nobody has gone there yet. The interests of my constituents come before any Japanese interests that may come to the Northern Territory. I think my request is very reasonable. The Chairman of the Places Names Committee is a pretty knowledgeable man when it comes to the history of all parts in the Northern Territory. I feel certain that he will come up with a very good alternative name for the Middle Point in Darwin Harbour to avoid confusion with our Middle Point.

Another subject that I would like to speak about is the unpleasant situation that prevails in many government buses. Certain people in the community cause problems for other people. I am talking about passengers who are argumentative and passengers who are drunk. I am not necessarily referring to people of any ethnic origin. They cause problems to other people who are legally minding their own business in the bus. I am talking about both men and women. At the moment, the bus drivers have no authority whatsoever to tip these people off the bus or to ask them to moderate their language or to ensure that they do not interfere with the rights of other passengers.

At the weekend, I attended a meeting called by the Women's Advisory Council. I went along as an observer and I was interested to hear what some of the women were saying about the bus service. This matter was raised with particular reference to the Palmerston interchange. I believe that the situation is becoming serious. It seems to be symptomatic of community attitudes these days that wrongdoers are patted on the head and forgiven because they had a difficult childhood, and their parents did not love them. In the meantime, people who are going about their ordinary business are inconvenienced and sometimes become the victims of these wrongdoers.

We do have a police force which does a good job within the constraints of its service. However, we cannot have police travelling on buses. In a way, the bus driver should be in the position of a captain of a ship. If you are on a ship, you are expected to do what the captain tells you. This is important also for school buses. Some students misbehave on buses. From time to time, bus drivers are rubbished by people in the community. I do not think they do a bad job. They work under very difficult conditions at times. In order to make their working conditions a little easier, I believe they should be vested with more authority to deal with people who misbehave on buses. I would like the Minister for Transport and Works to examine this matter and, by legislation or regulation, to provide more power to bus drivers. I will be pursuing this matter further with the honourable minister.

Mr EDE (Stuart); Mr Deputy Speaker, this is probably an appropriate time to report to the parliament on the results of my trip to Canberra to take part in the special national conference of the Labor Party. This conference had great significance for the Northern Territory. We did a great deal or preparatory work in terms of what we wanted to take up with people when we arrived there.

At the outset, I point out that I was most disappointed that nothing eventuated despite assurances from the Minister for Industries and Development that he would provide us with copies of work that had been done by his staff on this matter. He gave that assurance in the House to the Leader of the Opposition, and later his office made the commitment to me when I rang during the period when I was Acting Leader of the Opposition. We received absolutely no assistance whatsoever from the government on this, and that was most unfortunate. With the resources the government has, it could have saved us an enormous amount of work. We were told that the government would be sending some people down. If that did eventuate, these people did not turn up in Canberra and, certainly, never came to see me. I do not believe they contacted the Leader of the Opposition either. I did not see them at the conference. Of what they did if they were there I know nowt.

We decided that there were some objectives that we had to achieve at the conference. We realised that there were 2 angles to the community

service obligations and cross-subsidies. There was the way they benefit people in the Northern Territory, but we had also to think about Western Australia, South Australia, rural Queensland and New South Wales and even the outer suburban areas of the major towns around the nation. We saw that that could be divided into those that are funded currently by Telecom as part of a cross-subsidisation program and the possibility that the others could be picked up by the new AUSSAT-based competitor. We wanted to ensure that that cross-subsidisation would continue. That was our primary goal.

I think all honourable members have been interested over the years in the Rural and Remote Area Program that has been conducted by Telecom. It is the most expensive and far-reaching program that has ever been undertaken to try to provide telecommunication services to the bush. However, there has never been any definition of the level of service to a community. Did the community service obligation become satisfied once a pay phone was installed? Would the initial applications be satisfied and no more? What was the level of service? It was obvious what would happen. As soon as a few telephones were installed, the satisfaction produced more demand. These people wanted faxes and other people wanted phones. Naturally enough, by the time Telecom was 2 steps through the program, it had utilised all the lines for which provision had been made for the total run of the DRCS. If more phones were wanted in those areas, it would be difficult to convince Telecom that a highly-expensive program of that nature should be geared up again.

We wanted to take on those 2 areas and to ensure that Telecom survived without being stripped in the process. We kept in mind that many promises would be made by politicians and that we would be offered assurances. However, we wanted to see the creation of a system whereby the funds were actually generated within the system proposed to carry out the capital works pertaining to the Rural and Remote Area Program and the costs of those community service obligations. We believed that, if it were in the platform and resolutions of the party and if the minister made a commitment, it would become part of the legislation enacted to facilitate the process.

Legislation is the best basis. You can always say that it ought to be enshrined in the Constitution but, obviously, we have to draw the line somewhere. Legislation was what we were after. That was the basis on which we started. I do not know how many doors I knocked on in Canberra in order to talk to the different leaders of the different factions. I spoke with people across the political groups, to ministers, to ministerial staff and so on. Gradually, the process became clearer as we started to negotiate. For example, there was the problem of establishing the amount necessary for Telecom to be able to continue to carry out the Rural and Remote Area Program. The sale of even 49% of Australian Airlines and 49% of Qantas would make them no longer subject to Loans Council borrowing requirements. By itself, that would free up $700m a year for other bodies to borrow for the purpose of capital works programs that everyone in this parliament would support.

In discussions that I had with Minister Beazley, and Senator Collins was with me at that meeting, I asked what portion of that would be available. Obviously, there would be competing demands from many other ...

Mr Reed: Drop a few more names. There are a couple that you haven't mentioned yet.

Mr EDE: I wish you would shut up. God, it is late and I have to put with this twit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I suggested that there would be strong demands made on that $700m from other government enterprises. I was quite sure that Mr Keating and the Finance Department would be trying to utilise it to reduce debt. I was assured that a substantial majority of the $700m would be available for Telecom and that that had been agreed to by Mr Keating and Mr Beazley. Somewhere between $500m and $600m will be available as a pool. That contrasts with nothing this financial year and nothing last financial year from the Loans Council for Telecom. Thus, after 2 years of having absolutely no loan raising ability through the Loans Council, it will have between $500m and $600m each year. There is sufficient there completely to cover the entire Rural and Remote Area Program.

Having determined that the funds would be there, we then had to look at the basis for the community service obligations. At the end of my speech, I will table the resolution that was passed on telecommunications so that honourable members can see just how it was developed. It contains all the amendments that were processed during the course of the conference. We argued that the cost to the competitor to inter-connect into Telecom/OTC's network should at least cover Telecom/OTC's relative costs in providing the service and underpin its community service obligations. That was the major change that was made during the course of the transition from what might be called Beazley Mark I to about Beazley Mark 54. Initially, those inter-connection fees that the competitors would pay were to cover only the incremental cost of providing that service for that inter-connection. It was argued that that was unfair and did not provide a level playing field and that funds were not available to cover the costs of the community service obligations. However, this turns it around. The actual charge for the inter-connection will be driven by the level of community service obligations. The fee will vary until such time as there is enough money to pay for the community service obligations. Thus, that solves that problem as well. We have the community service obligations and the Rural and Remote Area Program.

The amendment that I proposed and had seconded by Carmen Lawrence from Western Australia was that rural and remote areas be provided with communications services, standards and costs similar to those enjoyed by urban Australians and that Telecom be required to continue development programs at the current rate until the goal of equality was achieved. That provided 2 different items. Firstly, it established the nexus or the standard for rural communities. As I said, the standard of service to be provided out bush has never been established before. There has been agreement that the standard and the cost will be similar to those enjoyed by urban Australians and over what stages this will be achieved. The agreement is that the current rate will be maintained. Currently, the Rural and Remote Area Program is producing services at the fastest rate that they have ever been provided into rural Australia, and that is the rate that will be maintained until service equality has been achieved.

The Leader of the Opposition proposed a very simple amendment that was seconded by Wayne Goss. The amendment was that the AUSSAT-based competitor have community service obligations for RCTS and HACBSS. The member from Katherine has done virtually nothing about the RCTS and the problems that the television stations have in maintaining their service in areas such as his own. There are very substantial problems not only with our own Imparja Television but also with Golden West and the one in north-east Queensland. They all rely on substantial government funding to continue their operation. The Western Australian and Queensland governments supply theirs. Funding for Imparja comes from the federal government. To date, nothing has been provided by South Australia or New South Wales which also

benefit from the service. Of course, there is nothing from the Northern Territory either.

Rather than have that argument continue - and members will find that the correspondence is voluminous - we thought the best principle was to put the community service obligation to provide that service back on to the new competitor. For example, this could be done by providing it with the 30 W transponders at a 12 W transponder price. It was considered that that might be an equitable way to facilitate that. Also, it is possible that the configuration of the satellite could be rearranged to put them on to 12 W transponders. There will be substantial benefits for rural and remote areas. In that, I encompass all of the Northern Territory and those other areas in South Australia and Western Australia. The inclusion of HACBSS will have substantial benefits for the ABC as well because it has been providing a very high-quality service out bush for many years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the objectives that we set ourselves before we went were achieved and ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION
Censure of Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries for deliberately misleading the House by stating, in response to a question, that the government had not sought to restrict the rights of pastoralists to make public comment on BTEC issues, when incontrovertible proof exists that the government has so done.

All honourable members heard the honourable minister reply to a question a few moments ago in which he was given 2 opportunities to come clean on this issue. He failed to do so. He has said simply that the government may have done something that related to commercial confidentiality. I will demonstrate now that what this government attempted to do went far beyond the bounds of anything that, even in terms of the very broadest definition, could be said to have anything to do with commercial confidentiality. He said that no impediment had ever been put in the way of any pastoralist who wished to comment on any aspect of the BTEC program.

Mr Speaker, at this point, I seek leave to table a document. It includes a letter from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory that was sent to a pastoralist, whose name I have blanked out. However, given the signature at the bottom, I do not think that the minister will attempt to say that it is not valid. Enclosed with the letter is a deed that the Northern Territory government drafted in an attempt to pursue the very issue of which I am speaking.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: The letter in question, from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, states:

> ... meeting with your clients and yourself on ... and enclose herewith a draft destocking agreement between the Territory and ... Pty Ltd for your consideration.
>
> I also include a draft deed between the Territory and the ... . The deed is considered necessary to cover a situation where the ... cease to be officers of the company but remain as shareholders.
>
> I await hearing from you as soon as possible with your comments on the draft documents.

It is obvious from that letter that the draft destocking agreement and the draft deed were linked. A nexus was established between the 2. After the initial, legal preamble, the deed states the following - and obviously, the 'agreement' referred to is the destocking agreement that was enclosed with the deed:

> In consideration of an agreement of even date made between ... Limited of the one part and the Territory of the other part ('the Agreement') the ... jointly and severally agree that they shall not:
>
> (a) disclose to any person the content or purport of the provisions of the Agreement ...

Mr Perron: That is a standard form of wording.

Mr EDE: Possibly it is a legal protection. Wait for it:

(b) supply information to or give or grant an interview to the press, radio, television or other communications media which is critical of the BTEC program whether in respect of the program on ... Station or in respect of the program in general.

What a shameful exercise! That is attempt to force a pastoralist by saying that he will get his destocking agreement only if he will sign a deed linking that agreement with a deed saying that he will not supply information to or give or grant an interview to the press, radio, television or other communications media which is critical of the BTEC program in relation to that property or any property in general.

Mr Perron: Did it have the minister's signature on it?

Mr EDE: The signature is Mr Chris Griffiths, Solicitor for the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, is it any wonder that the pastoralists concerned immediately obtained the best legal opinion that they could get? In fact, they contacted Mr Maurice, who is well known to members of this Assembly. He advised them immediately: 'Do not sign it. It is in contravention of just about anything you care to name but, specifically, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights'. It was an outrageous attempt by this government to muzzle pastoralists who might wish to be critical not simply of what happened on their own property, but of the BTEC program in general.

At this stage, I do not know how many of these documents were sent out, to how many people or to whom. Possibly, the honourable minister or the Attorney-General will be able to tell us. Perhaps they will tell us how many of those people did not have the resources at hand to enable them to obtain the services of a competent, highly-qualified QC of the status of Mr Maurice, who could advise them immediately of the portent of the document that they were being asked to sign. How many people were bludgeoned into signing because they wanted the destocking program and the funds that were encompassed in that agreement?

We know now why the media has found it so hard to get to the bottom of the abuses of BTEC. It is perfectly obvious why. And we know also the extent to which this government will go in that it will use the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to draft a document such as this to force pastoralists - the very people who know the truth about the abuses under BTEC - into silence. It is absolutely outrageous, and there is absolutely no way in the world that we can stand in this House and not censure a minister who does such a thing.

Mr Perron: Put your hand on your heart, come on! Do it properly.

Mr Coulter: Do you believe this?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, should I take it from the remarks of the Chief Minister that he would defend such an action, that he would ...

Mr Coulter: It is null and void, you clown!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: I withdraw the word 'clown'.

Mr Perron: If you say that it is unconstitutional, he can sign it.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, now we have it from the Chief Minister that it is quite okay for the Solicitor for the Northern Territory or for the minister responsible to attempt to have people sign contracts which are not legally enforceable. He said that it is not legal and therefore it is all right.

Mr Perron: When did the minister attempt to do it?

Mr EDE: What an outrageous statement from the Chief Minister. I really think that he ought to be included in the censure motion as well. What standard of morality do we have? Members opposite should be hanging their heads in shame over this issue. That is absolutely shameful! How can they attempt in any way to stand up here and not be ashamed of a document such as this? What else have you done, if you have no shame in relation to this matter?

Mr Speaker, I hope that all honourable members have a copy of this by now and are reading what they attempted to do.

Mr Finch: Who is 'they'?

Mr EDE: The Northern Territory government, of which you are a part. The government has lost any semblance of morality by going to citizens of the Northern Territory and attempting to have them sign documents which will remove all their civil liberties in regard to freedom of speech. I ask honourable members what types of regimes do things of that ilk. What types of regimes would they expect that from? Would they expect it in a democratic country, a country that believes in freedom of information? Would they expect it in a territory where we have had the Chief Minister talk in this House about his intention to introduce whistle-blower legislation? He has talked about how his government is drafting whistle-blower legislation which, in certain circumstances, would allow members of the public service to go public in relation to what they feel are heinous acts undertaken by the government which they serve. He was saying that he wanted to put that into place yet, by the same token, this government has sent this letter to at least this pastoralist - and I do not know how many others - in an attempt to have him to sign a deed which would restrict his right to make any comment.

All we have from the Chief Minister is that it is all right because it is not lawful. It is an illegal contract and therefore it is okay. How many other illegal contracts has this government been issuing to bully and coerce individuals by claiming powers that the government does not have? However, it says that it okay because it really does not have the powers. The fact that it claims such powers, of course, has nothing to do with it.

Mr Speaker, I note the incredible clutch of ministerial advisers in the box at the moment. Obviously, it is taking more than the collective wisdom of the frontbench to come to grips with this one. I expect that we will see a few more of them streaming in shortly. No matter how many advisers they bring together, nothing will remove the fact that this document was drafted by the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and was sent to a pastoralist in an attempt to have him sign it. It is outrageous!

Mr Perron: Do you have anything else to say?

Mr EDE: I have a great deal more to say. This is not the first or only time that this government has done this. The minister opposite has risen in this House time and time again and said that it is only a few disgruntled pastoralists who have problems with BTEC. The ones who have made public statements are those who have had the guts to do so. How many others would dearly like to make their statements, but have been beaten into submission by the threats in documents such as this. The Chief Minister's statement is that it is all right because it is illegal.

Only last week, I drew attention to the fact that the honourable minister, through his department, has been attempting to have people believe that the government has the power which, quite incontrovertibly, it does not have, to shoot out entire areas of the pastoral properties where people did not agree to it. Those people have been given various orders which purported to give them the power to conduct those shoot-outs. I remind honourable members that, since 1982, close to 200 000 head of cattle and buffalo have been shot on pastoral properties as part of that process.

In every case, the minister and his department have said that they have the powers which allow them to do these things. They have never come clean and indicated that they do not have those powers, but that they will undertake the shoot-out if requested. That would have been legal. They could have done that and, no doubt, quite a number of people would have agreed so that they could have a completely clean property. However, there are others who have said that they could get many more of the stock out and put them to good use. They wanted another 6 months or so to do that. Nevertheless, many of them made no fuss about it because they were told by everyone in the department that the government had the power to do it and that they might as well shut up and cop it sweet.

Only a few people had the guts to take the matter to court and to discover that, in fact, the government did not have the power right up until possibly the end of last year. At some stage, the honourable minister will be asked to come clean as to when he knew that he did not have the power. When did he, personally, know that?

Mr Perron: Have we got it now?

Mr EDE: When did the now Chief Minister, who was the minister responsible at a previous time, know that he did not have the power under the act to do that? Did the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, who was a previous minister, know that he was acting unlawfully? Did he know that every act that he undertook was an act of trespass at the very least? Did he know that an act causing grievous damage to a pastoral property was in fact tantamount to theft and the depriving of the people of their property?

That was the build-up to this. The people were coming to know that the government did not have these powers and that it was operating illegally throughout the campaign. The acts that it was undertaking were totally unlawful. Where people did not genuinely give their approval, it was tantamount to theft. That word was starting to filter through. What happened? The government introduced the deed: 'Do you want your destocking money? If so, sign this deed which states that, in consideration of the agreement, you shall not supply information to, or give or grant an interview to the press, radio, television or other communications media which is critical of the BTEC program, whether in respect of your station or

in general'. It is outrageous. Because it had been caught out, the government decided to adopt this strategy.

As honourable members know, I have been raising these issues as they have come to light. The honourable minister has consistently said that the government will have a police investigation. I have said that the issues required more than that. Obviously, when the minister carries on in this way, much more than that is required. The problem with this government is that it has lost all touch not only with reality but also with morality. It cannot see that its behaviour in this matter is absolutely immoral. It attempts to coerce a pastoralist into silence in consideration of moneys payable under the destock agreement. It says, in effect: 'If you want your money, you will shut up and cop it sweet. You will not tell anyone what happened, particularly the press. Not only will you not speak about what the government did to you, you will not speak about what you know the government did to your neighbour'. Obviously, the government did not want neighbours to come to arrangements under which each would blow the whistle on what happened to the other. The document is a well-drafted attempt to shut people up.

Mr Perron: Is it a genuine document?

Mr EDE: It is an absolutely genuine document.

Mr Perron: You guys have tabled forged ones in the House before today.

Mr EDE: I will be very interested if that is the defence of the Chief Minister. He has moved back now from using ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The interjection came quite clearly from the Chief Minister. I think the words he used were 'bogus documents'. He may have said 'forged documents'.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister did not interject on those lines. Obviously, in some previous parliaments ...

Mr BELL: His interjection began with 'you blokes'. What I am saying is that he should be asked to withdraw his comment or move a substantive motion to that effect.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, I would be prepared to amend my interjection to refer to the ALP opposition in the Assembly. The ALP opposition in the Assembly has tabled fabricated documents in the Assembly before.

Mr Coulter: That is correct, is it not, Neil?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: I do not know what happened before I became a member of this House. I can only talk about the 7 years during which I have been a member. In that time, this opposition has never tabled a phoney document or anything that we could not substantiate. If the Chief Minister wishes to put the lie to that, I will give him the opportunity to do so now.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Either the Chief Minister is moving back from his previous position or he is attempting to find some other ground. He began by saying that it was okay for the government to take this action because the document was illegal and would constitute an unlawful contract that would not be enforceable at law. Having realised what spurious ground he was on and how incredibly stupid that statement was, he is now attempting to suggest that the document itself is spurious.

I can advise the Chief Minister that I have seen the original document. There is absolutely no doubt about its authenticity. Given what he said in his interjection, I presume that he will be happy now to join in this censure of the minister. Certainly, there can be no doubt that a document of this nature, a legal document prepared by the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and delivered to a person in the Northern Territory, would indicate to any reasonable citizen, who still had the slightest ounce of faith in the due processes of law, that the provisions it contained were enforceable and somehow legitimate. Frequently, in dealings with the public, officers of government departments indicate that they have certain powers. People may or may not go along with that but, generally, they tend to agree on the basis that the person claiming to have the powers is a departmental official. Sometimes people may even contest such claims. However, when the average citizen receives a document from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, a very senior law official of this government, he or she tends to believe that it is kosher. That is my point. The government has used the Solicitor for the Northern Territory ...

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr EDE: The Minister for Transport and Works asks 'which minister'? He wants me to be specific and to mention the fact that he is one of the few ministers opposite who has never been responsible for primary production. I will do so. You are safe, Fred. You can sit down. You can vote with us, right? I am not blaming you for this one. I will get you on something else later.

Mr Finch: You are rude and ignorant. That is the most illogical outburst I have ever heard.

Mr EDE: You are safe, Fred.

Mr Speaker, the honourable members opposite must wear the condemnation arising from this document. Obviously, the Solicitor for the Northern Territory would be acting under instructions. That is how the system works. He acts under instructions from various departments. The situation is the same as that which occurs when an individual requests a private solicitor to prepare a particular type of document and have it served on a particular person. The solicitor cannot be blamed for following instructions. The person issuing the instructions is responsible. In this case, the document issued by the Solicitor for the Northern Territory clearly relates to BTEC and, obviously, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries is responsible.

Obviously, the minister or his department instructed the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to prepare a deed, together with a draft destocking agreement, and to issue them together. The destocking agreement would

provide for certain moneys to be paid in consideration of destocking. In consideration of that agreement, the deed would require that the recipient never again 'supply information to or give or grant an interview to the press, radio, television or other communications media which is critical of the BTEC program in respect of the program on ... Station or of the program in general'.

There can be no doubt that this government has to ditch the honourable minister now or stand condemned by association. His actions are absolutely and unassailably wrong. If any member opposite wishes to stand up and say that the minister was in any way justified in undertaking this action, he can wear the consequences. I do not believe that any member can justify the minister's action. I know full well that they will not cross the floor and vote with us on this censure motion. Hanging their heads in shame, they will vote according to the party line. However, when they leave this House for the luncheon adjournment, they have no choice but to dump the minister.

If members opposite do not dump this minister, they will be saying that actions that typify a totalitarian regime are legitimate in a democracy like the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I say to you that this is not legitimate, not in my Territory. Members opposite may want that sort of Territory for themselves and their children, but members on this side of the House certainly do not. We do not want a Territory where the Solicitor for the Northern Territory is used in an attempt to browbeat individual members of the public into silence. Is that the sort of freedom of information that the government wants? It is not what we want and it is not what we will wear.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Stuart for his theatrical display which is a repeat of his previous performances in this House in respect of BTEC. In responding, in the first instance, to the Leader of the Opposition's question, which was a general question, as far as I am concerned I answered honestly. According to the knowledge that I have, I believe that the answer was correct. I indicated that every opportunity not only has been offered, but has been taken by people wanting to put forward their views in relation to the BTEC program, either in support of it or against it. I do not think that I need remind anyone in this House that those opportunities have been taken to the fullest extent. They have been taken through every arm of the media in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. They have been taken through the courts. They have been taken through the Ombudsman. They have been taken up directly with officers of my department and, in some cases, they have been taken up directly with me. Where a producer has brought concerns to me, I have provided that producer with every possible assistance, and I am confident that the department has done likewise.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked another question in relation to a legal document. He said:

> I refer the minister to his answer to the previous question and to his advice that no impediment has ever been put in the way of any pastoralist who wished to comment on any aspect of BTEC. I ask the honourable minister whether the Northern Territory government has ever proposed to any pastoralist in the Northern Territory that he or she should sign a legal document which sought to remove that person's right to freedom of speech on the BTEC issue?'

That question was different from the one asked by the Leader of the Opposition. It was more specific and it related particularly to legal

matters. Of course, I answered that question in a different way, in accordance with its specificity. I indicated that arrangements are put in place between the department and the producer.

I do not have to advise honourable members opposite again that a number of producers have taken up issues with the department and have objected strongly to the manner in which the BTEC program has been conducted. Those objections and concerns expressed by pastoralists have led to negotiations at various levels, including negotiations between legal representatives of producers and legal representatives of the department and, in this case, as is appropriate and normal practice, officers of the Department of Law.

I refer now to the document which is the subject of the member for Stuart's remarks. It is worthy of note that the legal representatives of the producer concerned were party to the preparation of this document, as I understand it.

Mr Smith: So what?

Mr REED: They negotiated it. As I understand it, the legal representatives of the producer were involved in the process together with officers of the Department of Law. If the legal representatives of the producer took part in the formulation of this document, does that not make it clear to the member for Stuart that the producer was given every opportunity to contribute to the presentation of the document? The producer had legal advice on the matter. Presumably, the producer took the advice of his legal representative in the long term, and did not enter into the agreement.

As I understand it, there was negotiation between legal representatives of both parties in relation to the presentation and formulation of the document. I am not saying that I necessarily support the tenor of the document, but the fact is that it was negotiated between the 2 parties. Every day, people in the real world - and unfortunately the member for Stuart does not come into contact with them - negotiate commercial contracts. Such contracts have redundancy clauses, silence clauses and all sorts of things. That does not mean that people who enter into such agreements must adhere to them. They can breach contracts, and the consequences of that are a matter for the parties concerned. It is up to them whether, after signing a contract or a document of that sort, they choose to adhere to it.

The motion moved by the member for Stuart is frivolous. He has run a continual anti-BTEC campaign, to the detriment of the Northern Territory pastoral industry. Recently, he has recommenced that campaign. Perhaps he has a dose of election measles or some other contagious infection that is causing him now to see fit to commence raising issues and attempting to gain a high profile. I remind him that his approach has not worked very well in the past. Certainly, that is what I hear from people in the primary industry sector. I would remind him particularly that, on the last occasion when he entered the fray in relation to BTEC, he ended up in a very sad position in a paddock of polka-dot and steel-blue cows. I would suggest that the member for Stuart not continue in this vein, given the problems which he has encountered in the past.

I reject any suggestion that the member for Stuart has made in relation to whether or not I have misled the House. I have not acted deliberately in any way which might prevent anyone from commenting. Certainly, from my point of view, I was not aware of the document. Dozens of agreements are

put in place between producers and the department. Dozens, perhaps even a hundred, agreements have been put in place this year. I do not come in contact with them and I do not seek to.

The BTEC program is conducted at the operational level. There is no political interference in it, apart from the fact that the Territory BTEC Committee oversees its operations. That committee includes representatives of the federal government, the Cattlemen's Union of Australia, the Cattlemen's Association of the Northern Territory, the Buffalo Industry Council, the Northern Land Council and, of course, myself as the chairman of the committee. Through these industry representatives or through a number of other avenues, pastoralists have the ability to bring documents of this nature or negotiations of this kind to the attention of myself or other people.

It is interesting to note that this document is dated 1 September 1989. It has been around for a long time. I understand that it was never approved by either party. Despite that, it has surfaced here today. Why did the pastoralist concerned not take the opportunity to explore all of the avenues available to all pastoralists in order to raise the issue? He did not enter into the agreement but sat on it for more than a year. It has now surfaced in the hands of the member for Stuart who has cited it, with great drama and theatricality, as a dreadful impost on the democratic rights of a producer. Mr Speaker, the whole thing is a sham and the member for Stuart should be absolutely ashamed of himself.

As I have said, I do not necessarily support the tenor of this document. I am advised that the agreement has not been put in place. I am not aware of any other arrangements of this kind which have been put into place with any other producer. Indeed, I may well take action to ensure that this process is not followed in the future. However, the fact remains that legal representatives of both parties were involved in the negotiations. The pastoralist had the opportunity to withdraw at any time, which is what happened, and no agreement was entered into. In bringing the matter to the attention of other members of the industry, the pastoralist concerned could be said not to be particularly helpful. Who is this person? He is now very concerned about everyone's democratic rights and wants to bring the matter to the attention of the world. Why didn't he bring it to the attention of the industry last September? Why didn't the Leader of the Opposition bring it to the attention of people in the Northern Territory before today? The point is that he wanted to make a bit of a play.

Mr Bell: Perhaps he was not aware of it.

Mr REED: What about the producer? If suddenly the producer became concerned about other producers in the Northern Territory, who might have such documents foisted on them, why did he sit on his concerns from September 1989 onwards? That does not indicate to me that this producer is particularly concerned about his fellow pastoralists.

I think that the Leader of the Opposition might want to reconsider his position. He might want to censure the member for Stuart, who continually runs down the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. Like him, the Leader of the Opposition wants to close off the live export of cattle to South-east Asia, a trade worth $17m a year. That is the contribution of members opposite to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. They want to close it down, but they keep telling us that they support it.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition was not in the House last night when, in response to his comments on the Appropriation Bill, I pointed out that the live export trade has put a floor in the market for pastoralists in the Northern Territory. It has provided another market outlet. It has confirmed that the cattle industry in the Northern Territory has a future. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to close down the live export market, this bloke could sign any agreement that he liked because he would not be in the industry. He would not have access to any markets through which to sustain his livelihood. He would not have to worry about BTEC. It would not be BTEC that puts him down; it would be a Labor government. But, thank heavens, there is no likelihood of that eventuating.

I would like to refer to a newspaper article from a Queensland paper that mentioned the member for Stuart a couple of weeks ago. I think it was the North Queensland Register. I will quote from it because it indicates the extent to which the member for Stuart will go to run this BTEC cause. He has been totally irresponsible in relation to the whole deal. As has been proven in the past, the member for Stuart has made some outrageous statements. He said that 200 000 head of cattle and buffalo had been shot, and I think he repeated that in the House today. If only the member for Stuart had taken up my invitation a couple of years ago to speak with officers in my department about BTEC and to receive a full briefing, he would be aware of what is going on. He has a copy of the BTEC Strategic Plan, which sets out how BTEC will be conducted until the end of the program in 1992. That document itself has been viewed as an example to the states in relation to their BTEC programs. That strategic plan indicated that, in 1989, 70 000 animals would be destocked. In fact, the all-up total for 1989 was 80 000. The figures included all land in the Northern Territory, not only pastoral leases.

This is public information. Every pastoralist has a copy of the strategic plan. They know what is happening. They are fully aware of the requirements of the program, the extent of the program and the benefits of the program. The only person who is not fully aware of it is the member for Stuart, and he is the one who is doing the industry in the neck. He is the person who is putting doubts in the minds of people in our markets in South-east Asia. In the media in the last few weeks, west Malaysians were saying: 'We are concerned about the live export market and the supply of live cattle to west Malaysia from the Northern Territory. Can the Northern Territory industry give us an assurance that the animals we get will be free from TB?'

Mr Speaker, doesn't that give a clear indication to the member for Stuart of the importance of the BTEC program and the importance that our markets put on the BTEC program? They are saying to us very clearly that they will accept cattle from us only if we can assure them that the animals that we supply to them have been tested to be free of TB and that there is no chance that TB will be reintroduced into their herds. That is a condition of our continued access to these markets. Clearly, what they are saying is that, if we do not succeed in the BTEC program, we will no longer have a market in west Malaysia. Those people will start sourcing cattle from other places - places from which they can obtain animals that are guaranteed to be free of TB. That is the importance of this program, and I will never move from my position in pursuing it, just as Hon John Kerin will not move from his position in focusing on the 1992 target for the completion of the BTEC program.

Following the BTEC Inquiry last year, and the advice that was provided to Hon John Kerin in relation to that inquiry and the outcomes of it which

found no suggestion of malpractice, it is interesting to note that Kerin has accepted the position of the Northern Territory government. He does not accept the suggestions of rorts put forward by the member for Stuart. This year, the Cattlemen's Union of Australia will pump $19m into the BTEC program and it is not concerned. Of course, it has a say on how the program is conducted, and rightly so. As I indicated earlier, it could withdraw its funds tomorrow, and I am sure it would if its members had any indication that $1 of its $19m was being used in a way that was not within the strict guidelines set down by the BTEC program.

I reject totally all of the suggestions made today by the member for Stuart. I do not believe that I have misled this House, and I stand by officers of my department in relation to their conduct of the BTEC program. I fully support the program in the cattle industry in the Northern Territory and I call on the member for Stuart to start doing the same.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, at the core of this censure motion lies a very simple issue, and that is whether the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries has misled this House. It does not matter ...

Mr Perron: Deliberately misled the House.

Mr SMITH: ... whether he knew of the information or not. The test is whether he should have known. The only explanation given by the minister was that he was ignorant of the information that was tabled by the member for Stuart - 'ignorant of the information', and he used those words himself. Ignorance is no excuse in this situation.

The BTEC program is clearly a program under the control and administration of the honourable minister opposite. What is essential is that he accept responsibility for all aspects of that program. He has not done so. He has admitted in this House that he was not aware of very vital information that was floating around in his department, information that had the effect of intimidating pastoralists who were being asked to sign destocking agreements.

Of course, now that he has seen the document, the honourable minister is prepared to accept that perhaps, if he had known about it, as he should have, he would not have approved of it. It is a bit late for that. In particular, it is a bit late for him to say, in answer to a question from myself, that the government has never made any attempt to nobble pastoralists who wanted to be critical of the BTEC program. That is the core of it. The question was simple: has the government ever made any attempt to nobble pastoralists who were critical of the BTEC program? In the end, the answer was equally simple: the government has not. That is the case in black and white, and there is the answer in black and white that shows that the minister misled this House. We have a have a letter from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to these particular pastoralists asking them to sign an agreement that would remove their right to be critical of the BTEC program in general. Let us not forget that it does not take away any right they might want to exercise to be positive and supportive of the BTEC program. Surely, if it was to be an even-handed agreement, it would stipulate that there should be no comment of any kind. But no, it is critical comment only that was to be denied.

The Solicitor for the Northern Territory, on behalf of the Northern Territory government and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, is trying to impose on a pastoralist an obligation, if he wants to get his money, not to comment on or grant an interview to the press, radio,

television or other communications media. The timing is particularly interesting because it comes shortly after the now famous case of Donald Hoar, who actually had the gumption and the courage to take the government to court and to win. It was after Mr Donald Hoar obtained his judgment and his money ...

Mr Reed: Careful!

Mr SMITH: Settled out of court, Mr Speaker.

Mr Reed: Ah, he did not win. Did he win or was it settled out of court?

Mr SMITH: It was settled out of court because the government knew the problems involved in pursuing the matter to the end through the legal system.

The North Queensland Register has been quoted in the debate today. It is interesting to see what Mr Hoar thinks of the administration of the BTEC program in the Northern Territory, and I quote from the edition of 13 September:

> There was no future for cattlemen in the Northern Territory, according to Darwin cattle operator Mr Don Hoar. Mr Hoar said that the NT's BTEC campaign was being run by a bunch of unemployable schoolboys. 'Anywhere else in Australia, and they would not get a job', Mr Hoar said. He said the BTEC campaign was the 'greatest fraud ever undertaken in the Northern Territory. Millions and millions of dollars have been wasted. Someone, someday, will have to answer for it'.

That is Donald Hoar, a person who has been through the system and a person who took the government on this matter.

The honourable minister attempted to persuade this House that the destocking agreement was the result of prior discussions and negotiations between the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and the legal representatives of the proprietor of this particular station. We do not deny that. There is no doubt that there had been prior discussions between the legal representatives on both sides because it is stated in the document: 'I refer to the meeting with your clients and yourself ... and enclose herewith a draft destocking agreement between the Territory and the company for your consideration'. No one is denying that that draft destocking agreement was subject to negotiation.

However, a new element was introduced in the second paragraph: 'I also enclose a draft deed between the Territory and the pastoral station. The deed is considered necessary to cover a situation ...'. That is the point. That draft deed had not been presented to the legal advisers of the company. The minister attempted deliberately to leave this House with the impression that it had. That was the first time that the legal advisers had seen that draft agreement. That can be seen from their subsequent actions because they referred that draft agreement to Mr Maurice QC for a legal opinion. Maurice QC advised that, under no circumstances, should they sign it because it was in contravention of the United Nations convention and would deprive them of a basic liberty of any person in Australia to be critical of government actions. Let us get rid of this nonsense that that was subject to prior discussion and that the wording was arrived at through negotiations between the 2 sets of lawyers. That is a blatant lie and the

minister ought to be ashamed for trying to put that over in this House. It is a blatant lie.

Mr Ede: He will stoop to anything.

Mr SMITH: That is correct. The member for Katherine will stoop to anything to try to prove his point. What he cannot get away from is that he was essentially ignorant about something he should have known about.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The use of the word 'ignorant' in this regard is unparliamentary.

Mr SMITH: He should have known about it, Mr Speaker, and he should not have misled this House today in relation to that matter.

This was a very clear situation where the government attempted to put pressure on a pastoralist in very blatant terms. In so many words, it indicated to the pastoralist that, if he wanted his money, he would have to shut up. This was not only in relation to the particular arrangement - and one can argue commercial confidentiality in relation to that - but in relation to the program in general. That is completely and utterly unacceptable in a country like Australia. People have a basic right to criticise the government, whether or not they have dealings with the government. They have that basic right and they should not have pressure placed on them to sign away that basic right in order to obtain their legal entitlement in terms of compensation. That is the basic point in this argument and it is one that, unfortunately, the honourable minister opposite does not have the wit to recognise.

How many letters of this kind were sent out? How many people were asked to sign a deed of agreement that prevented them supplying information or granting an interview to the press, radio, television or other communications media? How many were signed? Perhaps the minister might like to take that on board because, if we do not get an answer today, certainly we shall follow it up until we do get an answer.

Mr Reed: Go on. You look good when you are cranky.

Mr SMITH: I have not found any circumstances in which you look good.

That is a key issue. In other words, how many pastoralists, who do not have the money to hire Maurice QC to obtain a legal opinion, have been dragooned into signing deeds of agreement that have deprived them of basic civil liberties and the right to talk to the media about something that is of interest and concern to them? I would like an answer to that question. Members on this side of the House are very interested in that. The other possible explanation might be that this individual was singled out because we all know whom we are talking about. We all know that the particular individual has been a persistent critic of the BTEC program. Perhaps the government was unduly exercising its powers in an attempt to shut him up. If that is the case, that is worse. I cannot believe that the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, on his own authority, would write a letter to an individual pastoralist and draft a particular set of terms and conditions to cover him because he has been an embarrassment to the government. I would like to have that answered too. Was this person singled out?

Mr Reed: What about the cattle industry?

Mr SMITH: You can answer that tomorrow or you can answer it today because I will keep asking you until you answer it. Was this person singled out or was there a general program to put the acid on pastoralists right throughout the Northern Territory in order to shut them up? That is the question that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries might like to contemplate over the next few hours. When we ask him questions, he should not attempt to plead ignorance of areas that are of vital importance to the administration of his portfolio. He might ask his department for the relevant information. For once, he might get off his butt, do some work, get on top of his portfolio and stop embarrassing himself, his government and this parliament because of his ignorance of key issues relating to the administration of his portfolio.

The member for Stuart has demonstrated clearly that this agreement is unacceptable. It is unacceptable on a formal legal basis. It is unacceptable in terms of a United Nations convention, and we are a signatory to that convention. More importantly, it is unacceptable in terms of what Territorians are all about. In the Northern Territory, we pride ourselves on having a free, open and robust society where people are able to speak plainly and loudly on matters that are of interest and concern to them. I would have thought that that tradition of plain speaking that we have inherited in the Northern Territory came to us particularly from those people in the pastoral industry - those people who pioneered that country in very tough times indeed. They established a Territory ethos and a Territory character in which we all take pride. We all take that on board even though many of us have never been on a cattle property and would not know a pastoral property if we saw one. Despite the fact that many people have not been outside the town boundaries, they become absorbed in the Territory ethos and the Territory culture. An important part of that comes from the pastoral industry and its own ethos and culture, and that is talking straight and talking plain.

We have a government that is trying to take away, from the very group of people who established that ethos for us, that very right to talk straight and to talk plain on issues that are of concern to them. It is of concern to me that we have a government that is so insensitive about those matters that it can do that. This government is so concerned about the flak that it has received in relation to the BTEC program that it wants to silence people. When this government finally realised that it had been operating a BTEC program for years without the proper legislative base, instead of fixing the problem and admitting openly and honestly that it had made a mistake, it attempted to stifle the critics. That is the guts of this. It is unacceptable behaviour from any responsible minister of the Crown.

The minister opposite did not invent the problem; he inherited it. Other honourable members opposite are culpable as well, including the Chief Minister, who was the minister responsible for primary industries during part of the relevant period of time. Most importantly, the minister opposite had an obligation today to be on top of the matter that we are talking about and to provide information on his portfolio area without misleading this House. He has failed that basic test. In his defence, he attempted to mislead the House even further. In the dying days of his parliamentary career, the member opposite has stuffed it up deluxe. He has been an embarrassment to himself, an embarrassment to the government and an embarrassment to the people of the Northern Territory. He has a direct and clear responsibility to be on top of this issue. He has a direct and a clear responsibility not to mislead the parliament as he did this morning

through his ignorance. It is not a question of deliberateness but of ignorance of what he should have known.

Mr Speaker, I will read to you the motion moved by my colleague: 'that this Assembly censure the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries for deliberately misleading the House by stating, in a response to a question, that the government had not sought to restrict the rights of pastoralists to make public comment on BTEC issues, when incontrovertible proof exists that the government has so done'. The case has been amply demonstrated. It was a very simple responsibility that the minister had, and he failed to exercise that responsibility. He should resign, but he will not do so. The Chief Minister should sack him, but he will not do so. The only consolation that this parliament and the people of the Northern Territory have is that the minister will not even be a member of the next parliament.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that' and inserting in their stead: 'this Assembly is of the opinion that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries has carried out his responsibilities in relation to the BTEC program with merit and distinction, but condemns the member for Stuart for constantly working to undermine the BTEC program and, in addition, for advising the Assembly that the Solicitor for the Northern Territory had written to a pastoralist, in the terms of the letter which he tabled today, when he was fully aware that the correspondence was addressed to a solicitor, not a pastoralist, that the deed accompanying the letter was a draft, that the draft was never signed and that the deed, which was signed, was the amended draft prepared by the pastoralist's solicitor'.

Mr Ede: Come on!

Mr Perron: What you tabled was never signed.

Mr Ede: I said that.

Mr Perron: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will be heard in silence.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, this whole matter has been one of deliberate misrepresentation by the member for Stuart. In his motion, he stated that, in response to a question, the minister had stated that the government had sought to restrict the rights of pastoralists and that, thereby, he deliberately misled the House. In actual fact, the question asked this morning related to the fact that the minister had denied the constitutional right of free speech to a pastoralist. The minister replied in the negative because it is obvious that the minister cannot deprive, in any way, any person of their constitutional rights. In fact, there was no attempt to do so.

Even the motion was a mess. He went on to create a scenario whereby he accused the Solicitor for the Northern Territory of badgering a poor pastoralist who was forced, in his desperation, to sign an agreement which abrogated his rights to protest. That was patently false. The member should be censured in the strongest possible terms for making that accusation and the Leader of the Opposition should be ashamed that he followed blindly in the footsteps of the opposition spokesman and accused everyone here of not being across the facts when, in fact, he did not know what he was talking about.

At this stage, it is very important to indicate - and I am speaking on behalf of the government - that I disagree with the concept of requiring people to refrain from making comments on television and radio. It is most important that we make that fact very clear. I think that it is very important to understand that this did not involve a solicitor who was dealing with a pastoralist, but a solicitor who was dealing with another solicitor. It was solicitor-to-solicitor negotiation. It was not junior solicitor to junior solicitor; it was a reputable solicitor for the government dealing with a very reputable solicitor acting on behalf of the pastoralist. The accusation is false that, somehow or other, something was done in a way that disadvantaged the poor pastoralist. The member for Stuart would know that the original letter that he had was addressed to a solicitor. Secondly, he would have seen the end result. I have a copy of a letter from the pastoralist's solicitor. It is addressed to the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, and it states:

> Thank you for your letter dated 1 September 1989. I have now had the opportunity of discussing the draft agreement with my client who has requested ...

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the minister is quoting from a document. I ask that he table it.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, most certainly, I will table it. Obviously, I intended to do so in order to add weight to my argument about the misrepresentations by the member for Stuart. I will continue reading from the letter:

> I have now had the opportunity of discussing the draft agreement with my client who has requested certain amendments to the agreement ...

Obviously, the purpose of solicitors passing drafts back and forth between them is to allow them to converse with their clients and to give advice, and that was what occurred here. This is from a reputable solicitor, not a babe in the woods. His job is to ensure that contracts that are signed are in the best interests of his clients:

> You will find enclosed herewith a copy of an amended agreement. I am advised my client will be prepared to sign an agreement in this format. I have attempted to highlight the amendments by underlining the same.
>
> When you have had an opportunity of considering the enclosed agreement, I would be grateful if you would telephone me in the hope that this matter can be brought to a conclusion quickly.

In other words, the pastoralist's solicitor actually drafted a new agreement and indicated that his client was happy to sign it. Mr Speaker, I have a copy of the amended agreement which was prepared by the pastoralist's solicitor. I will read out what the pastoralist and his solicitor proposed be signed and which, in fact, was signed. I will begin with the confidentiality restrictions. This is not the government's proposal. It is the pastoralist's proposal:

> (a) subject as hereunder provided disclose to any person the content or purport of the provisions of this agreement provided that the ... may disclose such information to

its ... or their legal advisers, accountants, financiers and business advisers; and

(b) supply information to, or give or grant an interview to, the press, radio, television or other communications media relating to the purport or provisions of this agreement.

This was proposed by the pastoralist, agreed to by the pastoralist and signed by the pastoralist.

Mr Smith: What happened to 'in respect of the program in general'?

Mr MANZIE: Exactly. A draft was negotiated by the solicitor ...

Mr Ede: You tried it on and it did not work.

Mr Reed: How naive are you?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will be heard in silence. If there is any further outburst, I will name the member concerned.

Mr MANZIE: When solicitors enter negotiations, normally they seek to obtain the best possible outcome for their clients. The member for Stuart cannot deny that he knew of the agreement proposed by the pastoralist, which included confidentiality provisions relating to press, radio and television. He was aware of that agreement when he tried to create the impression that the government was deliberately using the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to browbeat a pastoralist into accepting a totally illegal document. The fact that he blatantly misled this House is indicative of his normal behaviour.

However, it was disappointing to see the Leader of the Opposition follow the example of his deputy by accusing the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries of telling blatant lies and of being ignorant of what was occurring. Such comments could actually be applied to the Leader of the Opposition. He should be aware that, when his deputy speaks in this parliament, he is not talking to a local ALP branch or to people in the bush. What he says here has to be accepted at face value as being factual. Deliberate attempts to mislead the community and members of this House are most reprehensible.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Attorney-General has just suggested that the the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has deliberately misled or ...

Mr Coulter: He is speaking to a censure motion.

Mr BELL: I suggest that the terms of the motion should reflect that. They do not.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, the member for MacDonnell has been asleep for the last couple of hours.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made pious accusations of improper behaviour when, in fact, negotiations had been carried out by the solicitors

for the parties. Even though the government signed the pastoralist's own contract, the Leader of the Opposition blindly followed the absurd accusations of his deputy. It is not the first time that this has happened and it will not be the last. I know that members of this House and people in the Territory community are aware of the pathetic attempts made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to attack this government for participating in the national BTEC program. Today, his attempts have been despicable. He has cast an appalling slur on the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and, by inference, the pastoralist's solicitor. I believe that, during the luncheon adjournment, the member for Stuart should contact those people by phone and apologise to them.

I have been informed that the proprietors of the pastoral company, their solicitor, an independent observer, the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the government's solicitor, and a member of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries were all present during the negotiations.

Mr Bailey: They were all aware of the shonky, were they?

Mr MANZIE: I will pick up that interjection from the member for Wanguri who says that they were all part of a shonky deal. Finally, he has opened his mouth but, as usual, the result is drivel. If he condones the member for Stuart's effort to deliberately mislead the House, if he condones suggestions that the solicitor for the pastoralist was somehow incompetent and if he condones the actions of the Leader of the Opposition in blindly following the member for Stuart, he puts himself in the same class as themselves.

Mr Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

13 Ayes	8 Noes
Mr Coulter	Mr Bailey
Mr Dondas	Mr Bell
Mr Finch	Mr Ede
Mr Harris	Mr Firmin
Mr Hatton	Mr Floreani
Mr McCarthy	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Manzie	Mr Smith
Mr Palmer	Mr Tuxworth
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table a letter from a solicitor and an agreement which has been signed.

Mr SPEAKER: The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1990-91
(Serial 297)

Continued from 25 September 1990.

In committee:

Schedule 2:

Appropriation for division 14:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this morning, I circulated to the Chief Minister a number of questions regarding ...

Mr Perron: If you did, I have not seen them. When this morning?

Mr SMITH: They would have reached your office at about 8.45 am.

Mr Perron: No, I am sorry. I have not seen them.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this morning, I circulated to the Chief Minister a number of questions relating to the Office of the Auditor-General. Mr Chairman, could I suggest perhaps that, if the Chief Minister has not seen those, we might adjourn this section?

Mr Coulter: You had 3 weeks in which to send them to him.

Mr SMITH: I cannot help it if his operations have not caught up with them.

Mr Ede: We are doing the right thing by giving you the questions in advance to stop you looking like dodos.

Mr Coulter: You were asked 3 weeks ago.

Mr VALE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! The member for Stuart referred to members of this side as dodos. I think that is unparliamentary.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is a point of order.

Mr EDE: I withdraw the reference, Mr Chairman.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1990 makes the following statement:

> Observations from a synthesis of outcomes of audits of departments showed the following general weaknesses:
>
> ° asset registers were not being properly maintained - thus adversely affecting the level of control of government assets and ultimately retarding appropriate asset management considerations;
>
> ° inadequate attention to key controls in the accounting and the salaries payment systems - thus providing scope for error or fraud to go undetected; and

° ADP security administration procedures not being followed in departments - thus giving scope for unauthorised access or change to data stored under the government mainframe.

In regard to the first observation - that asset registers were not being properly maintained in many departments - can the Chief Minister advise whether the government has a complete list of its assets? If possible, would he be prepared to table a list of those assets at some time? That may not be a reasonable request, and I am prepared to be guided on that.

In regard to the second observation - inadequate attention to key controls in the accounting and the salaries payment systems - can the Chief Minister advise what action will be taken to improve controls in the accounting and salaries payment systems to reduce the scope for error or fraud?

Thirdly, in regard to the final observation - that ADP security administration procedures were not being followed in departments - can the Chief Minister advise whether guidelines exist to prevent unauthorised access, what those guidelines are, and to whom they apply?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I cannot provide the information that the honourable member seeks of me. Certainly, I have not received any advice if, as he said, he submitted those matters to my office earlier this morning. I believe that all ministers wrote to their shadow counterparts some weeks ago asking if there were matters of detail to be raised during the budget committee stage that we might prepare for in order that members could receive detailed information.

Quite clearly, in a matter as complex as the entire government's budgetary expenditure, it cannot be expected that ministers and the Chief Minister will have that type of information at their fingertips without prior warning. I make those comments at the beginning of this exercise because, obviously, it will be a long process that may involve some frustrations. I say that on the basis that ministers have not had advice of questions that are likely to be asked.

In response to the Leader of the Opposition's specific requests, it seems to me that he is selecting comments from the Auditor-General's report and asking what we are doing about them. It would be more appropriate to address such issues during debate on an Auditor-General's report. I am not in any way trying to dodge any of those issues but I cannot provide the information that he is seeking this afternoon. I had thought that the purpose of the committee stage is to examine the reasonableness or otherwise of appropriations to specific departments and authorities and, in this case, the Office of the Auditor-General.

The Leader of the Opposition asked if we would table a complete assets register of the Northern Territory government. I have advised the House that we have adopted a computerised asset management system. I am not sure whether everything is programmed under that computerised system. However, I can make inquiries to ascertain what information is easily available. I do not wish to suggest that there are government assets that we would not want to be known publicly. In fact, probably there is a raft of assets that I would like to know about out of sheer curiosity. However, it might involve such an enormously voluminous exercise that it would be better addressed by the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I cannot help it if the Chief Minister does not receive material that is sent to him.

Mr Coulter: It was delivered from your office during the BTEC debate a few minutes ago.

Mr SMITH: Secondly, I cannot help it if the Chief Minister, for his own reasons, advances the program of this House so that, instead of the normal practice whereby we would have this committee stage later this week or early next week, he has it on the second day of the sittings. The process has been speeded up quite a bit and no advance advice was provided to the opposition. In fact, the whole of yesterday, the government was playing it very cute indeed as to exactly what would happen in the next 2 days.

A number of months ago, the Auditor-General raised serious concerns about the operation of various government departments. That is a responsibility of the Auditor-General under the act. At this stage, it is appropriate for us to ask whether those concerns have been addressed. At the time, we asked whether those concerns had been addressed and we did not receive a satisfactory answer.

I ask the question again of the Chief Minister. Can he advise what action has been taken to improve controls in the accounting and salary payment systems? I would have thought that, at least in his role as Treasurer, the Chief Minister might be interested. Can he advise whether guidelines exist to prevent unauthorised access to the ADP security administration system? The Chief Minister cannot pretend that both these matters have not been of common interest or that they have not been mentioned before in this parliament. I thought that, if the Chief Minister was on top of his portfolios, he would be able to provide information on these matters.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I reiterate my point. The Leader of the Opposition is being quite unreasonable in suggesting that, in committee debate on the budget, I should be prepared to address all the issues that have been raised by the Auditor-General in a report tabled in this House earlier, a report which is referred automatically to the Pubic Accounts Committee so that it can be addressed in considerable detail.

It is worth recording in the Parliamentary Record that the Leader of the Opposition was so interested in my response to his detailed question that he left his chair the instant that he stopped talking and has now left the Chamber. That demonstrates how interested he is in any response that I might make. It appears that he wants to create the impression that he does have an interest in the matters before the Chair. People who read this record will think otherwise.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we have asked if the Chief Minister can advise whether the government has a complete list of its assets and, if so, whether he will table that list or register.

Mr Coulter: You were not here when he answered that.

Mr EDE: I was here.

Mr Manzie: What did he say?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am asking the Chief Minister if he is prepared to table the list or register, and what detail is on the list or register, if he now has one. If he does not have one, why doesn't he?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, if the honourable member was in the Chamber when I answered the question, obviously he was not listening. The government does have asset registers. I have mentioned during these sittings that we have a computerised asset management system in place. However, I am unsure whether all government assets are on the new, computerised asset management system. I said that I would examine whether or not it is reasonable to table in the House a complete list of the government's assets. I do not know how many assets the government has. It may be that such a process would involve imposing an enormous workload on staff in order to provide a pile of papers that would never be examined in detail by members opposite. However, I undertook to examine the matter.

If it is reasonable to provide a list of government assets, I have no problem with that whatsoever. I am sure that there is nothing on it that would cause embarrassment to me in any way. However, I suggest that a more appropriate course might be to refer the matter to the Public Accounts Committee or allow that committee to pick it up in its normal examination of matters such as the Auditor-General's report. Because that committee meets between sittings of this Assembly, it has more time to deliberate on matters of such extensive detail.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I refer to the matter of ADP security administration procedures not being followed in departments. This has been discussed extensively in a number of debates in this House. The Chief Minister has commented on it himself, as have most ministers. The Auditor-General's report cast some doubts on the security of administrative procedures and the possibility of unauthorised access or the alteration of data stored on the government's mainframe. I would have thought that the Chief Minister would have picked that up and that he could have given us an indication of what has been done since the Auditor-General's report was brought down. I ask him to do so.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, at the last sittings, I made a statement relating to information and privacy, and the steps that the government has taken to have - and I am testing my memory here - an audit of current practices adopted by departments and authorities in regard to access to information, including ADP information. That committee was to do certain things and report back to the government in due course. My memory fails me on further detail.

I reiterate that we are here to talk about the appropriations to certain government departments, not the Auditor-General's reports which have been tabled in this House. Of course, there are opportunities for such reports and the matters contained therein to be debated extensively.

Appropriation for division 14 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 15 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 11:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have several questions. The first relates to a question which was asked in the last sittings, after the budget was brought down, and which was not answered. Can the Chief Minister explain the increase in ministerial officer staff from 61 last year to 74 this

year? What are the additional positions and where are they located? What new services have been provided by these additional positions? I notice that there is a decrease of almost 10% in the allocation to the Office of Women's Affairs. Is the Chief Minister able to offer any explanation of why that has occurred?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I can advise the Leader of the Opposition that the figure of 61 ministerial officers which appeared in the 1989-90 budget represented the maximum staffing level at that time. The actual number of officers was 70. The actual amount paid in salaries was $2.944m of the $4.007m which appears in that column, a figure which also includes administration and capital items. This year, there will be 74 members of staff. The salaries appropriation is $3.288m. The increase in the number of staff from 70 to 74 would account for some of that, as would the provision for the first 3% wage indexation payment.

By way of further explanation, I point out that, since last year, there has been a change in the method of calculating staff numbers which appear in the budget. Last year's figures were the maximum staffing levels for each department. In fact, such figures may not reflect actual staff employed at a given time, which may be above or below the MSL. This year's figure is the result of a calculation based on the average number of staff paid during the course of the last financial year.

The Leader of the Opposition asked why the appropriation for the Office of Women's Affairs is lower this year. The $42 000 reduction arises from $33 000 in non-recurring costs associated with the domestic violence education program, and a saving of $15 000 because no vehicles are programmed for replacement in 1990-91. With the addition of $6000 in salaries to provide for the 3% wage increase, the reduction on last year's figure is $42 000.

Mr SMITH: Referring back to the increase in ministerial office staff from 70 to 74, can the Chief Minister tell me where the new positions are located? There are still only 9 ministers, 1 Speaker and 1 Leader of the Opposition.

Mr PERRON: I do not have that information before me. Obviously, they are located in the offices of ministers and on my own staff. I suppose the Leader of the Opposition has not received any additional staff during the last 12 months. As honourable members will be aware, Chief Ministers are able to determine how many staff each minister has, and the number of staff allocated to ministers depends very much on the portfolios concerned. Ministers from central Australia may effectively require 2 ministerial officers. Whilst I cannot say specifically where the additional ministerial officers are located, I know that my own staff has included a couple of additional people during the last year. I cannot name the individual positions but certainly I acknowledge that they are within the ministry.

Mr EDE: I would like to clarify the process of calculating staff numbers. As I understand it, this year's figure of 74 refers to the average number of staff paid during 1989-90. On the other hand, the figure of 61 in last year's budget represented the maximum staffing level at that time.

Mr Perron: Yes.

Mr EDE: That was the MSL but, during the year, the average number of staff employed was 74.

Mr Perron: Yes.

Mr EDE: I am trying to understand the process. Has the MSL increased at some stage? The Chief Minister has acknowledged that his department's staffing level was 9 above MSL at the time of the last budget. If the average staff number for last year was 74, obviously it exceeded 74 at some stage. What is the point of MSLs if there is no process to increase them before additional staff are put on will-nilly?

Mr PERRON: Some of my colleagues will be interested in the answer to that question. For the information of honourable members, the MSL is not inviolate. It is a guide which relates to the necessity for an organisation to have a staffing structure. There is a great deal of flexibility within that system which allows departmental heads to move people around, because we want the managers to manage.

There are many occasions when having the MSL changed is a very difficult process, as I am sure the Clerk of the Assembly would acknowledge. The system is designed to prevent departments getting additional staff, because they are all expensive and the lid has to be kept on it somehow. At times, it may be necessary for a department to engage people on contract. Most people engaged over MSL would be on a contract in one form or another to meet emergent circumstances. It might even be an ongoing circumstance. As an example, recently, we approved the fire service exceeding its MSL by 4 people in order to provide for the conduct of a recruitment campaign. We knew that there were resignations in the pipeline that would bring us back to MSL by the time we had finished training the recruits. They go south for their training. On that basis, the department was allowed to engage 4 more people than its MSL allowed for. We do not go through the process of increasing the MSL by 4 when there is a temporary blowout.

In the case of ministerial staff ...

Mr Ede: It is not a temporary blowout.

Mr PERRON: It may not be. If a case is put to the Chief Minister that he believes is worthy of support, he can approve additional staff to go on contract on a minister's staff. The MSL system is running behind that process in the Department of the Chief Minister in that regard. To sum up, MSLs are not figures which are hard and fast. Many departments would be running continually below MSL, certainly in terms of people being on leave etc. However, there are times when the MSL is broken. In the Department of Health and Community Services, there have been examples where people have been engaged specifically to handle an urgent program. Authorisation has been given to do that, even if it has meant that the MSL was exceeded. The first priority of government is to get the job done.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I take on board the Chief Minister's comment that the MSL is no more than a notional figure which can be bumped up and down and that it is easier to bump it up and down if you are a Chief Minister.

Mr Perron: If you are to run this place, you have to have some flexibility and authority.

Mr EDE: And some fun.

Mr Perron: A little bit of that too.

Mr EDE: Thus, there is an average of about 7½, and the Leader of the Opposition gets 6 of those positions.

The money for the railway investigation comes out of the vote of the Department of the Chief Minister. Is that right?

Mr Perron: Is that a question?

Mr EDE: I could not find any specific indication of how much is being spent on that. I would like the Chief Minister to indicate how much was spent last year, and how that compares with what will be spent next year. We learnt in Canberra that, with the micro-economic reform that is occurring, if the money freed up from the airlines is spent on the railways, the whole story of the railway will change significantly. Instead of having a hopefully efficient railway plugging into an inefficient network down south, we may have an efficient network here plugging into an efficient network there. I think that would change the parameters of the economics of the project. Obviously, it will be necessary for somebody to restructure the project. How much is available to do that, compared with what was available last year?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, no specific sum is set aside for the railway in the vote for the Department of the Chief Minister. In fact, the considerable sums that have been spent on furthering railway investigations, feasibility studies, market studies, freight identification studies etc to date have been undertaken at the expense of Rail North, the private participant in that company. It has been a very considerable expense. It has had a full-time chairman and office in Sydney.

Notwithstanding that, there is a cost to government. We do have officers who work with anyone who wants to talk about the railway. I refer to international companies, and bankers who flit through town from time to time. They want to know what it is about and our officers spend time with them. They may also be supplied with copies of documents. That is covered in the normal administration costs of the department. The department has a vote for consultancies which can be drawn upon for projects relating to the railway at any time.

I am pleased to hear the honourable member's encouraging words in respect of his reading of the national scene as far as the potential for the railway is concerned. Reading between the lines, I believe the concern about environmental controls, trucks burning fossil fuels, the inefficiencies of moving smaller tonnages and the Prime Minister's wish for an efficient national railway network make the railway look more attractive than it has in the past from the federal government's point of view. We will be seeking to cash in on that and to obtain support wherever we can.

I can assure the honourable member that we will find whatever we need by way of funds to mount cases for the railway and, by that, I do not mean that it will be dragged off another vote. That is what consultancy votes are appropriated for.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I asked the Chief Minister a question in relation to an item for office partitioning which appears in the budget. Perhaps he could answer the question. An enormous sum of money in this year's budget relates to office partitioning. This is more relevant to the Chief Minister as Chief Minister than as Treasurer because, after all, he is supposed to be the boss.

By my reckoning, Mr Chairman, office partitioning will cost $1 967 700. That represents a hell of a lot of office partitioning. There seems to be a magic figure of about $20 000. Last year, the Chief Minister's Department spent $20 000 on partitioning. Treasury spent $27 700. The Police, Fire and Emergency Services spent $26 000. The Power and Water Authority spent a great deal more. However, this $20 000-$25 000 figure leads me to believe, perhaps with a little cynicism, that it might be a figure that has been plucked out of the air and that, because somebody happened to have been $20 000 over or $20 000 under appropriation, it has been called expenditure for 'office partitioning'. Why is so much office partitioning necessary every year, and why is such a large sum of money necessary for such partitioning?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, of a total Capital Works Program of $347.4m, office partitioning is some $1.3m or 0.3%.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is 1.9%. I will show you the figures.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member has 1.9%. I will have to question my advisers in that regard. They are talking about less than 0.5%, not that that lessens the fact that we should not be spending money on things that we do not need.

The Northern Territory government is a large organisation employing about 15 000 staff. Inevitably, from time to time, there are changes within such an organisation which require reorganisation of partitioning within a building. In these tight times, such expenditure is kept to a minimum.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Rats!

Mr PERRON: However, of course, this is a source of work for some of the people in the community who need to earn a quid.

Mr Chairman, I think there is a figure of $20 000 in the Chief Minister's vote. I would think that this is for contingency items, although the money may be allocated against an anticipated move. As honourable members are aware, quite reasonably from time to time, there is a requirement to remove a wall between 2 offices or to insert one between 2 offices. Disappointingly, these activities are far more expensive than we might like to think they should be. Extra telephones have to be connected, access doors are required and so it goes on. Following reorganisation of that kind, it may be necessary to realign the air-conditioning ducting.

I do not think it is an unreasonable figure to provide for contingencies of that kind. If that sort of allocation is not expended three-quarters of the way into the year, one would expect that it would be returned to Consolidated Revenue or it may be reallocated for other purposes. The point that I am trying to make is that, even at $1.9m across the whole of government with its 15 000 public servants, it does not seem to be an enormous figure.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, may I ask the Chief Minister to reconsider what he has said. He gave the total figure for capital works, and he said the amounts spent on office partitioning are not unduly large. If this line of thought is continued, all these small percentages add up and, with due respect to the Chief Minister, who is reasonably efficient as Treasurer and as Chief Minister, I think that he is having a lend of us if he thinks that we will believe that office partitioning items in a range of departments come to this magic figure of $20 000 to $25 000. It is too

coincidental to be true, and that is why it interests me. I would like to know whether the Chief Minister intends to be always so ...

Mr Perron: Generous?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: No, not generous. Does he intend always to pass over these small trifles of a couple of million dollars and to think that they are negligible because he can see only the grander scenes?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, it is rather like the situation with the minor new works votes. That vote appears for the various departments ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, but that is different.

Mr Perron: It is a type of contingency factor. You could almost bet your life - particularly in the old Assembly, though not so much in this building - that, during the course of the year, numerous unforeseen things would occur. There would be problems with the floors or the ceilings or the power supply. There is a necessity to allocate funds for such contingencies. Personally, I would love to take $20 000 from the budgets of all departments and authorities and to use the money for some other purpose.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why are all the allocations in the range of $20 000 to $25 000?

Mr Manzie: That is what they are restricted to spending.

Mr PERRON: However, $20 000 does not buy very much these days in terms of engaging an electrician, a cabinet maker, a carpenter or a plumber. If those 4 trades are needed, you will not obtain much for $20 000. I do not think that it is an unreasonable sum, but I take on board the honourable member's comments about the possibly of some savings in that regard.

Appropriation for division 11 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 10 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have 7 long questions. Has the Chief Minister received any information on this question list?

Mr Perron: Let me have a look. Yes, I do have some information.

Mr SMITH: I will go through them for the record.

Last year, debt servicing consumed $114.6m of government expenditure. This year, it will cost us $132.6m or 17.5% more. In other words, debt servicing is consuming a greater and greater proportion of government resources. Does the Chief Minister acknowledge that there is a limit to our capacity to tie up money to repay loans? Associated questions are as follows. Can the Chief Minister advise what steps have been taken to prevent the Northern Territory government's debt from spiralling? Does the Chief Minister believe government should make an effort to set a limit on borrowing? Does the Chief Minister admit that removal of the Commonwealth guarantee on Northern Territory borrowings - which I understand was raised or agreed on at the Premiers' Conference some months ago - will have an impact on the rate of the Territory government's borrowing only if the market believes that this government's borrowing practices are risky and

that, by stating with such certainty that the interest rates would increase in the absence of the Commonwealth guarantee, effectively he has admitted that the government's borrowing practices have not been responsible?

The third question relates to the fact that last year's budget papers predicted a $2m contribution to the Consolidated Fund from the TIO. This year's budget papers do not present the TIO contribution as a separate line item. Can the Chief Minister advise what the actual contribution from the TIO was for the financial year 1989-90, what the projected contribution is for 1991 and under which line item in the 1990-91 budget papers the TIO contribution is included?

Fourthly, trust fund repayments to Treasury are $22.675m for 1990-91. Last year, they were $7.8m and the year before that there were no trust fund repayments to Treasury. Can the Chief Minister confirm that this is tantamount to borrowing from future years' budgets? Will the Chief Minister advise which trust fund accounts are affected, the amounts that have been repaid and to which departments? Can the Chief Minister further advise what levels he considers to be appropriate to hold in the trust funds, what plans there are to restore the funds to those levels, and why it is appropriate to run them down now, when they have not been accessed in the past?

Fifthly, in relation to stamp duty collections, can the Chief Minister explain why this year's projection is lower than last year's actual receipts? Sixthly, payroll tax receipts have increased at less than the cost of inflation. Can the Chief Minister indicate why that is the case and, in terms of motor vehicle registration fees, will the Chief Minister confirm that the projection implies a decrease in the receipts from motor vehicle registration fees in real terms?

My last question has not been supplied to the Chief Minister. It relates to a comment made by the Institute of Public Affairs that, in the last 2 or 3 years - the period over which the Institute of Public Affairs has been concerned about what is happening in the Northern Territory budget - there has always been growth in the administrative expenses areas, the non-productive areas, but that there have been cuts in real terms in the capital areas which, hopefully, are the productive income and employment generating areas. Does the Chief Minister concur with the IPA that there has been a cut in capital each year in relation to its percentage of the budget and that, on the other hand, there has been a growth in administrative expenses in relation to its percentage of the budget? Does he share the IPA's concern about that movement, and what is he able to do about it?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, this exercise becomes rather absurd when a member can ask 6 or 7 questions, including one that has 16 legs to it. However, I have a number of answers which I will read out.

Mr Smith: You designed the system of two 10-minute question periods. Do not blame us for your system.

Mr Ede: We told you it was stupid.

Mr Smith: We would be happy to change it.

Mr PERRON: In addition to the written questions, he has asked a further complex question and expects me to remember all of it by the time I finish answering the first 6.

Mr Smith: Change the system.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the first question had a series of sub-questions attached to it which were more like statements than questions. For example, he said that debt servicing is consuming greater and greater proportions of government resources. That is a somewhat meaningless statement. 'Does the Chief Minister acknowledge that there is a limit to our capacity to tie up money to repay loans? Can the Chief Minister advise what steps are being taken to prevent the Northern Territory government's debt from spiralling?' It is all good political stuff, Mr Chairman, if only we were not so tired of hearing it.

At the last sittings of the Assembly, I tabled a paper on the Northern Territory's debt. I believe that it was a very good paper. It took the Treasury many months to prepare. It used other advisers to assemble and collate the material. It addressed these very questions. It addressed the current Northern Territory debt, debt servicing commitments, those ratios in relation to the budget and in relation to similar ratios interstate. It posed questions such as whether there should be a limit on the level of debt that this government should accumulate. We debated that document briefly, although probably we did not do it justice. However, it is still current and I suggest that it answers all these questions satisfactorily. The report concluded that the Northern Territory was not unreasonably burdened with debt at this stage and indeed that it has considerable capacity to increase its current level of debt and to service it quite reasonably.

Most debt is accumulated in relation to the provision of productive assets such as wharves, power transmission lines, roads and so on. Water supply is a productive asset inasmuch as it enables population to settle, businesses to open up and so on. One might say that sewerage systems are not really productive other than of unmentionables. In answer to the honourable member's first question, I believe that the matter has been dealt very comprehensively and answered to the satisfaction of the Assembly. The same applies to the second question.

The third question referred to the fact that, last year, the TIO was required to contribute $2m towards our budget. The honourable member asked where that revenue figure appears in this year's budget. The TIO contribution is represented as Miscellaneous Revenue under Territory Receipts, Budget Paper No 4, page 37. The actual figure for 1989-90 is $610 000 which is what the TIO actually paid during last financial year. It still owes the government $1.39m to make up the $2m. That amount will be forthcoming this year. In addition, the TIO is to pay the government $2m this year. Page 37 of Budget Paper No 4 refers to a figure of $3.39m which is made up of $2m from the TIO for this year and $1.39m for last year.

In answer to the fourth question, drawing on trust accounts balances by their repayment to Treasury reflects prudent management over time of the total resources available to the Northern Territory public sector. Doing so in a particular year has no meaningful implication for any future year's budget except in the trivial sense that money spent once cannot be spent again. The test to be applied is whether, in the total budgetary context, the resources are well applied at the time of their application.

The fourth question asked also which trust accounts were affected and what amounts were involved. Trust fund repayments are indicated clearly, department by department, within Budget Paper No 4, in the section headed Consolidated Fund Receipts from Territory Sources. The appropriate level of funds to hold within trust accounts is determined within the total budgetary

context and with full consideration of the cash needs and timing of those cash needs in particular budget areas over the course of the budget year. In Treasury's case, this includes the allocation of funds from the conditions of service reserve to meet the cost of National Wage Case decisions and other employee entitlements including superannuation costs. Movements in each individual trust account are reported quarterly throughout the year in the Treasurer's quarterly statements and annually in the Treasurer's Financial Statements which are presented to the Legislative Assembly.

It is normal practice for trust fund balances to vary both within and between years for many different reasons including, in particular, the differences in timing between receipt of cash for a particular purpose and the actual expenditure on that purpose. For example, trust account balances were inflated artificially last year by $40m at the start of the year as a result of the early payment of the electricity subsidy by the Commonwealth. That was the single most important reason for the reduction in trust account balances in 1989-90, which fell from $180m to $133m.

The fifth question concerned projected stamp duty collections. Each year, it is expected that there will be some large conveyancing and related transactions which will attract significant amounts of duty, such amounts being $175 000 to $200 000. Normally, approximately 4 to 6 such transactions, realising $1.5m to $2m in duty, will occur in each year. During 1989-90, there was an unusually large number of significant transactions under the conveyancing, loan securities and marketable security heads of duty. These generated some $10m from only 10 transactions. The 1990-91 estimates assume a more normal number of large transactions, and the 1989-90 revenue receipts estimates reflect this. There was a single transaction during the course of last year which involved over $5m.

The sixth question concerned budgeted payroll tax receipts. The budget estimate for 1990-91 was based on a 5% increase in taxable salaries and a 0.7% increase in numbers of people employed. This increase in taxable salaries was settled after taking regard of the timing of possible wage adjustments. The estimate does not reflect any expectation that there will be a decline in the Northern Territory economy. I might point out that, in their recent budgets, a number of the states are defining payments made under the federal fringe benefits legislation as salaries, for the purpose of levying payroll tax on companies. We have not done that. At least South Australia and Tasmania have done it and no doubt they will receive significantly increased revenue as a result. At the same time, they have raised payroll tax by between 0.5% and 1%.

The seventh question related to the budget's projected receipts for motor vehicle registration fees. Treasury understands that the reason is related to one-off increases in taxi licence fees in 1989-90, but the question should be referred to the Minister for Transport and Works for a more specific reply.

The final question related to the Institute of Public Affairs which has retracted its statements about this budget. It had likened the Northern Territory to WA Inc and Victoria because of our payments in support of accommodation. After we wrote to the institute and explained that those were payments supporting terminating financial structures, it made its retraction by means of a letter to me. We issued a press release, which we ran past the IPA, stating that the retraction had been made and accusing the IPA of being more political than it should be if it wishes to retain credibility in commenting on government budgets.

Mr Smith: Can we have a copy of that?

Mr PERRON: I would be happy to provide you with a copy of the IPA's letter.

The Leader of the Opposition's comments related to the IPA's comment that the size of the capital works vote was declining as a percentage of the total budget. We will have to get some figures together in order to determine whether that is the case. Certainly, we are spending less on capital works than I would wish and there is a reduction in the funds available for capital works in this budget. Obviously, governments should have the best possible infrastructure development programs if they want the country to move ahead. We should be attempting to shovel money away from recurrent expenditures into capital expenditures. That is not always possible in the context of demands on government for services in areas such as health, education, police, prisons and so on. Many service costs are predetermined. Even in a situation in which income from Commonwealth sources and local tax revenue is decreasing, health costs could be running well above inflation because of such things as viruses and infections affecting large numbers of people. The costs of some items of modern medical equipment are quite astronomical. I am not sure that I can say much more. Certainly, I would like to see capital expenditure rising as a percentage of the total budget every year. That would be a desirable aim.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to return to the question of the TIO contribution. Last year, the government touted the TIO contribution of $2m as a significant feature of its budget. We believe it is appropriate for the TIO to make a general contribution to the Consolidated Fund. However, I must admit that I am rather concerned that only $610 000, or less than one-third of the promised amount, came across in the period. Why didn't the TIO meet its commitment? In light of the contribution made last year, what confidence does the Chief Minister have that its expected contribution this year will be met?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that all of the money, $3.39m, will be in Consolidated Revenue during the course of this financial year because I intend to make it my business to get it. Without reflecting in any way on the TIO, I must say that there has been a great deal of discussion between my office, Treasury and the TIO about the way in which such payments will be levied on the TIO. A provision in the Territory Insurance Office Act enables the government to seek a contribution from the TIO on the very basis that it provided the guarantee to the TIO which enabled it to get on its feet in the first place. It would be quite reasonable for the taxpayers of the Northern Territory to say that they want a return for providing that type of security to the TIO.

However, there has been a fair bit of debate about how the amount asked from the TIO should be calculated. On what basis is the government asking for it? Is it in lieu of profits? If the TIO were a private company, working to a board of directors responsible to shareholders, the shareholders would expect a return on investment. Therefore, there is a profit margin that the TIO is making, and that is what we require to come into Consolidated Revenue. Alternatively, it is not that at all, but the fact that we are offering a government guarantee to the TIO. The taxpayers of the Territory took a risk, particularly in the TIO's early years, before it had all its reserves in place. It could have collapsed and that would have been a cost to Consolidated Revenue. I am pleased to say that, with its substantial assets, it is beyond that. However, there has been this ongoing debate. I could have pressed the matter more quickly than I have,

but I knew that the TIO was not going anywhere and we finished the year without requiring every cent that we had in the bank account. It was one of those items that could be dragged over. I dragged the debt over the line, and added it to this year's contribution.

We will be debating this matter further because I want to clarify in the legislation what the TIO should contribute to Consolidated Revenue. That means we have to address what are the grounds for the contribution and how the contribution should be calculated. I would like to tie that up so that I do not have to become involved in further debate with various people who have other ideas as to how much it should be.

Mr Smith: That sounds pretty sensible to me.

Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 26 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 29:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I ask the Chief Minister whether there is not a better way of keeping track of those liabilities and entitlements entered into by the previous NTDC than having this separate Territory Loans Management Corporation. What is the extent of the TLMC's liabilities and entitlements, to whom does the TLMC owe money, how much, and when will the TLMC liabilities be fully paid off?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the Territory Loans Management Corporation has taken over the administration of loans which were incurred by a former Northern Territory statutory authority. In accordance with the TLMC Act 1986, the corporation administers the contractual liabilities and entitlements of the previous NTDC. No new contracts have been entered into by the Territory Loans Management Corporation. As at 30 June 1990, the outstanding liability is $3.76m. This liability relates solely to Northern Territory semi-government borrowings. Full liability is scheduled to be repaid by 30 November 1997.

Appropriation for division 29 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 16:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I must apologise to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services because this section did slip through our net and there are no questions on notice. However, I am sure the Chief Minister is aware of some general concerns relating to allocations to the Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I would like to mention a few of those general concerns and obtain a reaction.

The first general concern is in Alice Springs. For quite some time, there has been no Traffic Section within the Northern Territory Police Force in Alice Springs. I understand the reason is the increased number of persons needed for watch-house duty. I understand the watch-house now requires 2 people 24 hours a day. That has taken about 10 people away from the remaining sections of the police force in Alice Springs, and one of the sections that has suffered is the Traffic Section. Some public comments were made last month about that problem being addressed. Has the Chief Minister been able to address those matters?

The second area concerns general budget restrictions related to cutbacks in overtime and travel allowance which have been quite significant. These matters are of burning relevance to police officers because they do not have simple 9-to-5 jobs. At times, they can be in hot pursuit when their shift is supposed to end. At other times, on extended investigations, they can stack up quite a bit of overtime.

Mr Collins: Or be held up in court for hours.

Mr SMITH: That is right. Does the Chief Minister have some flexibility to provide overtime and travel allowance payments in those instances?

Another area of concern related to cutbacks in training. I understand there have been quite severe cutbacks in training, not for incoming members of the police force, but for existing members. We used to call it professional in-service training when I was a teacher. To give a practical example, I understand that, of the 4 crime scene examiners currently operating in Darwin, none has done a course because money to enable them to undertake the training course has not been available. I understand that 1 member in the crime scene examination system is undertaking a course at his own expense and in his own time. I would like a comment from the Chief Minister on what possibly might be done about that situation.

The last question relates to electronic interviewing. A decision has been taken by the Northern Territory government for the police force to set up electronic interviewing. My information is that, in fact, there is only 1 electronic interview room in Darwin. Quite clearly, at peak times, if one can use that term, that is not sufficient. I ask the Chief Minister what, if any, plans the government has to improve the electronic interviewing facilities in Darwin.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I am working out how best to respond to those questions as some of them impinge on a series of questions of which the member for Sadadeen gave me notice.

It is true that the police are the victims of budgetary restraint, as are all departments and authorities.

Mr Ede: Except ministerial officers.

Mr PERRON: I can assure the member for Stuart that ministerial officers do not get everything they want either.

It does make it difficult for a police force which runs a 24-hour operation which is required to respond to criminal activity or alleged criminal activity. I can assure honourable members that there is a degree of alleged criminal activity that causes enormous expense and results in little more than a pile of paper that ought to go through the shredder. The police have to reorganise their priorities on a regular basis in order to ensure that what is necessary to be done is done. If, in the course of a year, they run over their budget because they have had people at crime scenes, searches in the bush and extended investigations, then additional funds are provided to ensure that everyone is paid.

From the little snippets that I pick up from police ministers and police commissioners elsewhere, our police force is equipped at least as well in terms of manpower and equipment as are most other police forces around Australia. I understand the response times to some criminal activity

and reports of breaks and entries etc in some forces would be absolutely alarming in the Northern Territory. People would believe that society had come unstuck if those times were in place here.

That does not mean that our times are not stretching a bit. Perhaps we do not have as many people on some of the patrols as we used to. However, the police force is a dynamic service. We have changed very significantly towards a more community policing mode of late. We took the decision that it is sensible to put police constables in high schools, and we led Australia in this program. It is very expensive. The program involves some 14 police officers who are all fully trained.

A member: Some 20.

Mr PERRON: I am sorry. I saw the figure in the last couple of days, but it has slipped my mind now.

We are committed to expanding Neighbourhood Watch throughout the Territory because it appears to be successful. There is provision in this budget for an extra 4 staff for that purpose. Instead of the hundreds of police officers, who live and work in Darwin, going to and from the Berrimah Police Headquarters every day, now they report to Nightcliff, Casuarina and Darwin Police Stations so that the police force has a much more visible profile in the community.

In addition, our police have to adopt particular measures as a result of such things as Aboriginal deaths in custody. We have to go to enormous lengths in an effort to design cells where people cannot kill themselves with shoelaces and so forth, and we have had to install video monitoring equipment in cells. That has been done in Alice Springs. There are all sorts of complications with the use of that equipment, including the orientation of cameras when female inmates are involved. The monitoring screens have to be watched 24 hours per day. This is done by 2 officers so that an officer is able to take a break during a shift.

Infringements of the 2 km law cause problems too. The dry area legislation has forced many Aboriginals with alcohol problems, or very little resistance to alcohol, to go to places like Alice Springs. That is causing much heartburn for the police. More and more people are being apprehended and police protective custody is almost like a child-minding operation. I am determined to do something about this situation during the course of the next year. Unacceptably large numbers of people are having to be taken into protective custody. That is as unacceptable as leaving such people on the streets and in the parks where they are a danger to themselves and others.

It is true that overtime rates have risen in some areas of the police force. The police simply have to do the job that is required. If people are on overtime for too long, days off tend to increase. People need a spell after working long and hard, and that compounds the problem. At present, manning levels in Alice Springs are under review with a view to reorganising the workload and perhaps providing additional staff resources from other areas in the Territory.

I cannot recall the exact figure, but I believe that we have something like 2.5 times as many police per head of population than is the case elsewhere in Australia. That does not indicate that our police are inefficient in any way. I think that they are very efficient. It does indicate, however, that our police services are very expensive on a per

capita basis. Having many remote communities where a high percentage of people seem to get into trouble, which requires a police presence, adds to the cost. We are reviewing police numbers in central Australia at present to determine whether we can overcome some of the problems within existing resources. If we cannot, the only answer is additional financial resources for the police and increased police numbers.

Mr SMITH: I want to follow up on a few matters. Some time ago, I expressed my concern at the 1-man patrols which sometimes occur in Darwin. The son of the member for Jingili attended a police call which I had one night, and he was on his own. It struck me at the time that it is terribly unfair of us, as a society, to demand that police officers attend calls alone. In an increasingly violent society, one never knows what might happen, and I believe that every police officer deserves the comfort of being accompanied by a fellow officer. I am not entirely sure whether senior officers are still forced to attend calls alone because of staff shortages. I would like to hear about what the Chief Minister is doing to address that issue.

I want to comment also on Neighbourhood Watch and Police in Schools programs. I know that there has been some evaluation of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and that the results seem to indicate that crime rates have fallen in areas covered by the scheme. However, I wonder whether any evaluation has been made of the Police in Schools program. As the Chief Minister said, it is a very expensive program. I know that there is a feeling among certain members of the police force that it is time for that program to be evaluated so that its effectiveness can be assessed.

My third comment concerns regionalisation of the police force in Darwin, specifically the establishment of fully functioning police stations in Nightcliff, Darwin city, Casuarina and Palmerston, as well as the Berrimah Police Centre. I understand that there are some concerns among police officers that the resources allocated are not sufficient. My understanding is that no new resources were allocated in order to equip those police stations properly, but that the existing resources at Berrimah were divided up among them. When resources and equipment are in a single location, some economies of scale apply. However, when that equipment is divided into 5 separate lots in regional offices, there are some problems. For example, I have been told that there is only 1 vehicle for 5 detectives at the Nightcliff Police Station. That is a practical result of the regionalisation of the force. I would like the Chief Minister to reassure me in relation to such concerns about regionalisation and the need to provide additional support services to the police officers in their new regional locations.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, we are really talking about the ramifications of being such a small community.

In respect of problems caused by regionalisation, one has to let the managers manage to some extent. At a certain point, they have to manage within their resources as best they can. Obviously, as politicians, we do our best to respond to the pressure points which become apparent both in the community and in the bureaucracy. However, it is not really the role of the minister responsible for police to interfere with the Commissioner of Police in performing his job.

I understand that most police patrols are 2-person patrols. However, if, for whatever reasons, the Commissioner of Police feels that it is necessary to have some 1-person patrols, I will not dispute his judgment.

He has to weigh up such matters in the context of his overall command structure.

Mr Smith: I am not disputing that. I am talking about the resources which only you can provide to him.

Mr PERRON: Yes, but obviously they are always finite resources. We have to continue to do the best that we can. We believe that we have a well-resourced and well-trained police force. Certainly, it is very highly respected. At present, we are seeing some evidence of stress in the system, particularly in Alice Springs. Processes are under way to work out what can be done through reorganisation and other administrative measures. If such measures cannot resolve the problems, I shall have to seek additional funds from my colleagues. That is how the system works. The same applies to officers working in prisons, health services and so on.

I am not aware of any evaluation of the Police in Schools program although I am sure that we could organise one. I suppose it is a matter of getting people together. Of course, evaluations cost money. We believe, I hope not naively, that school-based constables perform a valuable function. They do not twiddle their thumbs during school holidays; they organise camps. The constables attend feeder primary schools to talk to the kids. They act as counsellors and perform a range of other roles which would be very difficult to evaluate. The real yardstick will be whether community attitudes towards police and crime change over a 5- or 10-year period. Such assessments will be rather difficult to make. Certainly, the thought has crossed my mind from time to time in tight budgetary circumstances that probably we could save $1m by scrapping the program. One could argue that it would not be such a retrograde step. Most states have not even heard of this program and certainly they do not have it. Imagine what it would cost to introduce it in New South Wales where it is probably most needed. You try to afford these things for as long as you can but, if the crunch comes, one day you will have to say that these are optional services. They are not essential services.

Mr Coulter: But, you could not say that it was encouraging crime.

Mr PERRON: No. That is right. However, we have not done an evaluation and no evaluation is planned at present.

The last question related to concerns in relation to regionalisation and whether the stations have adequate resources. I know it is easy to find these things out because we are a tiny community and we all have a mate in the police force or the public service. The Chief Minister can be asked why he doesn't do something about police cars that have bald tyres. The system has to accommodate that without my addressing each of those problems individually. In a larger system, one would not even hear about those things unless there was some scandal involved. I fall back on the point that, as is the case with all departments, the police have to live within a budget. We will wear the consequences if it is not large enough. The system has to undertake self-evaluation to determine whether more funds are absolutely essential or not.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I have 2 points to put to the Chief Minister as the minister for police. Firstly, there was a suggestion in this review that might be taken on board, and I wonder whether there is any possibility that the job of watching the cells might be privatised.

A member: Coast Watch.

Mr COLLINS: Coast watch or cell watch. That would be a death defying sort of a job - and no pun is intended. Certainly, it seems to me to be a great waste of police resources.

The second point is the key to the many questions that I raised yesterday. The level of overtime is causing a fair degree of stress among police. This results in sick leave being taken and other officers being required to perform extra work. This compounds the problem further. It boils down to a question of whether that is the best way to handle the situation. Usually, overtime is paid for at a higher rate than normal working time and therefore it may be a false economy to increase overtime rather than having more police. The total cost may well be reduced if more police were employed.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, at the moment, we are discussing with the Police Association the option of employing civilians to undertake some police functions. It would enable us to employ people at a cheaper rate to carry out functions that do not require a high level of police training. Such persons could even include officers who, for reasons of lack of fitness or whatever, are unable to perform normal police duties. However, it a sensitive issue in that members of the Police Association do not wish to be outnumbered, as it were, by non-uniformed people who are not trained as police officers. There would have to be a degree of training and they may become associate members of the Police Association. Those matters are being discussed with aim of maximising the use of trained officers for police work rather than in administrative or monitoring roles.

Mr Coulter: A start has been make, hasn't it?

Mr PERRON: Yes, to a small degree. I have been to police stations where civilians operate some communications units.

The honourable member asked whether it would be cheaper to employ extra police than pay overtime. It is inaccurate to say that the cost of overtime is greater than the cost of extra police. Obviously, it depends on the amount of overtime being worked. In respect of the centralian region, the overtime figures for the June-to-August quarter of this year totalled about $100 000. Bearing in mind that these are relatively cool months, it is reasonable to expect that things will become busier as the temperature increases, tempers become frayed and thirsts larger. It is believed that the annual expenditure on overtime will be in excess of $400 000.

The cost of employing 10 officers of the rank structure needed for a 10-person unit is in the order of $480 000 per annum. I believe that we would prefer to have additional police rather than the overtime. Morale is better and people are not worn to a frazzle.

Mr Coulter: The police might not think that.

Mr PERRON: Yes. Some police officers might prefer overtime to the extra men. Perhaps there is a balance to be found somewhere.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I apologise for not tabling this question earlier, but the Chief Minister may be able to answer it anyway. From my previous occupation and from reading a number of reports recently about police in the states, I am aware of the stress involved in police work. In particular, there have been recent examples of the post-traumatic stress syndrome among police who were early at the scene of some horrific bus crashes interstate. Indeed, one officer subsequently took his own life and

apparently there was no other cause for that act. Has any allocation been made within the budget for counselling services to be made available for police officers who may require them after attendance at traumatic events?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I cannot refer the honourable member to a particular item in the police budget, but I can assure him that I have discussed this matter with the Commissioner of Police. Being a long-serving and experienced officer, he is aware of the problem. We have a system in the Northern Territory Police Force whereby counselling is encouraged. There is a feeling among police officers that only a wimp would feel the need to cry or express emotion after attendance at the scene of an horrendous accident or after coping with the gruesome task of cleaning up the accident scene. There is a growing realisation, however, that all persons, whether or not they are police officers, experience human reactions in such circumstances and that the suppression of such reactions may be dangerous. There is a need for a system whereby even the tough cops will be encouraged to seek assistance on a confidential basis. I am assured by the Commissioner of Police that those opportunities are available in our police system and that officers are encouraged to avail themselves of those opportunities.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, did the Chief Minister intend his answer to imply that a police officer seeking counselling from, say, a qualified psychologist would have the fees paid for by the government if the service were sought in relation to a post-traumatic stress disorder, without its being classified as a work health claim?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I am not prepared to say that a police officer could consult any qualified person for the purpose of counselling and submit the account to the Commissioner of Police. The police have more refined procedures than that. I know that it has used outside people to provide counselling. I would not expect a small force such as ours to have those types of resources within its ranks.

To answer the honourable member's question, I do not know what type of people are used for this purpose. I rely heavily on the Commissioner of Police, a man of great experience and integrity, who has great concern for his police officers. I have indicated to him that he has my full support in addressing the needs of the Northern Territory Police Force in relation to such counselling. I like to think - and I am not sure any of us really knows, except the Attorney-General - that I can have some sympathy with police officers in respect of some of the more unpleasant work that they perform on behalf of the society.

I am certain that, if the Commissioner of Police had some concerns in this regard, he would raise them with me and we would seek a solution. I understand that a system is in place to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Police. His word is good enough for me.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, at a later date, could the Chief Minister provide details of what is available?

Mr PERRON: Put a question on notice.

Appropriation for division 16 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 46:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I provided some questions to the honourable minister. He should have no problems with them because, basically, they are the same questions that I asked last year, although they were not answered properly at that time.

Mr Coulter: I will probably give you the same answers. Why don't you sit down and accept what I told you last year?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: Last year, you said that you would not tell me.

Mr Coulter: Fair enough. Nothing will have changed much, I can assure you.

Mr Bell: That might be fair enough from your point of view, Barry.

Mr COULTER: Take it easy, take it easy.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, what is the anticipated deficit for the Power and Water Authority in 1990-91? Can the minister advise what he intends to do about the $4.2m wasted on construction of a powerline to Cosmo Howley, which Cosmo Howley never intended to use? What action will the minister take to ensure that this type of waste is not repeated?

I remind the honourable minister that, last year, during the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill, he indicated that the Power and Water Authority's corporate plan was not complete, but that it was being worked on. In view of his statement that he will give the same answers as he gave last year, that would provide some indication of his competence. Can the minister advise whether the corporate plan is complete and whether a copy will be provided to the Legislative Assembly? Furthermore, can the minister define the goals of the Power and Water Authority, particularly with respect to reducing the deficit and approaching break-even point?

In addition, I ask the honourable minister how much was paid out in dry bore subsidies to properties in 1989-90. Who were the recipients and what was the breakdown of the total subsidies by recipient?

Although I did not refer to this matter in the notes which I gave to the minister, he would be aware of the industrial dispute presently occurring in Alice Springs. It relates to the amounts paid to fitters and trade assistants in places like Yulara and Tennant Creek compared with those paid in Alice Springs. As I understand it, something like $26m in above-award payments is paid to people working at the Channel Island Power Station. Workers employed at other power stations are, not surprisingly, stating that there should be equal pay for equal work, and they are attempting to get the ...

Mr Manzie: Are you making a speech or asking a question?

Mr Bell: Oh, shut up, Daryl.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: He is trying to recover from this morning. He was smashed around a bit and he is having some problems.

Mr Bell: You blokes are so scared of what you are doing.

Mr Coulter: We are terrified.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like also to ask the honourable minister a question about the printing section in the Power and Water Authority. There have been statements indicating that, if people in that area did not toe the line, the whole activity would be let out to private contract. My information is that the current cost of that service is in the vicinity of 2¢ per copy whereas the private sector rate is in the vicinity of 25¢ a copy and that putting the activity out to private contract would cost in the vicinity of $6m in additional expenditure. I ask the minister to comment on that.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the anticipated operating deficit of the Power and Water Authority, before subsidy, is $98.441m. However, to place this amount in perspective, the operating deficit of the authority is substantially impacted on by the provision of electricity to approximately 60 remote communities and the provision of water and, in some cases, sewerage services to 600 communities throughout the Northern Territory. Only a small amount of revenue is received from the provision of services at this time. Additionally, the operating deficit encompasses the authority's response for the assessment, development and management of ground and surface water supplies and floodplain management, from which no revenue is received.

In responding to the honourable member's second question, I must say that I would love my kids to ask his kids, 10 years from now, about the waste of money spent on the Cosmo Howley powerline. There is a vital difference between members on this side of the House and the opposition. We regard economics not as a science but as a belief.

Mr Ede: It is a religion for you, Barry.

Mr COULTER: It is.

Mr Ede: Put up powerlines everywhere.

Mr COULTER: Exactly.

Mr Ede: Now we will have the corporate plan, thank you.

Mr COULTER: The corporate plan is pretty simple too. Wait till I get to it.

To us, economics is a belief. The line to Goodall, which is being completed as we speak, could not have happened ...

Mr Bell: What about Yulara?

Mr COULTER: Yulara is a perfect example. The economics of any major project in Australia ...

Mr Bell: The Sheratons?

Mr COULTER: Exactly. It is a belief. We will provide jobs for our kids and a future for them in the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: You complain about Brian Burke having those sorts of ideas.

Mr COULTER: That is where we are different. He was with the Labor Party.

Mr Ede: It is no good for him to have such ideas, but for you it is different.

Mr COULTER: Let us get back to the so-called waste in relation to the Cosmo Howley powerline. The line was not built exclusively for supply to Cosmo Howley. The powerline from the Pine Creek Power Station to the Cosmo Howley power station is a development project to secure revenue not otherwise available to the Power and Water Authority, and it will support mining and development in the area. The line has a minimum life of 50 years and it cost $3.4m. The present return, or net direct and indirect revenue from electricity, gas and electricity royalties secured subsequent to completion of the line associated with Cosmo Howley and Goodall, is $1.5m per annum. It will not take too long to get our money back. One does not have to be a strong believer in such projects if one really wants to get on with development.

The spur line to Goodall is under construction at present, and supply to this mine would not have been achievable if the powerline to Cosmo Howley were not in existence. Other prospective customers include Union Reef, Union Extended, various mines in the Fountainhead area, Chinese Howley and, of course, Woolwonga. In addition, the line provides a bridge and makes possible consideration of further extensions and permanent power supply to Tipperary, Wadeye, the Douglas/Daly area and Hayes Creek. Let us forget about this waste of money which the opposition talks about. That powerline is a sound investment and I would like to build many more of them. I will do so because that is the only way we will overcome the deficit which we face. That is what I am committed to.

The honourable member asked about the authority's corporate plan. The plan is immediately available. It was published in 1989 by the Government Printer and was first issued to employees at the beginning of 1990. A new version of the corporate plan is presently with the Government Printer and, once published, this could be made available to any member of the public who requested it.

With respect to the authority's goals, I return to what I have just said. My only corporate goal is that the Power and Water Authority should break even on commercial undertakings by 1995. The only way it can achieve that is by extending the electricity grid. It is pretty simple.

Mr Ede: You have extended the number of places which will take some of the electricity?

Mr COULTER: By $1.5m-worth, per annum. What a difference there is between you and me. We have not increased the power. 100 MW is available in that area, which is nearly as big as Darwin itself. A range of lines will be involved, including the 132 kV line and the 66 kV line. There will be more to come, including lines to Jabiru and Oenpelli, Yuendumu and the Tanami. All of those places are part of our energy strategy. One day, you will be able to go anywhere in the Northern Territory with a set of jumper leads and start up any business you want. That is another part of my corporate plan.

Turning now to the question of dry bores, I will provide the honourable member with the information that he sought. I do have the answer, but I do not seem to be able to put my hands on it at the moment.

I am happy to supply a briefing on the strike, the amalgamation of the unions and above-award payments etc. However, I do not think it is appropriate to discuss it during debate on the Appropriation Bill as it really does not impact greatly on the budget. I will supply a full briefing on it. I know the member for Sadadeen is interested in this subject as well, and I am happy to do that.

The printing section has a staff of 3. The cost of operating the printing area is about $500 000 per annum. PAWA proposes to limit in-house expenditure to this amount. All other printing will be undertaken by the Government Printer and the private sector. I am advised that it is nonsense to say that PAWA would spend $6m on printing if the reprographic section were shut down.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, obviously, the minister did not understand my first question. What is the anticipated deficit for the Power and Water Authority in 1990-91? I accept that probably it was easy to misconstrue it. What I was seeking was the deficit as at that point. I want to know where we are at in terms of accumulated deficit by the Power and Water Authority.

I ask the honourable minister if his department has the ability to differentiate between urban and rural suppliers and the costs and revenues associated with that? Obviously, he must be doing something in that regard if he is attempting to achieve commercial viability by 1995. I would like him also to advise just how he is setting that up. Does he count new essential housing as commercial installations?

Mr Coulter: New and expanded services.

Mr EDE: What classifications is he working on to reach that level? I would ask him if, at a later stage, he could provide me with some information about the possibility of a strike in Alice Springs. Feelings are running extremely high here.

He has answered questions on notice from me about the number of outages of power in Alice Springs and the various ways that these have occurred. He has accepted that these are at an unacceptably high level. It may be that some of these are due to dissatisfaction and burn-out. I have noted that the people there are extremely committed workers who have continued for many years in the knowledge that they are paid less than the people in Darwin. They have battled on regardless. We are hoping that the government will recognise that equal pay for equal work is a pretty basic premise.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I do not have answers for those questions with me.

As part of the Coulter corporate plan, if you like, the strategy is to replace the use of all fuel oils wherever possible in the Northern Territory. In today's climate, nobody could accept anything less than the replacement of fuel oils wherever they are used throughout the Northern Territory. In an extreme case, in remote communities, the cost of generating electricity is about $1.20 per kilowatt hour. The flat rate across the Territory is roughly 14¢. That is what we are trying to overcome. It can be overcome only by running pipelines, by running LPG in a truck, or by running electricity out by the wire. That is what we are trying to do by means of the grid system that we are working to put in place.

The return from Aboriginal communities is not good, and has not been good. Metering has been put in place. However, the collection of the moneys in those areas is a major problem. There have been some fantastic achievements in this regard, but we are still a long way from the desired model of the user paying the flat Territory rate across the board.

The idea is to replace the use of all fuel oils wherever we can. We heard today the story of the power station that cost $125 000 which a bloke ran for about an hour. That must be done away with because it is inefficient. Bob Rose from the Barkly Homestead came to see me yesterday. Fuel is now 91¢ there and it will be $1 by the end of next week.

Mr Ede: It has been a $1 for a long time at Rabbit Flat.

Mr COULTER: That is true.

He generates about 150 kW and it is sending him broke. At $1 a litre, he cannot run those machines. That is the big problem facing the whole of the Northern Territory. I have told the Power and Water Authority Board that I do not care if the deficit doubles in the next 2 years. It has to outlay the capital expenditure to come out of it faster. We have invested $280m in a pipeline, $300m in a power station, and then there are the new power stations and 20 new gas turbines. We have to keep spending and developing the system in order to be able to come out of the subsidy situation sooner. That is what they are working on. There will be many more powerlines like that to Cosmo Howley in the very near future.

I will obtain information for the honourable member on the situation at the power station there. It is a very detailed brief which relates to the award restructuring at Channel Island. I will provide that to him this afternoon. I have the briefing on it.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I gave notice to the minister of a number of questions relating to the Alice Springs power station and its capacity to run effectively during peak periods and also in respect of the possible industrial dispute which could lead to power outages and even water supply problems. I ask the minister to comment.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I make the same offer to the member for Sadadeen regarding a briefing on the details behind the dispute. I am happy to provide that this afternoon rather than answer in this context. However, some of the honourable member's questions are very relevant to the budget. I thank him for his questions and the lead time which he provided to enable me to obtain the answers.

The Ron Goodwin Power Station, plus the old power station, will have sufficient capacity to meet anticipated peak demands during the 1990-91 summer with the 2 largest machines out of service. The largest unit is the No 9 gas turbine and the next largest is one of the 3 units Nos 6, 7 and 8 which are the dual-fuel diesels. The 2.5 MW temporary gas turbine, currently being installed at the old power station, is included in those calculations.

In relation to the second question, a prolonged power outage would affect Alice Springs water supply as there is no standby pumping capacity at the bore field. However, programmed load shedding would ensure that water supply demand was met.

When does the government propose to put in a second large gas turbine? Planning studies are under way to determine the size and type of unit for the next stage of generation augmentation at the Ron Goodwin Power Station. This work will be completed by the end of 1990 and the timing of installation of this unit will be covered in this report. Further temporary plant will be installed if necessary to retain firm capacity prior to commissioning of unit No 10.

Has the government any plans to obtain further efficiency from No 9 using waste heat for steam generation of electricity in Darwin? The planning report being prepared on generation augmentation for Alice Springs will consider both open cycle and combined cycle. One option being considered is the future incorporation of waste heat from No 9 unit into a combined cycle block.

Is the minister aware of the report commissioned by PAWA on street lighting in Alice Springs? Would the minister ensure that PAWA has close input to future subdivisions and lighting standards, and would he seek to encourage and perhaps to assist the Alice Springs Town Council to upgrade lighting? PAWA does insist on design input. The town council has been advised of the poor lighting in Spearwood Road. The council has decided to rectify lighting problems in 2 other streets before work is done in Spearwood Road. I do not know the name of the streets.

The sixth question relates to improved lighting in the Todd Street Mall. Lighting in the Todd Street Mall is the responsibility of the Alice Springs Town Council and timing is up to the council. The Power and Water Authority is looking at the consultant's report on the lighting in the mall. This follows PAWA's insistence that it be involved in the design process.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, there are concerns in the community about the Greenhouse Effect and the excessive consumption of energy resources that are required for power generation. From PAWA advertisements, it would appear that the government still provides a $50 subsidy if someone buys an air-conditioner. This would appear to be for the purpose of increasing electricity consumption. Can the honourable minister indicate the amount of money allocated for this program, and comment on its continued standing?

Within the capital works program, there is $300 000 for upgrading the Larrakeyah macerater station. My understanding is that, basically, that facility chews up sewage and pumps it out into Darwin Harbour. Could the minister indicate what the upgrading will involve. Will it involve treating the sewage, pumping it further or what?

A constituent in my electorate, who is a controller at the power station, says that a number of controllers have been involved in motor vehicle accidents whilst travelling between Palmerston and the power station. Requests have been made for some suitable form of transport to be made available to them because, in the main, they travel at dawn and at dusk. A single vehicle, stationed at Palmerston and used by both groups to move backwards and forwards, could overcome quite easily the risk to life and limb and damage to their own vehicles. The minister may like to consider, in that context, the costs incurred already in work health payments to operators injured whilst travelling backwards and forwards under those conditions.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will work backwards through those questions.

There has always been a concern about the transport situation there. I witnessed a death last evening on my way home from work. Accidents are a fact of life. Buses have not been that successful of late around Australia and do not guarantee any greater safety. I will take the honourable member's comments on board. Comments of that kind have been made to me in relation to transportation to and from Channel Island. Of course, people living in the rural area travel that distance and further every day. It is a problem for everybody. It is not reserved only ...

Mr Bailey: It concerns only the controllers travelling at dawn and dusk.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr COULTER: I do not believe that the question relates strictly to the Appropriation Bill that we are debating. Perhaps we could take it on board as an inquiry.

In terms of greenhouse emissions, I would like to say that, if the there were no power stations anywhere in Australia, no motor vehicles anywhere in Australia and no more cows farting in Australia ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You leave my goats and sheep alone.

Mr COULTER: ... and no goats and sheep farting in Australia, we would reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the major cause of the Greenhouse Effect. However, if we were to shut Australia down and walk away from it, that would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 0.46%, less than half of 1%.

In the overall scheme of things, I am not sure that the government's air-conditioning rebate - some $60 000-worth of $50 rebates - will make that much of an impression on the Greenhouse Effect. These figures come from well-documented scientific reports. I think that the honourable member is out of his league in terms of asking us to walk away from the air-conditioning rebate in order to make an impact on the Greenhouse Effect. That is the truth because those are the facts. If we shut the place down and walked away from it, that would reduce the carbon dioxide levels by less than half of 1%.

Mr Bailey: So we have no responsibility?

Mr COULTER: We are very responsible. In world terms, we would probably be the most responsible nation in the world. Because we use clean, natural gas in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Bailey: What about the CFCs?

Mr COULTER: Once again, I have given the facts. I can obtain the reports for the member for Wanguri, but I am sure he has read them himself. If we shut the whole place down, that would reduce emissions by less than a half of 1%. Once again, that is not strictly related to this budget, but I think that the honourable member would have to agree that it would not make a major impact.

In terms of the actual details of the work at the sewage outlet, I will take that question on notice and supply the honourable member with the details. I forget the exact extent of the work that is being carried out there and exactly what the $30 000 has been allocated for, but I will be happy to obtain that information for the honourable member.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to pick up 2 issues, one of which the Minister for Mines and Energy has referred to already today. I will commence with that, and it concerns the question of power for remote communities. The minister referred to his pleasure at seeing that the user-pays principle was to apply to all remote communities and said that there has been an significant increase in the amount of metering in place in remote Aboriginal communities. I want to place on record my concern about the agreements reached with some communities, in particular that at Santa Teresa.

I am not aware of the recent history of these negotiations, but I can recall that I had some correspondence with the minister in respect of a disputed agreement about power supplies and the cost of power to that community. I received representations from that community in respect of the new charges. As you would be aware, Mr Chairman, the communities involved do not have great resources. There are high levels of unemployment and various forms of social and economic disadvantage that, in my view, mean that the user-pays principle is of less applicability there. In my view, the user-pays principle is applicable on the proverbial level playing field, and that certainly does not apply to the communities that the minister is talking about. The general point I make is that the application of the user-pays principle in that regard needs to be challenged, and I make my comments in this context to indicate to the minister that I do not accept the assumption that he seemed to be making so gaily before. I do not expect him to have at his fingertips the facts and figures about the putative agreement that was considered by the authority to apply in respect of Santa Teresa. I want to let the minister know that I do recall it and it continues to be a matter of concern to me.

The second issue is one that I have raised before in the Assembly, and I would expect the minister perhaps to have a better understanding of this. I refer to the general matter of hybrid power systems. In previous debates in this Assembly, I have referred to what I believe is an excellent example of a hybrid power system that is being developed at Alcoota Station. I had the opportunity to be briefed with respect to the operation of that hybrid power system by the owner of that station, Mr Tom Webb. I think I mentioned at the time that, in my understanding, that contrasts with the hybrid power systems that the authority has sponsored elsewhere, notably in the Aboriginal community about a drop-kick down the road. It has taken a hell of a long time to get going and, as an example of a hybrid power system, it is not in the same street. I understand that the same criticism applies to similar hybrid power systems placed elsewhere ...

Mr Coulter: Including the one that Tom first installed.

Mr BELL: ... in various communities. In the context of debate on this division, it is appropriate to place those 2 matters of concern on record.

Before I sit down, Mr Chairman, and possibly I should have said this at the outset, I want to indicate that I believe that this manner of going through the budget, without members being able to ask questions in a consecutive, logical order, is totally absurd. I will not say that again this evening, but I think it deprives the people of the Northern Territory of the type of invigilation of public expenditure that is desirable, and I think the government stands condemned for having introduced this standing order. Let me assure you, Mr Chairman, and whichever members of the government happen to survive the next election, that the opposition will be rather more open in that regard when it becomes the government.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I would remind the honourable member that he is a member of the standing committee that brought this system to the parliament, and it was endorsed by the parliament. Of course, he is reflecting on his own judgment and his position as a member of that committee.

However, if I could work backwards from Tom Webb's Alcoota system, under another part of the Coulter corporate energy plan, if it does not go 'bang' in a pretty big way, I walk away from it because it will not do anyone much good. An explosion is critical and it has to create heat if you want to do something. The bigger the explosion and the more heat, the better it is. The more contained the bang and the heat can be made, the better it works. I will give an example. I think Tom Webb has spent nearly $300 000 on his power supply now. He bought a commercial system - and I will not name the brand - but he has modified that.

I have been at the station. I have welded at the station, used drill presses, walked into the freezer and so on, and what he has been able to do is fantastic. In fact, his electrical engineer is a chap by the name of Webb also, but they are not related. The batteries power the same type of drive motor that was used on early submarines. He is to be congratulated. In fact, it is what I believe to be one of the best, if not the best, hybrid systems operating in the Northern Territory today. I share the honourable member's enthusiasm for what Tom Webb has done. In fact, the Department of Industries and Development is working with him now to try to promote what he has achieved after enormous expenditure to get it right.

Some of the other hybrid power systems that the honourable member talks about have not been as successful. Indeed, some of them have been failures. We have put a great deal of money into this. It is in our operating budget this year, and it could cost as much as $1m to get some of these other hybrid systems operating in the system. We are still a long way off with systems of this kind, but they are the answer for some communities, especially those operating under 100 kW ...

Mr Bell: Which are the competing systems?

Mr COULTER: I would rather not talk in commercial terms and place on the record one brand against another, but I am happy to talk to the ...

Mr Bell: Wait on. There has been a government contracting process, Barry, and we are entitled to know about it.

Mr COULTER: It is not a secret. It is just that, for commercial reasons, I do not believe that I should bag one system against the other in this Chamber. I am happy to provide you with ...

Mr Bell: I am not asking you to bag them. I am just asking you to explain the basis on which you would choose one over the other?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr COULTER: We have been working with a range of systems over 5 years now and some have been better than others. Some have been a total waste of time. I do not want to go into detail here. I am happy to tell the honourable member. I will contact him later.

Mr Bell: No. I think it should be on the record. I do not expect you to abuse ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will have the opportunity to ask a further question when the present answer has been completed.

Mr COULTER: They are still being evaluated and, no doubt, eventually a report will recommend which system is better than the others. So far, in my experience, the system at Alcoota that the member spoke about is the best without doubt. As I said, Tom Webb has ploughed about $300 000 of his own money into refining that system.

With regard to Santa Teresa and the user-pays principle, surely the honourable member does not expect the rest of the Northern Territory to subsidise that community forever for its electricity utilisation. It is not acceptable to enter into the next decade with those people not contributing at all to the cost of the electricity that is being utilised in that area.

Mr Bell: That is not what I said. I did not say that it should not contribute at all.

Mr COULTER: Do you expect it to be subsidised?

Mr Bell: I meant that they should contribute according to their capacity to do so.

Mr COULTER: That introduces a whole new concept, but I will take on board what the honourable member says. Can I say that, currently, we are looking at a proposal for Santa Teresa to enter the power grid as well. We have a proposal before us now which will drastically reduce the cost of generating electricity in that community. The only way to achieve that objective is by being able to link the power grids to provide that type of system throughout the Northern Territory. I return to my comment that economics is not a science but a belief. I believe that, one day, electricity grids will traverse the Northern Territory, connecting such communities and allowing us to reduce dramatically expenditure in some of those communities.

I believe that the dispute referred to by the honourable member was of a commercial nature relating to how much stores or other community enterprises, such as bakeries, should pay for electricity. If he is saying that charges should be based on their ability to pay rather than the cost of providing the service, I would have a real problem with that. I am trying to reduce the cost of that service wherever I possibly can, and the way to do that is through power grids.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the last issue first. Does the government make representations to the Grants Commission on the basis of these sorts of disparities in the Territory community? I have a basic value according to which everybody contributes for what they receive, according to their capacity to do so.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is because you are a socialist.

Mr BELL: No. I think that most people agree with that. I think that everybody believes that people should contribute to basic services according to their capacity to do so.

Mr Coulter: Try it at Charlie's, or the next time you are on a bus.

Mr BELL: I am not talking about discretionary payments for restaurants. I am talking about payment for what we refer to as essential

services - water and power and so on. We have come to accept that power is an essential service in this country. Presumably, the government presents these types of disadvantages to the Grants Commission. I am asking it to apply the same approach in terms of its charges to these communities which are disadvantaged.

Mr COULTER: We have a flat rate throughout the Northern Territory. Whatever it costs to produce electricity, we charge a flat rate. That is the subsidy. It is huge.

Mr BELL: There are 3 positions. The 2 extreme positions are that communities like Santa Teresa should pay nothing or that they should pay full tote odds. The position in between, which I am adopting, is that you take into account the situation of people in such communities. A large number of them are social security beneficiaries and the power charges payable by them should take that into account. The minister might talk about social security recipients in Palmerston ...

Mr Coulter: Or Alawa or Katherine.

Mr BELL: You do not send a bill to the Palmerston Town Council for everybody who uses power in Palmerston, do you? But that is exactly what you do at Santa Teresa. When we debate this issue of who pays what, just bear that in mind. I believe that we should take into account people's capacity to pay, which is exactly what the government either is or should be arguing before the Grants Commission.

As far as the second question is concerned, that of hybrid power systems, I am becoming rather sick and tired of the secretive style of government ministers.

Mr Coulter: It is not secretive.

Mr BELL: It is fine for the minister to say that but I believe that, in order to promote sensible public debate on these issues, the minister should be prepared to delineate the various systems and describe their specific advantages and disadvantages in various situations. For the benefit of those honourable members who represent urban electorates and are not aware of these exigencies in the bush, I point out that hybrid power systems have a considerable capacity to save fuel by allowing generators to run for much shorter periods, by storing power in batteries and by converting it from DC to AC before it is used. I do not expect the minister to answer any of these questions. I want merely to place on record the fact that I would like to see a report on the various systems which are available.

Mr Palmer: Why don't you buy one yourself.

Mr BELL: I pick up the interjection from the member for Karama. The fact is that people in the Power and Water Authority are working on these issues. I imagine that they have the facts and figures at their fingertips and it would be appropriate if that information were made available in some form which set out the virtues and disadvantages of the various systems.

Mr Coulter: Do you want me to do it for cars too? What about hair dryers?

Mr BELL: The Australian Consumers Association paradigm would not be too bad. Certainly, it would be better than saying: 'We have a rough idea of which ones are good and which ones are bad, but we are not going to tell

you'. I suggest that a little openness will help people in the marketplace to know something about items which they may wish to purchase. Let us face it, governments are among the largest potential purchasers.

Mr COULTER: We do not have the user-pays system in the Northern Territory. We have a flat rate. The communities are heavily subsidised by people within the Northern Territory. The Grants Commission considers only operating costs. It does not consider any capital costs at all in this exercise. The Grants Commission believes that the Power and Water Authority should be paying a dividend to the government because comparable authorities everywhere else in Australia do so. That is because they have had 400 MW power stations practically since Captain Cook came ashore which have paid for themselves 400 times over. We have spent almost $1000m on power systems in the Northern Territory, and the Grants Commission believes that the Power and Water Authority should be contributing to the Northern Territory coffers. Not so long ago, the Territory received a $90m subsidy every year, which is now down to $40m. The member opposite should leave the Grants Commission out of his argument because it does not make much sense.

As far as hybrid systems are concerned, I will say that we are spending a great deal of money on them. They are being evaluated at the moment. We will be spending almost $1m on these systems. Hybrid systems are at the leading edge of technology. In the Northern Territory, we are lucky enough to have a person who is very expert in this field. However, the fact is that I do not want to offer a commercial opinion in this Chamber in relation to all the brands available. That should be dealt with in the evaluation process which is proceeding.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, my questions have been submitted to the minister's office. They relate to budget items which appeared as new works in the 1989 budget and which appear as works in progress this year, many of them with the same figure.

The first question relates to the duplicate microwave bearer and the Hudson Creek Control Centre. In 1989, there was a budget allocation of $250 000 for new works. The same item appears this year. Is that a further $250 000 or is it a repeat of last year's budget item? If it is the latter, why does it not appear under new works, or was nothing done last year?

My next question relates to the upgrading of transmission and treatment capacity at the Katherine water treatment plant. Last year, there was a budget item of $1m. This year, the budget item for the same project is $850 223. Is this the same budget item or has some part of the work been done?

The next question relates to the 390 kL elevated tank at Adelaide River and the allocation to install a new transfer pump. There is very little difference between last year's budget item and that for this year. The same applies in respect of the sewage pond upgrade in Alice Springs. Last year's amount was $2 210 668 and this year's amount is $1 925 895. Is this the same budget item or has it been changed?

The next item is a waste incinerator at the Royal Darwin Hospital for the disposal of general pathological and cytotoxic waste. Last year, there was a budget allocation of $275 000 for this project. This year, there is again a budget allocation of $275 000 for this item. Last year, $3m was allocated for the construction of factory space in the Trade Development Zone. This year, the allocation is reduced slightly.

Mr COULTER: I suggest we leave the last item until we get to division 23, which is the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Chairman, the answer to the honourable member's question about the Hudson Creek Control Centre is that this year's amount of $250 000 is the same $250 000 as appeared in last year's budget. The project was programmed for commitment late in 1989-90 but has been revoted into 1990-91.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why not as new works?

Mr COULTER: Because it is a revote. Works are proceeding according to schedule, and I am told there is a long lead time for the delivery of equipment.

As far as the upgrading of the Katherine Tindal water treatment plant is concerned, the budget item for this year is the same as last year's item except that some of the original allocation of $1m has been spent. That explains why this year's allocation is $851 223. The project was programmed for commitment and commencement in late 1989-90. The project has several phases, some of which are restricted because of operational constraints. For instance, work on the raking system of the lime reactor could not commence until the river flow reduced. Work is proceeding as planned.

As far as the Adelaide River elevated tank is concerned, last year's allocation was $340 000 and this year's is $233 715. The honourable member asked whether this year's amount is the balance of last year's, and the answer is yes. It is true that little work was done. The project was programmed late in 1989 and a revote is involved. Work is now proceeding on schedule.

This year's allocation for the Alice Springs sewage pond upgrading is the balance of last year's allocation. Little work was done because the project was commenced late in the year. Work is now well advanced with only the pumping station contract to be let. Work is on schedule except for the pumping station, which was delayed due to a need to redesign after the lowest tender came in above available funds.

The replacement for the existing energy-efficient incinerator at the Royal Darwin Hospital is being implemented under the Government Energy Management Program. During 1989-90, design and documentation work for this rather complex project was undertaken by the Department of Transport and Works. I think that the member for Wanguri was responsible for this also. I understand that he convinced people that he had all the answers. That was after he returned from solving the Middle East crisis.

The design and the documentation was rather extensive. An invitation to tender was issued to incinerator manufacturers Australia-wide, with the closing date of 16 May 1990. Letting of the tender was delayed for some time due to negotiations between the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Transport and Works, the Environmental Protection Unit, and the selected incinerator supplier in relation to issues related to cost, atmospheric emission standards, and related technical variations to the original specifications. However, these issues have now been resolved. The tender was awarded to Warren Engineering on 31 August 1990 with a contract completion date of 1 March 1991. It should be noted that Warren Engineering intends to use local contractors for the installation.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: But is it still the same $275 000?

Mr COULTER: Yes, I would say so.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I rise to respond to the honourable minister's comments about modifications to the incinerator and the referral to the Environmental Protection Unit. I remember the Minister for Transport and Works stating in this House that the concerns which I raised in relation to the incinerator had no effect whatsoever on any changes in design or operation of the said incinerator. One of the 2 ministers has it wrong.

Mr COULTER: I believe that, if anyone has it wrong, it would be the honourable member.

Appropriation for division 46 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 47 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 45:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I refer the minister to the questions which I gave him this morning. There is a new line item, subsidies and grants. What does that cover? How was the $188m in subsidies and grants allocated in 1989-90, and how is the large increase to $680m for 1990-91 expected to be allocated? Secondly, in 1989-90, $24.079m was collected in mining royalties against a budget figure of $12.758m. Can the minister explain the cause of this huge increase on expectations? Can he advise how much of the $24m is attributable to royalty back payments and how much to unexpected increases in mineral commodity prices? Can the minister also advise the basis for the $24.976m projection of royalty receipts in 1990-91? Specifically, what is the breakdown of the $24.976m according to mineral, and how much of the large increase over the 1989-90 budget is attributable to higher commodity prices and how much to increased mining activity?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, first of all, let us get it straight. The honourable member's written question refers to an amount of $188m for subsidies and grants? Is that the figure he wants explained?

Mr Bell: Yes.

Mr COULTER: In fact, the amount is $188 000. Let us hope that you never get onto the Treasury benches. You simply cannot read figures. Like your boss, you make basic mistakes. I suppose anyone could make such a mistake.

The amount is for the rehabilitation of abandoned uranium mines in the Adelaide River and Rum Jungle Creek south areas. The funds are made available from the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy for projects which are managed by the Mines and Energy Environment Directorate. $188 000 was spent last year on engineering studies and rehabilitating 16 abandoned mine sites in the Adelaide River locality. The $680 000, not the $680m the honourable member's question referred to, was allocated for a major project in the Rum Jungle Creek south area. Work is expected to start on this project early next month. The amount in this item refers to moneys received from the Commonwealth. Approximately $1m will be made available by the Commonwealth later this year to complete this project. Additional old mine sites in the Westmorelands area will be rehabilitated this year also, at a cost of about $150 000. That is what the subsidies and other grants item is about. It is for the rehabilitation of old mine sites, which we undertake on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The next question concerned mining royalties. This is a very complicated subject. Although we asked for detailed questions so that detailed answers could be provided, these questions were handed to me only minutes in advance of being asked. The opposition deserves to be answered briefly, given the time it has been allowed for answers to be supplied.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: If you really want to know the answers, give us a bit of time.

The honourable member asked what had caused the increase in royalty receipts over expectations. The royalty budget for 1989-90 was $12.758m and the actual receipts were $24.07m. The entire increase of $11.321m is due to manganese. This increase in receipts was foreshadowed in the debate on the 1989-90 budget where it was noted that there was a potential increase of $15m. In terms of royalty back payments, $3.659m was collected for manganese. Although some commodity prices fluctuated throughout the year, the overall result was not influenced to a significant degree.

The next question asked about the basis for the $24.976m projection of royalty receipts in 1990-91. A survey was conducted by all mining companies currently paying royalties as well as those companies which are producing but not paying royalties. Our royalty is a profit-based royalty and all mines which have come on stream in the last 4 years, and which have been able to write off depreciation plus their exploration expenditure, are starting now to reach a profit-making situation and, as a result, are beginning to pay royalties. Our mining royalty payments have been quite low for the amount of minerals that are actually produced in the Northern Territory. As the mines start to make profits, we start to reap the rewards. As Minister for Mines and Energy, my argument is that mines have been producing about the same revenue as alcohol sales in the Northern Territory. That is because they have been able to write off much of their expenditure, and rightly so. That is starting to change now, and that is why we are seeing gradual increases in royalty payments.

My department's Royalty Branch analyses the results of surveys. The annual receipts budget is the product of that analytical process. It is important to note that the analysis is done on raw data supplied by the companies and that the department's estimates are only as good as the data supplied. In terms of the factors influencing profitability, the best prepared estimate can go wrong if even one of a variety of factors behaves differently to the way it was expected to behave. These factors include commodity prices, exchange rates, the domestic inflation rate, the level of production and so on. Clearly, if any one of these factors increases or decreases in a radical or unexpected manner, the profitability of mining companies and the level of royalty receipts will be affected.

The preparation of the receipts budget for this year was completed prior to the events which have taken place in the Persian Gulf. If a peaceful conclusion to that situation is reached in the near future, there should be no adverse affect on royalty receipts. However, if the current situation continues for an extended period, or actually develops into armed conflict, the effect on royalties is likely to be negative. Of course, the price of gold just might happen to increase a few hundred dollars in the meantime. It is a real balancing act, and it is very hard to project those royalties. It was not done by picking straws in a broom closet. Work was carried out and information was supplied by the mining companies to enable us to project that royalty figure.

How much of the large increase over the 1989-90 budget figure is attributable to higher commodity prices and how much to an increase in mining activity? For the 1989-90 budget, figures were done 18 months ago on royalties. It is difficult to assess as the companies do not always advise their proposed production rates nor the commodity prices used in estimating royalties. A significant amount, approximately $2m of this increase, is due to all of the Gemco mining operations coming under the Mineral Royalty Act. Previously, part of the operations came under the old Mining Ordinance which provided a much lower royalty payment to the government.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, my first question relates to a feasibility study, completed earlier this year, for a low-level radioactive waste storage and disposal facility. Approximately $100 000 of federal money was used on a report by ANSTO commissioned by the Territory government to look into the feasibility of burying low-level radioactive waste in the Northern Territory. That report has been completed for some time. Has any allocation been made for the implementation of this scheme? Indeed, has it even been brought to the attention of the minister's Cabinet colleagues? If not, it is strange that that much federal money has been spent with no apparent interest by the Territory government in terms of following it through.

The minister's department has advertised quite widely in respect of bonds for environmental protection being lodged in case of environmental damage. Are those bonds lodged with the department? Do they appear anywhere within the budget? Can he explain whether those funds are lodged generally for mine rehabilitation or only in the case of specific accidents related to individual mines? Do the bonds cover anything like the possible costs of environmental damage caused by those mines?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, let me quote a few extracts from the ANSTO report. The costs of doing anything in Australia are higher than they are overseas because of the overheads in Australia. The repositories are spread over a much smaller amount of waste that we have in the Territory. Most of this is low-level radioactive medical waste. In Canada, they take it to uranium mines, tip it into the mill and let it be processed through the system.

In view of the high cost of storage, it would be more economic to store at a facility where the equipment and the capacity already exists. To start a greenfields project anywhere in Australia, but particularly in the Northern Territory, is just not on. The report concluded that the overall benefits would be very small indeed. In fact, the actual flow-ons and multipliers into the community would be very small. We did not become very excited about the report. In fact, it was shelved because recommendations in the report indicated that it is cheaper to box up the waste and send it overseas, that it is better to treat it in a facility that exists already, and that there would be very little by way of spin-off benefits to the Northern Territory as a result of such a facility. The report is not being released. I think the Chief Minister wrote to the Environment Centre on 10 June and said that. I am sure the honourable member will have a copy of that letter.

Mr Chairman, I will take the question about the bonds on notice. I know that the honourable member has asked questions in the past about bond money. I do not start from the premise of doom and gloom where we would have to spend millions. We have had that in the case of Whites tailings from the 1950s, the damage from which cost $16m to repair. The bonds are

bank guarantees and, as such, they are not shown in the budget. I will supply the member with further information.

Appropriation for division 45 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 23:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister to advise the total expenditure on the Trade Development Zone to date and the amount that is committed but not yet spent. Secondly, how many jobs are there at the Trade Development Zone at present, excluding staff employed by the authority? Thirdly, last year, the zone's interest payments were double what they were in 1988-89. The 1990-91 interest payment figure of $3.458m is again double the 1989-90 interest payment of $1.673m. Nevertheless, anticipated borrowings are down. Can the minister explain why that is?

Fourthly, the allocation for marketing, incentives and assistance has increased 75% from $4.254m in 1989-90 to $7.456m in 1990-91. To whom are these incentives to go and what is the nature of the incentives. Fifthly, what payments were made to K.K. Yeung in 1989-90? What contracts and arrangements have been entered into for these payments? Sixthly, what losses has the government incurred in relation to Skycom and associated companies? Seventhly, what are the overall losses of the Trade Development Zone or any other government agency as a result of Hengyang? Eighthly, what is the expected income stream from operation of the Trade Development Zone in 1990-91, and what was the income in 1989-90? What are the sources of that income, broken down by area of contribution? Ninthly, the 'other category' increased 67% from $4.519m to $7.551m. What does that category include?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, total expenditure to date by the Trade Development Authority is $43.187m. An additional $4.146m was spent by the Department of Transport and Works on external infrastructure. Amounts committed but not yet spent are detailed in the 1990-91 budget papers, and total some $18.920m.

How many jobs? There are 68 jobs. People employed by 3 companies at present ...

Mr Ede: Million-dollar men.

Mr COULTER: That is right. We had the same thing with the powerlines. The difference is that we believe, and thank goodness we do because that is the only way we will get a manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory. However, it is expected to increase to 920 jobs in the next 12 months.

Mr Ede: That is what you said last year.

Mr COULTER: That is true. However, commitment is needed as well as belief. There will be 2500 jobs within 3 years. You can laugh. I put on record the laughter and the interjections of the members opposite.

Mr Ede: Some day you will be right.

Mr COULTER: You have knocked so many projects. You even knocked the miserable old powerline. It is bringing in $1.5m a year in revenue. You are worrying about me spending $3.4m. It will pay for itself in 3 years.

In relation to the third question, last year's actual interest payment figure, at $1.673m, was not double the 1988-89 actual level of expenditure of $1.226m. What doubled was the budget allocation. We are talking about actual versus the budget allocation, not actual expenditure. This year, the budget allocation is $3.458m. Is the budget allocation based on anticipated borrowing during the year? The timing of when the loans are drawn down will determine the actual interest payments. This is evidenced in the first part of the question when the budget allocation would have covered borrowing drawn down early in the year but, in actual fact, the borrowings were not drawn down until late in the year and were not fully utilised. Consequently, the payments made during 1989-90 did not reflect the full-year cost of the total borrowings to date of $16.938m. However, the 1990-91 budget provides for a full-year repayment of this amount, $2.748m, plus a provision for budgeted borrowing of $5.607m to be drawn down during 1990-91.

Question 4: 'The allocation for marketing, incentives and assistance has increased 75% from $4.25m in 1989-90 to $7.465m in 1990-91. To whom are those incentives to go and what is the nature of the incentives?' As the heading implies, this category includes marketing expenditure, not exclusively incentives. Only $4.4m relates to incentives and assistance, of which $2.5m is specifically for recoverable duty drawback payments. The incentives figure is based on projected company start-ups during the current 12 months, and it is purely a budget figure. The nature of the TDZA incentives is well documented in promotional literature and relates mainly to establishment grants, relocation and training assistance. I see us getting more and more into training assistance in the foreseeable future than we have in the past.

Question 5: 'What payments were made to K.K. Yeung in 1989-90? What contracts and arrangements have been entered into for these payments?' Payments to K.K. Yeung Management Pty Ltd during 1989-90 totalled $450 000. This comprised retainer fees and out-of-pocket expenses that are detailed in the representative agreement between K.K. Yeung Management Pty Ltd and the TDZA. In addition to the above payments, $43 000 has been acquitted against the advance of success fees provided to K.K. Yeung Pty Ltd within the terms of his representative agreement. I will not go into any specific details regarding the contract other than to say it is on a month-by-month basis at this stage.

Mr Smith: You were asked to. Why won't you?

Mr COULTER: We have never gone into the agreement in any detail in the past.

Mr Smith: Every year, you have given breakdowns to K.K. Yeung.

Mr COULTER: I have given you the payments.

Mr Smith: What is his monthly retainer?

Mr COULTER: I will take that on notice. If we have supplied it to you in the past, I am not sure why you would be asking the question now.

Mr Smith: So that we know what he is being paid this year.

Mr COULTER: If we have not told you in the past, we are not likely to tell you now.

Mr Smith: You have told us in the past.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, let me take it on notice. Once again, these questions came in minutes before I stood up.

Mr Smith: Don't tell lies.

Mr COULTER: I beg your pardon?

Mr Smith: It was there before 9 o'clock this morning.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I think that the interjection alluding to the minister being a liar ...

Mr COULTER: He said, 'Don't tell lies', and I am not telling lies. It is a point of order.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are you saying that you are not telling lies?

Mr COULTER: There is a point of order in that he cannot suggest that I am telling lies.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I withdraw it.

Mr COULTER: Thank you.

Mr COULTER: I will take that question on notice from the Leader of the Opposition.

Question 6: 'What losses has the government incurred in relation to Skycom and associated companies?' The TDZA expended approximately $255 000 on specialised fit-out costs for Skycom's factory. A portion of this amount, such as internal partitioning, is reusable. The TDZA is currently owed approximately $100 000 in rent and zone fee payments. The current situation is that the Sheriff has seized assets of the company and is in the process of disposing of these and, consequently, the actual loss situation cannot be itemised at this stage.

Question 7: 'What are the overall losses of the TDZA or any other government agency as a result of Hengyang?' The liquidator is currently finalising the financial operations of the Hengyang operation and, until this procedure has been completed, the question cannot be answered satisfactorily. Indeed, it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the outcome of ongoing negotiations with the liquidator.

Question 8: 'What is the expected income stream from operations in the TDZA in 1990-91, and what was the income in 1989-90? What are the sources of that income, broken down by areas of contribution?' The total income for 1990-91 is $2.685m, comprising $2.5m in returns from duty drawback payments, with the balance of $185 000 being rental and zone fee. In income from tenants in 1989-90, the total was $1.206m comprising $1m in returns from duty drawback payments with the balance of $206 000 being rental and zone fee income from tenants.

The 'other category' figure increased 67%, from $4.519m to $7.551m. What does this category include? The answer is that this includes the allocation for marketing incentives and assistance, with the difference being the capital payment on loans - that is, the $4.519m includes capital repayments of $265 000 and the $7.551m includes capital repayments of $86 000. The balances of these items are identical to the marketing

incentives and assistance category detailed in the expenditure by activity category.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, let me see if I have this right. We are spending $66m. We have created 68 jobs and, this year, the income that we receive after we take out the reimbursement of the recoverable duty drawback payment - because we put that in and then we pull that out again - the income we get after putting in $66m and $18m this year, if I have it right, is $185 000. Is that correct?

Mr Coulter: I have not done the arithmetic as you have.

Mr SMITH: The $185 000 is for rental and zone fees. Is it equally correct that, in fact, that is a lesser amount of income than we received last financial year, when we received $206 000 in rental and zone fees? I guess that is a statement-cum-question. Mr Chairman, those basic figures are fairly staggering, aren't they?

I understand that almost $0.5m went to K.K. Yeung, $450 000 as a retainer and $43 000 as an advance on his success fee. Is the minister able to indicate for which company or companies Mr K.K. Yeung has received an advance on his success fees? Would one of the companies for which K.K. Yeung received a success fee be the Hengyang company?

Mr Chairman, let me go through this again. In relation to Skycom, there was a $225 000 loss on the fit-out of the factory and a $100 000 loss in rent and zone fee payments owing. Is the honourable minister able to tell us for what period the rent and the zone fees were owed by Skycom - in other words, was it for 3 months, 6 months, 9 months?

Mr COULTER: I think it is longer than that.

Mr SMITH: It is longer than that, is it?

Mr COULTER: I think so. I will get some information for you.

Mr SMITH: Right, that is a useful answer, and I thank the honourable minister for it.

In terms of the incentives, the honourable minister made a useful distinction between the marketing allocation which has decreased, and I accept that, and the incentives assistance allocation which has increased from $210 000 to $4.4m in this financial year. I have a couple of questions that revolve around that dramatic increase. According to the honourable minister, $2.5m of that was an outgoing fee, a recoverable duty drawback payment, and I suspect that that is in anticipation of SZ and PDL coming into the zone and having those fees paid for them and then the government being subsequently reimbursed. Where was the recoverable duty drawback payment for Hengyang and the DIT? Obviously, it was not covered previously in the incentives and assistance section of the 1989-90 budget or, if it was, it was very small. If the recoverable duty drawback payments for the DIT and Hengyang could be encompassed in the $210 000, why will it take $2.5m to provide that type of assistance to the new companies coming in? Are those new companies receiving more favourable terms, in respect of recoverable duty drawback payments, than did DIT and Hengyang when they came into the zone?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, given the honesty with which I provided the answers and the figures I have given, the Leader of the Opposition will

agree that I am holding nothing back in this regard. I counted some 8 questions that he asked me during the period in which he was putting his questions to me. I will take them on notice. They require very detailed and complicated answers and I do not have the necessary information in my head at present to provide him with those answers. However, I will provide him with those answers during the course of these sittings.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, frankly, that is not good enough. The honourable minister has been the minister responsible for the Trade Development Zone Authority for a couple of years and he has been in this parliament for a number of years. He knows that what is happening with the Trade Development Zone is of considerable interest to the Assembly. He knows too that, in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill, a series of questions will be asked each year and answers given. Yet now, for the first time, we find that the shutters are going up.

Mr COULTER: Rubbish! I answered in full detail every question you asked.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I asked the honourable minister a very simple question: was K.K. Yeung paid a success fee for the recruitment of Hengyang into the Trade Development Zone? A quick conversation with his advisers will give the minister a yes or a no answer to that, and I suggest that he do it.

Mr COULTER: The answer is yes.

Mr SMITH: The answer is yes. Thus, part of the $43 000 for K.K. Yeung was the success fee for bringing Hengyang to the Trade Development Zone?

Mr COULTER: Yes.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, that is useful.

Mr Coulter: If you had asked those questions of me during the 3 weeks since I wrote, which gave you time to ask them, I could have had details for the other answers as well, but they are too complicated.

Mr SMITH: They are too complicated for your simple mind.

Mr Coulter: Keep on bagging me and see how you go on obtaining my cooperation.

Mr SMITH: It is not too complicated for you to spend $66m of taxpayers' money to create 68 jobs.

Mr Coulter: No problem at all.

Mr SMITH: But it is too complicated for you to answer some fairly simple questions ...

Mr Coulter: You are not going to do too well for yourself for answers to this.

Mr SMITH: I know that I will not do too well for answers to these questions because they are very embarrassing questions for the government.

Mr Coulter: Oh rubbish! As I said, the difference is that we believe.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I will take the rest of my time to go over the basic facts as we know them once again so that I can imprint them on my mind. The government has spent $66m and it has created 68 permanent jobs in the Trade Development Zone. We have a situation where more companies in the Trade Development Zone have gone broke in the zone than currently operate there. We have a situation where the government has been caught, in a significant way, by a least 3 of those companies, the first being Hungerford where, from memory, the TIO was caught for over $1m and the Trade Development Zone Authority itself was caught for hundreds of thousands. The second company by which the government was caught was Skycom and, on the minister's own figures today, the government was caught to the tune of $355 000. The third, of course, was Hengyang. Although the figure there is available publicly, the honourable minister did not even know that. The Trade and Development Zone Authority is into Hengyang for $600 000. That is what Hengyang owes to the Trade Development Authority.

We have a situation where, after having spent $66m and, after allocating $18.9m this year, the Territory will receive $185 000 in income.

Mr SMITH: And 920 jobs.

Mr SMITH: What is that? That is 1%. We will receive $185 000 for a commitment this year of $18m, and a overall commitment of $66m.

Mr Coulter: Keep talking.

Mr SMITH: What makes it worse is that that is less than we obtained in income last year. On top of that, we find that, in the incentives area - and this is really good - in order to get that $185 000, we have to increase our incentives from $210 000 to $4.4m. That is a pretty graphic figure too, isn't it? To get $185 000 back, we have to put out $4.4m in direct incentives to firms going into the zone or supposed to be going into it, and that is in contrast with $210 000 last financial year.

The honourable minister sits there and asks us to have confidence and trust in what he is doing. All I can say to the honourable minister is that we have run out of trust in him. We have run out of faith.

Mr Coulter: And you want to close it down, don't you? That did not stop you writing and asking them to contribute towards your election campaign, did it?

Mr SMITH: We have run out of confidence in the ability of the honourable minister opposite to run the Trade Development Zone, particularly with figures like that. That indicates that the honourable minister is not on top of his job. He is not adequately protecting the taxpayers' interests. The minister can be assured that we will continue to pursue the questions that I have asked tonight until we get some answers.

Mr Coulter: I told you that you would get the answers.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I repeat the question that I asked the minister earlier. In the 1989 -90 budget, there was an item of $3m for constructing factory space. In this current budget, there is an item of $2 982 572. Does that relate to the same factory space?

Mr COULTER: The item relates to the capital works program and not cash expenditure. In fact, the TDZ spent $8.123m on new factory space and subdivision works during 1989-90. The allocation for 1990-91 is

$2 982 571. That is the balance of approval required to complete factories under construction as at 30 June 1990. The actual cash expenditure for 1990-91 will total $5.624m. This includes completion of subdivision extensions as well as buildings.

Mr Chairman, if one were to weigh up the economics of the Trade Development Zone in terms of the number of jobs there, we spent $40m for about 10 jobs. As the member for Nightcliff said, we spent $150m for 300 people who live at Palmerston and now there are 7800 people there. I do not know how the economic geniuses from the other side operate but, if that is the sole criterion on which they make their judgments, let us hope that they remain in opposition for a long time.

Appropriation for division 23 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 91:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, tourism infrastructure support or hotel subsidies was $26.3m in 1989-90. The blow-out over the budget figure of $17.1m has been described as being caused by the pilots' dispute. What is the excuse for 1990-91, where the figure is $24.4m? What is the final 1989-90 breakdown of the $26.3m in subsidies, by hotel, and what is the breakdown for 1990-91 of $24.4m, by hotel?

Thirdly, this is the second year in a row that the appropriation for business development has decreased. Actual expenditure in 1989-90 was $8.798m and the 1990-91 appropriation is $7.557m. Can the minister explain when the disproportionately excessive allocation for the hotels will stop eating into the funds available for the development of other businesses and industries in the Northern Territory?

Fourthly, how was the industry development expenditure of $11.389m allocated in 1989-90? Specifically, to what projects, industries and businesses did the business development and industrial development funds go? How much was allocated to each project, industry or business? Fifthly, how much of the industry development appropriation for 1990-91 has been allocated to date, and what is the breakdown by project, industry or business?

Sixthly, last year, the government stated that 350 summaries of the Touche Ross Report on Import Substitution had been circulated to the private sector and that the government was working with companies in the areas of paint manufacture, garment manufacture, baking, small goods manufacture, printing, souvenirs and pottery. The minister indicated that the local set up cost for these opportunities was $4m, that 48 jobs would be created as a result of the $4m expenditure, and that the flow-on effect would be $1.5m for every $1m invested. Can the minister report on the status of these undertakings and advise whether the expected job-creation and flow-on effects were realised? Can the minister further report on additional progress on the Touche Ross recommendations during the course of 1989-90 and what progress is anticipated in 1990-91?

Could the minister advise how much was paid out in dry bore subsidies in 1989-90, who the recipients were and give the breakdown of the total subsidies by recipient?

Mr COULTER: The 1989-90 dry bore subsidy was $330 871. The breakdown of the total subsidy by recipient will be listed in the annual report which is expected to be out very soon. The recipients were: Adams K.E. - $4500;

Anningie Station - $17 447.75; Bishop W. - $4836; Braun M. - $7477.50; Brown M.P. - $7161; Coniston Station - $3704; Dallas and Vrodos - $11 312; Dungowan - $24 357.80; Camfield Station - $4720; Glen Gilnockie Station - $9754; Glen Helen Station - $7794; Hayfield Station - $21 552.20; Huckitta Station - $5068; Idracowra Station - $18 782; Killarney Station - $5820; King G.R. - $7646; Messrs Hunt, Wake and Eupene - $4540; Mittiebah Station - $11 346, Mount Ebenezer Station - $9408; Palmer Valley Station - $33 709; Riveren Station - $12 335; Shaw J. - $6040.95; Shaw J.C. - $5175; Sherwin Pastoral - $17 100; Skliros N. - $7217.50; Smith V.F. - $4840; Todd River Station - $8077.50; Wave Hill Station - $16 076.50; Western Creek Station - $12 258; and the Yuendumu Cattle Company - $20 814.55.

It is an expensive scheme but, as the member for Koolpinyah will tell us, it is a very important scheme. The honourable member may argue about the break up and where the subsidy went, but I pay particular tribute to the water drillers of the Northern Territory in their never-ending search for that very valuable resource that will make this a better place.

Mr Ede: At least a wetter place.

Mr COULTER: The answers to question 1 and 2 have been combined. The tourism infrastructure under 'other services' has been divided into 3 categories: the actual for 1989-90, the proposed for 1990-91, and the variation. The actual was $26.3m for 1989-90, the proposed is $24.4m and the variation indicates that that is down by $1.9m.

Expenditure in 1989-90 was $9.2m more than was originally appropriated in the budget. This increase resulted directly from the effects of the pilots' dispute and the following figures give details of the program in the last 3 budgets. For Investnorth Management Pty Ltd, the 1988-89 figure was $0.4m, the 1989-90 figure was $0.4m and the budget for 1990-91 is $0.4m. The Sheraton Darwin was $6.5m in 1988-89, $9m in 1989-90, and the budget for 1990-91 is $7.5m. The Sheraton Alice Springs was $5.805m in 1988-89, $6m in 1989-90, and the budget for 1990-91 is $5m. For Yulara, it was $14.8m in 1988-89, $10.9m in 1989-90 and the budget for 1990-91 is $11.5m. The totals are: for 1988-89 - $27.505m; for 1989-90 - 26.3m; and, for 1990-91 - $24.4m.

Special one-off factors in 1988-89 and 1989-90 make trends difficult to discern. They have been explained in debates in the Legislative Assembly in the past. In June 1988-89, an extra payment of $5m was made to Yulara as an advance 1989-90 payment. The original 1989-90 appropriation was reduced by the same amount and was $17.1m. In 1989-90, the pilots' dispute meant an additional $9.2m had to be appropriated during the year, raising the appropriation from $17.1m to $26.3m.

Adjusting for these special factors, the trend is $22.5m in 1988-89, $22.1m in 1989-90 and $24.4m in 1990-91. These figures show an increase of 10.4% in 1990-91 and 8.4% between 1988-89 and 1990-91. This increase reflects the ongoing impact of the pilots' dispute on tourist numbers. Total visitor numbers to the Territory have recovered strongly since the strike, but have been concentrated in the lower end of the market, comprising backpackers and people who stay in motels and mid-range hotels. The numbers in the 4- and 5-star hotels are still very much depressed.

When I was in Zurich last week, I questioned some tourism people there and it is not hard to tell why we are missing out on some of the European 4- and 5-star clientele we were getting previously. They have a policy that if, for any reason, a substantial leg of the journey is interrupted or

cannot be completed, the tourist agent who sold the package to the tourist affected has to provide a total tour of the same value. It is easy to see why we are not the flavour of the month when people cannot jump on a plane, a bus or a train to visit the Northern Territory. I am not sure whether that policy applies to America as well.

The Middle East crisis may well cause a further downturn in visitor numbers if fuel costs continue to escalate and road and air travel costs rise. Already, we have heard stories about tourists turning back. I do not know how true that is. Prices ease towards the Top End. The highest petrol prices apply on that central Australian leg. The effect may well be subsumed in the usual seasonal downturn, provided the crisis in the Middle East is not prolonged.

In relation to question 3, expenditure on the Business Development Program between 1989-90 and that proposed for 1990-91 has decreased by $1.241m. This variation is comprised almost entirely of expenditure on the highly successful Tourism Assistance Scheme which was undertaken during the pilots' dispute in September and October 1989. That involved $0.984. In addition, a further $0.5m was loaned to Darwin Joinery, now Dalway Pty Ltd. The business development allocation has no bearing on the tourism infrastructure hotel support.

The industrial development activity expenditure in 1989-90 of $11.389m covers a number of projects and business ventures which are lengthy to detail in the Assembly. The specific projects will be listed in the Department of Industries and Development's annual report. However, major projects which make up a significant proportion are as follows: Industrial Supplies Office - $200 000; Small Business Workshop - $128 820; National Industry Extension Service - $111 302; Imparja Television - $2m; assistance to the Northern Territory tourism industry during the pilots' dispute - $839 382 in stage 1 and $144 425 in stage 2; Dalway Pty Ltd - $2m; Darwin Joinery and Furniture Manufacturing - $200 000; Jaguar Joinery - $100 000; Modular Medical Products NT - $400 000; Offshore Fisheries NT - $103 000; and the money for the ghosting problem for television reception - $100 000. A further 70 projects were supported by my department. Details will be in the annual report. I am proud of the little ones as well. A very broad spectrum of people received financial assistance, including the deer park that was opened yesterday.

The total industry development appropriation for 1990-91 is as follows. The total appropriation for the Business Development Program is $7.557m. Of that, $2.118m has been expended to date. At present, outstanding commitments are in the order of $2.863m. The Industrial Development Program appropriation is $3.386m. Expenditure to date is $305 000, and outstanding commitments total $2.351m.

I turn now to the breakdown by project within the Business and Industrial Development Programs. The Business Development Program appropriation breakdown and expenditure to date, 26 September 1990, are as follows: salaries and allowances - appropriation $955 000, expenditure to date $191 000; administration and operational - $431 000 and $66 000; other services, loans and advances and assistance to industry - $2.089m and $655 000; subsidies and grants, Industrial Supplies Office - $200 000, and no expenditure to date; dry bore scheme - $445 000 and $56 000; small business workshop - $157 000 and $35 000; Imparja - $2m and $1m; patents - $30 000, and no expenditure to date; water supply development - $100 000, and no expenditure to date; assistance to

industry - $999 000 and $103 000; and NECE $30 000 and $12 000. That gives a total of $7 570 000, of which $2 118 000 has been expended to date.

The breakdown for the Industrial Development Program, including expenditure to date, is as follows: salaries and allowances - $473 000 and $120 000; administration and operational expenses - $320 000 and $97 000; other services, loans and advances and assistance to industry - $150 000, and there has been no expenditure to date; subsidies, grants and assistance to industry - $2.421m and $82 000; and patents - $22 000 and $6000. The program total is $3.386m, and we have spent $305 000 to date. Total outstanding commitments are as follows: for the Business Development Program - $2.863m, and for the Industrial Development Program - $2.351m

The sixth question concerns the Touche Ross Report. The government's continued encouragement for new or expanded business activity based on import replacement has resulted in a number of development projects proceeding on a range of manufacturing proposals. Those new businesses are associated with the manufacture of electrical goods, paint, frozen pies and pastries, garments, dimension stone products, explosives, establishment of a value repair workshop, opening of a bookbinding service and expansion of orchid nursery activities. In addition, significant progress has been made in increasing the extent of printing jobs handled by local enterprise. The developments under way to date, or about to commence shortly, involve expenditure of some $4m. The resulting employment has involved the creation of over 40 new jobs. The Leader of the Opposition will no doubt say that we are doing better than the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Smith: Yes. You are.

Mr COULTER: The problem is that we cannot continue to take in only our own washing. That is the only problem. We have to expand into other markets. Import replacement is one aspect and export is the other. Export is more expensive, as honourable members will have noticed.

For the remainder of this financial year and well into 1991-92, the government will continue its concerted effort to attract additional manufacturing development. Further developments are expected in meat processing, tanning of hides, and granite cutting and polishing. Those developments are expected to be worth approximately $10m. I believe that an announcement about a paint factory is due to be made very soon.

Mr Smith: Next time you go to the Vic, you will announce it!

Mr COULTER: I am sure that Chris Draffin would like to say something about that project.

In the area of defence industry support, major projects are expected to establish employment for over 100 people. This will be very significant when the 2nd Cavalry arrives in the not-too-distant future. There will be significant multiplier effects and I look forward to its arrival, especially in Palmerston.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the ABS has produced some figures in relation to international arrivals in Australia as a whole, which raise some questions about the impact of the pilots' dispute on tourist arrivals last year. The figures do not relate to the Territory specifically but, from memory, I believe that they show that the number of international arrivals in the 7 or 8 months to August 1989 were down by about 7.5% on the previous year's

figure whereas the decrease during the period of the pilots' dispute, in the 5 or 6 months from August to February, was in fact some 5.3%.

Those figures indicate that revenue losses in various parts of Australia, which were attributed to the effects of the strike, may have been due to excess capacity built up in the expectation that the growth rates achieved over a couple of years - in the order of 25% - would continue. In a time of high interest rates, some highly-geared tourism projects in places like Cairns and Western Australia could not survive when that projected growth did not materialise.

I know that there are some figures which relate specifically to the Northern Territory. These include a breakdown of where tourists come from, long-term and short-term arrivals, interstate and overseas travellers and so on. Could the minister give a breakdown of those figures and an analysis of them? Does his analysis give an indication of whether problems in the local industry have arisen because of high gearing and over-capacity developed in expectation of continuing high growth rates? I ask this question particularly in the context of reduced international arrivals in Australia well in advance of the pilots' dispute, and the possible impact of other factors such as the high value of the Australian dollar. Obviously, I do not expect the minister to provide this information now, but I would appreciate hearing his views at some later stage.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I was reading last week that, on any given day, 8000 Boeing aircraft carry 2.5 million people - and that is Boeing alone.

I will be happy to provide the information sought by the honourable member during the course of these sittings. I am told by my advisers that the problem is that the numbers reflect air travellers. I am not sure exactly which figures the honourable member is referring to, but I am told that people continued to arrive at Sydney and the Gold Coast, but were unable to move to the hinterland. Tourists were arriving but they could not reach their intended destinations. Thank goodness the Northern Territory was not in the process of expanding hotel infrastructure and so escaped the drastic effects experienced in places like the Gold Coast, Cairns and Port Douglas.

Mr Ede: That was not because of the pilots' dispute, but because they developed too far too fast.

Mr COULTER: Whilst the pilots' dispute did not help, there certainly was a large expansion in the industry in those areas. One effect is that the banks now have grave reservations about tourist projects in the Northern Territory and remote areas. In fact, the banks would not look at Kings Canyon unless there was a 50:50 equity to debt ratio. Even then, they believed that they are putting their necks on the line.

I will be happy to supply the honourable member with the information he seeks. We were fortunate that we were not in any sort of development stage at that time. Certainly, if we had commenced the Kings Canyon project 2 years ago, it would have been dead in the water. It was a $50m proposal in those days, not a $14.5m proposal. Those people would have been out the back door, and that is an example of that. Certainly, it is not related solely to the pilots' dispute, but is is an example what can happen during those development stages.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I guess that the figures that disturb me involve our ongoing commitment to Yulara and the 2 Sheratons. The reason that I am disturbed is that the projections in the early years indicated that, by this stage, we should be putting in reduced amounts of money. Instead, we find that the trend which the honourable minister has kindly outlined for us indicates the reverse. We are spending more money. In fact, this year, it is anticipated that we will spend 10.4% more than in 1989-90, and we know that 1989-90 was a bad year because of the impact of the pilots' dispute. However, I guess it is fair to say that the honourable minister discounted the effects of that when providing his answer.

The honourable minister went on to say that there is a rough chance - and more than a rough chance, I would expect - that the Middle East crisis will exacerbate that situation. In other words, the one-off eventualities that disturb the figures in any one year simply keep occurring, and that raises the real question of where the protection lies for the taxpayer of the Northern Territory. Frankly, there does not seem to be much. If things go bad in the tourism industry, and the tourists do not flock into Yulara in the numbers anticipated and the overnight stays at the Alice Springs Sheraton and the Darwin Sheraton are lower than anticipated, it seems to be fairly clear that the taxpayer of the Northern Territory will pick up the bill. From what the honourable minister has said, the bill is anticipated to be $24.4m this year.

Mr Chairman, that was a rather lengthy preamble to my question which is: what revised projections are there that show our anticipated commitments to these projects over the next few years in the light of the knowledge that we have at present? I am happy to accept that perhaps we have not taken full account of the Middle East crisis, and that would be almost impossible because it is changing on a daily basis. However, it is clear now that the projections that were put forward at the commencement of these projects are no longer valid, and it is equally clear now that the amounts of money that it was anticipated that taxpayers in the Northern Territory would have to contribute to these projects has been quite seriously underestimated. I will repeat my question: what projections do we have for the likely cost of underpinning these projects in the next few years, and do we have a date by which we expect to be out of these projects? I know that, at one stage, it was to be in 1996. Is that still the date by which it is anticipated that we will be out of these projects, or has that date altered as well?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am reliably informed that the 1990-91 figure of $11.5m was the projection from the 1985 documentation. Thus, the figure that we have today was the original projection. That was done in 1984, but the documentation ...

Mr Smith: Sorry, what $11.5m?

Mr COULTER: The actual projection in the original documentation, which was written in 1985, suggested that it would be $11.5m for 1991.

Mr Smith: For what? For Yulara?

Mr COULTER: Yes.

Mr Smith: But what about the other 2?

Mr COULTER: We are talking about Yulara in that case. That was the amount, and the projections were the same. It has been a while since I have had one of Otto Alder's Sheraton briefings, which take considerable ...

Mr Bell: I wish I could get one.

Mr COULTER: You can have one whenever you would like. That is not a problem.

Mr Smith: Can I go too?

Mr COULTER: Yes. If you have 2 or 3 days to sit down and listen to him, it is not a problem.

Mr Bell: Why don't you give us that in the budget debate next time. You refused last year.

Mr COULTER: Why don't we do this? Why don't we refer the projections that the Leader of the Opposition has talked about to the Public Accounts Committee? The PAC could determine where the original projections are now and what is happening. The committee can report on that. That would not be a bad idea, would it? What do you think? What is there to stop us doing that? I think it important enough for it to be referred to the PAC. It is only an offer, but I think it is a good offer.

Mr Smith: I do not think the committee needs your offer in order to do it.

Mr COULTER: We have nothing to hide on the Sheratons. Once again, as I said, economics is not a science, but a belief. We believe in the Sheratons and Yulara, and the spin-offs that are coming from them. We believe in the $400m tourism industry in the Northern Territory. We have nothing to hide. We are proud of the Sheratons and Yulara and what we have been able to achieve. I am happy to refer the matter to the PAC for it to examine the original projections and whether or not we will come out in 1996. There are no gimmicks here. It is straight up. It is not a problem. The PAC can look at it, but I am told that it is on schedule and that the situation is not very different from the original predictions.

Mr Smith: You would make a good used-car salesman.

Mr COULTER: Let's do it. The PAC can have it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, a little birdie told me that, in fact, the Public Accounts Committee has been looking at this very question.

Mr Coulter: Oh, I hope not!

Mr SMITH: I understand it has a standing reference to examine that particular matter.

Mr Palmer: We moved it last year. We will report at the next sittings.

Mr SMITH: That is right. The committee is about to report in the next sittings, and that is an interesting comment in itself. It is interesting that the Public Accounts Committee is about to report at the next sittings which will probably be in the life of the next government.

Mr Chairman, having said that, I do not have a problem with the Public Accounts Committee looking at the question and, obviously, it is legitimate that it do so.

Mr Coulter: It is an important question!

Mr SMITH: However, my question simply sought information from the minister, and I will state it again: does he have any information on revised projections for these 3 projects and what they are likely to cost the taxpayer in the next few years? We do not need the Public Accounts Committee to provide the answer to that question. The minister should have that information available to him, and that is why I have asked the question.

Mr COULTER: I have made the point that, on this side of the Assembly, we do not consider them to be a cost or a negative. We consider them to be wealth creating. For every $1 we put in, we get $4.68 back. That is how we look at the Sheratons, and that is the difference between the opposition and the government. I do not have the projections, and it would have to be a pretty game man who did, with this country of ours sliding slowly into the wilderness, with interest rates the way they are, with fuel prices rising and hotels going broke everywhere. They still have the high dollar. It is a personal opinion, but I think that probably our tourist industry will be depressed for some time. It must be remembered that 600 000 of the 850 000 people who are domestic travellers come into the Northern Territory, and many of them come in motor vehicles.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr COULTER: If we are talking $1 or $1.20 a litre of petrol, I really cannot project what next year will bring. I would hope that it would be a good year. The Minister for Tourism projects one million and one visitors in 1991, and they come up with all these little ditties each year about how good the place will be. My philosophy, as I have said, is that I will count them on their way out. I am not into crystal-balling, but I am saying that times are tough. The impact of the pilots' dispute on this country will be felt for some time yet, particularly in relation to the European travellers, and many of them used to come here. However, they have stayed away from Australia in droves in respect of the package tours that are required to come into vast, remote areas like Australia. Look at McAlpine and the promised airport. He has packed up and gone home virtually because the industry he founded has failed.

I do not have any projections on what will occur, and it would be a game person who was prepared to project what next year will be like for the tourism industry or how the Sheratons or the Yulara will come out of it. As I have said, on this side of the House, we believe in the statistics that we have. Those facilities are wealth-generating at present and, for every $1 we put in, we get $4.86 back.

Appropriation for division 91 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 55:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, in addition to the questions that I supplied to the minister yesterday, I passed some further questions across to him this morning. I will read those into Hansard.

The 1989-90 budget for the department was $18.6m and the actual expenditure was $21.2m. Can the minister explain the reason for the 14.1%

blow-out? Secondly, the budget provides inaugural funds for the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, and those funds are $2.581m. However, the overall increase is $922 000. The appropriations have decreased for both the lower court's jurisdiction and for prosecutions. My questions then are these. On what basis does the minister predict a decrease in the function of the Magistrates Court? On what basis does the minister expect a decrease in the number of prosecutions? Substantial cuts in the legal services' area would indicate a related and significant change in policy. Do these cuts mean that the government will not continue to pursue costly litigation?

As I mentioned yesterday, of continuing concern to the opposition and to many Territorians are the appeals to the High Court that the Territory government has insisted on pursuing, particularly in respect of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and claims under that act.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr BELL: We will come to the absurd actions against Telecom that were the subject of questions yesterday morning and which will be pursued, no doubt, during these sittings, but not in this context. I refer here specifically to the appeals to the High Court against those claims. Of the 25 or 26 High Court appeals that have been launched, I do not think that one has been completely successful and, as all honourable members will be aware, appeals to the High Court are expensive.

I accept the government's right to test legislation in various areas by way of appeals to whatever courts may be necessary but I think that, in this case, as in the Telecom case, there has been an absurd level of expenditure. If the proposed reductions represent a decision on the government's part not to pursue some of these absurd court actions, then it is to be congratulated on that basis.

The minister mentioned mediation and conciliation techniques. I would like to know under which particular head he intends to carry out this initiative and what, in fact, is constituted therein.

My third question relates to estimates of the cost that the Criminal Code has brought about in court terms. Honourable members will recall that I raised this in the second-reading debate yesterday. It is evident to me that the Criminal Code experiment has been a costly one in terms of court time. I believe that some assessment of the costs to the Department of Law generally should be made. I look forward to some response from the minister in that regard.

To sum up, I want to hear about the blow-out of the 1989-90 budget by 14.1% and the reductions in the Magistrates Court and the legal services area. I want an estimate of cost of High Court appeals and the extent to which there has been a policy change in that regard, if any, by the government. I want to know under which head the mediation and conciliation techniques to which the minister referred yesterday will be carried out, and the cost of construing the Criminal Code over the last 7 years.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the difference between the 1989-90 budget figure and the final expenditure figure can be explained as follows. In the first budget review, an amount of $764 000 was provided to the Department of Law, and that was arrived at taking into account increases for the development of the Integrated Justice Information System, the National Wage Case increases and the creation of a new position. There was also a Treasurer's Advance of $1.795m. That was arrived at taking into account the

Burgundy Royale costs of $1.872m, additional salary costs of $190 000 caused by non-provision of termination payments and having regard to savings generated internally.

Mr Bell: What is the Burgundy Royale cost?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the total amount extra was actually 14.1%.

The member for MacDonnell asked about the Burgundy Royale cost. Obviously, you have to pay as you go. He would be aware of the proceedings which were instigated against the Territory government. Honourable members would remember that the opposition castigated us for having the audacity to defend it. Those proceedings were dismissed on 22 May, in the Federal Court in Sydney, and costs have been awarded in our favour on an indemnity basis. We are going through the process of recovering those costs. Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of not paying as we go.

Certainly, there will be no decrease in the functions of the Magistrates Court in 1991, nor in the capacity of the department to prosecute. In fact, the latter will be enhanced by the employment of a Director of Public Prosecutions. The difference in the budget for this year, excluding the budget for the Legal Aid Commission, can be explained by the fact that there is a reduction in the amount provided for this financial year: for Burgundy Royale, the decrease will be $1.5m; for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the decrease will be $412 000; for double criminal sittings of the Supreme Court, the decrease will be $400 000; and for capital items, the decrease will be $109 000. In addition, there has been a 10% reduction across the board in administrative and operational expenses, before allowing for inflation, to take account of increased efficiencies. Taking those factors into account, the proposed expenditure for 1990-91 will be at a similar level to that of 1989-90. Certainly, there will be no reduction in programs or services.

As I foreshadowed in the Appropriation Bill debate last year, much work has been done in relation to performance measurement in the various departmental programs over the last 12 months. The Department of Law now has in place a sophisticated computer program which enables management to monitor workloads and trends and to deploy resources in accordance with emerging priorities in a planned and proactive way.

In addition, the department is now looking at the current system of budgeting for legal expenses with a view to making clients more accountable for the legal expenditure which their programs cause to be incurred. Like every other Attorney-General's and Justices Department in the country, we are looking at ways to plan for such expenditure and, if considered desirable, to arrange for clients to provide the necessary funds. This will be an ongoing exercise over the next 6 months, the results of which I expect will add immeasurably to the government's capacity to budget effectively for legal expenditure and to reduce unnecessary costs.

In respect of appeals to the High Court, on a number of occasions, I have provided details of the numbers involved in land claim matters. I certainly do not resile from our obligation to appeal to the High Court when we receive advice that matters affecting Territorians have been processed incorrectly. There have been occasions when those results have been resolved in a satisfactory way. Because of the way in which the Land Rights Act is framed, there is an obligation on the Territory government to test certain matters in relation to requirements of the act and, unfortunately, we have to pay to do that.

The fact that the Land Rights Act impinges on the Territory, and was introduced and passed by people who do not live in the Territory and who are not affected by that law, is an abomination on our entire democratic structure in this country. One day, historians will proclaim it as such. At present, we have to live with the contingencies of that act and we have a duty to represent, to the best of our ability, the interests of all Territorians. We will be continuing with that process if there are matters that we believe need to be taken to higher courts for assessment. Such steps will not be taken frivolously, nor have they ever been. Indeed, the High Court does not entertain any matter that is frivolous. Certainly, we have had some rather unusual sets of circumstances imposed on us, and it was the responsibility of the government to proceed with those matters.

In relation to the Criminal Code, I resent the inference by the member for MacDonnell that this code has failed and is hideously expensive to Territorians. That is simply not true on either count. In relation to appeals to the higher courts for interpretation of the Criminal Code, I have been advised that there have been only 2 such appeals made to a higher court. The first was a matter of Baumer, which was a mixed appeal for the interpretation of section 154 plus sentence. The other was a matter of Mumford, who appealed to the Court of Criminal Appeal over interpretation of section 209(4) of the code.

In relation to the first matter, Mr Michael Abbott QC appeared for the appellant and Mr Pauling QC, the Solicitor-General, appeared for the Crown. All our costs were in-house in that matter. In relation to the matter of Mumford, Mr Abbott QC appeared for the appellant and Mr Glissan appeared for the Crown. The fees for Mr Glissan were approximately $6000. The introduction of the code most certainly has not led to a large number of cases being appealed. As in all cases in criminal law, counsel for the Crown and defence look at the factual situation and see whether the facts fit the law. This is true not only of the code but of all jurisdictions. It is important to note also that, in jurisdictions which do not have the Northern Territory code, appeals are still made from decisions of the inferior courts. The code has not caused any excessive initiation of higher court matters or costs to the Territory.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: We are not talking about matters of interpretation of the code. There are grounds for appeal in many ways. The code itself is not the cause for many of those appeals.

Mr Bell: You are confusing 2 issues, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: I am not confusing anything, Mr Chairman, and I think that the member for MacDonnell shows abominable ignorance in trying to blame the code for so-called costs of legal actions that will be incurred by Territorians. I agree that there are some problems with the code, but that is not one of them. It is mischievous to try to suggest that it is. If the honourable member has some evidence to back up his remarks, let him provide it, but he should not sit there with a high and mighty 'I know best' look on his face making inane comments. If he has some evidence, let him provide it. Otherwise, let him accept the information that I am giving to him as being factual, because that is what it is.

Mr Bell: Calm down.

Mr MANZIE: Mind your p's and q's then, because I am sick of your high and mighty pontifications when you are wrong.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr MANZIE: When you are correct, I will agree with you on matters. I think you should accept the fact that you make mistakes sometimes and that you are not infallible.

In respect of proceedings in relation to the Land Rights Act, 2 matters went to the High Court in 1989-90. There was a Kenbi special leave matter and the actual costs involved were $21 000. There was the Kidman Jasper special leave application and the costs were $16 537. That is a total of $37 963. If successful, the costs in relation to that matter are recoverable. At this stage, last year's High Court costs in relation to land rights are yet to be seen because the matters have not been finalised. I think that covers all the matters that the honourable member raised.

Mr Bell: The mediation and conciliation techniques - under which heading of expenditure is that?

Mr MANZIE: I will seek advice and provide that information to the honourable member.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I indicate that I have 10 minutes. That demonstrates how inadequate this process is. There are a large number of matters that need to be considered in some detail.

Mr Reed: You have had 3 weeks in which to provide detailed questions.

Mr BELL: I know you blokes do not like it, but the fact is that we have a parliament so that we can develop our questioning as we discuss.

I will commence with the matter of the Criminal Code. When I interjected that the minister had confused 2 issues, what I meant was that I had asked 1 question about the cost of High Court appeals, particularly in relation to a successful land claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, and I had asked a separate question about the costs of construing the Criminal Code. The minister took that to mean that I was interested only in the cost of appeals to the High Court on matters that involved the Criminal Code, and he referred to 2 particular cases. That is not what I meant in entirety. I meant as well appeals from the Magistrates Court to the Supreme Court and from the Supreme Court to the Court of Appeal about construing particular cases.

Broadly speaking, my view is that there needs to be some assessment of the cost of doing that. I believe that, if we had not gone down the Criminal Code path and if we had retained the common law arrangements with statutory changes as the community and the parliament saw fit, it would have been a considerably cheaper exercise. I believe that it is incumbent on us to look at that cost in court time. The minister referred to a particular case in which the Solicitor-General had acted for the Crown and Mr Michael Abbott QC had acted for the appellant, and said that it was done in-house. Having something done in-house does not mean that it costs nothing. Court time always costs money.

The minister asked me to provide an example of a case in the category to which I referred. I do not recall the names of the defendants in this example but, from memory, an off-duty police officer observed a couple more

or less inside their house in flagrante delicto, and laid a complaint. I was surprised that ...

Mr Manzie: Neil, under common law, the processes for behaving indecently or obscenely within view of a public place are far stricter and stronger than they are under the code.

Mr BELL: I am not interested in whether the law is severe. I am saying that this was a summary offence and normally it would have been dealt with in the lower court. However, the judgment on the matter dealt with in the Supreme Court is a very thick document.

Mr Manzie: You are talking rubbish. It has nothing to do with the code. You are ignorant.

Mr BELL: If you think that that does not cost dollars in terms of what we are debating here, you need to have your head read. You accuse me of being ignorant and not having evidence. I am just giving it to you and jamming it down your throat.

Mr Manzie: You are doing it the wrong way. You are showing your ignorance, Neil. Give us a bit of evidence in relation to the code. Come on. You cannot.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BELL: I have only 5 minutes remaining, Mr Chairman, and I resent the minister interjecting in this fashion when I have so little time in which to debate these matters.

The honourable minister gave me a figure of about $2.5m in respect of last year's blow-out. I would be interested in the Burgundy Royale costs. I am surprised that a matter as important as that, a matter which has evidently been responsible for about 10% of the department's expenditure, has not been the subject of more fulsome explanation to the Legislative Assembly. I imagine that the dealings between the Northern Territory government and Burgundy Royale are not something of which the CLP government can be proud. However, I will pass over that.

Mr Manzie: I am not going to let you pass over it.

Mr BELL: I would expect the Attorney-General to be a little more fulsome in explaining the position of the Territory in that regard.

Mr Chairman, the answers which the minister gave to the second question were very difficult to follow. Judging by my experience last year with the Minister for Health and Community Services, this crowd will be out of government before I have the opportunity to receive some decent answers. He referred to an expected decrease of $400 000 in expenditure under the head of the Supreme Court. I would be very interested to know how that is to be effected. He referred also to a decrease in administrative expenses as a result of what he referred to as 'efficiencies'. A further decrease of $412 000 was mentioned, the reason for which I was not able to follow because he hurried over it pretty quickly. There was a further $109 000 under a head which also escaped my notice. I would appreciate further details concerning the basis on which those decreases are able to be effected. I believe that the committee deserves some better explanation than has been provided by the minister this evening.

I come to the question of the appeals to the High Court in respect of land claims. I notice that the minister did not bother to refer to how stunningly unsuccessful these appeals have been. He used the phrase 'processed incorrectly' in respect of some of the decisions which the government appeals. I would have thought that that was fairly close to a contempt of the High Court, given the decisions that have been made. I believe that it would be appropriate, as in the Burgundy Royale case, to give an overall assessment of the costs involved so that more detailed debate could occur. I am satisfied that it would be found that many of these appeals are quite unnecessary and that the costs involved are a waste of money as far as we are concerned.

The minister referred to a requirement to test particular claims. That, of course, is patently absurd. I do not know who wrote his answer for him but there is no requirement on the Northern Territory government to test any finding. I can imagine that, initially, it may have been desirable to test particular issues but, on the record of this government's appeals to the High Court, there is no evidence that any of its appeals have been at all worth while.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, some outsiders probably wonder why I get a little angry, but the member for MacDonnell really is an unbelievable performer.

Mr Bell: You started it, Daryl, not me.

Mr MANZIE: He makes snide insinuations. He misinterprets. He glibly makes derogatory comments about the government and Territorians in general, and he gets away with it. He really is a grubby operator at times, Mr Chairman.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I would like a ruling on the extent to which the phrase 'grubby operator' is parliamentary or otherwise. It is water off a duck's back, but I am not sure that it should be enshrined as acceptable.

Mr CHAIRMAN: It might be preferable for the minister to find some more suitable term of endearment for the honourable member opposite.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I withdraw the comment. The honourable member is certainly not a very nice person at times. I do not know how else to put it.

He made some snide remark to the effect that the CLP government would not want to talk about Burgundy Royale. I would refer him to the comments of the court in relation to the Burgundy Royale application. The judge was scathing in his comments regarding Burgundy Royale and some of the insinuations made against this government. Not only did he dismiss the matter but he condemned Burgundy Royale in the strongest possible terms for the unsubstantiated comments that were made.

Mr Bell: Another CLP deal that went bad, Daryl?

Mr MANZIE: The member for MacDonnell would not be game to walk outside and say such things because he knows that he would be sued for his whole life savings and everything he could earn in the next few years. He is a dishonest man without the intestinal fortitude to stand up outside this Chamber and make the sort of abusive comments he makes in this House. He

hides in this coward's castle like the worm that he is and I believe that he should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable minister will withdraw the word 'worm'.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I withdraw the comment but I give a commitment that, before these sittings are over, I shall make a very strong statement in relation to some of the unsubstantiated allegations made by the member for MacDonnell. He makes them continuously, and he never gives an iota of evidence to back them up.

Mr Bell: If you guys were a bit more honest about what you did, we would not have to do it.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I will give you another example. I asked the member for MacDonnell to give us an example of the way in which the Criminal Code has cost us more money. The advice I have received is that costs in relation to the operation of the Criminal Code are the same as, or possibly less than, those which would have applied under the operation of common law. The ridiculous case that he mentioned had no bearing whatsoever at all on the code. That just shows the ignorance of the man. He makes pious pronouncements and throwaway comments and he thinks that he can get away with it.

I asked the honourable member 3 weeks ago to provide questions for which he wanted a detailed response. He says: 'This is an important matter and I really should have these details. Members of the Assembly should know'. I agree. Since I have been a member, it has been the practice in the Legislative Assembly that questions to be asked during this committee stage are provided 3 weeks ahead to enable detailed information to be provided. However, at these sittings, he decided that he would play games.

If he has not received the information, that is his own fault. I think this behaviour has debased debate in this parliament. The community deserves better than unsubstantiated claims by the member for MacDonnell, and his slurs and snide remarks about the government. He has made comments regarding the cost of the code for which he does not have one iota of evidence. He cannot prove them because they are not true. Such comments do him no justice. I hope to see an improvement in the way he behaves because he cannot continue in this way. He is not contributing to this parliament and he is not contributing to the good order and good government of the Territory. It is about time that he stopped playing like a schoolboy and started to act as what he is supposed to be: a member of the parliament of this Territory.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, following responses to various questions over the year about the costs of some of the court actions that the Northern Territory has been involved in, we have been shocked by the amount of money involved. I agree that there are cases where it would be remiss of the Northern Territory government not to take various issues all the way because it has a strong belief and evidence to back it up. On occasions, it can save substantial sums by following that process. However, there is another class of proceedings which can be described only as using the courts for political purposes. There are 2 that I would like to canvass briefly tonight. One is in relation to land claim matters and the other is in relation to BTEC.

The number of and the extent to which land claims have been taken all the way to the High Court leave Territorians with a feeling that the people providing the advice to proceed with the appeal are either particularly incompetent, given the extremely low success rate, or they are being overruled by their political masters and the decision is taken to proceed regardless of the fact that there is absolutely no chance of success. We are now 15 years into this process. In the early years, despite the chance of success being perhaps 50:50 at best, there may have been logic in proceeding on the basis of establishing a precedent in respect of the interpretation of the act. One would have thought that, by now, most precedents would have been established and the government could make its decisions on the basis of those.

I would like the honourable minister - and I recognise that he may not be able to do it now - to advise how often points of law, which had already been established, have been taken again to the High Court, not so much in an attempt to have them elucidated further or to extend the boundaries of knowledge of the law, but for the purely political purpose of being seen to be doing something to frustrate the land claims process. The other class of proceedings that particularly worries me occurs in a number of different areas. I refer to court actions taken up by the government for the purpose of what can be described only as getting at people. The government uses its resources to take a case as far as it can in the hope that the individual concerned will be unable to follow because they will not be unable to match the government's expenditure. To my knowledge, that has happened a number of times in relation to BTEC. A particular old lady, whom the member for MacDonnell would know, had what has turned out to be an excellent case. However, there was no way that she could spend the amount necessary to take her case all the way to match the Northern Territory government. She had been sent broke already by the shoot-out of her property.

Actions of that nature against citizens of the Territory are abominable. It is obvious now that the Northern Territory government did not have the power under the act to do what it did. The government pretended that it had that power in the hope that that would deter numerous claims. It then worked on the basis that, if people made claims for compensation, it would drag them right through the courts. When the matter was just about to come to judgment, the government would settle. In that way, no judgment was entered which somebody else could use as a precedent to try to speed up the process. The next person had to work through the process themselves and spend money in an attempt to establish the point of law. Of course, when they got really close, they were made an offer that was too good to refuse because they knew that the alternative was a string of appeals and counter appeals and so on to ever higher courts.

That sort of activity really gets my goat because it is using the courts for political purposes. I would like the honourable minister to detail, at some stage, the various civil proceedings between Territorians and the government where the government has acted, not for the purpose of clarifying the law, but for the purpose of frustrating the process or the individuals concerned. That is a matter which Territorians feel particularly concerned about. There is a rising tide of anger about this.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the honourable member claimed that we go continually to the High Court to appeal the same matters of law in relation to the Land Rights Act. That indicates that the honourable member has no idea how the system works. To appear before the High Court, one has to seek leave to appeal. It assesses whether the matter is worthy of its consideration. It does not matter whether you have been in the right or the

wrong, it makes its decision on the basis of whether the matter is important enough in terms of legal principles. If you approached the High Court with frivolous matters, you would be castigated from one end of the country to the other. It shows how ignorant the honourable member is. He is talking about something of which he has no knowledge. His accusations are so far off the mark that they are not even plausible. I would certainly urge him to seek out some information about how the process of appeal to the High Court works.

I reiterate that the Land Rights Act is a most unjust act. An example of how unjust it is would be roads that have provided public access across pastoral land and to Aboriginal communities for many years. These can be claimed and declared to be non-public roads. The Land Rights Act can prevent Territorians from moving freely as they have for over a century. After complex legal deliberations in the courts, the High Court has determined that an act that was imposed on the people of the Territory from without precludes them from utilising a road that they have used for many years. That is an example of the unjust legislation that is imposed on us. It is an example of the sort of thing that this government will continue to appeal until we cannot go any further. It is unjust and unfair.

Another example is that it has been decided that the act allows government property, such as the research station at Kidman Springs, to be available for claim. The claim over that research station was granted and we have to pay rent for it. There is another example relating to this law that has been passed by people who are not affected by it. The people on whom it is imposed have no legislative rights in relation to it. The whole thing is absolutely ridiculous. It is something that would never occur anywhere else in the world, but it is occurring here. It is the sort of thing that led to the Boston Tea Party. The mentality of the colonial era whereby colonial governments imposed laws on people is still occurring here and now.

The only avenue whereby Territorians can maintain some meagre rights in this regard is by pursuing the processes of the courts. I will continue to do that and I will go outside and tell the community that I will continue to fight for its rights. I believe that, if there is anyone in the Legislative Assembly who does not think that way, they should not be here.

The member for Wanguri thinks it is funny. He will laugh on the other side of his face when his constituents find out what he thinks. How can anyone in this House say that it is fair that people who cannot have any impact on that law are the only ones who have to bow under it? It is wrong in principle. It is undemocratic and it stinks. We have a responsibility to fight until we control the laws that affect us. The community will make a decision in relation to those who do not think that way.

The toadies of the Canberra masters, who sit opposite and dance to the tune of the puppeteer from Canberra, are not Territorians. They are visiting colonists and they will be gone when their time in the Territory is finished. I live here, and my children were born here. I will die here and my grandchildren will die here. I will fight until I have the same democratic rights as other Australians. If it means we have to go to the High Court on behalf of all Territorians to right wrongs, we will do that.

To have members opposite suggest that this government should not be doing that is reprehensible. They cannot think of anything intelligent to say and therefore point the finger and accuse me of being mad. I would rather be accused of being mad, Mr Chairman, for fighting for my democratic

rights and for the future of my family than sit there and be the toady of some Canberra masters. That is not what people like Ron Withnall and Tiger Brennan were like. They and others fought for democratic rights for all Territorians. We have not achieved them all yet. If we roll over now and say that it does not matter any more, and that we should let other people make some of the laws for us, it will be a pretty sad day. I think that some of the comments that have been made here today have been very indicative of the sort of thought processes and the attitude that some of the members opposite have towards democracy in the Territory. They are pathetic.

I make it very clear that the information and the detail, which some members opposite have complained that they have not received, could have been made available if they had provided prior information on the type of questions they wanted to ask. The supply of such information has been the normal practice in this House in preparation for the budget debate. For some reason or other, they decided not to follow through with that process.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I apologise to the minister for not giving him warning of this question which relates to the $20 on-the-spot fine for breaking the 2 km law. Can he indicate how many unpaid $20 on-the-spot fines there are throughout the Territory and the cost involved in prosecuting to collect those outstanding fines? Is there any value in pursuing this aspect of the law?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I stand to be corrected on this. If an on-the-spot find is issued and is not paid within a certain time, I believe a service order is issued. If that is not carried out in a certain time, I believe a warrant for imprisonment is issued. I do not think a court process is involved, but I will confirm that.

Appropriation for division 55 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 32 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 30:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I have 2 questions for the Minister for Lands and Housing. First, last year's sale of assets brought in $405 000. In 1990-91, it is expected to bring in about $5.801m. Can the minister advise which assets are to be sold to raise this $5.801m? Can he confirm that the increase in property management from $1.135m to $2.543m is attributable to increased rental costs because of government offices being displaced from government-owned buildings, and that the displacement of those government offices will result in continuing increased rental costs and will erode the benefit of the assets sales in the medium term?

Secondly, what properties are held under title vested in or managed by the Northern Territory Land Corporation, and what are the details of the purchases or sales by that body during 1989-90?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the sale of vehicles and equipment in 1990-91 is expected to recoup $130 000. This is an annual operation which disposes of items which are being replaced or which are no longer needed. An additional $5.5m has been budgeted to be recovered from the sale of government-owned buildings during the year. The buildings identified to be offered for sale are Sturt House, which is owned by the NT Housing Commission, the Port Authority Building, owned by the authority, and the

Greatorex Building in Alice Springs, which is directly owned by the government.

These buildings are not to be sold in haste but through a properly designed sale process and, accordingly, the budgeted amount is less than their total estimated value because it is not anticipated that all the revenue will be received in this financial year. The sale of these buildings will not disadvantage the government in the medium term. In fact, the ability to use the capital which has been tied up will give the government far more flexibility to operate within the constraints imposed by the severe financial cutbacks, in real terms, which have been imposed by the Commonwealth since 1984-85. Part of the negotiations for the sale of the properties will be to achieve rental levels which extend this advantage.

The increase in property management has nothing to do with rental or accommodation. Rather it reflects a one-off payment to the Commonwealth Department of Administrative Services for the provision of the services of the Australian Valuation Office to act as the Office of the Valuer-General of the Northern Territory, and this one-off payment arises from a change in the accounting procedures whereby billing will occur monthly instead of yearly. In effect, the account for 1989-90 and 11 months of 1990-91 will be paid for this year, and this accounts for $1.298m of the increase. The remainder of the increase reflects the government's concern with the maintenance of vacant Crown Land, particularly fire control and the removal of rubbish. The amount budgeted for this was increased by $109 000 from $334 000 in 1989-90.

What was the second question?

Mr Lanhupuy: What properties are held under title vested in or managed by the Northern Territory Land Corporation?

Mr MANZIE: I know that that question is asked every year, but the response that I gave last year remains the same. The land corporation operates independently of government. It is not subject to control or direction by the minister. Its dealings are not secret, but information has to be obtained in the same way as for any other corporation, and that is by search at the Registrar-General's Office or by inquiry to the chairman. Whether the chairman decides to answer or not is up to him because neither he nor the corporation is under my direction. Anything the honourable member wishes to ask, he will need to include in a letter to the chairman of the corporation or he can conduct a search through the Companies Office.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, my question to the honourable minister stems from his earlier outburst on the right of individuals to be represented and heard. This arises from a deal that is occurring at the moment between the government and the council, on the subdivision of the Botanic Gardens. The power is held by the minister to determine whether or not that proposed subdivision will be placed on public display so that people of the Northern Territory are able to exercise the right to representation in relation to a decision that may profoundly affect them. It is their land. Will the minister guarantee that funds are available to ensure that details of this proposed subdivision will be placed on public display so that the people of the Northern Territory can make submissions to the Planning Authority expressing their concerns, and that it will not be a subdivision that is done behind closed doors purely between the council and the government?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I do not understand what the member for Wanguri is talking about. Possibly, he may be alluding to the transfer of

the Botanic Gardens to the Conservation Commission and the transfer of the Rapid Creek Water Gardens from the government across to the council. If that is what he is talking about, I cannot offer him any further information. If he can explain his question further, I may be able to provide some information.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, the Botanic Gardens are to be handed over to the Conservation Commission. Currently, the Botanic Gardens comprise one block of land. It is proposed that the area that is generally referred to as the amphitheatre, where performances are held on the stage, be subdivided and handed over in freehold title to the Darwin City Council so that, effectively, the single block on which the Botanic Gardens are located will be subdivided into 2 blocks. As minister responsible for planning, will he give a guarantee that the proposed subdivision will be exhibited publicly to allow the people to be involved in an open planning process, or will it be done behind closed doors? He has just explained that the reason why he goes to the High Court is to allow the people he represents to be involved in the judicial process.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, people in the Territory have the democratic ability to vote us in or out of office, and that is the big difference between the imposition of the Land Rights Act and democratic processes. It still has not got through his head that the people who made the Land Rights Act are people who are not affected by it and that, unfortunately, as voters, we do not have the ability to control what they do. The honourable member has no concept of the situation at all. I am glad that he was not around in the days when we were fighting for independence as a colony.

In relation to the Botanic Gardens, I will say it pretty slowly and maybe it will get through. At present, the council has both the Botanic Gardens and the amphitheatre. We will be coming to an arrangement whereby the council gives the Botanic Gardens to the Conservation Commission, which will operate them, as is apparently the norm for botanic gardens around Australia and the world. At the same time, the Rapid Creek Water Gardens ...

Mr Bailey: It has nothing to do with the water gardens.

Mr MANZIE: It is all part and parcel of the same arrangement. The water gardens will go from the government to the council.

The government does not wish to be involved with the amphitheatre which is operated by the council now, and it will continue to be operated by the council.

Mr Bailey: It is part of the Botanic Gardens.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the mind boggles. It will remain. There will be no change there. All the normal legal processes involved in that exchange will be followed. A fear was expressed in the media by the member for Wanguri that the council would subdivide the ampitheatre and build high-rise developments on the land. I think even his small mind knows that the council cannot make any changes to the status of the amphitheatre and the land that it is on, unless it undertakes procedures to change it through the planning process. It has to obtain permission from the minister responsible for local government if it wants to sell it or do anything with it. There is no problem about the status of the land changing in respect of its being for an ampitheatre.

Apart from that, the normal processes will be followed. Certainly, I will give a guarantee to the member for Wanguri, but we are not going to institute some form of Spanish Inquisition in order to transfer the Botanic Gardens to the Conservation Commission. I am sure that, if people have any problems with it, they will let us know. I find the suggestion that we should institute some form of a Spanish Inquisition or a Star Chamber inquest into how we effect transfer of the 2 facilities to be a little strange.

Mr Bailey: Hasn't the government a Planning Authority to put things on public display?

Mr MANZIE: But all the processes will be gone through. There will be no change in the status ...

Mr Bailey: They are not. You have a choice on whether the change is put on public display or not.

Mr MANZIE: The amphitheatre will continue as an amphitheatre and the remainder of the area will continue as a botanic garden. I think the member has delusions of grandeur or something. I do not know.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I speak on behalf of the member for Koolpinyah. She has given notice of a couple of questions to the honourable minister. The first relates to the Darwin Middle Arm peninsula, offensive and hazardous waste industries subdivision preliminary works stage 1. In the 1989-90 budget, the estimated cost was $1m and, in the 1990-91 budget, it is $535 000. Is this a balance left over from 1989-90 or is this a further $530 000 for the project?

The second question relates to housing administration. In view of the decrease in population and the slackening of demand for housing resulting in less administrative work, why is there an increase of $606 000 over last year in the budget for housing administration?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the short answer on the Middle Arm peninsula question is that the $535 000 is the balance of funds from the 1989-90 financial year.

Mr Collins: Some has been spent?

Mr MANZIE: That is right. It is the outstanding balance.

The increase of $606 000 for housing administration activities is caused by a number of factors. Firstly, the full-year effect of salary increases from November 1989 and the salary increase approved in June 1990 adds a further $220 000 to the activity funding in 1990-91. The devolution of some functions from corporate services to this activity, such as debt recovery, also adds to this activity in the order of $300 000 in salary and administration costs in 1990-91.

This is offset by a reduction in the corporate management activities so that, in effect, it is cost neutral. An increase of approximately $80 000 in the construction and redevelopment program is associated with special purpose Commonwealth moneys made available for a housing development program. The price increases in service costs under administrative expenses add a further $40 000 to the bill for 1990-91. An increase in the Aboriginal Housing Capital Works Program under the Housing Commission budget has required an increase in salaries and administrative costs associated

with the supervision of those projects. That increase is in the order of $60 000. Savings of about $100 000 brought about by efficiency measures are then offset against that total amount. That is the difference.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I have 2 further questions, and I believe that they have been forwarded to the honourable minister. How much money has his government allocated in relation to the land purchase for the Marrakai Dam, and why has no money been allocated for the purchase of large areas of land as opposed to the purchase of small areas?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the amount budgeted for land acquisition is $3.34m. The decrease reflects a smaller acquisition program in 1990-91. It reflects the reduced needs of government departments and authorities.

As far as the Marrakai Dam proposal is concerned, a number of properties will be affected. It is anticipated that funds will be depleted around or just after Christmas as most affected owners are keen to accept early cash settlements rather than land in exchange or deferred settlements. In actual fact, we shall acquire less land than we acquired last year. We are considering including the Glen Helen/Narwietooma project if we can finalise it, the Larapinta stage 2 buy-backs, some of the land excisions, the Koolpinyah/Lambells Lagoon horticultural areas, the Cullen Bay area, some areas in Palmerston, rural roads, Tennant Creek, Nathan River and some Commonwealth acquisitions. We have contingency funds for payments to claimants from various compulsory acquisitions by the Commonwealth prior to self-government in the Northern Territory. We have sufficient funds for any acquisitions which we expect to make, including those in the Marrakai area.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, at this stage, it is appropriate that I refer to a matter which I raised yesterday: the shedding of equity in housing markets, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs. I believe that this matter needs to be addressed by the minister, and I think that he understands what I mean. To refresh his memory, I believe that we ought to be provided with some figures about the extent to which there has been an increase which has kept pace with inflation in the value of various classes of housing around the Territory. Some places have fared better than others. I indicated a Tennant Creek example to the minister yesterday and I believe that some attention must be given to this matter, at least in terms of placing the facts before the Legislative Assembly. I have a serious concern, as I stated yesterday, that the way successive CLP governments have spent housing dollars in fact has exacerbated this process. Basically, I want the minister to give some details of his understanding in that regard today.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am being chastised because we have managed to keep housing prices down. That is pretty heavy stuff. The member for MacDonnell has been making noises along these lines for a number of months. I have not responded to date simply because what he is saying is very confused and appears to bear little resemblance to reality. It is almost impossible to understand what he is getting at. Of course, that is not an unusual occurrence.

Generally, I have taken comfort from the fact that his comments have never really been picked up in the media, but I am afraid that he said a few things on ABC radio this morning and therefore I will try to straighten him out on a few points. He said this morning that the Territory government has been irresponsible in its spending on housing since self-government and that Territory homeowners had lost equity in their homes as a result. He said:

'There is a difference between spending money responsibly and splashing it around to artificially inflate prices'. That is what he said.

Mr Bell: And that was what I meant.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the statement appears to be a logical impossibility. Even assuming it to be true, which it is not, how can increasing the price of housing decrease the equity of home buyers?

Mr Bell: How can ...

Mr MANZIE: That is what you said: 'There is a difference between spending money responsibly and splashing it around to artificially inflate prices'.

Mr Bell: Yes, I did say that.

Mr MANZIE: How can increasing the price of housing decrease the equity of home buyers? What happens is actually the reverse. If the value of your property increases but your mortgage does not, your equity in your home increases. It must do so, because your home is now worth more than you paid for it and, therefore, it is worth more than the loan which you took out to pay for it in the first place. The ratio of your home's value in relation to the money you owe on it has increased considerably in your favour. It is pretty simple.

Let us assume that the honourable member meant to say something other than what he actually said. Again, this is not unusual. I assume he meant that the Territory government's housing program since self-government has been so successful that it has resulted in decreased home prices rather than the inflation to which he referred. That argument is, I suppose, as flawed as the first one. Certainly, however, the Territory government has built a great many houses since self-government. The simple fact is that we had to. At the time of self-government, housing was in extremely short supply throughout the Territory. The waiting times for public housing were appalling and those fortunate people who owned private rental accommodation were able to demand and receive extravagant rents. The Territory government's housing program, of which members on the government side of the House are very proud, has since succeeded in reducing waiting times for public housing to the lowest in the country, generally below 18 months in major Territory centres.

Is the member for MacDonnell suggesting that we should not have undertaken that construction program? Is he suggesting that we should have allowed waiting times for public housing to be 4, 5, 6 or 7 years, as they are in the Labor states? Would he like to travel throughout the Territory, perhaps with a megaphone, telling Territorians that they do not deserve to have reasonable access to public housing? If he wants to do that, fine.

The Territory government's housing program is not in itself responsible for any decline in home prices or any shedding of equity. If the honourable member wants to do a little research ...

Mr Bell: What about the Tennant Creek situation? There are figures on that, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: If the honourable member will do a little research, he will discover that, during the period when housing construction was at its highest in the Territory - in the early 1980s - housing prices were stable

in real terms although they were increasing - that is, people were not losing money which they borrowed to buy them. Indeed, they paid their loans off and gained equity as values increased. The big problem in housing in the Territory, particularly in Darwin, began in the late 1980s.

The member for MacDonnell may be able to recall what happened at that time. Certainly, I can. The federal Labor government tore up the Memorandum of Understanding and began a series of very savage cuts to the Territory's funding. Capital works declined and growth declined. Further, we had the federal Labor government's interest rate policy, which drove interest rates on home mortgages through the roof. We finished up with a stagnating local economy, massive trauma for the construction industry, and enormous problems for the real estate sector. Home values declined in real terms, in some cases to below replacement cost. That was when locals began to lose equity in their homes - when their homes became worth less in real terms than the money they borrowed. The only way out of that problem is to make repayments at an accelerated rate, and higher interest rates have put that option out of the reach of many.

I want to make it very clear that that situation was not caused by the Territory government's housing policies or housing construction program. When we were at the height of activity in terms of building new houses, the situation was healthiest in terms of rising price levels. It was only when the federal Labor government decided to make the Territory the whipping boy for all the economic problems of the rest of the country, by hitting us twice as hard as any other place, that the problems started to occur. The member for MacDonnell should be honest and recognise those facts instead of trying to blame this government for what has occurred in housing. It has not occurred only here. It has occurred in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia ...

Mr Bell: No, it has not.

Mr MANZIE: You should do some research.

Mr Bell: I have.

Mr MANZIE: Well, you have not done it very well.

The new land schemes in Western Australia are a disaster because the value of the properties is decreasing. Equity has disappeared, and it has stopped all real estate activity there. Make some phone calls. It would not take you long. It is a disaster. The Territory government did not push interest rates through the roof. Maybe the honourable member wants to blame us for that. We did not slash federal funding to the Territory, disproportionately in comparison with the rest of the country. But the honourable member wants to blame us for that as well. We did not rip the guts out of the construction industry and other industry in the Territory and throughout the country. It certainly was not the Territory government which caused Territorians to lose equity in their homes. We did not agree with the Commonwealth's action in slashing $100m from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, money which would have been spent on housing for Territorians.

Mr Bell: Sit down, Daryl. When are you going to get on to Tennant Creek?

Mr MANZIE: You do not like it. I would like to hear your comments about how $100m for housing in the Territory will be slashed under the

CSHA. You ought to be ashamed that you purport to represent Labor when it does that sort of thing to Territorians and future Territorians. It is a disgrace, but we do not hear any protests from you. You say that the Territory government is responsible for people losing equity in their houses. I am proud of the fact that we provide the best opportunities in Australia for people to purchase houses.

Home loan repayments, as a percentage of family income, are much better here than in the states. In the March quarter, the Territory figure was 20%. It was 43% in New South Wales, 34% in Queensland, 26% in Tasmania and 32% in South Australia. I am proud of the fact that we have kept housing costs down so that people can still purchase homes. With the federal government's interest rate policy, it is a struggle.

Ordinary Australians are working their fingers to the bone just to keep a roof over their heads. Meanwhile, the federal Treasurer appears on television saying that we must have this policy in order to restrain demand. Ordinary men, women and children are suffering as a result of the interest rate policies of the world's greatest Treasurer. It is a disgrace. It is the first time in Australia's history that ordinary Australians are being denied the opportunity to dream of owning their own homes. On this side of politics, we will do everything in our power to ensure that Territorians have access to home ownership because we believe that it should be the right of all ordinary working Australians to own their own homes.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The policies of your mates have destroyed the dream of home ownership, and you are trying to tell us that the Territory government is somehow ruining it for Territorians. You stand condemned.

Mr BELL: The minister has chosen to ignore entirely what I said. He has spent the last 15 minutes delivering a meaningless diatribe. I will pick up one of his points before I refer to the questions which he did not answer. Successive CLP governments have been very smart at taking the credit when things are going well and at blaming the Commonwealth government when they are going badly. The minister said tonight that reductions in Commonwealth funding were responsible for the economic downturn in the Territory. All I have to say is that, if it was simply a reduction in Commonwealth funding that was responsible for that, the economic growth must have been fairly shallow to start with. I suggest that the minister look a little beyond the sort of self-congratulatory nonsense which he has poured forth for the last 15 minutes.

Mr Manzie: You do not like the truth.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the minister failed to respond to the concrete example which I gave. The example related to a house in Tennant Creek whose value decreased in dollar-of-the-day terms from $36 000 in 1985 to $31 000 in 1990. That is a very dramatic example of the problem which I am talking about.

Mr Manzie: A mine closed in Tennant Creek, didn't it? But it is our fault.

Mr BELL: Yes, absolutely. Since self-government, housing prices in Tennant Creek have gone up, and down again. That is because of a housing program which seduced people and which was based on idiot ideas about market

forces that do not apply in isolated places. People were seduced into bidding unrealistic prices for houses. Nevertheless, the minister has the gall to stand up here and say that his government is looking after the little people. What absolute nonsense!

Let me concentrate on the figures because that is all I need to concentrate on. Let us say that somebody bought this house in Tennant Creek for $36 000 in 1985, and that it was still worth $36 000 in 1990. The minister will probably accept that the person will have lost money in real terms. Whatever equity the person has in the house will still be the same equity 5 years later. In fact, the opportunity cost of that money means that its value has decreased dramatically. I presume that this simple lesson in economics is understood by the minister because the fact is that home owners elsewhere in this country have been able to maintain equity in real terms. That has not happened here. What are the ballpark figures in Darwin? Let us say that a Darwin house was worth $60 000 in 1980. The same house today might be worth $80 000 or, to be generous, $90 000. That is a 50% increase in 10 years. It is nowhere near inflation. Whatever equity people had in 1980 has not been protected. That is simple arithmetic.

Mr Manzie: It is our fault. Interest rates. Our fault.

Mr BELL: Absolutely! I appreciate that, in spite of my urging him to do so, the minister has never taken the trouble to look into the effect of housing schemes in the Territory. He has not bothered to look into the fact that houses that were worth $35 000 in 1978 went up by $10 000 overnight because of the housing scheme that was made available on self-government. People were quite happy when prices were rising quickly. If you bought prior to 1978 and sold in the mid-1980s, you did wonderfully well. However, if you kept your house or bought later than that, you have done surprisingly badly. As a home owner, that gives me no joy. The fact is that these people, who stand in here and boast of having spent $1500m on housing in the 12 years since self-government, do not bother to look at the fine print. They do not bother to see where that money has been spent or to consider what impact it has had. Their record is not particularly good.

I have only a couple of minutes left. I want to reiterate a question on behalf of my colleague who has run out of time. It concerns the Planning Authority's decision in respect of the public display of a subdivision application to divide the Botanic Gardens into 2 separate blocks. I want the minister to give me a simple yes or no answer. Will he direct the Planning Authority to display the application to subdivide the Botanic Gardens and the amphitheatre so that the public is able to submit comments?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it must really hurt the members opposite.

Mr Bell: Yes, particularly when you cannot answer a question directly.

Mr MANZIE: It must hurt them when people of the opposite political ilk, with a different philosophy to their own, have managed to create a situation in which Territorians have the best access to home ownership in the country, the most affordable home payment schemes anywhere in the country, and can still dream about owning a home. That must really gall them.

The member for MacDonnell draws a very long bow when he accuses us of being responsible for all the ills of the housing industry. I can remember speaking in this Assembly a few years ago and describing what would happen. I remember saying that interest rates would reach 16% or 17% under the

policies introduced by the federal government. At that stage, interest rates were 10% or 11%. The member for MacDonnell pooh-poohed my remarks, saying that they were ridiculous and that the world's greatest Treasurer would have us all living in a land of milk and honey. He now turns around and he says that it is all our fault. I will say once again that members on this side of the House are proud that, in a time of great difficulty, we have created a situation in which ordinary Territorians can still dream about and actually take steps toward owning their own homes. There are not many places in Australia where that can happen. When I came to the Territory, it was almost impossible for the average Territorian to think about buying his own house. Costs were astronomical and houses were simply not available.

I cannot understand what members opposite are getting at in relation to the Botanic Gardens. At present, the Darwin City Council has the Botanic Gardens and the Amphitheatre. The Botanic Gardens will go to the Conservation Commission and the Amphitheatre will stay with the council. I will give an undertaking that all the necessary legal processes involved in that transfer, as far as it relates to me or my department, will be undertaken. I will not be interfering in any way or directing anyone to act in a manner contrary to those processes. I do not understand what the problem is. The member for Wanguri is trying to drum up a story and create a headline by saying that the Amphitheatre will be destroyed for the sake of high-rise development. That cannot happen unless the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government approves it.

Mr Bailey: Someone wants to build a hotel on Gardens Hill.

Mr MANZIE: This is one of the fellows who used to say that we were going to build a hotel on the golf course. Of course, there has been never been any suggestion of building a hotel on the golf course.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Wanguri picks up an issue and just goes on and on. He has never had it right yet. People are starting to ask when this guy is going to have a win, when he will get one right. I hope that he does because he is well behind at the moment.

Mr Bailey: I must be getting you riled when all you can do is make personal attacks.

Mr Bell: You still haven't talked about Tennant Creek, have you?

Mr MANZIE: If reasonable arguments were put, I suppose the government would have to wear responsibility for the copper running out at Peko, the mine closing and people leaving. However, until someone can sheet home that responsibility to the Territory government, I remain totally unimpressed. Of course, the member for MacDonnell does not mention the fact that the land claim around Tennant Creek means that there is no chance of expansion. Nor does he mention problems in respect of the Tennant Creek water supply.

Mr Bell: That is codswallop, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: Last of all, there is the process whereby the federal minister, contrary to the suggestions of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner and contrary to the suggestions of Mr Justice Toohey, handed over land that had water controls on it. It is absurd of this man to say we are responsible for a fall in house prices in Tennant Creek.

Mr Bell: You are not interested in doing much about it, are you?

Mr MANZIE: We tried. We went to the High Court.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Appropriation for division 30 agreed to.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I move that the committee report progress. It is 9.45 pm and we have not had dinner.

Motion negatived.

Appropriation for division 86:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I will not rehearse the argument that we have had already, where basically the minister has refused to come to terms with reality. I point out that, in respect of that particular case, the Housing Commission's programs are in desperate need of review, but I will not discuss it any further. There is one further issue I do want to raise, and that relates to the vacancy periods with Housing Commission accommodation. I appreciate that the minister will not be able to answer this question off the top of his head, and I would be quite happy for him to take it on notice and to provide the information to myself or to the Assembly at some later date.

The opposition has received representations from would-be Housing Commission tenants who have been concerned about the length of time that apparently vacant Housing Commission accommodation remains vacant, and I would like the minister to answer a couple of questions in that regard. I would like him to advise the Assembly what the average period is between tenancies in Housing Commission accommodation, whether it varies from area to area, where there may be greater and lesser demand for Housing Commission accommodation, and whether there is some average maintenance period. In addition, it would be of value if we could be informed about maintenance costs generally and the extent to which maintenance costs are covered by rentals recovered, and the ratio of rentals recovered to the value of housing stock held by the commission.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, off the top of my head, I have had similar representations made to me in my own electorate when people see houses that are vacant for a while. Inquiries have revealed that a number of them are not actually owned by the commission. Either they are owned privately or they are owned by federal government departments. I have been advised, and again I am talking off the top of my head, that the average period of time, in Darwin anyway, that houses are vacant is around the 3-week mark. That allows for cleaning and things like that. Of course, if the houses are damaged, further time is required to allow the contractor to carry out repairs. If a tenant leaves a place and there is a $500 damage bill, and he comes back 6 months later and wants a new place, he cannot take one up until such time as he has paid off the money that is owed.

Normal maintenance costs are built into the rental processes. The total cost of maintaining the stock, the maintenance and painting programs etc are taken into the overall cost of the stock and that is divided by the number of units and the rentals are determined. The Housing Commission is supposed to run a neutral process, but that can vary when there are problems with tenants.

The other situation in which houses can remain vacant for a longer period is when they enter the cycle for a major maintenance program. A number of houses in the older suburbs are undergoing that process. They are being let in groups for contracts for renovation. They may remain vacant for longer periods because they may be waiting for a certain number to become vacant. I will obtain the actual figures from the department and provide them to the honourable member.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, a question has been raised with the minister from my office previously and I would like to obtain a response in respect of some of the criteria according to which allocation to specific areas for Housing Commission houses is made. At the moment, I am aware that, for people who specifically need close access to the hospital, priority is given to trying to locate them in Tiwi. Within my electoral boundaries, I have both the Tiwi and the Wagaman schools which, at the moment, are quite low on student numbers.

We made a representation both to his department and to the Minister for Education suggesting that, in specific suburbs that have declining numbers within their primary schools, there may be some benefit to be obtained for the community generally by looking at locating families with children within those suburbs so as not to force a situation whereby some of those schools are ceasing to be viable. I am suggesting to the minister that he may like to consider that suggestion if it will help balance student numbers between some schools that are very large and others that are small. Placing people who need to be close to the hospital in the Tiwi suburb may even be contributing to the decrease in the number of students at that primary school.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, with regard to allocation, there are priorities for certain circumstances. Medical certificates give people certain priorities ...

Mr Bailey: What priorities enable people to move quickly on the list?

Mr MANZIE: I know what you are saying, but the way the list is managed is something that I keep a million miles away from. All primary schools in Darwin, except Malak, have declining populations. Malak Primary School is growing quickly as a result of stability in the population. Some of the older suburbs are having problems. I believe that Rapid Creek, Nightcliff, Alawa, Jingili and Wagaman have shrinking numbers of children of primary school age from pre-school upwards. Further out, the opposite is the case.

I would not wish to look at a process that would interfere with the normal process of delivering accommodation through the Housing Commission. The Housing Commission has a list system. Priorities are not something that are dished out freely to people to enable them to obtain a specific site allocation. Many people want to live in Darwin, and they are told that there will be a long wait for that accommodation but that, if they want to be placed quickly, they will be located in Palmerston.

I know what the honourable member is saying. I am willing to see if it is possible to do something that would not interfere with the normal prioritising of people on the list, but I certainly cannot guarantee anything. I will undertake an exercise to see whether it can make any difference in terms of balancing the distribution of age groups etc in the community. I am willing to have a look at the suggestion and report back to the Assembly.

Appropriation for division 86 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 37:

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, this question has been tabled already, and I am delivering it on behalf of my colleague who is just arriving. There has been an overall cut of $1.58m in the appropriation for the Northern Territory University. At the same time, staff numbers have increased by 39 and salaries by $0.27m. Cuts to academic support, student services, facilities and management are significant. What impact will these cuts have on teaching and research for academics? What services will students have to do without? Do the reductions in facilities, management, and repairs and maintenance mean that valuable assets will be left to deteriorate? I believe the minister has received a copy of the questions.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I thank the opposition spokesman for education for providing me with a copy of some of these questions. I received them only late this morning. In relation to the university, first of all I need to point out that we have a unique situation in the Northern Territory in relation to the funding of our university. I do not think I need to remind honourable members about the proposal whereby the Northern Territory University is jointly funded by the Commonwealth government and the Northern Territory government. This does not happen in any other area in Australia and, as I have commented on many occasions, we will continue to pursue the federal government for funding along the lines that is provided to other universities.

The contribution by the Northern Territory government to higher education is to decline annually and, in large part, will be compensated for by an increase in the Commonwealth funding. I need to point out that the university has to be seen to be, and must operate as, an autonomous body. That is one of the issues that has been of continual concern to the university and, of course, the Northern Territory government would always argue that the dollars that we are putting into the university are indeed Northern Territory taxpayers' dollars. We are the ones who are responsible and we should have a part in ensuring that those dollars are being used in the manner that we want them to be used. The university has agreed to the proposals that we have put forward to phase out funding over this period of time and, as I mentioned in the Assembly yesterday, the recurrent funding aspect will phase out by the financial year 1996-97.

When we talk about the dollars and how those dollars are to be spent, it is up to the university to make those decisions. The Northern Territory government is not involved in that. As a result of this budget, the university has decided to reduce funding predominately in the non-teaching area. For example, the University Council has decided to reduce the following items, which the 1990-91 budget will impact on: capital equipment - $500 000; utility costs, including repairs and maintenance - $350 000; minor new works - $50 000; and salary savings - $660 000. I emphasise that it was the university's decision to do that. The university has accepted the present basis of funding and it is planning accordingly.

It was a major concern - and I covered this yesterday - but, in response to the opposition spokesman's point, I say to him once again that it has been difficult for the university to plan where it is going in the future, because it works on a calendar year and we work on the financial year. We acknowledge that that constitutes a problem for the university in setting the targets on which to spend its dollars. That situation has been

adjusted this year. As I said, we have given the university an indication of how the dollars will be phased out.

The first question was about the impact these cuts will have on teaching, and research for academics. The impact will be marginal. The main impact will be on the non-teaching costs. However, there will be some pressure on the teaching effort as the present university approach is to fund the salary needs of the faculties at 97% of their previous funding level. The difference accounts for recruitment lags, and the ability to service some areas through the use of part-time instead of tenured staff. As far as recruitment is concerned, they were able to push this out a little.

The second question was what services the students will do without. This budget should not alter the delivery of services directed to the students. That needs to be made clear. The third question was whether the reduction in facilities, management and repairs and maintenance means that valuable assets will be left to deteriorate. There is concern about this. It is a difficult area to address. The university has set up a group to examine this matter. Over all, the university accepts the funding levels detailed in this budget, and it is continuing with a process to distribute resources more equitably.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, is the honourable minister saying that the Northern Territory University actually asked for this cut to be applied to its budget? If so, it would certainly be an institution which rises in my estimation. However, I find that rather amazing. He might like to clarify that.

The point he made about the calendar year versus the financial year is true. Members on this side of the House are looking to 3-year budgets for various institutions as a means of allowing people to know better what their allocations will be over a longer period. I would suggest to the honourable minister that something of that nature would be of assistance, particularly in a case such as this. If the honourable minister has a look at the federal budget papers, he will note that they refer to a number of years ahead and provide indicative figures on which various bodies can operate.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the university has acknowledged that it is required to tighten its belt as is everyone else. It did not ask for the cuts. As I said, it has accepted that the situation in the Territory is unique, and the member for Stuart is aware of that. We would prefer the university to be on a similar funding base to other universities throughout Australia. I hope that the honourable members opposite will assist us in trying to gain the funding that should be provided to the university here. It is important that we have a university that is able to operate as other universities operate. We will continue to pursue this matter with the federal government. As far as our dollars are concerned, the university acknowledges the role of this government and what we have done to achieve the university. It has accepted the funding processes that have been placed on it. It has agreed with the proposed funding methods and the phasing out of funding over a period so that, by the 1996-97 year, no more recurrent funding from the Territory will be going to the university.

Appropriation for division 37 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 35:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, despite the apparent increase to education, the government's commitment is decreasing in real terms, taking into account

Commonwealth increases. I ask the minister why that is the case. What assumptions has the minister made in the budget about increasing the retention rate to Year 12, and what allowances have been made for these? What allowance has been made for the possible introduction of the national benchmark salary for teachers?

Has information from the government's much-publicised personnel review of Aboriginal education been used in deciding on cuts to remote area schools and assistance in missions schools? What information is contained in that review and what implications does this have for the remote area package currently under negotiation? What is the break-up of expenditure on Aboriginal education for 1989-90 and 1990-91, and will the minister provide details to support his assertion that there has been no cut in real terms?

There is one other question that perhaps the minister would like to take on notice and to provide me with details at a later stage. It relates to the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. What staff costs are involved in that program, how much PTI money is involved, and what student numbers are involved?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, in addressing the first question, the government commitment as such has not decreased. That is clearly established by the fact that we have been able to maintain the formulas. As I mentioned yesterday, the gratifying aspect of this year's budget is that, through careful and judicial management of funds available, we have been able to maintain all existing key educational programs - for example, staff development and formula staffing in schools - and to protect the education system from major funding cuts. I want to make it clear that the government's commitment has been maintained as far as that is concerned.

To maintain programs of that nature does not necessarily mean that more dollars are required to be spent. That is generally acknowledged in the award restructuring process where the review of productivity has enabled us to look after the interests of teachers and, at the same time, to maintain the good programs that we have in place. I emphasise that the government has not reduced its commitment. We are still able to maintain our good programs with the dollars that have been provided. If members look at the services provided in relation to staffing and facilities, they will find that we do indeed stand up very well.

The second question related to assumptions in the budget about increasing retention rates to Year 12 and the allowances that have been made for them. As far as staffing is concerned, all of that is provided for in a normal formula process. As in previous years, the allocation in the 1990-91 budget, to take account of the increase in retention rates, is based on the demographer's projections of the number of students who will remain at school. The allocation takes account also of a staffing formula which allows for the equitable distribution of staff across all schools in the Territory, with extra staff for small schools to enable them to offer a wide range of courses to encourage students to remain at school.

The matter of student retention rates at the Year 12 level has been raised by the opposition in the Legislative Assembly and elsewhere before. I would like to add some further information to indicate exactly what the government is doing to increase retention rates. A misleading inference has been drawn that there was a decline in the retention rates to Year 12 in 1989 which, in some way, was attributable to funding. There have been no cuts in formula staffing or school-based funding in 1988, 1989 or 1990. In fact, in this period, school-based funding has increased and the formula for

small schools has been enhanced following work done by the Small Secondary Schools Working Party.

At the last sittings, the fluctuation in retention rates from 45% in 1988 to 42.7% in 1989 was claimed by the opposition to be a significant variation. The source of these figures is page 52 of the 1989 Australian Bureau of Statistics publication 'Schools Australia 1989'. It is a pity members of the opposition did not look at the other information that was provided in that document. At page 52, table 13 shows the dramatic increase from 24.4% retention in 1984 to 42.7% in 1989. Honourable members would be interested to note also that the figure at self-government was 11%. When the 1990 figures are added, it is clear that a slight dip occurred in 1989 because the retention figures for 1990 have risen to 47%. In other words, the clear overall trend in retention is upward.

The next question asked what allocations have been made for the possible introduction of national benchmark salaries for teachers. The current departmental budget does not include funds for a national benchmark or for national wage increases because the quantum is not known in advance. The awards are made by independent commissions. When awards are made, the government provides the funds through the normal budget review process from Treasury's Conditions of Service Reserve Program. The same would apply if additional students arrived unexpectedly. Formula staffing is provided and the cost is covered in the budget review processes. The government has agreed to pay the $37 200, the current agreed benchmark salary of the Conference of Government School Employers, as part 1 of the 2-stage offer. Stage 2 is dependent on the outcome of current negotiations and may involve a determination of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

I must say that a great deal of goodwill has gone into that exercise. Over a period of time, teachers have been receiving increases in their salaries. We have worked well with the Teachers Federation and the negotiations are continuing. We are reaching a point where I believe we will arrive at a satisfactory solution which will see teachers in a very good light in the Northern Territory.

In relation to the review of Aboriginal education, I want to make it very clear that this is not a government review. It is my review and it has been carried out over a long period. I hope to be able to table that review during the course of these sittings.

Mr Ede: Just before you resign as minister or just after?

Mr HARRIS: You will get a great kick out of this review, I can assure you of that. In answer to the specific questions that have been raised, the review has only just been completed and it was not taken into account during budget deliberations. That needs to be made clear. I hope to table the report during the course of these sittings. The implications of the review will depend on the overall response to it. We will have to wait with interest to see exactly what that response is.

The reduction in funding for remote schools results from non-recurrent expenditure in 1989-90. Examples are: painting, repairs and maintenance at Shepherdson College - $410 000; repairs at Maningrida - $226 000; repairs at Numbulwar - $110 000; and vehicles for new outstations - $376 000. It needs to be made very clear that there has been no reduction in services being provided to remote area schools.

The reduction in funds to mission schools results from non-recurrent expenditures in 1989-90 on capital works projects such as the administration block at Santa Teresa, and an elevated classroom block at St Francis Xavier School, Daly River. These one-off expenditures have been partially offset by providing additional funds to mission schools to cover the employer's 3% superannuation contribution, and funds for additional staff.

The other question asked for the break-up of expenditure on Aboriginal education for 1989-90 and for 1990-91, and details for my assertion that there has been no cuts in real terms. The proportion of the education budget spent on Aboriginal education comprises about 34% of the total budget. This may fluctuate minimally each year as a result of periodic variations, such as the timing of major maintenance to facilities. Aboriginal education is not identified separately within the department's financial accounts, and precise dollar amounts cannot be provided without a thorough and detailed analysis.

Mr Chairman, perhaps I could ask the opposition to comment in relation to the Commonwealth's new index of disadvantage which uses a combination of factors that ensures that Aboriginal Territorians are significantly excluded. If you recall, I sought the assistance of members of the opposition on this matter during the last sittings, though obviously to no avail. Under the new index, Tasmania doubles its funding whilst the Northern Territory gets a cut in funding in real terms. It is a pity that, instead of knocking the government in many respects, the opposition spokesman does not direct his energies on behalf of Territorians and try to address the important needs of Aboriginal students. I know he will be aware that Senator Collins has taken up this particular issue. It is something that I believe the honourable member should take up. It is very important that we ensure that we are being treated fairly as far as our isolated communities are concerned.

The honourable member asked a question in relation to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has a full-time executive officer, a full-time isolated communities officer, plus several part-time staff, the NT Awards Committee secretary, and field officers for Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. The salaries and part-time costs are in the order of $125 000. The scheme is supported by a friends' committee which raises funds through voluntary effort. It is also in receipt of grants for training and community service activities from various Commonwealth funding agencies, mainly for work in Aboriginal communities. Approximately 1000-plus candidates have moved through the scheme over the years and therefore it has been quite effective.

Mr Ede: How many years has it been going? It is about 10 years now, isn't it?

Mr HARRIS: Yes. It is approximately 10 years.

A most noteworthy feature of its work in remote Aboriginal communities is that more Aboriginal people have received awards in the Northern Territory than in the rest of Australia combined. The scheme is active at Bathurst and Melville Islands, Lajamanu, Barunga, Maningrida and Umbakumba to name just a few places. It is interesting to note that well over 90% of the Aboriginal candidates are now successfully in paid employment, and I think that spells out very clearly the worth of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. It is a scheme which we are continuing to support.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in relation to the apparent increase in funding in education and its actual decrease in real terms, one of the measures that can be taken of a government's commitment to education is to look at the proportion of its budget that it spends on education. From recollection, in the Northern Territory, we are far below the national average. In fact, I think we are the lowest or the second lowest in terms of the percentage of our budget that we devote to education, and that has been of concern to me.

Generally, when I have asked this question before, the honourable minister has said that we pay so much per student, and has contrasted that with so much per student in the states to show that actually we spend more per student than is the case elsewhere. That is understandable given the dispersed nature of our student population and the isolation etc, but I believe that those aspects are taken up by the Grants Commission as part of its deliberations on the funding which is provided locally to the Northern Territory. In fact, that should not impact on it because that same formula is applied to all the states and the Territory when the decision is taken on the amount of money that the Grants Commission will incorporate as a national amount into the total grant that is applied to the Territory. One would have thought that, if the same formula is being applied nationwide, each state that has a component of a grant resulting from the Grants Commission having applied that formula then applies its money. If, in spite of the amount of money that the states receive, which is far less than ourselves in that regard, they are able to maintain a far higher percentage of total budget spent on education, on the face of it at least, that would indicate that they have a higher commitment to education than we have. That is something that I would like the honourable minister to comment on.

The next question concerns retention rates to Year 12. The honourable minister stated that a demographic analysis had been done and that the various amounts had been allocated on that basis. I ask him what retention rate was arrived at by those demographers for the ensuing year?

In regard to the break-up of expenditure on Aboriginal education, in view of his statement about the costs, I was surprised by his statement that the expenditure on Aboriginal education was 34% of his budget. I know that sounds high initially, but I would have thought it was higher and I am rather surprised. My understanding was that 34% of our student population was Aboriginal, which would be expected, given the nature of the population pyramids between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians and the substantially higher percentage of school-age Aboriginal people in the total population than school-age non-Aboriginal people. If, in fact, 34% of the budget does relate in the same way to their demographic percentages in the school population, that would indicate that no additional loading is placed on Aboriginal education to take account of those factors that I mentioned, such as dispersal, isolation and the high cost of providing education in remote areas. I find that surprising, and I think the honourable minister might like to clarify that to some extent.

The other point was related to the index of disadvantage. At different times in the past, I have obtained information from the minister on this and I have forwarded it on. I was told that a new index has been developed or is in the process of being developed. I do not have details on that, and I ask the honourable minister if he could provide me with the departmental summary, how it works and the basis for comparison that he is working on so that I can take that up with the federal minister. Whilst this was not an actual commitment, I understood that some of the earlier problems were to be taken up. If that is not the case, I would like a written brief.

I do not expect the minister to be able to give me all the details now, but a written brief on this situation - how it is applied in the Northern Territory and how it is applied nationwide - would assist me to mount my case more effectively than I have in the past because I have been unable to obtain the improvement that we had hoped for. I know that this is something that is very dear to the heart of the member for MacDonnell. He has been pounding my door down on account of it.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, first of all, may I ask the member for Stuart to indicate where he is getting his figures from because we had a problem in identifying the source. He raised several issues during the course of the last sittings, and I was happy to try to address the concerns that he raised. If he would indicate that to me at some time, that would be of assistance.

Mr Ede: The ABS series.

Mr HARRIS: Yes, but there is a little confusion and I would like to know the source of the information.

Mr Ede: From recollection, it is an ABS series that provides the break-up of government funding of different areas.

Mr HARRIS: The Northern Territory per capita funding is the highest in Australia. These figures were provided at the last sittings.

Mr Ede: Yes, I conceded that.

Mr HARRIS: I have said that.

Mr Ede: It is the proportion of budget.

Mr HARRIS: We have checked those allegations about proportional levels of funding with the ABS both here and in Canberra and we cannot find the source. That is what I am saying. We need to come to grips with that before I can answer the question in a manner that will be satisfactory to the honourable member.

Mr Ede: Your predecessor was actually going to eat his hat over it when he was proved wrong on this point.

Mr HARRIS: As far as the percentage of the budget that goes into education is concerned, I am not really worried that it is lower than in the states. In the Northern Territory, we are interested in ensuring that our system is as good as if not better than the systems in the states. As is clearly indicated, in the Territory we have been able to maintain the same high level of formulas and facilities as any state has. We will continue in that direction, and that does not necessarily mean that x% of the budget must be provided simply because the states provide that percentage of money from their budgets towards education. We are able to provide the best, and we will continue to do that.

Mr Chairman, in relation to the support that we are getting on the index of disadvantaged schools, the honourable member may have written to me some time ago. Did you?

Mr Ede: Yes.

Mr HARRIS: I am very pleased to hear that we have the support of the members opposite because it is an issue that we have to address. I will be happy to provide that information to the honourable member.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I have some brief questions for the minister and I accept that he may not be able to answer some of them at the moment. The first concerns the outdoor education facilities in relation to Batchelor and/or Lake Bennett. I recall that, at the end of last year, concern was expressed over exactly what was happening between those 2 locations. Can the honourable minister clarify what is happening, and what funding implications there are for next year?

Mr Harris: At Batchelor College?

Mr BAILEY: No. The outdoor education facility at Batchelor and Lake Bennett. Can he explain what is happening with the outdoor program in relation to those 2 areas.

At the end of last year, concerns were voiced over the status of the Student Driver Education Program. I wonder if the honourable minister can clarify exactly where we stand now with the Student Driver Education Program and what its future is. I acknowledge that it is uncertain whether student driver education is actually under this division or the next, which relates to TAFE and higher education. If I am addressing the wrong division, the minister can refer to it later.

The third question concerns the movement of student services personnel into Tiwi Primary School recently. I ask him to clarify whether that is an efficient use of resources through housing some of those personnel in Tiwi Primary School or whether actually it is a move to take over Tiwi Primary School as an educational facility rather than as a school? I hope that his answer may allay some fears in the community that moves are under way to remove students from the school.

Another concern which has been raised with the opposition relates to scholarships for students entering tertiary study. People say that scholarships are not available to students studying outside the Northern Territory even when they are undertaking courses which are not available in the Territory. I would like the minister to clarify that situation because I have had varying responses from his department.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, student driver education has been split into 2 sections, 1 operating through secondary schools and the other through the Northern Territory Open College, because these services are also required in the bush. Responsibility for the management of school programs is to be devolved to senior secondary colleges, while the Northern Territory Open College will be responsible for the remote areas. Private providers will be used where possible, as is happening now. Major emphasis will be placed on road safety awareness at both primary and secondary levels. I believe that it is very important at primary levels. Staff in-servicing will be handled by the department's Professional Development In-servicing Program. That is how the Student Driver Education Program will operate in the future. It should be noted that there has been a decline in the number of students enrolled in Student Driver Education Programs over a period even though some programs, such as the holiday programs, operate very well. It is very important that we continue to emphasise student driver education, and the government will be ensuring that that happens. I indicate too that the Road Safety Council will be fully informed and involved in that process.

The Lake Bennett situation remains the same. Secondary schools will be using Lake Bennett whilst the primary sector will be at Batchelor. It is hoped that, when the entire Batchelor Complex is completed, including the area school, the operation of the facilities there will be considered again. However, for the time being, the existing situation will continue.

The honourable member was correct about the Tiwi Primary School. The decision relates to the efficient use of resources and not to what he termed a 'take-over'. I make that very clear. If any other matter needs to be clarified, I am happy to provide information to the honourable member.

Mr Bailey: The scholarships?

Mr HARRIS: I will have to report back later on that matter.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to add weight to the request for information about the Disadvantaged Schools Program which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to. I thank the minister for undertaking to provide a written brief in that regard. However, I wish to place on record my consternation at finding that a school which was attended by 2 of my 3 children is on the disadvantaged schools list. In 16 years in the Territory, my children have attended 4 schools. The first was the Bradshaw Primary School. That was in 1974, and it was terrific.

Mr Coulter: Is this what you did on your holidays? Are you telling us your life story or speaking to the content of the Appropriation Bill?

Mr BELL: I think my intention will become obvious if the Deputy Chief Minister will bear with me.

Mr Coulter: I was enjoying the story.

Mr BELL: In 1975, my children were compulsorily enrolled at Areyonga School. In 1981-82, they attended Traeger Park Primary School and, from 1983 to whenever they left primary school, they went to Ross Park Primary School. I must say that, by and large, we were very happy with the education our children received in those Territory primary schools. Obviously, they were different types of schools. I worked in the school which they attended at Areyonga and, for a time, my wife worked there as well. It was an interesting experience for the children.

Traeger Park School is a different kind of school. It has a high enrolment of both town Aboriginal children and bush Aboriginal children, many of whom do not speak English as their first language. It has characteristics which one would not associate with a mainstream primary school like Ross Park, where the background of the students and the educational program fairly closely resemble that of 10 000 other primary schools around the country. I have referred to this matter at some length because I was very surprised to find Ross Park Primary School included on the list of disadvantaged schools in the Northern Territory. I am entirely unable to understand why. I can think of any number of other schools that are much more dramatically disadvantaged.

All Aboriginal schools in my electorate are dramatically more disadvantaged. The students do not speak English as a first language, there is a high turnover of teachers, and they are physically much more isolated than any school in Alice Springs. I find it very difficult to understand what criteria might apply in such a way as to confer disadvantaged status on

Ross Park Primary School. Its students speak English as a first language. It has a very stable teacher population.

Mr Harris: It is a tough neighbourhood.

Mr BELL: We may have lowered property values by moving in a couple of blocks away, but I fail to see how a school like that can possibly be regarded as having disadvantaged status. I will look forward to receiving a written brief from the minister in that regard.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am not trying to keep information from the honourable member opposite. In fact, I can refer him to a question which I answered on 16 August in relation to this issue. In terms of distance from centres of population, many schools in the Northern Territory are disadvantaged, and there is no question about that. In order to allow schools to have a bite of the cherry, we have to rotate them. That is where the problem lies. We are considering fighting this issue with the federal government in order to arrive at acceptable formulas which give our disadvantaged schools the dollars that they require. I am trying to gather support in my efforts to persuade the federal government to look at this issue.

I will provide honourable members opposite with a further briefing which was given to Senator Collins and which contains all the details of this issue. I hope that they will take the matter up. In fact, most of our schools are disadvantaged and, when some schools in Victoria are receiving 4 times as much money, it is just not on.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for that explanation, and I would like him to confirm something that he said. My understanding is that, in order to allocate funds for disadvantaged schools, the department has a system of rotating the schools. Is that what the minister said?

Mr Harris: Schools apply for disadvantaged status. There is a system according to which they are moved so that all schools have opportunities to be part of that program.

Mr TUXWORTH: Over a period of time, you rotate the different schools and give them an opportunity to qualify for disadvantaged status. Is that right?

Mr Harris: That is right.

Mr TUXWORTH: What criteria do you use to give various schools a turn?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will provide full information to honourable members so that they have full details of how that program works.

Appropriation for division 35 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 36:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the staff increases in the TAFE system were substantial. Has a cost assessment been made of the duplication involved in operating 2 TAFE systems in the Northern Territory? I refer particularly to the town of Katherine where the TAFE college operates a certain number of courses, as does the Open College in town. In some places, there is more than duplication with ITAFE, the Open College and TAFE colleges.

The other point is that the budget shows a decrease in library and information services. I ask the honourable minister what specific services will be reduced. It was not long ago that there was a substantial outcry about the library services and the way that librarians felt that they were being badly done by. We see now that there is to be a decrease. I ask the minister to justify that decrease and to advise what services will be affected.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, although members of this Assembly would be aware of the significant increases in demand for training following from award restructuring, there have not been substantive increases in staff within the TAFE system. The apparent staff increases reflected in the budget papers are the result of the transfer of the 2 units from the Schools Division to TAFE. I touched on these yesterday. Unfortunately, the honourable member was not here. These are the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School, which has been amalgamated with the Northern Territory Open College, and the Educational Resources Unit which also provides publication services for the Distance Education School.

The purpose of these transfers is to save administrative costs by having one service delivery point for distance education services for both secondary and TAFE students. In the Territory context, given the population and the number of remote areas needing to be serviced, it would be inefficient and very expensive in the long term to try to provide a separate delivery system for secondary and TAFE distance education.

With respect to the second question, there are not 2 TAFE systems in the Northern Territory. There is one. One of the TAFE institutions, the Institute of TAFE in Darwin, is a part of the Northern Territory University for very sound economic reasons in terms of the size of the university itself and also for the important educational purpose of facilitating the articulation of courses and credits from the TAFE sector through to the higher education sector. Like the other TAFE colleges, however, it is part of the government's funded network of TAFE service providers which are coordinated through the Northern Territory Technical and Further Education Advisory Council.

It is government policy that, as far as possible, the operational responsibility for the TAFE system be developed to the institution level where local and regional input to training issues can be most effective. The central policy and support functions are maintained within the Department of Education by a small group. Interstate comparisons would indicate that the resources reserved for central and system level are very small indeed. The majority of TAFE resources are with the institutions where they can have most effect in terms of education and training programs. The cost of the TAFE system is very much a concern both locally and nationally. That particular matter will be looked at. The TAFE Advisory Council has initiated a review of TAFE costs within the Territory, by type of course and by location, to provide a better database for future resource allocations. Costs are also a concern to the Northern Territory University which is currently involved in a broadly-based management review which concerns both its TAFE and higher education sectors.

Turning to the question on library and information services, library services is an area of government which, for some years, has been developing and implementing systems which are cost effective. The benefit of these developments are now being reaped and leave library services in the situation where they are able to absorb the variations in the budget overall without reduction in services. The main reason for the variations is lower

cyclical requirements for furniture and fittings. Libraries have been aware that there has been a need for them to tighten their belts. They have acknowledged that. There is a 16% reduction in the book budget this year. All librarians are aware of this and know that times are tough and savings have to be made.

In respect of TAFE information systems, a reduction in funding will result in a slowing down in the rate of upgrading of computer development. General reductions have been taken in areas where they will have least direct impact on clients. In respect of information systems, however, it is convenient to slow down the development of TAFE information systems at this stage because management systems in TAFE are a national concern just now. A slow-down at this time will allow the Northern Territory to evaluate interstate developments in the design of more appropriate TAFE management systems. We will be watching very carefully and we have slowed down in order to take advantage of any findings which come out of inquiries and reviews interstate.

Mr EDE: Roll on, the clever country! The book vote is down, computer development is down, the library vote is down, and there is less money for services and fittings.

The minister still did not satisfy me in respect of the duplication of the 2 TAFE systems. He may say that there is no duplication. I find that very hard to believe when I look at a town like Katherine, where there is a very expensive institution to which the minister himself has given some very close attention, and where the NT Open College is also operating. Surely there are administrative savings to be made by amalgamating those 2 areas. I find it very difficult to believe that it is not possible to make administrative savings in such situations, thereby releasing funds to provide other services.

Whilst on the subject of the NT Rural College at Katherine, can the minister give me some information about current student numbers? I keep hearing horrendous stories about present levels.

Mr Reed: You don't hear them. You make them up.

Mr EDE: Perhaps the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries drops out there now and then. That might be what is scaring off the students. However, knowing the way he treats the rest of his electorate, he probably does not.

I would like the minister to give an indication of current numbers and trends in comparison with other periods in the life of the college. I would also like an indication of whether the minister believes, realistically, that the college has a future. Efforts have been made to enrol students from overseas and interstate but it does not seem to be achieving viability in terms of the economic environment.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr EDE: I know that, previously, the Minister for Industries and Development has categorised the pastoral industry as being worth only a couple of old Toyotas and a rusty set of mudguards.

Mr Reed: It would be if you closed down the live export trade.

Mr EDE: If the recent efforts of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries are any guide, he has been taking advice from the Minister for Industries and Development.

However, to return to the NT Rural College, I believe that we must continue to keep a very close eye on student numbers and on the cost per student, which must be among the highest in comparable institutions across the country. Obviously, a plan is required if we are to emerge from the present situation. We cannot continue to bear such costs for what seems to be so little return. Obviously, full fee-paying students from interstate and overseas can be of assistance. However, if such students vastly outnumber local students, we still may not be providing a service which is of any real benefit to Territorians. Certainly, we will have to rethink the situation completely if the college is to emerge and play a significant role.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the Northern Territory government agrees with the member for Stuart about the need to rationalise services and to avoid duplication, and we will continue to move in that direction.

During the last sittings, the member for Flynn spoke about his concerns in relation to student numbers at the Northern Territory Rural College. I refer the member for Stuart to the answer which I gave on 21 August. I indicated that the Northern Territory Rural College had been put on notice, that it was making an effort to lift its game, and that it was looking at developing an associate diploma. I do not know whether the member for Stuart received the pamphlets and brochures which I displayed on that occasion, which indicated that the college was taking the matter seriously.

The Northern Territory Rural College Council will be meeting on Friday and I understand that it has come up with some positive plans. I am happy to provide the member for Stuart and other honourable members with a continuing update in relation to the college. It has tremendous potential to meet student needs in a whole range of areas, and proposals will be developed as time passes. The college is on notice. It is aware of that and it is doing something about it. I will keep the honourable member informed about the results.

Appropriation for division 36 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 70:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have given the minister some written questions today and I made some comments in the second-reading debate yesterday. My questions are as follows. Firstly, charges for services have increased. In what areas are these charges? Why have they increased so dramatically? Secondly, alcohol services funding has increased by only 8%, which is only marginally above the inflation rate. Does this mean that there is a commitment on the part of the minister to provide urgently-needed services to people affected by alcohol abuse? Thirdly, the budget for communicable diseases has increased by approximately 20%. Does this increase reflect an expectation of an increase in communicable diseases or does it reflect an increased number of programs? I would appreciate details of program changes in that regard. Fourthly, part of the increase in funding is from the Commonwealth and is related to a program for hepatitis B. To which other communicable diseases is the increase directed? Fifthly, why has the department stopped providing funds for testing children with hearing impairments?

In yesterday's second-reading debate, I raised questions about X-ray services in last year's budget. Those questions were not answered adequately. I refer particularly to a question on notice in relation to the maintenance contract for radiological equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital and the contract with Toshiba. There were 2 aspects of the minister's answer which bothered me. The first was that the government had paid the service contract in advance over 5 years. The second was that the minister prevented us from discovering whether that was a satisfactory deal or not by refusing to provide us with information, on any basis whatsoever, on the terms and conditions of the contract. The minister made a fatuous comment in the answer, to the effect that this was for the protection of privacy. That is an absurdity.

I point out to members opposite that they have been in government for so long that they have started to believe that they are spending their own money. The fact is that they are spending public money. They are here to account for it. To stand up in this Assembly, or to provide written answers to questions on notice, saying that the protection of privacy means that information about the expenditure of public moneys cannot be provided simply will not wash. I look forward to hearing the results in that regard.

For the reasons which I have outlined already, it is not possible to test the claim the minister made in last year's budget speech that there was a saving of $100 000. I am not prepared to take at face value his protestations that those savings were made. Two jobs were lost at the hospital and, on the basis of the service contract being paid in advance, I would have thought that there might have been less savings than claimed. Costs are involved in paying a $600 000 contract several years in advance of when it needs to be paid.

The answer the minister gave in the Assembly last year was not satisfactory. Fortunately, he is not likely to be in office for much longer and it will become our problem. At least we will know what we are dealing with. Mr Chairman, I indicate now that we will be quite happy to provide information of that sort. Commercially sensitive information, of course, may be provided on a confidential basis.

I reiterate my question about the review of services. I noted the minister's comments yesterday about what appears to be a productive relationship with the Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association. Of course, that is to be encouraged. The absence of relations between the hospital, the department and such organisations contributed to the problem.

I refer also to the need to consider, in the equations of health funding, an assessment of the cost of alcohol to the health system. That does not appear as a line item in the budget, but I believe that it should. Of course, there are statistical difficulties in providing very accurate figures. The Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol has taken some evidence in this regard. I do not think I am breaching standing orders by suggesting broadly what the tenor of that has been. It has been to show that such figures are not completely accurate. However, if a caveat were put on such figures, to the effect that they were accurate to 5% or 10%, they would be of value in the context of assessing how well we are delivering health services to the Territory community.

I look forward to hearing from the minister in respect of the matter of vacant positions, in particular vacant positions in Katherine. I have received representations about the number of positions in the hospital that have not been filled. I look forward to hearing a detailed account of which

positions have been left vacant, why they have been left vacant and for how long they have been vacant. The Minister for Health and Community Services will recall that I have placed questions on notice with respect to the placement of medical practitioners in various centres around the Territory. I have asked those questions in response to representations that I have received. It is appropriate that the minister provide us with information, not only of vacant positions in respect of medical practitioners, but also in respect of other health professionals and para-professionals in public sector employment.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, firstly, the honourable member asked about the increase in the charges for services within the departmental budget. The department has been endeavouring to maximise its revenue collection and I can outline the major reasons for the increases. Firstly, like many institutions, the Department of Health and Community Services has had some difficulties in chasing up outstanding debtors. There has been a tendency for many debts to be written off as bad debts. We have engaged a debt collection agency to recover outstanding debts. It is anticipated that this process will generate an additional $200 000 a year in revenue.

Mr Bell: $2m.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I certainly hope that we do achieve $2m. It would substantially increase the revenue generated by the Department of Health and Community Services and it would be a worthy goal to target. However, we are trying to put a budget together as conservatively as we can to ensure that we can live within it. We have set the target there at $200 000. Certainly, the objective is to collect as much in outstanding debts as possible.

Mr Bell: Where do you get the $200 000 from?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I took it on professional advice, which is more than the member for MacDonnell does.

Our principal objective, particularly in much of our rural and community health areas, is for our medical practitioners to be engaged predominantly on primary health care. However, of necessity, they carry out significant amounts of curative health care of people who are sick or injured. Under the Medicare arrangements, government doctors are entitled to claim on bulk billing. To date, we have not been as diligent as possible in doing that, and there are good reasons for that. When the doctors are in the field, they want to be treating people and dealing with the primary health care initiatives.

To support that, a double-barrelled approach has been adopted. We have engaged an additional 5 staff to accompany the doctors on their rounds to assist with the paperwork involved in processing bulk-billing applications. We anticipate that that will generate $600 000 in additional revenue to the Department of Health and Community Services. That is the net effect offset by $200 000 for the cost of employing the clerical support for the doctors. There is still a net gain in revenue to the department of $400 000. It will be done in such a way that it will not detract from the work of the doctors in the delivery of the medical services. It is not intended to direct the process of the doctors' work away from the objective of primary health care work into preventive work simply to chase dollars. This is work that they will have to do anyway. It will ensure that we will collect what we are

capable of collecting through the Commonwealth Medicare arrangements rather than missing out as, unfortunately, we have done in the past.

There is an additional $700 000 in the revenue which relates to the TIO payments in respect of the Motor Vehicle Accidents Compensation Act. This matter is being dealt with at the moment with the Treasurer. It is proposed that there will be some readjustment on the revenues being paid under MACA for hospitalisation that is more in line with the payments that are being made by similar schemes interstate. That should generate an additional revenue source within the departmental vote. It does not affect the overall income to the Department of Health and Community Services because the revenues will go into Consolidated Revenue. It does not add to our ability to spend more money. However, it helps to balance the books on the net costs of health services in the Northern Territory. Those are the 3 major reasons why the charges have increased.

The second question related to alcohol services. The member said that alcohol services funding has increased by only 8%, and that this is only marginally above the inflation rate. He wants to know where my commitment is to provide urgently needed services to people affected by alcohol abuse. I am very pleased that this question has been raised because it gives me a chance to focus on the initiatives that we are taking in addressing the issue of alcohol abuse and treatment in this year's budget. I am very proud of the level of increased services that we have provided.

Firstly, in 1989-90, expenditure on alcohol and drug services included a one-off payment of $453 000 for acquisition of land for the Darwin Sobering-Up Shelter and the upgrading of the Katherine and Tennant Creek Sobering-Up Shelters. After taking this into account, the actual growth in 1989-90 is 27%. I would like to address some of the matters that are being dealt with in respect of this level of funding. Alcohol services are a very significant component of expenditure. The grants-in-aid funding under 'other services' have increased from $1.555m to $2.143m. The deaths in custody funding from the Commonwealth decreased from $453 000 to zero. The National Campaign Against Drug Abuse funding increased from $442 000 to $502 000. There have been other increases in our operational vote. However, I would like members to note the large increase in the grants-in-aid component. We are, and have been, concentrating much of our effort not only on the delivery of health services through the department, but also through the grants-in-aid to community organisations. It is in the integration of those activities that we will see the total delivery of services in the drug and alcohol program.

Apart from our specific allocations in this budget, it should be noted that the Early Intervention Unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital is funded under a Royal Darwin Hospital program at $138 000. The capital works program under the Department of Transport and Works vote has assessed the construction of the Darwin Sobering-Up Shelter at a figure of $533 000 this year. That is in addition to the 27% increase in the specific drug and alcohol vote to which I referred.

If we look at the grants-in-aid program, there are some really interesting initiatives that I have approved already and forwarded to the community. These relate to a range of activities. In central Australia, the department has employed 3 additional Aboriginal alcohol counsellors who will be working in the rural areas there. In addition, the Tangentyere Council will receive $76 000 to fund 3 alcohol workers within the council to work in the town camp community in Alice Springs. That is balanced against

the 3 counsellors in the department who will be working in the rural areas in central Australia.

The Drug and Alcohol Services Association in central Australia has had a substantial funding increase with the provision of an outreach worker to be attached to the sobering-up shelter to provide support. In addition, work has been occurring over the last few months on a trial basis with the Holyoake Co-dependency Program in central Australia. Holyoake committees are going into the rural areas and to Aboriginal communities to work on co-dependency programs. They are working with the families of substance abusers in order to provide support for them to try to break the cycle. It has been a very successful program in the Top End. The CAPS program is part of that Holyoake concept. We will be funding the Holyoake Co-dependency Program. The funding has not been set formally in dollar amounts, but I have approved it. It is in the order of about $25 000 to $30 000 to the DASA in central Australia to support that program.

In Numbulwar, we are funding the petrol-sniffing program. It was a pilot program but will now become a full-time program. The Katherine Drug and Alcohol Association has been providing a range of drug awareness programs. I am funding an additional position of a female counsellor for that service to provide necessary support on their applications in Katherine. In Darwin, we are working on 2 programs. I have not yet finalised the arrangements, but there is a review of the CAPS program in Darwin and it is hoped that, when the review is completed, we will be able to look forward to some financial support.

Further, the Darwin District Alcohol and Drug Dependence Foundation has sought funding for an additional counsellor. I believe that it is a very worthwhile program, but more discussions are needed before the initiative is finalised. We have funds set aside to deal with the additional issues that we were referring to in the alcohol program area. That is in addition to what has been occurring. The construction of the new sobering-up shelter in Darwin will complete the network of sobering-up shelters in the Territory. Funding is available for the staffing of the shelter when it is completed, but that will be very late in the financial year. That is backed up by existing programs and the reinforcement of existing initiatives with additional counselling, prevention and education programs, particularly in central Australia, where we are working with community organisations and the Aboriginal organisations in addressing the problems.

Far from us having made nothing more than a token gesture on alcohol programs, honourable members will recognise that it is an exciting and innovative program. It demonstrates quite clearly a very strong commitment to address the prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation aspects of alcohol programs in the Territory. Clearly, that needs to be backed up by other coercive and regulatory functions, and that is being dealt with through other areas in other portfolios.

The third question was related to communicable diseases. The member asked whether the 20% increase reflects an expectation of an increase in communicable diseases. It does not. It reflects the work that we have been doing in respect of communicable diseases and it provides for the full-year effect of a number of programs and activities that we have been engaged in. In my second-reading speech, I tried to cover the related issues comprehensively so that people would understand what we are trying to do. If honourable members had paid a little more attention to what was said, some of these questions might not have arisen today.

I referred particularly to concerns in respect of tuberculosis problems in the Northern Territory. At the beginning of 1989, 1.5 positions in the department were dealing with tuberculosis. That has now increased to 11 positions in the middle of this year. That is a significant part of the additional cost. The National Wage Case increases added $117 000. The full-year effect of new initiatives such as the AIDS Prevention Awareness Program was $77 000. Additional funding to fight TB amounted to $259 000. Additional special purpose payments to fight AIDS were $165 000. Additional special purpose payments for inflation funding were $52 000. AIDS blood testing was $50 000 and there were other payments amounting to $32 000. No increase in the incidence of communicable diseases is expected except for some increase in tuberculosis figures as old cases are identified through the expanded control program. The major proportion of the increase relates to the AIDS awareness program and the expansion of the TB program.

With respect to the funding of the hepatitis B program, I referred to that also in my second-reading speech. It is $450 000. That is shown under 'other services' in the Alice Springs Hospital program and not in the communicable diseases component of the program.

Why has the department stopped the funds for testing for children with a hearing impairment? The answer is that we have not. In fact, the budget provides $700 000 for the hearing program, and I refer honourable members to my second-reading speech in which I outlined the programs. We have added 2 testing units, one in Alice Springs Hospital and one in the Royal Darwin Hospital this year. That comes under our Urban Health Care Program. I suspect the honourable member was led into this by a report that has recently come out from the - what do you call that crazy organisation?

Mr Bailey: The CLP.

Mr HATTON: No - the Industries Assistance Commission. That is the crazy organisation which has recommended to the federal government that it should close down the national hearing program. On 6 August, I wrote to my Western Australian ministerial colleague and also to the federal Minister for Community Services and Health setting out very clearly the consequences of such a ridiculous action because of the very important need to maintain those programs in areas such as the Northern Territory and Western Australia where, in particular, otitis media problems demand a continuing testing and treatment program. We have not reduced our commitment in that area. On the contrary, we are maintaining it and appealing to the Commonwealth to ensure that it maintains its efforts as well.

Another issue raised was the cost of alcohol. We do not have specific figures on what alcohol costs the health system of the Northern Territory. I have gone on record as saying that we believe it to be in excess of $50m a year. Anybody who comes up with a figure is coming up with a statistical estimate. The costs spread right across the whole range of services, including many of the health and social service components of the budget and grants-in-aid funding. That is quite apart from the specifics of accident victims and the estimation of what proportion of those accidents is the consequence of alcohol. I do not believe anyone can put a figure on it. It would be a practical impossibility to structure a budget in such a way as to demonstrate that unless you wanted to increase dramatically the administrative costs of trying to shuffle the figures. Certainly, the finance section of the department would be quite pleased if that were demanded of it because it would have a rapid expansion. It would mean that probably the managerial staff would need to be reclassified upwards because

of the higher managerial duties they would have to perform in trying to manipulate figures to provide a budget result for nosy politicians.

In respect of the Toshiba X-ray equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital, I suspect that the member for MacDonnell and I will have an ongoing discussion about this project. I indicate to the honourable member that the program went through the proper procedures of selection. A decision was taken, following advice from our technical and specialist people, to seek a certificate of exemption for the letting of that contract. It did not go to public tender. That was because there were only 2 potential suppliers who could supply the range of equipment and backup services. We are talking about very sophisticated equipment and backup and support services. It is not an unusual practice in government that, where it is quite clear that there might be 2, 3 or 4 clearly identified tenderers, there can be a waiving of the public tender process. The Treasurer's regulations provide for that, as do our purchase and tendering procedures. The tender details were assessed and the selection process was carried out by the Northern Territory Supply and Tender Board which made the final selection recommendations which were adopted.

The outcome was a one-off saving of over $100 000 with annual savings of approximately $50 000 per annum. That was based on the cost of spare parts stored and utilised to maintain the previous equipment. It was the basis of the calculations and the advice provided through the technical assessment to the NT Supply and Tender Board in the selection of the successful tenderer and the decision to make an advance payment for a 5-year service contract. The advantage of that is that we do not have to hold supplies of spare parts and materials and to have staff on hand in case it breaks down. Those cash flow costs fall on somebody else. Certainly, there is a cash flow cost involved in paying up front. It was the assessment of those who advised us that the balance would be in our favour.

In relation to unfilled vacancies, it is impossible to provide all the answers except by way of substantive and specific questions on notice. I do not know how many jobs are vacant for any given period. I can say that, as a matter of policy, no medical, nursing or related professional positions are being held off recruitment. Certainly, there have been delays in recruitment. I can advise that, when the last restraint process was brought down on staff recruitment, the basis of my advice to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Community Services was that we did not want to see a reduction in the delivery of essential health services but that we would review many of the positions in the less sensitive areas of the department. At present, the department is not experiencing difficulties in recruiting medical specialists or medical practitioners, except in the Katherine region where it has been traditionally difficult to recruit and retain medical officers for the Katherine Hospital.

As part of award restructuring for medical officers, the department is undertaking a work value review to identify the changes in work values since self-government. This review is due for completion in November 1990. It will be scheduled for hearing by the Industrial Relations Commission after that date. As part of award restructuring for medical officers, the department is undertaking a review of structures and conditions of employment for medical officers. That is due to report back to the Industrial Relations Commission in November 1990.

At present, the department is not experiencing difficulties in recruiting nursing staff, either in the hospital or the community. Both the Katherine region and the Arnhem region have several vacancies for community

welfare workers. However, the department is addressing the need with an interstate recruitment drive which is to be undertaken during October 1990. I might say too that the consumer services area of the department is also carrying out a review of their work roles with community welfare workers to see what can be done to improve some of the quite strenuous conditions that welfare workers work under. The aim is to develop better jobs to minimise the problems of burn-out and to assist recruitment.

There are several vacancies for dentists in Darwin and Alice Springs and 1 vacancy in the Katherine region, which will be filled in November. The department has identified the need to review the conditions of employment for dentists, to address recruitment and retention strategies and to review the career structure. These issues are to be discussed in detail with the Public Service Commissioner and the Professional Officers Association.

In relation to specific vacancies, in the Darwin region, 3 specialists from an MSL of 16, 2 medical registrars, and RMOs and interns are being recruited for next year. A recruitment drive is being undertaken around Australia at this time, and that is an annual event. Specialist psychiatrist positions are extremely difficult to fill on a permanent basis. Currently, 2 positions are filled on limited tenure, and they will become vacant at the end of the year. Usually, positions are filled by limited tenure, secondment, or 3-month rotation.

In the Alice Springs and Barkly Region, 2 district medical officer positions have been advertised. We have 3 applicants, and we will be interviewing next week. There are 2 senior registrar vacancies and 1 in Alice Springs has been advertised in the media and the NT Government Gazette, and 1 senior registrar position in Tennant Creek has also been advertised. In the near future, the Chief Medical Officer at the hospital, Dr Peterkin, will be undertaking a recruitment drive for RMOs. At Katherine, hospital positions are currently filled. However, as of next week, only one position at MO2 will be filled at the hospital. The region is in the process of recruiting locums.

In relation to community welfare workers, the Darwin Region has no vacancies, the Alice Springs and Barkly Region has 2 vacancies, which have been advertised in the NT Government Gazette, and the East Arnhem Region has 1 senior community welfare 2 vacancy for which recruitment action is pending and the position is filled on a temporary basis. The Katherine region has vacancies for 1 senior community welfare worker 2, 1 senior community welfare worker 1, and 2 welfare workers. An interstate recruitment drive for community welfare workers for all regions will be undertaken in late October and longer-term strategies are being determined for the recruitment and retention of community welfare workers. In relation to nurses, there are no vacancies in the Darwin Region and, for the Alice Springs and Barkly Region, there are 3 RN1 positions from an MSL of 125, and 1 pupil nurse position from an MSL of 10.

In relation to dental services, the position is: Darwin Region - 1 dentist class 3, 1 dentist class 2, 1 dentist class 1; Alice Springs and Barkly Region - 2 dentists class 1 from an MSL of 3, which are currently filled on contract and all of which are to be advertised soon; East Arnhem Region - 1 dentist class 2; there is ongoing recruitment action for private dentist based at Alyangula and sessional cover for departmental position which is nominally vacant, but actually filled; and Katherine - 1 dentist class 3 position for which we are in the process of recruiting from overseas and which is expected to commence in November.

I believe the last question raised was in respect of an ENT position. That was asked by the member for Wanguri, but I may as well answer that while I am on my feet. Honourable members will be aware of some debate and discussion during question time and adjournment debates on this matter. Mr Rao recommenced work in February 1990, with a contract for 12 months, and he is being contracted to stay a further year until the end of 1991. Unfortunately, Doctor Havier, who was offered a specialist position at Royal Darwin Hospital for 1991 - and he was the doctor who came here over Christmas 1989-90 for a temporary period - has decided not to take up that offer. Through a recruitment agency, the Royal Darwin Hospital is continuing its efforts to recruit a permanent full-time specialist for the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Without wasting further time on that matter, given the number of times this matter has been raised in this House, I must say that a continuing effort is being made to recruit an ENT specialist. Honourable members must remember that it is an exceptionally difficult position to fill anywhere in Australia. Further, it is interesting to note how many of the ENT specialists are of the same age as Mr Rao. I understand that Mr Rao would fit the average age of ENT specialists in Australia. Certainly, he has been a valuable part of our medical profession and we hope that he will continue as long as he has the desire to do so, and the continuing ability to deliver that service. Certainly, we are looking for an ENT specialist.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, with respect to the X-ray contract, I wish to place on record my dissatisfaction with the minister's answer. I am not satisfied that the explanation that he has given to us has been patent, and I look forward to being in government and determining the truth of the matter.

Mr Hatton: You are welcome to have a look at the contract.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the second issue I wish to raise is that the minister did not address this evening the question of the relationship between coronial inquests and reform of departmental practice or equipment purchases or whatever may be required to address shortcomings identified by coronial inquiries. I mentioned an inquest yesterday. My attention has been drawn to adverse comments in a more recent coronial inquiry in Alice Springs, and the reference in that inquiry to inadequacies in respect of facilities and workloads for staff. I look forward to the minister providing some response in that regard. As I said yesterday, I believe that there needs to be a formal process, possibly with a legislative base, to ensure that the public knows that the recommendations of coronial inquiries are acted on. After all, we have coronial inquiries because the state has decided that, if somebody dies under any ...

Mr Hatton: The reason is to determine why someone died.

Mr BELL: No. That is not quite right. Coronial inquiries are conducted under certain circumstances only, not following all deaths. The state decides that inquiries should be held where there may be questionable circumstances surrounding a death. If we decide that that is necessary, I believe that there should be a formal process for ensuring that any shortcomings identified by such inquiries are addressed. There may very well be an argument for saying that a gazettal notice should be published saying that, at such-and-such an inquiry, these and these shortcomings were found, and that these measures have been adopted in response. It should not be left simply to Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to identify those shortcomings and to ensure that the government is kept up to the mark in

that regard. I would like the minister to take that thought on board, and I would like him to give some specific responses in respect of the inquest that I mentioned yesterday and, secondly, the more recent criticisms made in the inquiry that is pending ...

Mr Hatton: I will not address current inquiries at all.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that, in the circumstances where the inquiry is pending, the minister may prefer not to comment at this point, but I suggest that, in the overall consideration of the coronial process, the government's actions are not sufficiently patent.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, in respect of the previous inquiry that was carried out, I would remind honourable members that the issue there was to do with radiological equipment and procedures. In fact, at the time of the decision, I announced a range of new initiatives in radiological equipment and procedures in the Alice Springs Hospital, by way of public and media release. If my memory serves me correctly, the matter that was dealt with in the Assembly related to the engaging of the Adelaide consultants, Jones and Partners, who have provided a comprehensive service to the hospital for the past year. Its 5-year contract runs until late 1994.

Recently, to extend the scope of its visiting services, Jones and Partners introduced new technology in the form of a CT scanner and a mammography unit. There has been an increase of over 30% in patient referrals since the consultancy commenced. After-hours is covered by radiographers on call. Alice Springs Hospital employs 4 radiologists, and Jones and Partners employs 1. The on-call demand has increased to the extent that overtime is increasing to approximately 50% of salaries. One radiologist is required for ultrasonics, and 0.5 of a position is required for CT scans. The hospital receives remuneration as payment for facilities and staff for patients X-rayed. In 1990-91, $632 000 has been made available to Alice Springs Hospital to upgrade equipment, increase staffing and extend the hours of availability of the hospital's radiological services. I think that responds specifically to further inquiries related to matters that were raised in that previous coronial inquiry.

Without going into details, extensive work has been occurring to expand the availability of medical and health services at Yulara. Shortly, a radiology room will be provided at the medical centre. We have identified a suitable mobile X-ray machine that could be transferred to the Yulara Medical Centre as soon as the building extensions are completed. The Yulara community is working towards the extension of those services. As honourable members may be aware, negotiations have been under way between the department, the Yulara Corporation and the Royal Flying Doctor Service about the future directions of medical services at Yulara. Those negotiations are not yet completed.

Certainly, we do take very close cognisance of the results of coronial inquiries. Any coronial inquiry that in any way questions the delivery of services by our department results in a close re-examination of our work. In respect of central Australia, which is where many discussions have occurred, particularly in the last 12 months, an enormous amount of work has gone into a range of issues including a building assets review, a fire and safety survey, a senior management structure review, a staff criteria review and a public liability evaluation survey. A nursing review has been completed and is being prepared for presentation,

The Medical Engineering Branch has defined its future directions. A wide range of reviews of the assets, the facilities, the staffing, and the support systems for the staffing in central Australia, particularly at Alice Springs Hospital, has been conducted in the last 12 months. That has been done because of the number of concerns that have been expressed. That has been combined with the review that is being conducted by Dr Kerr and to which I referred to last evening. In that review, we have been working with CARPA to examine the relationship between the delivery of services to rural communities in central Australia and the hospital services. Nobody can say that we are not carrying out very comprehensive investigations on all aspects of our services in central Australia and, even in this budget, we can see that the delivery of programs is directed towards the clearly identified needs. That process will continue as necessary.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, if I am not to disappoint the minister, I guess I have to start with the ENT specialist situation, even though he feels that he has answered the question already. He has said that Mr Rao will be employed until 1991 ...

Mr Hatton: No. He has been offered a contract until then, and I hope he will take it.

Mr BAILEY: He has been offered a contract till 1991?

Mr Chairman, I think all members would be aware of the prevalence of chronic ear infection problems in the Northern Territory, especially within Aboriginal communities. I believe that even the level of service now being provided by Mr Rao would not enable him to cater fully for the needs in the Top End. The honourable minister has been aware of the difficulty of recruiting a permanent ENT specialist in the Northern Territory for some time. In previous statements and debates, he has said that, in part, the difficulty is due to the shortage of ENT specialists around Australia which means that the asking price for specialists is becoming very high. I put it to the minister that it may be that we will have to start looking at competing in that open market to ensure that we are able to employ somebody who is suitably qualified. I think that in excess of 12 to 18 months of being unable to attract somebody may indicate that a review is needed of the procedures that the honourable minister is undertaking.

Secondly, I note that funding to the area of consumer affairs is the only area in the honourable minister's portfolio of health and community services that has had a cut in actual funds. Since I have been in this Assembly, it has been brought to my attention that a number of reviews have been conducted into consumer affairs legislation. I would like the honourable minister to explain how what would appear to be an increase in the workload in this area, resulting from the monitoring of this legislation, is to be undertaken effectively in spite of this reduction in funding.

My third question relates to the Burdekin funding from the federal government. I gather this is within his portfolio. It would appear that the taking up of the offer of that funding was delayed for many months and then finally taken up. My understanding is that there are still delays in the implementation of programs to spend that money. Is that true?

Fourthly, it is my understanding that, recently - and it may still be continuing - there was a training program for senior management people within the honourable minister's department in which 5 or 6 people at a senior management level participated for a number of weeks. Was that funded

from money left over from last year's budget or was it funded from funds allocated this year? Can the honourable minister give some indication of the purpose of that program and how much it actually cost in terms of bringing in a specialist trainer and in the salaries lost through those fairly senior management people being off work for what I believe was quite a long time? Was it actually a program that had been organised some time previously and for which those people were specifically being prepared to attend or was it decided on at fairly short notice?

My last question is in relation to the area of environmental health where we have 28 positions. Could the honourable minister give some indication whether these are administrative positions or field positions? I notice that one of the areas they are interested in is the control and use of poisons, including pesticides, as part of the monitoring program which is increasingly concerned with the effects of residues on the environment and the individual, and advice on various planning sections regarding those types of areas. I would like the honourable minister to give some information that may have come from those officers relating to concerns about levels of residual pesticide in urban areas in Darwin that may be higher than the accepted standards - and I am not sure whether they are Australian standards or world standards - for pesticide residue in urban areas.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, in respect of the consumer affairs vote, I advise the honourable member that the 1989-90 budget provided $160 000 for a new truck for Weights and Measures, as a one-off payment. When that is taken into account, it counteracts the concerns the honourable member has in respect of that reduction. In fact, it is an increase, but it appears to be a reduction because of a very large one-off payment. Having spoken to the Weights and Measures people, I must say that they are very pleased to have received that during the last financial year.

With respect to the executive development program, it involved 7 to 8 officers over the 6 months, from August to December. They were taken from existing resources. I believe that Annabel Muis was the consultant brought in to carry out the project. She used to be in health and community services and I believe that, at one stage, she was in the PSC's you-beaut Executive Development Unit. She is an excellent trainer. I do not know details of the costs. I assume that it has come out of this year's budget because it is being spent this year and, inevitably, it should come out of this year's budget. There are other executive development programs within the department and I advise honourable members that they can expect to see an increase in spending on staff development, including at the executive level. It is important that we have professional, well-trained executives if they are to provide the leadership and direction that the department needs. We must actively support staff training and development.

Honourable members should note that the department has recently employed a Human Resource Manager at Deputy Secretary level. The department employs some 3500 people from basic labouring and unskilled classifications through to world-class medical specialists who have broad experience in a wide range of environments. As a consequence, the department has a very real need to look after its fundamental resource of people, and it needs a high level of support in that regard. I am proud to say that one of the initiatives that I have instituted in that department is to place a much higher emphasis on personnel and industrial relations matters, and on staff development. More and more of that program will be implemented in the department as we continue to develop that very important resource.

The environmental health area of the department includes those 22 ...

Mr Bailey: 28.

Mr HATTON: 28 officers. These include the entomology and poisons sections, 8 regional health surveyors and 6 people in the central office staff. We do not have a large supply of health surveyors, and that is the concern to which the honourable member is referring in particular. In the process of devolution, these people have been caught betwixt and between. Whereas health surveying functions are supposed to be part of the process of devolution to local government, the functions in fact have been devolved only in the case of the Alice Springs Town Council. That area of the operation's staffing has been reduced steadily to appropriate staffing levels to cope with Territory-wide responsibilities, post-devolution. The process of devolution seems never to reach completion because the councils have not been picking up the work. The government is now confronted with the need to make a decision with councils either to devolve the functions to local government or to get on with recruiting the appropriate staffing structures to carry out those local government-type functions within the Territory departmental structure. It is an unsatisfactory situation at the moment, and it is one that we are addressing. We must address it directly with the local government community and resolve that as soon as we can.

The Entomology Section provides professional advice in relation to action to be taken whenever there is a mosquito or blowfly problem in Darwin. That section is located in the Department of Health and Community Services. It advises on mosquito eradication programs in Darwin and in other related areas. The section does a considerable amount of work on environmental assessment and it advises the Conservation Commission about insect vectors and insect pest concerns, particularly mosquitoes, in terms of environmental assessment.

The Poisons Section of the Environmental Unit is responsible for the management of the poisons and dangerous drugs legislation and the provision of advice in relation to that legislation. I do not have any specific information with respect to the question that was asked. Did it concern pesticides?

Mr Bailey: Residues in housing blocks in the Nightcliff area.

Mr HATTON: The only issues raised in that regard have been raised by the local member who has sought clarification. This is being investigated and I will provide more details to the honourable member at an appropriate time. I can advise that the member for Nightcliff has not received a response as yet.

There were delays in the funding for the Burdekin initiatives because the federal government, in its usual polite fashion, did not tell us about it until after its budget came down last year. With considerable effort, we were able to find some money during the first budget review, but that delayed the ability to put in place the funding for the programs this year. We have agreement to carry them through into this year. The money has been provided and those projects are continuing. Additional Burdekin moneys are provided in this year's budget. I referred to the funding for homeless youth fairly extensively in the second-reading debate but, unfortunately, the honourable members opposite were not present and did not hear what I had to say about that matter. The funding is under the Support and Accommodation Program and the money is in this year's budget. I believe it is in the order of $286 000, but I will have that confirmed. Programs are

being assessed through the SAP projects for funding. Agreement will be reached with the Commonwealth because joint ministerial approval is required for any such projects.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I will repeat one of my questions. I asked if the honourable minister could give some indication of the cost of the executive training program. He has indicated that 7 to 8 senior staff are participating over 6 months. As I understood the minister's response, this is a full-time course.

Mr Hatton: Do you want the opportunity cost as well as the direct cost?

Mr BAILEY: And the direct cost of employing a person to provide the course.

Mr HATTON: Given that the honourable member is looking for the opportunity cost of not having somebody working at their desk because they are being trained, I will have to take the question on notice.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I will ask the honourable minister 3 questions of which I have given prior notice. The first relates to a budget item: weights and measures facility to provide testing facility, workshop storage areas and office accommodation. Last year's budget contained an item of $250 000 for this work, and the same amount is contained in this year's budget. I ask the same question that I have asked other ministers about similar matters. Is that the $250 000 that was allocated last year or is it an additional $250 000? A similar question applies to the Coconut Grove Sobering-Up Shelter. Last year, it appeared under new works with an amount of $360 000 and, in this budget, it appears under unexpended authorisations, with an amount of $533 000. I assume that this is last year's allocation of $360 000, plus a further amount.

I would like the honourable minister to explain also the $525 000 allocation for the AIDS Blood Testing Program and the $20 000 for the AIDS Blood Transfusion Service. I sincerely hope that I never receive an AIDS blood transfusion service.

Mr HATTON: The weights and measures facilities were included in last year's capital works program at an estimated cost of $250 000. Design and documentation for the building works were completed and tenders were advertised on 6 June last year. A contract for the project was arranged and work commenced on 20 August 1990. Work is expected to be completed by late November 1990. It is the same money as was allocated last year.

In the case of the Coconut Grove Sobering-Up Shelter, last year's allocation of $360 000 was not expended. There was a blow-out in the estimate because the original estimates provided by the Department of Transport and Works were based on the cost of the construction of similar facilities in Alice Springs. Because some faults were identified in the Alice Springs facilities, some redesign work was necessary. Darwin City Council requirements, including stormwater easements and other related matters, added significantly to the cost and led to a blow-out in the budget estimates, which had to be resubmitted to Cabinet for approval. The appropriate processes have been completed and I understand that it is proposed to have the contract let by November. Tenders are out at present and construction is anticipated to take 26 weeks.

As far as the AIDS Blood Testing Program is concerned, it is a cost-shared program whose correct title is Funds to Combat AIDS. I

apologise for the fact that the correct title does not appear in Budget Paper No 4. The Territory receives Commonwealth funding for the program on a dollar-for-dollar basis. In this year's budget, funds have been provided under a number of matched funding programs. Education and prevention comprises funding to community groups to provide education and peer education for high-risk groups. Treatment and services provides funding for treatment, counselling, testing and support services for people with HIV, their partners, families and friends. Home care services and hospice services, self-help and care programs are developed by community-based organisations for people with HIV. HIV study grants are provided to enable professionally trained volunteer care givers and trained volunteer care givers to undertake short-term HIV AIDS-related training and to study their own or another state's health system.

The second question concerned the AIDS Blood Transfusion Service. Funding is intended to contribute towards costs in the Territory which are clearly identifiable and related to the necessary screening of blood donations in order to ensure that AIDS cannot be spread though blood transfusion services. Related activities include testing and counselling. The cost-sharing arrangement is on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, when the minister talks about blood transfusion testing and counselling, does that mean that he expects mistakes which will lead to people inadvertently contracting AIDS through blood transfusions? Secondly, apart from screening blood intended for use in transfusions, has the Department of Health and Community Services given active encouragement to people facing elective surgery to contribute their own blood for storage? I would not take anyone else's blood in a transfusion these days. You cannot trust any of it.

Mr HATTON: I do not know that the hospital encourages people to give blood before they undergo operations in case that blood may be needed for transfusions.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I said before elective surgery.

Mr HATTON: I am sorry. I am advised that it is possible to do that. If the honourable member is scheduled for an operation, she can build up her own personal supply of blood prior to the operation, to allow that blood to be used should any transfusion prove necessary. That would certainly assist the hospital. I can say that blood transfusion services today are very safe indeed. Prior to knowledge of the AIDS virus, unfortunately, there was a period when some people contracted HIV through blood transfusions. However, there are strong testing processes now for HIV infection, hepatitis B and other such transmittable diseases. Whilst this has added considerably to funds required to operate blood transfusion services, it is worth while in terms of assuring people about the safety of these services. I believe that honourable members should feel quite confident about receiving blood transfusions should they be faced with that necessity.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I gave the minister notice of my question yesterday. It concerns the staffing levels at the Alice Springs Hospital. It has been suggested to me, following a conversation between Dr Peterkin and a family, that the reason for not carrying out some practices which might normally have been carried out was that the hospital was short of 2 physicians. The minister has received a letter in relation to the case involved. Without going into too much detail, can he advise whether or not that staff shortage exists, and whether it is placing a heavy workload on other staff?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, there is no doubt that staff of the Alice Springs Hospital have had an extremely heavy workload during the last 12 months. There is no question about that. Rather than discuss vacancies and so forth, we could perhaps provide the honourable member with a detailed briefing. He may find that the details of the particular case to which he refers differ somewhat from what has been put to him.

Mr Collins: I would be more than happy with that.

Mr HATTON: Because the question refers to a particular case, I think that it would be addressed confidentially.

Appropriation for division 70 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 51:

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I have given the minister notice in writing of my first question. There is an overall decrease in allocations to the Museums and Art Galleries Board. For example, there is a decrease of more than 50% under 'other services'. Can the minister explain what services are involved and what impact the decrease will have on the operations of the board?

My second question concerns a matter which was brought to my attention today. If correct, it seems quite extraordinary. Can the minister comment on an assertion that the director of the museum has been in Sulawesi for approximately 3 months, waiting for favourable winds to allow him to sail a prahu to Darwin, knowing that the favourable winds do not commence until the wet season starts? Can the minister comment on whether or not the director's time in Sulawesi is officially classified as working time or whether he is on leave? I would like the minister to comment on that assertion which was made to me today.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the first question referred to the decrease in the 'other services' allocation for the financial year 1990-91. The overall decrease is $228 000. In 1989-90, the government provided funding of $100 000 for a one-off Malaysian Cultural Exchange Program between the Museums and Art Galleries Board and the Malaysian government. This has not been repeated. A further reduction of $128 000 refers to the purchase of acquisitions as collection items for the financial year 1990-91. Because we are in a very tight financial year, we have reduced the funding for acquisition of art works and other museum collection items. Neither of these reductions will have a serious impact on the operations of our museums and art galleries.

As in other portfolios, cuts have been made in discretionary spending whilst maintaining important underlying service delivery functions such as curatorial work, the establishment of the display for the new maritime museum, and the basic research being carried out by research and curatorial staff. The honourable member would be fascinated by some of the work which is being carried out under the auspices of the Museums and Art Galleries Board. We can be very proud of this work.

In respect of the second question, I can advise that the Director of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences has been overseas for some considerable period.

Mr Bailey: 3 months.

Mr HATTON: It may well be 3 months. I cannot recall the exact dates. He did come back to Darwin approximately 2 weeks ago, before returning to Indonesia last weekend. I have asked for a detailed report on the circumstances surrounding this trip and I am looking forward to reading it.

The museum is involved in the construction of a vessel known as a prahu pinisi. It has been named Prahu Pinisi Nusantara. It is larger than the perahu padewakang which came to Darwin as 'Hali Marege' in 1988, as part of the bicentennial celebrations. It is the first prahu pinisi to be constructed by traditional methods since approximately 1930. The last traditional prahu went out of service in 1965. This prahu will become part of our maritime collection and will be a worthy addition to an excellent array of vessels which are relevant to the history of the Northern Territory, including its pre-European history and Macassan contacts. Together with the other vessels, it will form an important part of our gallery.

Earlier in the year, I took the opportunity to accompany the director to south Sulawesi to attend the initial blessing and formal handover of the vessel. The director was to collect the prahu, which was to be in Ambon at the time of the completion of the Darwin-to-Ambon race. At the request of the Indonesian government, it was then to return to south Sulawesi to participate in a specific regatta in Vjung Pandang, following which it was to sail to Darwin. For a range of reasons, including some technical problems with the boat which included the fact that the engine was too small, the prahu was unable to leave harbour.

Mr Reed: It was a whiskey-driven motor.

Mr HATTON: Be that as it may, without acknowledging anything, I can advise that the vessel is on its way to Darwin. It should have left Kupang at the weekend. The director went back to rejoin the vessel in Kupang. It is expected in Darwin within the next fortnight, at which time I am sure that a number of the questions which have been raised will be answered appropriately. Prior to going to the gallery, the vessel will be used for 2 to 3 years, in conjunction with the Darwin Sailing Club, as a training vessel for children. I believe that it will provide an excellent educational experience for those involved.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Probably I will be teaching on it myself.

Mr HATTON: Knowing of your enthusiasm for sailing, Mr Chairman, I am sure that it will be very worthwhile project.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, in the detailed estimates, the program for the museum mentioned the educational display of the collection for the benefit of the public. Could the minister define 'benefit of the public'? Does this mean that we may expect paintings etc from the museum to be displayed in public buildings such as law courts, the new Legislative Assembly building etc? I have been told that many artifacts and other items are stored at the museum because there is no space to display them. I was told that after a craft exhibition a couple of years ago. If that is the case, it seems to be a criminal waste for the government to spend thousands of dollars on these acquisitions only to have them stored away, when they could be on display in public buildings around Darwin.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, it is the board's policy to present its collections to the public in such a manner as to enhance the public's understanding and enjoyment of the exhibits. Given the objective of

establishing and preserving its permanent collections, the safekeeping, conservation and security of these collections should always be a primary consideration. It has been the board's previous experience that displays mounted outside the controlled museum environment have had a deleterious effect on artifacts, especially those of a fine art nature. To this end, it is intended that these collections should generally be displayed in public institutions, namely museums, where their security and safekeeping can be guaranteed. It is true that a number of our exhibits are kept in store. For example, prahus and vessels are stored at the old Parap Theatre. When we have the gallery, we will put them on display.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am not talking about big things like that.

Mr HATTON: We are changing our displays regularly within the museum so that people can continue to obtain new experiences there. That is a recognised and appropriate museum practice.

Further, our museum, like other museums, has many travelling exhibitions around the Northern Territory, Australia and overseas. Such exhibitions are usually funded by outside sources. In my view, our museums and art galleries are the world's experts at finding alternative sources of funds other than government budgets to carry out their work. We obtain excellent value for money for what we put into the museum. Last year, we had an exhibition of Aboriginal art travelling around Europe.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am not talking about that. I am talking about the material that is stored.

Mr HATTON: That is part of what we do. That is why we need additional material to that which is on display. We do need to keep it in a secure area so that it is properly preserved.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I have a further question that I omitted from my initial list of questions. I was approached by the Portuguese Association about a display of maritime artifacts in the museum. The association was interested in this being a permanent or short-term display. In the next year or so, there will be the 400 years or 500 years celebration of Portuguese maritime exploration. Is the minister aware of the interest of the Portuguese community in a display for Portuguese maritime exhibits within the museum, given the historical importance of the Portuguese in this area? Has he taken any steps to encourage artifacts to be placed within the museum?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I have not been approached by the Portuguese. Perhaps the honourable member could refer them either to my office or to the Curator of Maritime Archaeology at the museum. That position has been in existence for 5 weeks. The curator is responsible for setting up the curatorial display at the new gallery and obviously will be involved in any other maritime exhibitions. He would be the appropriate person for those people to contact. I am sure that he would be very interested in examining such a proposal.

Appropriation for division 51 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 85:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the 1990-91 appropriation of $36.211m for the Conservation Commission is a reduction in real terms. It is only 2.8% above the 1989-90 expenditure. Given that the government has declared 2 new

parks, Gregory National Park and the West MacDonnells Park, how will it be able to manage these effectively without an increase in resources? Secondly, what will be the impact of a reduction in the property management vote from $1.664m to $1.519m and a reduction in the repairs and maintenance vote from $0.614m to $0.527m?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the 1989-90 budget allocation of $35.213m included $1m for the Darwin Urban Enhancement Program. This allocation has been transferred to the Department of Transport and Works in the 1990-91 budget under the capital works program. If the transfer of this $1m is taken into account, the real variation between the 1989-90 and 1990-91 budget allocations is $1.998m which represents an increase of 5.8%. In addition, there is an amount that is not budgeted for but which is anticipated to come through the National Soil Conservation Program. I believe it is in the order of about $0.5m. That will add to the funds available in the budget.

Whilst the Gregory National Park has been declared only recently, and we are acquiring additional areas for inclusion in the proposed West MacDonnells National Park, effectively the Conservation Commission has been managing these areas for a number of years. In the case of Gregory National Park, already the commission has an existing staff establishment of 6 positions. The chief district ranger and a plant operator are at Timber Creek. There are 2 rangers at Bullita and 2 at Victoria River. Recruitment to one of the ranger positions at Victoria River has had to be deferred pending the construction of accommodation for which a contract has been let recently by the Department of Transport and Works. Development works within the Gregory National Park are continuing this financial year with the provision of some $550 000 in the capital works program for access roads from Timber Creek to Bullita, from Bullita to Limestone Gorge and from Bullita to Barrabarrac.

At present, the Conservation Commission is negotiating acquisition and joint management agreements in respect of several areas proposed for inclusion in the West MacDonnells National Park. Pending finalisation of these matters, the commission continues to manage the existing reserved areas at Simpsons Gap, Serpentine Gorge, Ellery Creek, Redbank Gorge, Finke Gorge and Ormiston Gorge with the existing 11 ranger staff. In anticipation of a favourable agreement on acquisition and joint management, a provision of some $2.3m has been made in the 1990-91 capital works program for continued development of the Larapinta Trail and proposed developments of Redbank Gorge, Serpentine Gorge, Ellery Creek and the Ochre Pits.

The original property management vote for 1989-90 was $1.444m. The 1990-91 allocation of $1.519m is an increase in budget of $75 000. Expenditure in 1989-90 was $1.664 and was funded by a one-off transfer into property management to cover costs in that year. The commission is working towards managing within the increased budget allocations by exercising strict controls on the utilisation of such services as electricity, lighting, air-conditioning etc. If, in the course of the year, savings are not sufficient to meet property costs, the shortfall will be found from within existing resources and will be addressed at the first budget review.

Although the 1990-91 allocation of $527 000 for repairs and maintenance is $87 000 less than the 1989-90 expenditure, it is also $113 000 more than the original budget allocation for that year. This situation arose because the original allocation proved to be insufficient and a one-off injection of an additional $200 000 was approved. The 1990-91 allocation reflects the need for an increase on last year's original allocation, but does not need

to be as high as the actual expenditure which picked up an accrued backlog of important work.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I refer the minister to page 145 of Budget Paper No 4. Is this a typing error or are there actually 22 staff within the Heritage Unit and only 4 in the Environment Protection Unit? There seems to be a significant decrease in the number of personnel within the Environment Protection Unit and a very significant increase in the staff of the Heritage Unit.

Although the minister appears to be doing more for the environment, the budget for the Environment Protection Unit has been reduced by more than $0.5m. The vote for bushfires protection has been reduced by $126 000 from the previous year. What is the reason for that? There is also a reduction of $326 000 in the vote for parks and reserves for the northern region. As we have heard tonight, the Conservation Commission is taking over the Darwin Botanic Gardens. There does not appear to be any extra allocation for those gardens. I gather that would come out of the allocation to Parks and Reserves North. I would think that the Darwin Botanic Gardens would be quite a major expense for the commission.

Concerns have been expressed also about the reduction of commission services in the Batchelor and Douglas/Daly areas. There is now only 1 ranger to oversee a very large area which is used by tourists. He has responsibility also for monitoring wildlife matters in that area. A number incidents involving the poaching of birds and other fauna in that area have been recorded. The staffing is totally inadequate for an area of that size.

Concern has been expressed by a number of people over possible disturbance of the ghost bat colony, and I ask the minister whether or not any funds are being allocated to examine that matter issue and whether or not the minister has given the mining company permission to go ahead with exploration around that ghost bat colony which is believed to be the largest in Australia and is believed to contain something like 20% of the population of ghost bats known to be in existence?

As I have already mentioned, the staff of the Heritage Unit has increased to 22, and I wonder whether that is in anticipation of the introduction of heritage legislation. We have been waiting for some 10 years for that, and it was introduced finally into the Assembly at the end of last year. Almost 12 months later, after many promises that it would be introduced early in the year and that there would be public workshops to discuss modifications to the legislation, those discussions have never occurred. It appears likely that the honourable minister will introduce the legislation in these sittings with no real chance for public input into the new legislation which he has said is totally different from the draft legislation that he tabled 12 months ago. The public will have no opportunity to comment on that legislation before it is introduced. His argument will be that to allow time for that input will delay further the introduction of the legislation. Why has it taken 12 months to reach this stage with no open public discussion of the changes? We are waiting too for a number of other documents, and the honourable minister may like to tell us if there is any reason why ...

Mr Hatton: Are they budget matters?

Mr BAILEY: Yes. It is because of budget implications that such documents have not been released, and I refer to the mangrove management plan, the coastal management plan and management plans for a significant

number of parks and reserves. Some time ago, I received from his department a copy of a proposed time line for the release of those management plans. It seems unlikely that the honourable minister will be able to maintain the time line that he has given. With the reduction of staff numbers in the Environment Protection Unit to 4, it is not clear whether they will be able to produce those management plans.

The last question I would like to put to the honourable minister relates to the ongoing issue of sustainable development with the harvesting of lancewood and gutta percha that the honourable minister spoke about recently as being one of the best projects he has ever seen. He has commented repeatedly that the project was a joint environmentally assessed project by the CCNT and the federal government. I would like to read a statement from the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and the Territories. It is from a letter referring to the export of lancewood and gutta percha from the Northern Territory. The last paragraph says:

> It should be noted that, as the above proposals were not referred to this department as proposed actions in accordance with the administrative procedures under the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1975, the comments above should not be regarded as comments following assessments of the proposals under these procedures.

In other words, Mr Chairman, we have been working under the assumption, introduced by the minister, that the assessment of those proposals was based on a joint assessment by the federal government and his department when, in fact, they were not. The assessment was made only by his department.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, bushfires protection is down $126 000 due mainly to a reduction in the capital items program. The Darwin Botanic Gardens is not under Parks North. A provision of $644 000 has been made under flora and fauna. A cut of $0.5m in the environment area is because, previously, it included $1m for the Darwin urban enhancement program, which has now gone across to the Department of Transport and Works capital works program. If my mathematics are correct, that is the increase of $0.5m in the funding of that.

With respect to the Batchelor and Douglas/Daly area, that has been included now with Litchfield, resulting in a saving of 1 ranger overall, and managing Batchelor, Pine Creek and Douglas/Daly. The ranger has been brought into town.

With respect to the average paid staff figures shown at page 145, I must advise that the computer had a hiccup when those figures were being produced and, for the benefit of the honourable member, I will read out the correct figures. I will give the budget paper figure first and the actual figure immediately after that. They read from the Executive Secretary down: 64 should be 14, 9 should be 63 and 14 should be 8. For park management: 41 should be 80, 34 is correct, 80 should be 58, 35 should be 34, 58 should be 40, 49 should be 48, 19 should be 67, 65 should be 22, 4 should be 20, 22 should be 4, 3 is correct, and 8 is correct. The total should be 503.

Only the MSL numbers, which do not affect the budget figures, were in error. Clearly, there was a computer hiccup, and we can see transpositions of numbers all over the place there. We have been conscious of it and those figures will be adjusted formally at the time of the next budget review. The error does not affect operations at the average staffing levels. If the

honourable member will review those figures, he will find that they are now consistent with the views and initiatives that I have been expressing consistently through this budget and the direction we are taking with the Conservation Commission.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, my first question to the minister is to ask him to explain, in the park management activity relating to the Conservation Commission, the definition of a park at Litchfield/Daly, and the Vernon district. With regard to that, I have heard only the Vernon district used as a description of a bushfires area. There is also the Alligator/Arnhem, which is easy to understand. Are these existing parks or proposed parks, and where are they?

Mr HATTON: They are parks, reserves and areas under conservation management. The question I was given asked for details ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Tell me where they are. That is all.

Mr HATTON: The Litchfield/Daly district is Litchfield Park, Daly River Nature Park, Douglas Hot Springs Nature Park, Butterfly Gorge Nature Park, Umbrawarra Gorge Nature Park, Manton Dam and Ooloo Crossing. The Vernon district is the Casuarina Coastal Reserve, Holmes Jungle Nature Park, Howard Springs Nature Park, Howard Springs Forest Park, Howard Springs Hunting Reserve, Malacca Swamp - which is proposed to become a sanctuary - Black Jungle, Lambells Lagoon, Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve, Harrison Dam, Marrakai Fauna and Flora Reserve, Cape Hotham Forestry Reserve - including Escape Cliffs Historic Reserve - Cape Hotham Conservation Reserve, Leaning Tree Nature Park, Berry Springs Nature Park, Blackmore River Conservation Reserve, Indian Island Forest Reserve and the Vernon Islands Conservation Area. The Alligator/Arnhem district is Mary River Conservation Reserve, Mary River Crossing Reserve, Gurig National Park, Cobourg Peninsula, Cobourg Marine Park, Murganella Sanctuary, Gove, Cape Arnhem, Wildman River, Shady Camp, Swim Creek Rainforest, Alligator Lagoon and Sampans Creek. Point Stuart includes Stuart's Tree Historical Reserve.

The second question asked for details of budget allocations for the Territory Wildlife Park.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I have that information. I asked the minister a third question. What budget allocation has been set aside for management programs for Northern Territory fauna to enable sustainable farming of species leading to possible export interests?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, before the products of native animals can be commercially exported from Australia, a management program for the species must be prepared and approved by the Commonwealth government. The Northern Territory Crocodile Management Program has been such an approved program since 1986, enabling the industry to develop a permanent export market. During 1991, the government will be spending $360 000 on projects related directly to the development and management of this most important Australian wildlife utilisation program.

A program for the management of magpie geese is about to be submitted to the Commonwealth for approval. This follows surveys and ecological research on the species over a number of years, which indicates that the species can be utilised commercially for both export and domestic markets. In 1991, $50 000 will be spent on further research and monitoring of magpie geese and on encouraging development of a small industry based on raising geese for restaurants.

The commission and the Department of Industries and Development are midway through a planned 3-year project to research sea snakes, with the objective of developing a management program which will enable sea snakes, caught as a by-product of the prawn industry, to be traded on export and domestic markets. In 1990-91, $50 000 will be spent on this project.

A large number of research programs are being conducted by the commission with the general aim of obtaining more detailed information on particular species, such as the northern long-necked turtle. Although none of these is aimed specifically at developing commercially utilisable programs, the information gained will be useful in the future should markets be developed for these species.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I would just remind the minister of the ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: I remind the honourable member that standing orders were changed to limit speakers to 2 questions.

Mr Bailey: I have asked only one.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Clerk advises me that, in fact, you have had 2 questions on this division. Indeed, 3 questions have been asked by the opposition on this division - 1 by the member for MacDonnell and 2 by the member for Wanguri.

Mr Hatton: I will answer anyway, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I believe that the minister may wish to add to his reply on questions asked so far.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I apologise to the honourable member. I have not yet responded to some of the questions he raised in respect of heritage legislation.

I will not deal with this issue in great depth except to say that every undertaking made in respect of heritage legislation has been met. A public meeting was held in January. I wrote to the member in February and outlined the amendment procedures that we would be following. We have followed those procedures and have been engaged in extensive discussion and consultation. I have before me a proposed bill. It has not yet been referred to Cabinet but, when that process is complete, it will be ready to introduce. I have said in this House previously that my objective is for the bill to be introduced during the October sittings of this parliament, and I am still well within that time frame. Indeed, it is possible that I will have a chance to introduce it earlier.

I am quite happy to defend the work that has been done in respect of gutta percha and lancewood. The Australian Conservation Foundation and its running dogs have been engaged in an outlandish beat-up. To use photographs of clear felling of trees in southern forests as an example of individual tree selection in the Northern Territory is outrageous. I am happy to defend the environmental assessment relating to this activity. A very conservative program has been implemented. It includes extensive research requirements and on-ground supervision by Conservation Commission staff of any felling operations. The timber company is required to provide funding for ongoing research into the species by the Conservation Commission. It is a fine example of how properly sustainable development can be accomplished.

Federal government export permits have been issued for gutta percha and lancewood. We contributed to the Commonwealth environmental assessment. We are not sure of the relationship between federal government departments in this matter. Perhaps one department is not talking to another. We are of the view that the Commonwealth is satisfied about the environmental aspects and has issued export licences on that basis. I stand by the environmental assessment, and I say again that this is a prime example of responsible sustainable development of an abundant natural resource.

Appropriation for division 85 agreed to.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION
Price of Petroleum Products in Remote Areas

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that:

(1) this Assembly -

(a) note with alarm the large increase in the price of petroleum products resulting from the Middle East crisis;

(b) invite the Commonwealth government to give urgent consideration to the consequential and inequitable burden placed on people in remote areas and particularly the Northern Territory;

(c) call on the Prime Minister to have the user-pays component of the inland freight costs on petroleum products under the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme lowered from its current level of 12.7¢ per litre to the former rate of 1¢ per litre in recognition of the disadvantages suffered and lack of alternative energy sources available to Australians living and working at a distance from major population centres; and

(2) the Speaker forward the terms of the resolution to the Prime Minister forthwith.

This subject was raised in question time last Tuesday. By way of interjection in this Chamber and in a press release, the member for MacDonnell, in his capacity as Acting Leader of the Opposition at that time, indicated a willingness to debate the matter to determine whether an agreed position could be reached in relation to the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme.

We have spoken briefly about the matter this morning and I understand that the opposition has some objection to the wording of the motion in relation to the 12.7¢ per litre and the former rate of 1¢ per litre. I have been offered an amendment to that form of words, but it is not acceptable to this side of the House. I will explain why. I have a list of figures, which I now table. These figures give some examples of what needs to be done to reduce fuel prices in a range of selected Territory centres and help to indicate why the user-pays component should be reduced from 12.7¢ to 1¢.

We are not asking for a great deal in this regard. The Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme now applies only to places where freight costs exceed 12.7¢ per litre. That does not apply to many places in Australia. For example, in Alice Springs, the user-pays component is 5.8¢. That is below 12.7¢, therefore the subsidy does not apply. However, it does apply at Bartalumba Bay, where the user-pays component is 24¢. The scheme costs the Australian government approximately $6m to $7m a year. We are not talking about big money.

If the scheme were changed in the terms of the motion, the cost throughout Australia would be about $170m. To put that in perspective, the federal government is currently receiving at least $2m per day, and it could

be $3m per day by the end of the week, as a result of increased fuel prices. To date, the Commonwealth has received a windfall of about $700m. That is a substantial amount in comparison with the $170m which would be involved if changes were made to the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme in the terms of this motion. When the opposition has had a chance to study the figures which I have tabled, I hope that we will be able to reach agreement on paragraph 1(c). It is absolutely paramount that the House reach a unanimous decision on this matter. I ask members on the crossbenches, as well as members of the opposition, to give the matter careful consideration because of the plight in which people in the Northern Territory and all remote areas of Australia now find themselves.

The Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme has been in existence for many years. In fact, the member for Braitling tells me that the freight component used to be threepence a gallon. The level of subsidy has gradually diminished over the years, and I will give some examples in a moment. We are certainly not asking for new legislation. The federal government could act on this immediately. In 1980, the user-pays component on freight was 0.44¢ per litre. It rose to 1¢ in 1982, 1.1¢ in 1983, 1.2¢ in 1984, 5.2¢ in 1985, 5.7¢ in 1986, 6.2¢ in 1987, 10.2¢ later in 1987, 10.9¢ in 1988, 11.7¢ in 1989, and 12.7¢ since then. That means, of course, that a place like Alice Springs, with a freight component of 5.8¢ per litre, is ineligible for the subsidy.

Let us look at some examples of what would happen under the price structure that we are proposing, with a 1¢ per litre user-pays component. In Alice Springs, the freight differential is 5.8¢. Therefore, the subsidy would be 4.8¢ per litre. With the 1¢ per litre arrangement, subsidies would apply at the following levels: Tennant Creek, 2.9¢; Katherine, 0.6¢; Jabiru, 1¢; Elliott, 5.9¢; Rabbit Flat, 10.8¢; and Kulgera, 4.1¢.

Mr Speaker, I table a document containing examples of reduced subsidy levels over a number of years.

I will continue to list the subsidies which would apply under the arrangement proposed in the motion: Milingimbi, 20.4¢; Barrow Creek 6.4¢; and, last but not least, Yulara, 9.2¢. We believe that such levels would be fair and equitable and, on that basis, the suggested measures would cost only about $170m.

The Chief Minister has written to the Prime Minister concerning this matter. I would like to read the letter into Hansard:

My dear Prime Minister

I have become increasingly concerned in recent weeks about the continuing rise in international crude oil prices and the impact of these upon the lives of everyday Australians, particularly those living in remote areas. While the oil industry has been talking about the psychological impact on the community of petrol prices breaking the 80¢ per litre barrier, this is already a fact of life in many communities. Prices there are already in excess of 90¢ per litre and for some it has in fact exceeded $1 per litre.

Such high prices are not difficult to envisage with freight costs to such communities often 8¢ to 10¢ per litre and with the purchase price of petrol from port bulk storage now greater than 70¢ per litre. I have been advised that tourists are returning home rather than continuing their trips, because of the high cost

of fuel, and retail outlets are suffering a market reduction in sales volumes.

I believe it is timely, therefore, for your government to consider specific relief for these communities. This can be achieved through the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme, which your government has all but removed since 1983. During that time, your government has allowed the user-pays part of inland freight costs to increase from 1¢ per litre to currently 12.7¢. Only the most remote communities now benefit from this scheme, the main recipients in the Northern Territory being Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land.

The funding for a revitalised and strengthened freight subsidy scheme could come from the additional revenue that your government is receiving as a result of the Middle East crisis, particularly in crude oil excise. While some may argue that this is an unreasonable request, I believe it to be equitable, given that most inland communities pay far more fuel excise than their city counterparts because of their greater reliance on liquid fuels.

Evidence of this is clearly seen from the fuel consumption figures for each of the states and the Northern Territory. These figures show that, per capita, the Territory uses far more liquid fuels than any of the states and therefore also pays far more excise.

I urge you to give favourable consideration to this request. Failure to do so will lead to further social and economic hardship in depressed rural areas of Australia. In view of the national importance of this matter, I have taken the liberty of copying this letter to each of the state Premiers seeking their support. My Minister for Mines and Energy, Mr Coulter, has also written to his colleagues in your government, Mr Kerin and Mr Griffiths.

At this stage, it is worth talking about the pricing structure for fuel and its effects in terms of who gets what. One almost needs to have a Reuters screen to keep up with the average price of petrol in Singapore at the moment. Based on today's price and the average price during the past 4 days, the Singapore price is currently about 35.2¢ per litre. To that must be added: 0.3¢ for shipping and insurance; 7.4¢ for oil company terminal costs; and 24.9¢ for the federal government excise which is indexed to the consumer price index with increases in February and August of each year. That gives a total of 67.8¢.

We realise that times are tough, but they will get much tougher under this scenario. Only last Tuesday, the Attorney-General and I had lunch with Bob Rose from the Barkly Homestead. He was quite frank with us about the cost of running diesel generators there. Honourable members should be aware of the add-on costs faced by these roadside stops. In many cases, they have liquor licences. They have to provide 24-hour fuel services, which means that somebody has to sleep beside the bell at night. That imposes a big cost burden. They have to supply their own electricity. The Barkly Homestead requires 3 generator sets and anyone who has lived with them will know what a burden they can be. He also has a spare generator and alternators in a powerhouse which has the capacity to produce about 250 MW. It is burning up fuel at a very rapid rate. That electricity is generated for pumps, air-conditioning, toilets and everything which must be supplied in some of these remote areas. Dunmarra, Threeways, Rabbit Flats, Kulgera etc all find themselves in the same predicament.

Apart from their overheads being crippling, their sales volumes would be lower than, for example, those at Ampol Jingili. In terms of fuel sales, they do not have the cash flow that would occur in a normal suburban service station. As a result, they are in trouble. The only way they can survive is to increase the prices to reflect their costs. It is not simply a matter of petrol prices increasing at the bowser. They are also using huge amounts of oil for generators. Members will note that we use the expression 'petroleum products' in this motion. We are referring to petroleum products across the board.

I do not think that there is any need for me to use up my time on this subject. Members on this side of the House have discussed the issue at some length. I think that I have set the parameters of what we are talking about, and why it is important to have the 12.7¢ to 1¢ margin. I think I have demonstrated the need for that. I would like unanimous support for this motion as it stands and I will be disappointed if that were not forthcoming. If members opposite have another scheme or they cannot support this proposal, I am sorry. I really must insist that we provide the Prime Minister, as we have in the letter, with the margins that we believe should apply in this case.

Mr Bell: Where do you get your figure of $170m?

Mr COULTER: Take the other figure that I provided and increase it in terms of dollars of the day. We have added an inflator to bring it to today's figures. Let us say that it is $200m. If it is less than $700m, you are still in business. Let us say that it is $300m and that is still only half of the windfall. In this case, we are talking about all Australians, not only people in the Northern Territory. We are talking about all Australian remote areas. Even if it is $300m, which is double what I suggested it is, it is still only half of the windfall that the federal government is making out of this. I do not think that figure is very relevant.

I will leave the Minister for Transport and Works to talk about the cost of freight and the cost of servicing roads etc in the Northern Territory. I will leave it at that. We support the motion wholeheartedly. As I said on Tuesday, this could be enacted tomorrow. It requires only the stroke of a pen. We are not talking about new legislation. It is something that the federal government could do tomorrow. We believe it is a real option for it if it is fair dinkum in recognising the plight of Australians in remote areas, not those who are situated 50 km from the Sydney or Melbourne GPOs. We are talking about the people in the rest of Australia, particularly those people north of the 26th parallel. They number some 1 million people who now produce $18 900m-worth of export wealth for this country. If it is fair dinkum, the federal government should have no problems in accepting the proposals in the Chief Minister's letter or the terms of this resolution which will be forwarded to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, at the outset, let me point out to the Minister for Mines and Energy that the opposition is sympathetic to the spirit of this motion. However, we have reservations about the figures. I really do not have to go any further than the figures tabled by the Minister for Mines and Energy himself. It is a very hastily prepared and handwritten document.

Mr Coulter: I gave you notice of it this morning.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that and I appreciate the spirit in which this motion has been brought forward. However, in order to support a specific figure in respect of the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme, we need a little more evidence than that. The opposition has reservations in respect of paragraph 1(c). I would like to circulate an amendment, which I do not intend to move at this stage. I am quite happy to indicate that the opposition is very interested in the figure of $700m which is the projected but uncosted estimate of the crude oil excise increase that the federal government will receive. That is 3 or 4 times the putative cost of this measure that the minister has proposed. I use the word 'putative' advisedly because I do not believe that there is a sufficient level of clarity in the figures that the minister has submitted.

There are a number of points that I would like to make. The minister referred to the mechanics of his scheme. The 12.7¢ per litre, the point at which the petroleum products freight subsidy cuts in, is currently too high. Many of the places currently affected are referred to in his handout: Alice Springs with a 5.8¢ per litre freight cost, Tennant Creek with 2.9¢ etc. These are unaffected by the present level of the scheme. I accept the logic of his scheme.

I have had photocopied a graph that will probably be of assistance in explaining what I think needs to be calculated in this regard. There are 3 curves on the graph, one of which represents the recent Northern Territory price increase. The bottom undotted line indicates the increase in the capital city prices. There is also a dotted line which indicates a parallel increase on top of capital city prices.

This motion refers to inequitability. I am concerned that the inequitability that we are referring to has not been calculated. This leads me to the second point that the minister referred to. He talked about the reintroduction of this scheme. I need to point out to the minister that this scheme has been going for a long time. He is not proposing a reintroduction at all. He is proposing a mathematical alteration to the scheme that may have some benefits, but it is the belief of the opposition that those benefits, as well as being looked at from a regional Territory perspective, have to be looked at from a national perspective, as they have been, and the minister well knows this. I was very surprised that the honourable minister did not mention the Prices Surveillance Authority's exercises in this regard. I am not sure whether the minister has studied the background documents on this issue, which I have had the opportunity to do this morning. However, I think that, in respect of the position the opposition is adopting in this debate, it is important that we all do so. I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Prices Surveillance Authority, its concerns about petrol pricing and the pricing of petroleum products generally in the Territory, and the minister's submissions to that body.

In December 1989, the Prices Surveillance Authority prepared a report which I am sure is available to honourable members in the Parliamentary Library. It was an inquiry into petroleum product prices pursuant to the Prices Surveillance Act 1983. I will ignore any sort of grandstanding on the fact that it took a Hawke Labor government to reintroduce what had been dismantled by a Fraser Liberal government. In this debate, it is appropriate that we strive for bipartisanship and therefore I pass over that with slight reference.

Page 95 of that report refers to a study of Darwin petrol prices. It refers to a number of issues including the complexity of petrol pricing. I

would like to draw attention to one of the concerns of the Prices Surveillance Authority that is mentioned at page 96 of that report. The Prices Surveillance Authority refers to an internal staff report that, at the report date, was being considered by the authority. It referred, inter alia, to 'retail price competition and the influence of oil company commission agent sites'. That internal staff report made an observation that a 2¢ per litre reduction in the authority's wholesale maximum price for petrol in August 1989 was not reflected in retail prices at oil company commission agent sites in Darwin. When the Minister for Mines and Energy referred to the plight of the roadhouse operator at the Barkly Homestead, Bob Rose, and to the Jingili Service Station, he gave the impression that the only downward impact on petrol prices is a reduction in the level at which the petroleum products freight subsidy cuts in. Of course, as this report indicates, that is not the case. A large number of issues impact on the retail price of petrol.

I believe it is important to draw to the attention of honourable members the fact that this is not a simple issue. Indeed, it is a complex issue and it is deserving of greater consideration than simply trying to hold a gun to the head of the federal government - or perhaps a peashooter to its ankle as the federal government might think of it, but I will pursue the first metaphor - and demanding the level of 1¢ per litre.

It is for that reason that I have circulated this graph. I am not seeking to move an amendment at this stage because the Leader of the Opposition has indicated his concern about some of the issues raised by the minister. Before this motion is put, we would seek possibly to amend our amendment. I point out that the chief aspect of our proposed amendment is to urge the federal government to review the scheme without putting particular figures on it. I think that that is reasonable. That is the reason why I have circulated this graph. I do not believe that we have established the quotient of inequitability to which the motion refers. I think that it is important for us to establish the quotient of inequitability before we put a particular figure on it, and I am not convinced that there is appropriate information before the Assembly to enable us to do that.

The honourable minister referred to a letter sent by the Chief Minister to the Prime Minister referring to the impact of these dramatic and unforeseeable increases on the average Australian. He referred also to the funding from the additional crude oil excise. In a very broad-brush fashion in his letter, he said that there is a greater impact on remote area Australians because of their greater use per capita of fuel. Instinctively, I agree with the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy, but I think that we need to make a more detailed submission than simply putting forward an assertion that that is the case. From the letter that the minister quoted, that certainly did not seem to be occurring.

I point out that the Territory government made a submission to the Prices Surveillance Authority Inquiry that I referred to earlier. In that context, the government pointed out our special position in comparison to much of Australia and that much of our petrol, avgas etc is sourced as imports direct from Singapore. The honourable minister referred to that. Various issues were raised in the Territory government's submission to the Prices Surveillance Authority and I am surprised that the honourable minister made no reference to the Prices Surveillance Authority.

A further issue that the honourable minister referred to in passing was the pricing problems involved with some outlets that have a lower throughput

than others. In this context, he was referring to Bob Rose at the Barkly Homestead. He said that, because an isolated place like that has a lower throughput, it has to work on higher margins to maintain profitability than does an outlet that has a much higher throughput. That argument has to be accepted. In fact, to my mind, that is an argument in favour of the opposition's approach to this issue. That is an argument in favour of urging the federal government to take into consideration the overall complexities rather than our nailing our colours to the mast of one particular proposal.

Mr Coulter: The Whitlam government abolished this. The Hawke government has diminished it until it is ineffective. We do not have much to go on, given its performance.

Mr BELL: The honourable minister may have been working, but he certainly was not listening. I pointed out that the Prices Surveillance Authority was dismantled by the Fraser government.

Mr Coulter: Fraser reintroduced it after Whitlam. Menzies introduced it in the first place.

Mr BELL: I was not going to become involved in kicking federal governments of whatever persuasion, Mr Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I am interested only in ensuring that Territorians pay a fair, bearable and responsible price for fuel at the pump. If the Minister for Mines and Energy would let me get on with it, I would be able to further my arguments in that regard.

The Minister for Mines and Energy is aware also that the petroleum franchise fees were increased by 47% in the budget. This government collected petroleum franchise fees of $13.535m in 1989-90. The projected revenue collection for 1990-91 is $19.896m which is a 47% increase. I would have thought that, if they were fair dinkum about doing something about the plight of Territorians ...

Mr Coulter: We are talking about Australians.

Mr BELL: This is the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, Barry.

If the government were fair dinkum about doing something about the prices that Territorians are paying at the pump, it would reconsider this 47% increase in petroleum franchise fees. I am not suggesting that this takes the ground out from under its feet, but I am suggesting that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If the Territory government wants to urge the federal government to forgo, as I believe it should, revenue that might have flowed to it, perhaps the Territory government ought to do likewise. I simply say that a 47% increase in petroleum franchise fees in a climate that is characterised by these outrageous increases does not indicate to me, and I am sure it will not indicate to Territorians, a conviction that this government is completely patent in the representations that it is making to the federal government. As I say, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Mr Coulter: The federal government's is a windfall. It did not even budget for it. At least we budgeted for it.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, we are not talking about windfalls or whatever.

Mr Coulter: Yes, we are. $2m a day.

Mr BELL: No. We are talking about the plight of Territorians for whom the cost of petrol has been jacked up extraordinarily. I have not moved the amendment because I believe that there should be some mention in it of the $700m crude oil excise increase that the federal government is receiving. It should include something like 'bearing in mind the receipt of increases in crude oil excise levies'. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss that further over lunch rather than put it forward at this stage.

To sum up, the operation of this scheme over the last 12 years has been various. It has been considered by the Prices Surveillance Authority. I have demonstrated that the pricing of petroleum products and specifically the cost that Territorians pay at the bowser for petrol is subject to a number of considerations and that the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy is only one of those. The attitude of the refiners, the attitude of the retailers, as well as the attitude of the federal government, needs to be taken into consideration.

I think I have also established that the petroleum franchise fees, that are so dramatically increased in the budget, cannot be ignored in the context of a debate such as this. I believe that we should be urging the federal government to review this scheme in order to make a just sharing of the burden of the Middle East crisis on Australians possible. Patently, that is not the case at the moment, and I hope that, from this debate, we will obtain some sort of just outcome.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I would not have thought it necessary to think too much at all about supporting this motion. It is quite clear that this is the barest minimum that we should be doing. However, it is a positive initial step to take. Instead, all we have heard from the member for MacDonnell is a repetition of the typical Labor stance of having another inquiry and calling for a report. For a change, let us make a firm commitment to support something which is patently needed and which can be implemented immediately. The scheme was introduced in 1965 by then Prime Minister Menzies. In 1974, it was abolished by the socialist government under Whitlam and reintroduced by Fraser in 1978. In 1983, the scheme was abolished again by Prime Minister Hawke.

The amount of money involved is chickenfeed. It is next to nothing compared to the windfalls that the federal government is now gaining as a consequence of the Middle East crisis. We are told that it could be as much as $2m a day. In itself, that would more than compensate for this scheme. However, when we look at the other $6000m that the federal government collects every year through the fuel levy, of which less than 25% is returned to the road system, it fades into insignificance. This should not need to be debated. It is an immediate step that should merit bipartisan support rather than a call for another inquiry.

This is no attempt to hold a gun to the head of the federal government, or a peashooter to its ankles as the honourable member for MacDonnell chose to put it. It is true that we are small fish politically. The Territory has only 1 seat in the House of Representatives and an ineffective member who finds it all too easy to burn up $100 000-worth of flying time for himself alone. He did not even take the dog with him. We have had enough of this automatic defence of the federal government. Yesterday, when we tried to raise the consequences of the escalating fuel costs, I pointed out

to honourable members that the immediate increase in land freight costs projected by people in industry in Darwin at the moment is 10%. That is not where it will finish; it is 10% now. I was berated for raising once again this other big shadow of the $40 000 registration fees and the other 9.4¢ a litre federal fuel tax that will be added to the 24.9¢ fuel tax, out of which the federal government will provide some 6¢ or 7¢ for the environment. That 6¢ or 7¢ represents $1500m per annum and therefore the amount we are asking for - $170m - is chickenfeed. It is clear that the Northern Territory and other areas of Australia will be affected to a greater degree.

In Sydney, it does not matter because people can catch the heavily subsidised train or the subsidised bus to work. If they want to send a package out to Dubbo or down to Wagga or wherever, they put it on the train. That service is subsidised to the tune of $3000m per annum. That subsidy is to be added to now under this new you-beaut Inter-State Commission's road recovery report - the report that the Leader of the Opposition himself said ought to be supported. The railways will get a 24¢ a litre fuel subsidy. We are talking about 2¢ or 3¢ or 4¢ and, in extreme cases such as Bartalumba Bay, 20¢. However, not an eyelid is batted for the millions of litres of diesel that will be subsidised at 24¢ a litre for those that are privileged to have a railway.

Mr Smith: This is a well-researched proposition that you blokes have.

Mr FINCH: It is an immediate step. The Leader of the Opposition says that this is well-researched. It is a proposition.

Mr Smith: Do you realise that we will be subsidising the cost of petrol in Canberra?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, to pick up the interjection by the Leader of the Opposition ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works will be heard in silence.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition suggests that, because Canberra might receive a 0.5¢ subsidy or something like that, we should abandon this proposal.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr FINCH: I do not know whether Canberra will receive a 0.5¢ per litre subsidy, but it takes only a little logic to realise that the people who will be most adversely affected are those in the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition can be as rude as he likes and disregard the facts as much as he likes, but that will not change anything at the next election. It will not change a thing.

Mr Smith: I am sure that subsidising Canberra fuel prices will be a really big selling point. That is terrific.

Mr FINCH: This is his mentality: mickey mouse politics and mickey mouse economics. The Leader of the Opposition interjects continually with his inane economic statements.

Mr Smith: This is a big new breakthrough.

Mr FINCH: It is time that he shut his mouth, opened his ears and gained a smidgin of knowledge.

Currently, average road freight costs to Brisbane are running at $330 per tonne. A 10% increase will add $33. Registration costs are rising and indexed federal government levies will drive costs up further. In spite of that, we hear the member for MacDonnell squawking about a 1¢ increase in this government's fixed, non-escalating fuel levy.

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr FINCH: The member for Nhulunbuy is no mathematics genius. He should open his ears and listen too. He ought to be thinking more of his own community which will probably be among those to suffer most in this whole debacle.

Mr Leo: We bring our fuel in direct, you dummy.

Mr FINCH: The 5¢ per litre which this government collects is returned to the road system. The federal government rips more than $6m per annum out of us, but only 25% of that goes back into the road system. Therein lies the problem. The only advice we can give Territorians at the moment, other than to reflect on the incompetence of the opposition's mickey mouse economics, is to advise them to buy lockable fuel caps. The way petrol prices are going, they will need them.

Mr Leo: Dear, oh dear.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I look forward to hearing some constructive input from the member for Nhulunbuy. Hopefully, he will spend his time more productively at lunch than he does usually and will come back with some sensible, supportive comments.

We are faced with massive increases which affect all Territorians, some worse than others, and every tourist travelling to and from the Territory. Holding another review is not the way to go.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this very important topic. I think everybody who buys fuel, not only in the Territory but throughout Australia, is concerned about what is happening. It is one of those powerless situations where the decisions are being made by people in the Middle East. The influence that Australia can have on that situation is very limited. Members on this side of the House accept the point that there has been a dramatic increase in petrol prices and that it is having an undue effect on at least the psychology of people in Australia. I took the trouble to check today with one of the major petrol wholesalers who said that, as yet, they have not noticed any decline in fuel sales in the Northern Territory. After speaking to people at the consoles, his view was that most people were accepting the situation. I think that is probably a fairly reasonable summary of what is happening. People do not like it. People ...

Mr Coulter: It is a bit like beer.

Mr SMITH: Yes. People do not like the extra price increases but they recognise that the reasons for the increases in price are largely outside

the control of anybody in the Northern Territory, and they will continue paying for their petrol.

However, having said that, we recognise that there are particular problems in remote communities throughout Australia and, of course, the Deputy Chief Minister has indicated the problems that the President of the Tennant Creek Branch of the Country Liberal Party has in his operation at Barkly Homestead.

Mr Coulter: Let us talk about him as an operator. He went out there and risked everything he has to establish that place.

Mr SMITH: He is a roadhouse operator, and a nice bloke by the way. The minister referred to the problems that he is having as a result of these rapid increases in fuel prices.

Mr Ede: Like many pastoralists.

Mr Coulter: But pastoralists receive about $78m a year in subsidies, including BTEC.

Mr Ede: That is not a subsidy. That is compensation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable member for Stuart, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make a contribution to this debate. He does not need you to interrupt.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we have considerable sympathy for the broad proposition advanced by the government, but we cannot support the solution that has been proposed because, like all ad hoc solutions, this is full of problems when examined closely. It does not tackle the issue of high petrol prices in remote communities in a realistic way. I refer the honourable minister to paragraph (b), which refers to the consequential and inequitable burden placed on people in remote areas, and paragraph (c) which refers to the need to look after Australians living and working at a distance from major population centres. Paragraph (c) advocates a petrol subsidy that will impact anywhere that is beyond an hour's drive of a major capital city. I think that is rather difficult to support when we are talking about the burden placed on people in remote areas and people living and working at a distance from major population centres.

We took the trouble to obtain some figures. In New South Wales, for example, 432 places located outside of the major metropolitan regions, the Sydney Newcastle Wollongong axis, would be eligible. People who are living in the remote areas of the Latrobe Valley of Victoria would be eligible for a petrol subsidy. People doing it hard on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland would be after a petrol subsidy under this proposition. What I think is particularly apt - or inept perhaps - about this motion is that people in Canberra will be eligible for a petrol subsidy of 0.8¢ per litre. We obtained a costing of that. In round figures, the cost to the taxpayers of Australia of subsidising the people of Canberra under this proposition would be $2m a year.

The federal government will be asked by this inept and ill-conceived motion to support a proposition that will give people living in Canberra a petrol subsidy. You can imagine how that will go down in the rest of Australia. You can imagine the support that the federal government will get for those long-suffering people living in the remote area of the ACT when they wholeheartedly take up the proposition advanced by the Northern

Territory government that there should be a subsidy of 1¢ per litre for freight costs. The proposition is a nonsense. I must say that it is a new concept that the CLP in the Northern Territory is advocating that we should give Canberra a subsidy. We always break new ground in the Northern Territory and that is new ground indeed - a subsidy for our long-suffering, remote, isolated cousins in the ACT. It really makes my heart bleed that we can spend $2m giving them a subsidy when there are people at Rabbit Flat and other places who might want a subsidy. This proposition is badly thought out. It fails to come to grips with the problem and it is enormously expensive. The figure of $170m is nowhere near what it will cost. I admit that it is not possible to determine a cost at this stage, and that is one of the reasons why we are not prepared to support a particular figure. On the information available, it cannot be costed.

One lesson is that no one knows how many people are affected. I would suspect that, throughout Australia, a minimum of 2 or 3 million people would be affected by this proposition. The government, with its very simplistic approach to economics, has returned to a situation which existed 10 years ago, when the freight component was 1¢ per litre, and has transposed that into current day terms. The problem with that is that, 10 years ago, 1¢ would take you a considerable way from the major centres. It would take you beyond Canberra, Latrobe Valley or the Sunshine Coast and well beyond the major regional centres like Bendigo. It would provide a realistic base for coming up with a sum of $150m. Since then, 1¢ takes you approximately an hour's drive out of the major capital centres. For example, Euroa is over 1¢ and that is about an hour's drive out of Melbourne.

Mr Reed: Are you going to talk about the Northern Territory at all in this debate?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am.

As a result of this government's ineptitude and inability to understand the basics of what this debate is about, a proposition is being advanced that everywhere an hour's drive outside a capital city in Australia should receive a petrol subsidy. Through this motion, this government is supposed to be protecting the interests of the people in remote locations. It does not make sense. If this parliament is silly enough to pass it and send it off to the Prime Minister, it will make us a laughing-stock. The Prime Minister will have to come to grips with the fact that the representatives of the people of the Northern Territory want to provide a petrol subsidy to Canberra, to the Latrobe Valley, to the Sunshine Coast and to all those other places that are more than an hour's drive out of a capital city. Quite rightly, he will dismiss this as a piece of nonsense and a piece of misguided political electioneering. The result will be bad for the Northern Territory because the ineptness of this motion means that the Prime Minister will be able to throw it into the wastepaper bin. He will be able to say: 'Those people in the Northern Territory are crazy. They want me to give a subsidy to people in Canberra'. He will not get the message that should be coming out of this parliament - that we do have a real problem in remote communities in the Northern Territory, that we do have remote communities which are rapidly looking at $1 plus for a litre of petrol and that there is a responsibility on the federal government to have a look at its freight equalisation scheme to see if it can be improved.

That is not too difficult a proposition to advance. I would have thought that we could have gone about this debate in an intelligent bipartisan manner and have come up with something that would persuade the Prime Minister that there is a united concern here about petrol prices and

that he should examine the matter. When he receives this and when his experts tell him what the impact ...

Mr Finch: Do you want to make it 2 hours out of Canberra?

Mr Coulter: Or 3 or 4.

Mr Finch: Give us a suggestion.

Mr SMITH: When he realises its implications, he will consign it to the wastepaper bin, and the people of the Northern Territory will be the worse off. A good case has been ruined by this inept motion.

Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'Prime Minister' in paragraph 1(c) and inserting the following in their stead:

> to review the Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme to ensure that the dramatic increases in the price of petroleum products impacts fairly on all Australians, including those in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in remote Australia.

The stupidity of trying to put a particular figure into the motion has been revealed by the government's effort to do that. As I have said already, 1¢ takes you an hour's drive out of Darwin. For the life of me, I do not think anyone would describe that as a remote area.

Mr Finch: What? An hour's drive out of Darwin?

Mr SMITH: Yes.

Mr Hatton: Adelaide River.

Mr SMITH: I do not think anyone would describe Adelaide River as a remote area.

Mr Reed: What about Katherine? Would that be considered remote?

Mr SMITH: The subsidy for Katherine is 1.7¢ a litre.

Mr Coulter: How do you know that? Table your figures. Are you quoting from something?

Mr SMITH: I am not quoting.

Mr Coulter: Do you want to table that figure, because it is not true. Did you say Canberra is 1.7¢?

Mr SMITH: I said Katherine, and I got it from the figures that you supplied to us.

Mr Coulter: I thought you said Canberra, my apologies.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I move the amendment in the hope that we can reach some agreement on this issue. The 1¢ proposition advanced by the government is obviously a nonsense. It has not been adequately costed. No one knows how many people it will apply to in the whole of Australia but I bet that it will be at least 2 or 3 million people. The cost of the subsidy and the fact that the federal government is being asked to provide a subsidy

to Canberra is enough to kill it and enough to weaken the whole argument that this House should be able to present for the federal government to look at petrol prices in remote areas.

If we do not want to make fools of ourselves, we must defeat the motion moved by the government and accept the amendment. I do not want to be part of any ill-thought-out motion put forward in this House which, if it is passed, will weaken the strong case that we have for an examination of the freight equalisation scheme to see if it can be made to work better for the Territory. That will be the unavoidable result of passing the motion that we have before us. I ask members opposite to have a close look at the implications of passing the 1¢ proposal, to accept that major population centres will be included in it and to recognise that that was not the intention of the motion. It does not even fit into the resolution that has been presented because it refers to remote areas and to Australian populations living and working at a distance from major population centres. It is a little difficult to define a remote area as some place an hour's drive from a capital city or to define the ACT as a remote area. This motion will make us a laughing-stock unless we fix it.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the motion by the Minister for Mines and Energy. To pick up from where the Leader of the Opposition left off, if my memory is correct, when this Petroleum Products Freight Subsidy Scheme was first introduced in 1966, Canberra received a minimal amount of subsidy. Sir John McEwen introduced the legislation.

Mr Ede: You know what he did to the economy!

Mr VALE: He helped inland and remote areas.

Mr Speaker, when the scheme was first introduced in 1966, Sir John McEwen levied an excise of 1 penny per gallon throughout Australia. Of course, a vast amount of revenue was raised in the south-eastern corner of Australia. That allowed the federal government to reduce the cost of certain petroleum products around Australia to ensure that people living outside capital cities paid no more than threepence a gallon above capital city prices. That system worked very well for industry and individuals throughout Australia, including Gippsland, where the Leader of the Opposition has his origins. I doubt that Canberra was affected in those days because the freight charge was not significant. Certainly, any freight subsidy that would apply to Canberra under the terms of this motion would be very minor in comparison with that applicable to more remote places with much higher freight charges.

It is not surprising that the ALP opposition in this parliament should oppose this proposal. Historically, Labor has a record of opposing or abolishing any such schemes. When Prime Minister Whitlam took office in 1972, one of the first things he did was to halve the amount of the subsidy paid. Within 12 months, he totally removed the rest of the subsidy so that inland consumers were paying through the nose. At that stage, people began to wonder whether they might soon be paying $1 per gallon. Of course, that is a long time ago. We have almost reached the stage of paying $5 per gallon in inland areas. The amount will continue to increase dramatically, with a drastic effect on the growth and development of the northern region of Australia, the region which will provide the economic salvation of Australia, if we are to have such a salvation under this present federal government.

In the early days, the subsidy applied to motor spirits, automotive distillate, aviation gasoline and jet A1. It was not only the large towns such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine which received the benefit of that subsidy. Surprisingly, in many instances, the subsidy would reduce with distance from capital cities. At Yuendumu, for example, the subsidy was lower than at Mount Allan. Yuendumu received bulk deliveries whereas Mount Allan purchased smaller amounts which were delivered in drums, which added to handling costs.

When the Leader of the Opposition argues that this motion will benefit Canberra, he tends to imply that the rest of Australia will not benefit. Easily the largest benefits from this proposal will flow to inland and remote areas.

Mr Smith: Why don't we aim it at those people?

Mr VALE: The Leader of the Opposition wants us to do a Goss and have another review. In Queensland, 85 reviews are under way and industry is starting to stagnate. I have no problems with a review but the legislation and the machinery is in place now in state, territory and federal parliaments to introduce this scheme tomorrow. The federal government presently in power has an unequalled history of tax grabbing. Who can forget that, on taking office, Treasurer Keating said the government would index everything, including the 2¢ per litre bicentennial road funding? The act was specific. The 2¢ went into a trust fund, not into Consolidated Revenue, and was paid out for road development around Australia. However, Mr Keating looked at it and said: 'We will index that. We cannot use that for the roads because the act stipulates 2¢'. He could have amended the act but, instead, he pocketed $490m in bicentennial road funding which would have gone a long way towards repairing roads right across Australia.

I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition and other opposition members oppose this motion because the ALP has a habit of imposing high taxes with no benefit to the community. They stand condemned by their past Prime Ministers and their current federal colleagues having a history of taking and not giving. Over $700m is now being creamed off into the federal coffers as a result of the world price of oil - $2m a day, and it will continue to rise.

Mr Speaker, I support the motion. The need is urgent. It will benefit all sections of the economy and the community. The benefits will far outweigh the cost of implementation.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the minister's motion this afternoon because it is one of those proposals that really will address the problems of rural Australia as distinct from just the Northern Territory. I think the problems in rural Australia as well as the Northern Territory are so bad that, if we do not have a review of the pricing of fuel, as has been proposed by the honourable minister, many people will not even be here in a year or 2 to take any notice of what might be said in this House. The premise that the minister is putting forward is perfectly reasonable. It is a proposition that has been adopted by state governments of all political persuasions over nearly 50 years in relation to charging for the distribution of power and water, and it is one of those formulas that is essential to enable people to be able to survive outside major city boundaries.

I raise with honourable members the prospect of what the Northern Territory would be, what we would have and what we would look like if we

extended the principle of user-pays to those people who buy electricity and water at Borroloola, Ayers Rock, Pine Creek and Docker River. It is quite clear to everybody that, under that circumstance, many people would not remain in those places and that, if they did, they would not have services such as power and water. It has been obvious to many people from both sides of politics over a long period that we need fairness and equity in the costs of those essential services that we need to maintain our daily lives and our social fabric. I think petrol is more important today than either the power or the water and the need to have an equitable cost for people in the community is becoming very demanding.

It is interesting that, when the governments of the various states go before the Grants Commission, they plead for their funding on the basis that it is more costly to run services in remote areas and more difficult to provide facilities for people in remote areas and, accordingly, the Commonwealth acknowledges that those states with large rural components should receive an extra allocation of funding to allow them to provide for those people in the remote areas. The Commonwealth should acknowledge that rural people have additional costs to bear in respect of the fuel that enables them to stay in the remote areas and be productive or provide facilities. For about 10 years now, that benefit has gone, and it was a benefit. Just as the cross-subsidisation of power and water for various communities is a benefit, so too the price equalisation scheme was a benefit and a very important one.

I would like to extend for a moment the proposition that, if a freight equalisation scheme is not reintroduced in Australia in the very near future, many people will not make it. There are cattle properties in the Northern Territory that cannot afford to run their lighting plants for more than 6 or 8 hours a day at the homestead, and there are many cattle properties that can no longer afford the fuel to pump their bores. It can be said that that is one of the side effects of the Middle East dispute and it is just too bad and, if a few people go out of business, then that is the way it is. However, regrettably, if some of these people are forced off the land, they will not be overrun with candidates who will want to take over their properties and keep them going. That is a great disadvantage for the Northern Territory and a very serious impediment to the maintenance of our present position. Particularly in the Territory, and I dare say in other parts of rural Australia, we need a fuel policy that will enable people to remain on the land because, if they move off the land and back into the cities, we lose their productivity, we lose the use of the land and, generally, we have larger unemployment queues as a result.

Mr Coulter: Then, we increase the imports.

Mr TUXWORTH: That may or may not be the case, depending on what they are growing but, most certainly, the wise, prudent and productive use of land is something that all governments try to achieve and, if we do not have people who can afford to stay on the land, that use will not be maintained, and that is a point that the Territory is moving towards at present. If honourable members do not believe what I am saying, I suggest they drive around the outback for 2 weeks and witness the problems that people are having to overcome merely to keep their properties going. The situation is very serious.

In terms of the tourism industry, I think the freight equalisation scheme program that was introduced some years ago by the Menzies government did a great deal towards stabilising life in the outback because people had a pretty fair idea of what their costs would be for fuel. If you were a

traveller at that time, you knew that, with a couple of exceptions, wherever you went in Australia, you would not have to pay more than 4¢ per gallon extra for fuel. If you were a tourist, you did not have to worry about driving more than 200 miles and then being hit with very large fuel bills. You knew that the price of fuel would be relatively consistent wherever you went.

Mr Speaker, let me tell you of 2 experiences I have had in the last 10 days during my return to Darwin for these sittings. At one service station down the track, a person I followed into the service station filled up, turned around and went south again. I asked the service station owner if the bloke had said where he was going. The reply was: 'He is going home. If the price of fuel keeps increasing at the present rate, he cannot afford to travel the remaining 3000 km or 4000 km'. That happened not once but twice during the course of my trip. Around Australia today, I wonder how many hundreds and thousands of tourists, who are contributing to the economy, pull up at the bowser, look at the cost and calculate that they will not have enough money to return home if the increases continue, and so decide to return home immediately? A freight equalisation scheme will be of tremendous benefit to the tourist industry right across the country because travellers will know that, no matter where they go or what happens in the Middle East, their costs will be within a couple of cents of a city pump price. They will know that it does not matter if they go home early, because they will pay the same amount relatively for doing what they want to do at home.

A philosophical opposition to the maintenance and the use of the freight equalisation scheme has come from members of the Labor Party for many years. They do not have the same philosophy when it comes to the distribution of power and water because they think it applies quite well. However, they find the idea of subsidising rural people for fuel costs a nauseating proposal. It is time that we put party politics aside and looked at the reality of what will happen to rural Australia if prices continue to rise to a point where they are so disparate between the city and the country that the country people will toss in the towel and get off the land. I do not think that the federal government will move until the nation has hit the wall. At the rate that we are going, we will not have to wait very long for that to happen. That is the pity because, at the end of the day, when the reconstruction of rural Australia has to occur, one of the things that will be put into place for rural Australia will be a fuel freight equalisation scheme.

I would like to put a perspective on this and try to be objective about it. If we want to be fair, let us consider the benefits - and I will call them benefits - that rural Australians had 10 years ago that do not exist today. There were benefits relating to air services, freight equalisation, and postal charges. Tax advantages, education assistance and a plethora of other benefits were made available by government that have been slowly but surely taken away from rural people. Now the rural people are asking themselves what they are doing out there. They can no longer afford a holiday. They are giving it all up.

That is the tragedy of the last 10 years of whittling away the benefits that rural people had. Those benefits may have been regarded by the boffins in Treasury and some people in the political system as unnecessary contributions to country people. They may have been regarded as extravagant. As it has turned out, they were the very things that were needed to keep people in the bush. As a nation - and the Territory is involved in this on a minor scale - we have the challenge of reconstructing

the economy of our rural areas. If we do not want to do it, the result will be very simple. The people are already on their way. Some of them are leaving because they want to whilst others are leaving with deep regret but, nevertheless, the numbers are declining dramatically.

I support the minister's motion. I say to the members of the Labor Party, who are keen to have a review, that I think a review would be a very timely undertaking. A review of petrol pricing in rural areas should be carried out and perhaps a review of a few other benefits would be appropriate as well.

Mr Smith: Do you want to give a subsidy to Canberra and ...

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is talking about a subsidy to Canberra. I am talking about a system that will provide rural people with some relief from the cost pressures that are driving them out. It is not a contribution to Canberra to consider reintroducing a scheme such as the freight equalisation scheme.

Mr Smith: It is.

Mr TUXWORTH: Canberra has had its hands out for so long that it does not even know how to put them back in its pockets. Their pockets are so full that they cannot get their hands back in.

There is probably a need for a review but, in the meantime, it would not hurt to reintroduce the freight equalisation scheme.

Mr Smith: It is there now.

Mr TUXWORTH: It may well be, for the 200 people who obtain benefit from it. There are 150 000 people who are asking for a little relief. We can argue emotively about the principles as long as we like, but the bottom line is that, if the rural people do not get some relief, they will not be out there to make any contribution to the development of the north at all. That is exactly where we are at.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, last night on television, I saw an interview with the federal Minister for Resources, Hon Alan Griffiths. He made a few points. He said that it was not simply a matter of the government trying to keep prices down. If it did so, the companies who own our oil from Bass Strait would simply sell it elsewhere. I always support a free market.

The companies are making some money. I recall the Minister for Mines and Energy saying that people who invested in the petroleum industry had obtained a mere 7% return on their money in recent years, and they had had to pay tax on that. However, I thought that, if the petroleum companies are making money, hopefully there is a silver lining in terms of encouraging people to invest in the oil industry, and this might result in more exploration. I am not quite so sure that I was right, after being provided by the minister with a couple of pages relating to who pays what and the impact of increased fuel costs on Australians, particularly those in the bush.

Minister Griffiths tried to make the point that the federal government received merely a standard 24.9¢ per litre and no more. I would suggest that that is not quite true. The crude oil excise from the Bass Strait field has been calculated by people like BHP who have to pay it. They

suggest that the federal government is obtaining something like $80m per annum for every $1 rise in the cost of the world price of crude oil. This adds up to quite a sum over and above what the federal government expected to get in its budget, but there is more to it than that. It looks as if the fuel companies will gain as a result of this, putting more money into the pockets of their shareholders. That may lead to more exploration which may help to make us self-sufficient in oil. However, the papers before me suggest that the federal government is receiving another windfall - about 63¢ of every dollar of extra income which the companies receive as a result of the increased oil prices.

I find it very difficult to believe that the proposition put forward in the motion would break our federal government. It will reap enormous sums in excise and company tax, something which Minister Griffiths certainly did not acknowledge.

Mr Coulter: Excise of $6100m for 1990-91.

Mr COLLINS: That is the budget figure for refined products at the bowser, and I am certainly not disputing it. BHP has suggested that the excise will produce an extra $80m in revenue per annum for every $1 increase per barrel of crude. An estimated 63% of the extra profits gained will be paid in company tax. Certainly, the federal government will not be the poorer as a result of this situation.

Let us have a look at the proposition from the Leader of the Opposition. He says, and maybe he is right, that fuel in Canberra would be a little cheaper if action were taken in accordance with the terms of the motion. If the user-pays component were set at 5¢, to avoid subsiding places like Canberra, people in remote areas of the Northern Territory would be disadvantaged. Of course, there is another possibility. I dare say a scheme could be developed leaving the user-pays component at 5¢ and then, after the 5¢ range, instead of actually increasing it, it could be decreased. That would be a possibility.

Mr Smith: Say it again.

Mr COLLINS: Actually go backwards and make it cheaper. It is a possibility. It is not too difficult. Let me go through it again for the Leader of the Opposition. At the moment, you pay up to 12.7¢ depending on distance. If the freight cost is 6¢ per litre, that is added to the cost at the bowser. If it is 12.7¢, that is what you pay. The proposal here is that the freight cost will be subsidised in excess of 1¢. If the objective is to help the outback people more, another possibility would be to set the level at 5¢ and, after 5¢, have a reducing scale. Thus, if the freight cost were 7¢, 2¢ would be deducted from the 5¢, bringing it back to 3¢. That would help people in remote areas.

What we have to remember about this problem is that it is happening now. Businesses are going broke and people throughout the country are on their uppers. If this trend continues, many more people will soon be on welfare, with far fewer people paying taxes to cover that welfare. This is an immediate problem and the federal minister could act today. If something is not done, I suggest that the costs will be very high indeed. The situation is approaching crisis point. If the federal government wishes people to remain in business and to be tax contributors instead of welfare recipients, it will take action straight away. To fail to do so will be counterproductive and it will cost the federal government in the long run. It is receiving extra income for which it did not budget, and it is not a

small amount. I would suggest that it would be considerably more than the cost of providing this subsidy. With a stroke of a pen, and without any need for parliament to meet, it can take action today. Today is the time.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that a review is needed, and that could certainly be useful. It could look at suggestions such as the one I made, under which people would pay so much extra for freight on fuel up to a certain level and a reverse sliding scale would apply that would discriminate positively in favour of people in the more remote areas. A review could be a good thing. However, there is a need to do something now. On that basis, I believe that the opposition should support the motion. It would help all Australians if they could receive this subsidy.

Mr Speaker, you will appreciate that I support the motion. I believe it is vitally important. If the federal government does not wake up to itself, it will find itself with a bill for far more than it would cost to do this. It is getting the money daily that would enable it to do this. If it does not want the country to collapse - and sometimes I wonder about that - it must act immediately and appreciate the importance and the urgency of this motion, which has my full support.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, most people in this House would agree that Nhulunbuy is an isolated community. Most people in this House would understand that our electricity is not subsidised by any government in Australia. In fact, its price is contributed to partially by this government's own taxes. Our water supply is not subsidised by any government in Australia. No money from the PAYE taxes, to which we all contribute, goes into the running of the Nhulunbuy Corporation which serves as the community's local government. Those are simple facts of life. The government is asking me to tell my constituents that they should pay more in tax to support a fuel subsidy for persons who enjoy all of those other subsidies - subsidised electricity, water and community costs that all the residents in Darwin enjoy. The government is asking me to tell my constituents that, via their tax dollars, they should support people in other places who enjoy all of those subsidies. Frankly, I will not do it.

I have a great deal of sympathy for people in remote Australia. I live in remote Australia. However, because fuel is brought into Nhulunbuy directly over the wharf and it is not road freighted, we do not have to pay exorbitant road freight costs for our fuel. That is one of the few benefits that we enjoy. Now the government is asking my constituents to subsidise people who live on the Gold Coast and who enjoy all those other subsidies. We do not enjoy a single one of those subsidies. In fact, with its fuel excise levy, this government contributes to the cost of electricity in Nhulunbuy. Thus, in fact, we subsidise the rest of the Northern Territory already. That is a fact of life.

Mr Speaker, I do not give a damn what these people say. Frankly, their motion is incompetent because it will not serve those people who certainly need some relief.

Mr Finch: Any relief, and not next year when you have had another review.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I will control the level of my voice if I enjoy your protection.

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: If this useless collection of loud-mouthed, pointless yobs really do believe ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find the words that the honourable member just uttered offensive to some of his colleagues in this House. I suggest that he withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The language used was unparliamentary.

Mr LEO: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The facts of life are that the motion, as proposed by the government, will cost my constituents money as taxpayers. In fact, it will cost all Australian taxpayers money. It is pointless to say that this will not cost a government in Australia money. All governments in Australia raise their money via taxes. Assuming that those taxes are raised equitably, it will cost all Australians money, as taxpayers. However, the benefits of this proposal will not be distributed equitably. As taxpayers, my constituents will fund part of this.

Mr Finch: Yirrkala?

Mr LEO: Your constituents in Darwin will fund part of this as taxpayers whether you like it or not. That is a simple fact of life. People in Darwin already pay too high taxes in this country and we all agree on that. Now you are telling them that they should subsidise fuel for the Gold Coast. Are you bananas? Are you absolutely troppo? Are you crazy?

That is what the government is putting to the residents of Darwin and Nhulunbuy. We get our fuel virtually straight into our community service stations yet the government is telling the taxpayers of Darwin that they should support a subsidy for fuel consumers on the Gold Coast.

You are crazy! You are absolutely mad! That is what the motion says. Take the word 'review' out of the opposition's amendment if you think it will be another 6-month review.

Mr Coulter: It will be.

Mr LEO: Take the word 'review' out, but why tie yourself to something that is clearly inequitable? You are asking the tax-paying residents in Nhulunbuy, who enjoy no subsidies, to subsidise the cost of freighting fuel to the Gold Coast. That is what you are asking. It is absolute nonsense. You are doing it to your own constituents in Darwin. I assume that a large number of your constituents are taxpayers. You are asking the taxpayers of Darwin to subsidise the cost of freighting fuel between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. That is madness.

I ask the Chief Minister to look at the opposition's amendment. Take the word 'review' out. If the cost of fuel freight subsidies is to make any sense at all and if we do not want to be the laughing-stock of the rest of Australia, we simply cannot proceed with paragraph 1(c) as it is presently framed. It is an absolute joke and the government will be considered a joke if it proceeds.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker ...

Mr Coulter: An old Nhulunbuy man.

Mr HATTON: I am an old Nhulunbuy man, Mr Speaker. May I say that the only pleasant reflection arising out of the contribution to this debate by the member for Nhulunbuy is that, by the middle of next year, he will be in Queensland.

Mr Coulter: And receiving a subsidy!

Mr HATTON: He will be receiving a subsidy in an area that has special planes with radar coverage of its skies. He will have left the remote parts of Australia and have gone to enjoy the fruits of his labours in the Northern Territory in the comfort of the east coast.

Mr Poole: Where he can get a subsidy on fuel for his fishing boat.

Mr HATTON: The member for Nhulunbuy chose to ignore the needs of that significant proportion of his constituents who contributed substantially to his terms in this parliament. I refer to those people in the remote parts of his electorate, at Gapuwiyak and the outstations, and other people who need a fuel subsidy. He ignored them completely. But, quite apart from that, he missed a fundamental point.

The government is not asking people in the cities to add to their burden by paying an additional fuel levy to subsidise people in other areas. What this motion is saying is that part of the windfall profits gained by Paul Keating and his Canberra henchmen should be used to remove the gross inequities that have been visited on remote Australia by Labor policies. That is the bottom line. This argument has run through the debate time and again today. When Liberal and Coalition governments have been in power, freight equalisation programs have been put into place and, on the 2 occasions when Labor came to power, during the Whitlam era and the Hawke era, the scheme was removed on the first occasion and emasculated on the second at the expense of rural Australians.

These people, who claim to represent the rural and remote parts of the Northern Territory, have the audacity to stand in this Chamber and say that we should not do this because Canberra might receive a subsidy of 0.8¢ per litre. I am sorry, but I do not think there is anything particularly wrong with people in Canberra receiving that help. I believe that it is reasonable to argue that Keating and his cronies - my apologies - the honourable Treasurer and his cronies should contribute from their windfall profits to assist all Australians to obtain equal treatment and to pay the same price for their fuel.

This is not a case of undertaking a lengthy review. With the crisis in the Middle East, events are moving swiftly day by day. The cost crisis in Australia is escalating daily. It is not good enough to call for an inquiry to examine the options open to us. We need to take action to ensure that Australians are being treated equally and to bring back a sensible scheme to equalise fuel prices in Australia. It can be done by using a small proportion of the windfall profits earned by the federal Treasury as a consequence of the oil crisis. I am advised by the Minister for Transport and Works that, as a result of windfall gains, the federal Treasury receives additional revenue of $1m a day. That adds up to $720m a year.

Mr Ede: What is it doing with it?

Mr HATTON: Putting it in its kick.

These are not profits that have been budgeted for. They are windfall profits amounting to $720m a year.

Let us look at what it would cost to introduce even the 0.8¢ per litre to Canberra and all those places in rural New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. There is some debate about whether the total cost of that would be $150m or $170m a year. Let us take a figure of $200m. That still leaves the federal government with an enormous windfall profit of $520m a year. There is plenty of room for it to subsidise people in remote areas of the Territory up to 10¢ or more per litre. Some areas of the member for Arnhem's electorate would require a 20¢ subsidy so that all Territorians would be paying the same price for their fuel. Territorians require large amounts of fuel because of the large distances and the sparse population.

In all good conscience, nobody who stands in this Chamber and claims to represent Territorians can be content merely to call for an inquiry. I was astounded by what the Leader of the Opposition said. At some time in the next few months, he will be facing an election and declaring to the people of the Northern Territory that he wants to be their leader in government. Nevertheless, he wants to give the federal government an excuse to knock back our request. He wants to tell it that, if it helps us, it will be helping the people of Canberra also and that that is not good. I argue that the federal government should help the Territory, north-west Western Australia, rural Queensland, rural NSW and rural Victoria. The necessary funds to do that would not come from this year's budget but from the windfall profits.

The Labor Party here has an ongoing problem. Its federal colleagues think only in terms of the south-eastern corner of the country. The Northern Territory ALP has been bound by the national directives from its national organisation. This is a good example. Members opposite are more worried about what Bob Hawke will think than about the needs of the Northern Territory people. Last week, we had the nonsense about Megacom and Telecom and whatever 'com' they could think of. There is a small error there. I think it should end in 'n' rather than 'm'. It should be Mega-con because there is no protection for Territorians. We need to ask what Labor can deliver. I have an advertisement here from 1983. The Australian Labor Party under Hawke promised to reduce petrol prices and remove sales tax on freight costs.

Mr Finch: It has done very well, hasn't it?

Mr HATTON: Let us try again.

Mr Palmer: Only a Hawke Labor government can be trusted.

Mr HATTON; Yes, only a Hawke Labor government can be trusted.

Mr Ede: We won, you see.

Mr HATTON: The ALP won, but Territorians lost.

The Leader of the Opposition said on 8DN radio something to the effect that all politicians say whatever they like before an election without expecting to have to honour their promises later. We know where members opposite are coming from. They will say anything to win votes. They keep changing and chopping their stories with every shift in the wind because they are being directed by past masters of the art of saying whatever you

like. The mob down south write the script for them. Their philosophy is to promise whatever the opinion polls indicate people are calling for. It does not matter whether it is right or whether they intend ever to implement it. Their aim is to win a few votes. After the election, when you have all the trappings of government to obfuscate the issues, you can do whatever you like. That is what Labor has done to the Territory.

We remember the days of John Reeves in 1983-84. He was the member who earned the unenviable reputation of being Canberra's representative in the Northern Territory. We remember him saying that the Northern Territory was overfunded. He sold that idea to the federal Labor government. He was the man who justified the destruction of the promise on the railway and who oversighted the reneging on the promise to construct the Darwin Airport. He earned the distaste of Territorians and was thrown out on his ear at the next election. We now have 2 other Labor guys in Canberra doing the same thing. We have heard today how poorly our Labor Senator for the Northern Territory is representing the interests of Territorians in terms of air safety. It is yet another example of his poor performance.

Mr Finch: What about Warren?

Mr HATTON: Recently, the federal member for the Northern Territory was criticising my ministerial colleague who wanted our representative to open a particular project in Alice Springs. Mr Speaker, let me tell you a little story that is not unique. Recently, there was the launching of a hyperbaric unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital. We received a directive to issue an invitation to the federal Minister for Community Services and Health because the federal government had contributed about $100 000 to the project. We had to invite him and, of course, he invited the federal member to represent him. The plaque had to include reference to the federal government. The federal government contributed only about a quarter of the cost of that project. Mr Speaker, if you check, you will find that the federal government has to have its name splashed over every project to which it has contributed 5¢, and that the relevant minister will be represented at the opening by the local member, Warren Snowdon. It is a joke. What Warren Snowdon never does is stand up and fight for what Territorians need. We never hear him doing that. He is too busy defending federal government policy while he trips around in his jet from Cairns to Port Hedland and then back to Tennant Creek to miss out on presenting trophies at a dog show.

Mr Smith: You know that it was the Tennant Creek Show.

Mr HATTON: My apologies. It was the Tennant Creek Show. He missed out on presenting the trophies, I believe, because he was down at the Dolly Pot Inn having dinner. This was despite the fact that he had flown across Australia in a government jet for the purpose.

Let us come back to the bottom line of this motion which is that rural Australians, and Territorians in particular, need some relief. That relief relates to paying the same price for fuel as other Australians. What is needed is equality, and freight cost equalisation for fuel would make a major contribution to that. It would not be a cost on the federal budget. There would be no impost. It would assist the people of rural Australia and Territorians dramatically. Nobody in this Chamber with any conscience or interest in Territorians can oppose it. I condemn the Leader of the Opposition for trying to shunt the matter off into a review in the interests of looking after his mates in Canberra.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a few points about the current oil crisis which are relevant to this debate. In fact, world oil stocks are very high. Production has been increased in other countries and that has more than offset the reductions in Kuwait and Iraq. Leaders around the world are complaining bitterly about the way in which speculative increases have pushed up the price of fuel. There is no doubt, of course, that people in remote areas are unfairly copping the brunt of fuel price increases. There is no doubt that members on both sides of the House would like something to be done about this situation. The question is: how do we take the matter to Canberra in a manner which will bring about the actual result that we want?

Mr Coulter: Victorians are rioting on the streets of Mentone.

Mr EDE: I do not know whether even the Minister for Mines and Energy would suggest that we riot on the streets. However, given that he has the numbers to pass this motion, I would ask the minister not to send a transcript of this debate to Canberra. The resolution itself will cause us enough damage but, if the speeches go down as well ...

Mr Coulter: The letter has already gone to the Prime Minister.

Mr EDE: The letter has gone before we have even voted. That is great! It just shows the absolute arrogance of this government and its disregard for this House.

Mr Coulter: Rubbish! We said last Tuesday that we would write to the Prime Minister.

Mr EDE: It is absolutely ridiculous.

If the user-pays component were to be set at 5¢ per litre, it would still assist people in Alice Springs and anywhere more remote than that. It would have ...

Mr Reed: Katherine is not in it. I suppose Katherine is not isolated.

Mr EDE: Under the terms of your motion, the price of fuel in Katherine would reduce by 0.6¢ per litre. The amount is much less than the impost which this government intends to place on petrol by means of the budget which is before the House at present. The hypocrisy of that will be evident to people in Canberra. They will say that it is ridiculous. Their reaction will be the same as the laughter we got when we rang Canberra during the luncheon adjournment to discuss the matter. In New South Wales alone, hundreds of places would qualify for subsidy under the terms of the government's motion. If the government had suggested reducing the user-pays component to 5¢ per litre or something like that, we would have had a very real chance of getting some rapid action. However, it was not prepared to do that.

We have proposed an amendment which will get around that problem and which will allow us to argue our case in Canberra on substantial grounds rather than seeing us knocked off at the first stop. I implore the government not to send the record of this debate to Canberra because the last few speakers on the opposite side of the House and the crossbenches have made some absolutely ridiculous statements. For example, the Minister for Tourism eulogised Black Jack McEwen, the person who commenced this scheme. No Liberal in Canberra, let alone a National Party member, has a good word to say for him. He is the gentleman who set up the industry

protection schemes which led to the destruction of this nation's industrial base. He is the person who placed the cost burden for that industrial protection on the rural producers of this country, pushing their cost structure so high that it led to the problems which they face today. Anyone who eulogises Black Jack McEwen is pretty much on his own these days.

We then had the contribution of the member for Barkly who said that everybody will leave the bush if there is no relief in the terms of this motion. It follows from that that everybody would also leave Canberra which would also benefit from the measures proposed. Such comments indicate how, when the government proposes measures without thinking them through properly, the result is a ratbag reaction from many members who do not understand the issues.

Mr Collins: Oh, come on.

Mr EDE: I hear the member for Sadadeen interjecting. What a wonderful proposal he had! After 5¢ a litre, there would be a reversal. At 10¢ a litre, it would reduce to zero. It is an interesting proposition. The result would be that, if you could get your local supplier to charge you 20¢ per litre freight rather than 10¢ per litre, you would be buying fuel 35¢ per litre cheaper than the rate in the capital cities. Perhaps you could aim for a really good deal. If you could get your supplier to charge you $2 per litre for freight - and this shows how ridiculous it is - the petrol attendant would fill up your bowser and say: 'That is 100 litres. Here is your cheque for $65'. What a ridiculous proposal!

The Minister for Health and Community Services reckoned that $1m a day amounted to $720m a year. I am glad that he is not the financial whiz of the opposition. He is the person who, when he was Chief Minister, said that he would provide 1000 new jobs a year. That was in 1987. In 1990, we have 2000 fewer jobs. What a contribution! He went on at great length and the way in which he carried on made me feel that there is definitely an election in the wind. He talked about how federal ministers want any Commonwealth funding contribution to be acknowledged on plaques. He talked about the Tennant Creek Show. I remember entering the Darwin Showgrounds a couple of years ago. I paid at the gate and walked in to be confronted by a nice bronze plaque saying that the show had been opened on 17 August by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Hon Steve Hatton. The show had not actually been opened at that stage. Someone had been at the plaque with a bit of bootblack, trying to blot out the reference to Hon Steve Hatton as Chief Minister because he had been dumped 2 days earlier. Whilst he did not get his name on that plaque, Mr Speaker, I can assure you that, when he was Chief Minister, he made sure that it appeared on as many plaques as possible. That was one he missed out on because he was dumped before he could actually open the show. I did not check to see what was on the plaque this year. I suppose that his name was removed and they had somebody else open it.

Mr Hatton: No, it is still there.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the contributions of members opposite in this debate have been pathetic, lacking in rationality and failing to provide any basis which could be argued effectively in Canberra. However, we will not be daunted. Already, we are making approaches to federal ministers in an attempt to obtain a result from this, but we will have to do it without locking ourselves into this ridiculous motion which would have us laughed out of court. It needs to be done on a rational basis which will secure for Territorians the reductions that they should have.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, let us try to put the amount that the federal government makes out of fuel into proportion. Let us look at what money comes into the federal government coffers from the oil companies and from the excise that is paid at the bowser. Last year, the excise at the bowser was $5100m. This year, there will be $6100m, before any windfalls. That is what the federal government will receive into its coffers from product excise alone. That is $16.7m a day. Bass Strait has yielded $30 000m to federal governments of either political persuasion over a 15-year period.

The whole of Australia is in trouble at the moment. You do not have to move too far from the Sydney GPO or the Melbourne GPO to realise that. In fact, people living in those areas are in trouble. At the moment, the federal government is receiving a windfall profit that is coming in for no other reason than that we are linked to a very complicated system of world parity pricing and excise. Whether or not opposition members want to support this proposal, because it would provide a subsidy to Canberra, the Sunshine Coast or the Latrobe Valley, is up to them. We are talking about a national scheme that was put in place and has always applied to those areas right throughout Australia. It used to apply to Canberra or Latrobe Valley or the Sunshine Coast.

We must have a sliding scale. At the moment, people in Victoria are collecting petitions because of the current freight differentials there. There are people on the streets in Victoria asking for exactly what we are proposing today. Do not rule out the people in the Latrobe Valley. They are suffering and are paying extra fuel costs. In many cases, capital city pricing in Sydney and Darwin has not changed very much. What has occurred in the rural areas of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland or Western Australia has really been a burden on those people. In fact, we have been fortunate in Darwin with our price for fuel. On many occasions in Melbourne and Sydney, I have seen pump prices equal to Darwin prices. However, that is not the case when you venture outside of those areas. You do not have to go very far before the freight costs start to add up. This is not a new argument. I refer members to the Payne and Fletcher Report of 1937. I will quote from that report:

> Tariff charges press heavily on the Territory and fetter its progress. That the undeveloped Northern Territory should pay a heavy petrol tax and otherwise pay tribute to the populous states by tariffs on machinery and developmental material seems to us to be ludicrous. The Commonwealth levies a petrol tax of 7½d per gallon on imported motor spirit. This tax is universal throughout Australia, including the Territory. In the Territory, however, residents have to pay for their petrol from 1s to 2s 6d per gallon extra mainly on account of long haulages. Thus, at Alice Springs, the terminus of the Port Augusta Alice Springs railway, petrol costs 2s 9d per gallon, at Tennant Creek 3s 10d per gallon and, at Newcastle Waters, 4s 4d per gallon. This problem has been around the Territory for a long time.
>
> Transport is vital to the Territory and petrol is an indispensable requirement. There are no main roads and none of the facilities enjoyed by motorists in the populous centres, yet the government levies the same tax as the inside districts.

Nothing changes, Mr Speaker.

> Even water pumped for stock by petrol engines has to pay this toll. When similar charges operate in every other sphere, can it be wondered at that borderline propositions in the Territory are allowed to remain undeveloped and that progress is fitful and slow.

The costings of our proposal may be a little rough, if you like to put it that way. The problem is that it is very hard to find the exact piece of paper you want when you need it. Let us look at how one can arrive at these figures. Crude oil excise is collected on offshore crude oil production, particularly in Bass Strait. All the federal government will say is that its excise increases by $65m a year for every $US1 increase per barrel. That is as much as it is prepared to reveal. However, the fuel companies believe it is much more than that. The rate of excise varies on each of the wells depending on whether it is old oil, new oil or intermediate oil. It would relate as well to when the well first came into production. Shell is one of the leaders in the industry and it estimates that the federal government is receiving at least $1.2m a day in windfall profit.

As I said, the actual increases have not been given by the federal government. However, the following figures are indicative. The oil industry has talked of $2m to $3m a day. The federal government has admitted to $65m a year for every $US1 increase in oil prices. It went up $US5 the other day. If we multiply 65 by 5, we have an idea of the ballpark figure that we are talking about. Actual crude oil excise is paid on a price which is confidential. However, it is known to be substantially less than current world market prices and is thought at present to be approximately $US30 a barrel. The price rise since the Middle East crisis is from $US23 to $US30. The 1990-91 federal budget assumed a price of $US23 a barrel. Thus, the windfall is at least $455m. It is pretty easy to work out that we are talking about enormous amounts of money here.

Mr Perron: $500m.

Mr COULTER: $500m is considered to be very close to the mark. That is about $1.2m a day and that is on top of the $16.7m a day the federal government receives from normal excise.

This country is in a mess. It is in a mess on the Gold Coast or Canberra or Latrobe Valley or Bendigo or Bruce Rock or Port Augusta.

Mr Smith: Where is Bruce Rock?

Mr COULTER: Just outside Perth. Senator Peter Walsh comes from around that area. They would be entitled to a subsidy under the scheme that we are putting forward. Why shouldn't they? The farmers and the miners are creating wealth for Australia.

There are mines operating around Canberra as well. There are quarrying operations there. In so far as Canberra being subsidised goes, what is new? It has the cheapest electricity in Australia by far. It was subsidised by the Australian taxpayer with the development of the Snowy Mountains Scheme in particular. It is nothing new. Canberra would expect it. If you do not come up with a national scheme whereby everybody has a bit of a win, you will not get support for it around Australia. If the Leader of the Opposition does not believe there will be support for this proposal nationwide, I ask him to think again. Those people will be screaming out for it. What he refers to as a ludicrous proposal will be demanded across Australia in a very short time indeed.

It will be interesting to sit here at the next sittings, whether it is the next sittings of this parliament or a sittings of a new parliament or whatever, and reflect back on today as the day on which the Leader of the Opposition would not support this proposal. He has left the Chamber now. It is interesting to reflect on his expertise on petroleum products and his knowledge of the industry.

Last evening, the Northern Territory Chapter of the Australian Petroleum Institute had its meeting and the Leader of the Opposition was to be the guest speaker. Unfortunately, the meeting was cancelled due to lack of interest by the members. Nobody turned up. We have had to sit in here today and listen to this man, whom members of the Australian Petroleum Institute would not attend their own meeting to listen to, tell us all about the petroleum industry and what should be done in Australia. No wonder he has the lowest rating of any parliamentary leader in Australia today. He does not really care for Australia. He does not care for Northern Territorians. He has to follow Labor Party policy. It has been demonstrated today that the ALP is the only party to have thrown this proposal out. Menzies introduced it in 1965.

Mr Vale: Sir John McEwen brought it in.

Mr COULTER: It was during the Menzies government. It was thrown out by Whitlam as soon as he got in. Fraser reintroduced it. Since 1983, Hawke has reduced it to such an extent that today it requires a maximum of $3.3m per annum to support the scheme. It is virtually meaningless across Australia except for very remote areas such as Bartalumba Bay, where the cost differentiation is about 20¢. Everywhere else in Australia falls below the 12.7¢ ceiling which Hawke has established.

That is what the Labor Party has done and that is why members of the opposition cannot support this motion today. They do not believe in it. They have never believed in it, federally or at a state or territory level. We heard that, over the lunch adjournment, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition telephoned ministers in Canberra. He has promised us that something will come out of those discussions - no doubt, an election promise by the opposition. I wonder how successful he will be, when his party does not believe in it.

In his electorate office window, the member for Sadadeen used to have the Hawke promise on fuel. It related to how much a litre we would save.

Mr Collins: 3¢ a litre.

Mr COULTER: That was what we would save. Unfortunately, none of that ever came to fruition. That is why the member for Sadadeen kept it in his window.

Mr Collins: The 1989 election promise was that it would be 3¢ a litre cheaper and, six weeks after Labor was in, it was 3¢ a litre dearer.

Mr COULTER: This is the type of government direction that we have from the Labor Party. That is why members opposite cannot support this motion today. That is why they will not support this fair and equitable proposal that would provide meaningful relief to those people immediately.

I do not know what the fuel subsidy will be for Gladstone where the member for Nhulunbuy is going and whether he will get a fuel subsidy for his fishing boat. This proposal would save the people of Nhulunbuy 2¢ a litre.

He has walked away from that. He is off to Gladstone. He was not interested in helping the people of Nhulunbuy and he knew little about the subject.

We believe that we have put forward a definitive proposal. Perhaps we will not achieve the 1¢; it may be 4¢ or 5¢. However, we heard from the Leader of the Opposition that the Prime Minister can be expected simply to throw it in the wastepaper bin. We have been told that there is no innovation or caring in Canberra. He is absolutely right. The Whitlam government threw the scheme away and the Hawke government diminished it until it was meaningless. The Leader of the Opposition knows what he is talking about. The federal government does not care. It simply keeps on raking in the money.

The reason for that is simple. Bass Strait oil production is running out really fast now, and the federal government receives about $1600m a year from Bass Strait. Production is now down to about 320 000 barrels a day. The taxation incentives that have just been offered may help them a little, but a $1600m-a-year cheque is roughly equivalent to a wheat cheque, although it has been up to $2200m in any one year. The federal government needs that money to replace the revenue that it is losing in Bass Strait and, with $22 600m for the welfare bill alone in this year's appropriation, it is in real trouble supporting the welfare society that it has created. This advertisement reads: 'On March 5, vote ALP. Develop the Territory. Put people first. Cut living costs. Reduce petrol prices by 3¢ a litre'. Petrol prices rose 3¢ just 6 months later.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister's time has expired.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1990-91
(Serial 297)

Continued from 26 September 1990.

In committee:

Appropriation for division 81:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have 3 questions to ask under this division. First, what is the reason for the $1.2m increase for debt servicing that the authority has undertaken? The amount of money for debt servicing has moved from $4.76m to $5.969m. Secondly, what is the anticipated deficit on the operations of the Port of Darwin for the year 1990-91? Thirdly, what is the government's plan for reducing that deficit?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, in answer to the first question, the $1.2m increase in debt servicing is to cover the final payment for the roll-on roll-off facility. It was the Port Authority and the government's intention that we should tidy up that final payment and reduce the burden that imposed on the authority, as we do from time to time with our assets. Secondly, if the honourable member looks at page 155 of Budget Paper No 4, he will see that the deficit is $3.1m. This figure is made up of authority-generated revenues of $6.6m, which are listed there, less expenditure which is comprised of salaries at $2.7m, administration at $3.6m, interest payments at $2.0m, and repairs and maintenance at $1.4m - a deficit of $3.1m.

As for plans to reduce the deficit, we have an ongoing effort to reduce the cost of operations and to increase the level of throughput in the port - that is, to increase the use and therefore the revenues. Both of those measures are succeeding, despite charges to users. Of course, we have been trying to encourage increased activity in the Port of Darwin. It has taken a while to overcome the reputation acquired in the 1960s when shipping companies simply would not visit us. For a number of reasons, that situation has improved now. We have kept charges to a minimum. We have increased those charges to users by less than the CPI. The ever-increasing repairs and maintenance costs for the older wharves have been something of a burden and that has helped to keep things contained a little. Some facilities are provided at less than cost to various industries, such as fishing, to encourage them to use the port in the interests of the Territory.

Despite all of those incentives etc, the deficit has been decreasing. I will give some figures. In 1988, it was $3.9m and, in 1989, it was $3.2m. The figure for this year is anticipated to be $3.1m. Of course, some moves have been made to improve efficiency and that will continue. Next week, we will form the Darwin Port Services Company which, in simple terms, is a labour pool company. That will be a first in Australia. We have agreement in principle to an enterprise-based agreement for that company. That agreement has yet to be detailed and signed but, nonetheless, it is agreed in principle, and will be a leader in waterfront reform. That will provide us with a great deal of versatility in labour as it develops and will ensure the continued existence of competitive stevedoring through Conaust and Federated Stevedores. Federated is a 50:50 joint venture company with the involvement of waterside workers. In itself, that competition has led to improvements over the last few years. The eventual integration of the labour force with Port Authority workers will further improve efficiency.

There has been no increase in establishment despite an improvement throughout the port in recent years. Other relevant factors are: increased exports of zinc etc; very close monitoring of expenses, and the commercialised approach of the Port Authority that is accepted by its peers interstate as being up with the state of the game; a reduction in interest payments; and, as I mentioned, the elimination of one of those debts in this current year. Increased trade from offshore gas has been very helpful as well. Whilst our progress is only steady, some of the very positive attitudes from port unions and all of the various people involved, which are expressed often through the Port Efficiency Task Force that looks at the nitty-gritty of day-to-day operating efficiencies, indicate that we will continue to see improvement.

Mr LEO: I have 2 further questions. The minister may or may not have received these. First, what is the leasing cost of the Portainer, the container crane, and the roll-on roll-off facility, and what income has been obtained from each in the past year? Basically, what is the cost of those facilities compared to the income that those facilities have generated over the last 12 months? Secondly, what plans are there for upgrading Stokes Hill Wharf and what will be the cost?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the leasing cost of the Portainer, which is the container crane, is $916 778 per annum. We have now made a final, lump-sum payment for the Ro-Ro. I am not sure how far we have still to go with the container crane, but that is a separate commercial agreement.

With regard to income obtained, whilst I did receive these questions yesterday, I simply have not been able to obtain the specific returns of

income from each of those units. That would be possible in time, but it is probably fair enough to say that they would not give a normal commercial return. We have had to provide a single container crane and a single roll-on and roll-off facility regardless of how much percentage use is needed. Logically, with the relatively small throughput of the port, the returns would be far from commercially viable. However, without those facilities, we would not attract any of that shipping and we would be much worse off. In due course, I could get those figures, if the honourable member is interested.

Mr Leo: I am interested and I would like to have them.

Mr FINCH: They do get a fair amount of use but the fact that they are not in heavy use has probably proved useful. The fellows there are very rarely put to test, but some of the monitoring of off-loading with the container crane have produced off-loading rates much better than the Australian average. On one occasion, monitoring indicated a rate of 21.7 containers an hour in comparison with a national average of 14. I am not trying to be flippant, but that means that the shipper is required to pay less because the container crane is able to handle everything in less than a single shift. Thus, the returns to the Port Authority are less. Those are needed as basic infrastructural facilities, regardless of whether they fully pay their way or not.

Coincidentally, 2 days ago, a report arrived on my desk. I have not had time to appraise it fully nor to take it to Cabinet but, certainly, I want to handle it fairly expeditiously. It is a report on the various options for restoring Stokes Hill Wharf, which has been the subject of a severe attack by termites. We have had to limit the operation of the mobile crane. It has to travel at certain speeds and on certain parts of the deck to get out there. Fortunately, it is able to do that and therefore we are still able to utilise Stokes Hill Wharf. There have been 3 options put to me. The first is minimum restoration at a cost of $320 000, with expenditure of $13 000 a year for 5 years after that. That is the 0- to 5-year option. The 5- to 50-year option would cost $2.26m. It starts to become costly when you move towards full-scale upgrading. The projected cost for the ultimate solution is higher again.

There are some limitations in the first option, not in the load-bearing capacity of the wharf but in lateral strength for berthing loads. Thus, we do have some work to do. We will be talking with the Port Efficiency Task Force next week or the week after in regard to where we are heading with those repairs because that matter is of concern to the efficiency task force. Ultimately, our government will have to make a decision in relation to that upgrading.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the honourable minister will be aware of advice that, if the railway project were to get off the ground, we would need a specialised container port, probably at another location further south in the harbour. Has the Port Authority done any work on the costing of that and what would be involved in terms of capital expenditure? What throughput would be required for that facility? Has an analysis been made of the effects which such a facility would have on our current facility and existing capital infrastructure in terms of all container cargo being handled at the other port?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, whilst the question does not have any impact in a budgetary sense, I am happy to advise that the Port Authority and the Department of Transport and Works have provided technical input to

Railnorth's feasibility studies. Some preliminary work has been done in relation to the operational side although it is far too early to speculate on future outcomes. I do not believe that there is any point in jumping too far ahead on those aspects. Obviously, the port would remain fully operational until the completion of the railway line and, possibly, a new port. That is at least 4 or 5 years away.

Once we have some feasibility studies from Railnorth or whomever, there will be an opportunity to appraise critically the possibility of a transition and the likely impacts. Certainly, the Port Authority and the port unions are very much aware of the need to address these issues from all perspectives, including the success of the railway project itself, and the need to provide the most efficient port service possible for other general uses required in the Territory. Given our very small throughputs, there would need to be a fair degree of integration of the options.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the revenue side of the Port Authority allocation is considerably diminished. There are significant cuts in projected income from wharfage, berthage, port dues, mooring basin rentals, equipment and facility hire, pilotage and miscellaneous. Does that indicate that the minister and the Port Authority expect usage of the port to decrease during the next 12 months? If that is the case, could the minister identify particular areas? I would have assumed that, with the increase in offshore oil and gas exploration anticipated in the next 12 months, there would have been a significant increase in at least that aspect of wharf business. I find it a bit disturbing that all of those figures are down.

Secondly, can the minister confirm - and I am not absolutely certain about this information - that the Port Authority was approached by a large passenger liner company which wanted to bring a passenger liner into Darwin, but that agreement was not able to be reached on the appropriate level of fees for use of the wharf area?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I am at something of a loss in respect of the question about reduced income. The estimate is for an increase from $5.867m to $6.207m, an increase of $340 000. Whilst that is only a marginal increase ...

Mr Smith: What page are you on?

Mr FINCH: Page 155.

Mr Smith: Can you look at page 159, where it talks about the revenue stream under Territory authority funds.

Mr FINCH: Page 159?

Mr Smith: I have the wrong book. I apologise.

Mr FINCH: I thought it was a deliberate attempt to confuse me.

Mr Smith: I have succeeded.

Mr FINCH: As far as the passenger liner is concerned, I am not aware of any such approach. There is a set scale of fees. As I mentioned earlier, recently, we increased wharfage charges by 9.2%, which is less than CPI over the last 2 years. Usually, Port Authority fees account for less than 11% of the total cost of bringing a ship into port. Most of the costs

arise from stevedoring and other charges which may have been the cause of the problem.

Appropriation for division 81 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 60:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, for the Hansard record, I will repeat the questions which I have submitted to the minister in writing.

Firstly, Darwin Bus Service buses have been replaced recently with Buslink buses on the Palmerston route. What impact has this had on the budget of the Northern Territory Bus Service? Secondly, what are the government's plans for the future of the Darwin Bus Service, and does the government intend to replace further services operated currently by the Darwin Bus Service with contract operators? Thirdly, is it the government's intention to allow the Darwin Bus Service to run down so that it is no longer productive?

Fourthly, capital works and acquisitions have decreased by over 10% in real terms. Can the minister advise what impact this will have on employment in the construction industry? In other words, what is the downstream impact of that reduction in effort in the capital works and acquisitions area? Fifthly, can the minister advise whether there is a target level of capital works that will assist in supporting a base level of activity and expertise in the construction industry in the Northern Territory? In other words, how much is needed to provide a basis of support required to allow the Northern Territory construction industry to survive?

Sixthly, the repairs and maintenance item has decreased by some 24% in real terms, in addition to last year's decrease in real terms. Does the government have an ongoing repairs and maintenance program? If so, what repairs will not be carried out this year in order to provide for that 24% decrease?

Seventhly, arterial and local road funding has reduced from $16.5m to $15.6m and $35.8m to $24m respectively. Can the minister explain why there is more than a 30% decrease in real terms in a period when consolidated road fund receipts from Commonwealth sources have increased from $39.2m to $50m? The government has reduced its effort by 30% whilst Commonwealth funding has increased by some 10%.

Mr FINCH: In response to the first question, there will be an additional operational subsidy for operation of routes 8 and 9 to Palmerston by the contract service. That is estimated to be $287 000 for this current year. However, there is a reduced capital item requirement. If the contract service had not been used, 4 buses would have had to be purchased at a cost of approximately $1.1m. There is obviously a saving there. In the longer term, the contract bus system is marginally cheaper than the Darwin Bus Service. However, during the next 2 years, we are in for a fairly high level of capital replacement. That was not the sole motivation for the integration of the contract route and the DBS route. Other factors were considered, including the concerns of the travelling public of Palmerston who were concerned about disputation levels and inconvenience suffered as a result.

After a strike which lasted for about 1 week, a petition was brought before this House. A comparison between the DBS and contract services over 18 months or 2 years showed that the respective number of days lost because

of industrial disputes were something like 22 days and 1. An integrated system, in which a proportion of buses come out of the suburbs, go through the interchange and on to the trunk route, provides efficiencies which are of benefit to the travelling public.

Our plan for the future is to continue to make the system more efficient. In that context, I have to acknowledge the work of the management of the bus service and, just as importantly, the drivers who have gained for themselves a reputation for service. There has been an improvement from 1987-88, when we had only 30% cost recovery. There was a 2% increase in the next year and another 2% increase last year. I am confident that we will continue to achieve those improvements. The future of the bus service relies largely on that continued efficiency. I do not see any reason why things would change dramatically in the long term, provided we continue to run as efficiently as we are. Currently, there are no plans to reduce the work being undertaken by the bus drivers. However, growth in the system, depending on where it is, will be taken up, in the main, by contract people. As for suggestions that we would run the bus service down, the contrary is the case. We want to improve efficiency.

Questions 4 and 5 can be linked together. From the department's point of view, there has been a steady flow of works to the construction industry of $133.5m in 1988-89 and $145.6m in 1989-90. This year, the figure is $140m. We had an increased last year, mainly as a result of an injection of $32m into the Supreme Court building and a housing program of $27.5m. Out of the total of $140m for this year, there is $24m for State Square and $22.2m for housing. If those are taken out and we go back to the 1988-89 base, it will be seen that we would have had $133.5m down to $88m and up to $93.8m. That demonstrates that, without the State Square project, we would have been in a hell of a pickle.

The overall impact of the Northern Territory government's capital works activities has been fairly level through that time, if one includes PAWA and the other instrumentalities. Over that same 3-year period, we have gone from $200m to $212m, down to $209m this year. However, in the case of Transport and Works and in the case of the government overall, we are a little ahead of where we were 2 years ago in actual dollars. When that is compared to the federal government's capital works program in the Territory, we are streets ahead. I would hate to be standing on my feet in Victoria during this budget session answering questions as to why there was a $550m reduction in its capital works program. The answer is quite logical. It does not have any money.

Three years ago, we recognised that there was a downturn in capital works on the horizon. The timing of the Northern Territory government was almost impeccable. In 1987-88, we had a private sector construction program of $161m. That fell in 1988-89, to $115m, and pulled up a little better in 1989-90 at $146m. While I do not have figures for this year, the projection from all sectors of the business community is that non-residential construction is on the verge of a substantial long-term dive. In fact, the chief economist of the Commonwealth Bank referred the other day to why it had not dived before now. He said that it was the result of work in the pipeline. His prediction is that, over the next 2 or 3 years, the 'contraction is going to be steep and prolonged'.

Mr Ede: Is that throughout Australia?

Mr FINCH: Throughout Australia. It is a national trend and we do suffer the consequences of it. We believe that it will be in the order of $120m this year.

In those same 4 years, the federal government's capital works program has gone from $59m to $32m to $29m to a big question mark. I will come back to the question mark later. The overall net effect is that, from 4 years ago, there has been a $60m net reduction in construction in the Territory. The next year, against the same base, there was a $75m reduction. That was the first year of State Square which enabled about a 40% claw back on that overall loss. This year, against that same 1987-88 base, we are effectively $90m down across the board. That is compensated for by $24m on the Parliament House and the Supreme Court this year. That still leaves us with a $60m reduction on where we were 4 years ago, in actual dollars. In real terms, an inflationary factor is involved on that.

It is not necessary to undertake a critical appraisal of what that means. You have only to walk around the northern suburbs or anywhere else in the Territory to determine that. People in the building industry will tell you that things are tough. Unlike the case in Victoria, things are not as bad as they might be and that is because of a reasonably-sustained level of total capital works expenditure by the Northern Territory government. Of course, there are some reductions in some sectors, and we can go into detail on those later if honourable members wish that. However, relatively speaking, Territory construction people are much better off than their interstate counterparts. Obviously, the industry is not without some pain. The work on the 2 buildings was commenced 2 years ago and will continue for another 2 years. With good intent and design, that fell exactly at the right time. The extra benefit that derives from our 95% local content is the only thing that is keeping many more Territory businesses from folding.

The next question related to repairs and maintenance. By and large, the items that have been deferred are not significant. It is important to say right from the outset that, out of that reduction, $4.5m was the flood damage component from the previous year for Alice Springs. Flood damage occurred during 2 years, some of it was in the Top End but the great bulk of it, about $10m-worth, was in Alice Springs. Most of the funds were expended in the first year, with the remaining 40% or so being spent last year. The big increase in the previous year was because of the cost of repairing flood damage.

As a direct result of the go-ahead for work on the Victoria Highway, $1.5m has been deleted from highway repairs and maintenance this year. The upgrading means that repairs and maintenance are not required. The reduction of $6.568m in repairs and maintenance comes about both through that deletion and as a result of constraints on the budget. However, we have ongoing repairs and maintenance programming. The department has a very sophisticated computerised assets maintenance forecasting system and it leads Australia, particularly in the roads area. Our programming is not done year by year but rather for the life of the asset. We have taken great care to ensure that no significant items have been deferred. Items which relate to safety, security or health have not been deferred. Care has been taken to ensure that maintenance is not deferred in any situation where such deferral could lead to some sort of catastrophic failure.

I must acknowledge that we have had a very small reduction in public works in real terms. The net figure is $695 000, with the net effect on roads being just a smidgin up, at $125 000. That is a reduction in real terms but, nonetheless, it is fairly close to being the full effective

maintenance. The basic principle that we have adopted, at least for the 4 years that I can recall, is to meet the maintenance requirement before spending any remaining dollars on capital improvement. It is an important basic principle. Many other governments in Australia have failed to recognise the value of long-term asset maintenance and have found themselves in a hell of a pickle with old sewerage systems, old roads and a range of other problems. We have been diligent in our efforts to ensure that we do not fall into that trap.

The seventh question concerned road funding. Of course, the figure quoted included that artificial increase of $4.5m because of flood damage. The honourable member also mentioned an amount of $50.572m from Commonwealth sources. In fact, the amount is $49.84m. Our estimate was a pre-budget guess and, whilst the actual amount did not fully match our expectation, it is acknowledged that there has been an increase in Commonwealth funding. Of course, I may be a little premature in saying that.

I was asked during the last sittings whether we had received the full amount which Minister Brown promised for the Victoria Highway. I can report to the parliament that we have not yet received it but are hopeful of doing so soon because we are now issuing contracts. We have committed approximately $17m. To date, we have received about $9m. Apparently, the federal minister intends to provide the balance from the Provincial Cities Program. That is a fairly large amount and we are waiting eagerly to see if we receive all of it. If we do, that will help greatly.

When one considers the reductions in federal funding for highways during the last 3 years, that $9m merely brings us back to our former level. Certainly, there has been some reduction in Territory government contributions to road construction. We have maintained maintenance levels but, at the end of the day, there is only a fixed amount available. Some expenditure reduction has related to arterial roads, where lower than expected population growth has justified this. As much as possible, we have provided a decent level of funding for roads which are involved in our strategic initiatives for Litchfield Park, Kakadu and the MacDonnells. Also, some minor initiatives have been removed from the program. We have persevered with major projects, such as those in Litchfield, in order to complete them. The same applies to Kakadu.

Mr Smith: You received Commonwealth money for that.

Mr FINCH: Until last year, it was all Territory funds. Now, we receive a contribution from the Commonwealth, which has been the subject of a proliferation of press releases about 30% cost-sharing, but the Territory has paid for the lion's share of that project.

I should mention that the final stage of the Oenpelli Road was the subject of some concern among Aboriginal people which was expressed by the NLC and the ANPWS. We were considering an alternative alignment that was surveyed originally as an extension of the existing Arnhem Highway. It has now been suggested that we use the existing road alignment. That will cause access problems at Magela Creek because the Aboriginals want a low-level crossing rather than a bridge. That means that the road will be cut during the wet season, but there will be some improvement. When the Pancontinental mine goes ahead, there is an agreement in place to provide access to the mine regardless of this.

That road goes through land managed by the ANPWS, and funding is on a 50:50 basis. The ANPWS has to apply for its contribution and it has assured

us that the funds are not available for this financial year. We have designed the road ready to proceed when the ANPWS receives its share. Hopefully, that will happen next financial year although, of course, members on this side of the House hope that Pancontinental will get the green light, which means that the road will proceed for mining as well as tourism and will provide proper all-year access across Magela Creek.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, during yesterday's debate on the appropriation for the Power and Water Authority, the Minister for Mines and Energy made a comment in relation to the Royal Darwin Hospital medical and toxic waste incinerator. The member for Koolpinyah asked why the allocation was the same this year as it was last year. I would like to draw the minister's attention to the reply given to the member for Koolpinyah's question:

> The replacement for the existing energy-inefficient incinerator at the Royal Darwin Hospital is being implemented under the government Energy Management Program. During 1989-90, design and documentation work for this rather complex project was undertaken by the Department of Transport and Works. I think that the member for Wanguri was responsible for this also ... Letting of the tender was delayed for some time due to negotiations between the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Transport and Works, the Environmental Protection Unit and the selected incinerator supplier, in relation to issues concerned with cost, atmospheric emission standards and related technical variations to the original specifications.

I would also like to bring to the honourable minister's attention his outrageous response to a dorothy dixer asked by a former colleague, who no longer sits with him, in respect of the incinerator. In that answer, after implying that my press release on the subject was totally false, he said: 'Of course, there was no need for that to occur. The specifications met both the New South Wales State Pollution Control Guidelines and the anticipated amendments to those which are assumed to comprise a forthcoming national scheme'. His response to my comment, that I had obtained agreement for the amendment of the operating guidelines to overcome the potential problems as originally identified by me, was that it was absolute nonsense. One of the ministers has it wrong. One of them appears to have misled this House.

Mr Finch: Move a motion.

Mr BAILEY: I am asking the minister to clarify why we have 2 totally contradictory responses from 2 different government ministers.

Mr Hatton: If you want to talk about misleading the House, I have an example for you if you want it.

Mr Bailey: I am merely asking who is right.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FINCH: Of course, as you would expect, Mr Chairman, we are both right. The member for Wanguri tries hard. He tried hard when he originally wrote off to the New South Wales State Pollution Control people. The trouble was that he sent them such inanely stupid questions that they had difficulty in understanding what he was asking. He may have had the right intention but, once again, he has not understood what the answers to those questions were. The delay resulted as much from the tender prices as it did

from ensuring that the equipment met the standards. It did not meet the standards. We told him that. To ensure that it will meet the standards will take time. It is not a problem.

Mr Bailey: Rubbish!

Mr FINCH: If he likes, I can arrange for another full briefing by the technical officer. I do not profess to be an emissions control expert nor to know much about mechanical or electrical engineering. I would be happy to sit side by side with him whilst officers of my department assure him that they have given me advice which I accept.

Mr LEO: Thus, in response to the question on 15 August, you were wrong and Barry was right?

Mr FINCH: Not at all. I fail to see ...

Mr Bailey: You said there were no changes whatsoever to the tender process. The Minister for Mines and Energy said that there were.

Mr FINCH: To the tender process? There were no changes to the tender process.

Mr Bailey: No, to the actual tender requirements.

Mr FINCH: It is all about operating requirements, and that is where the honourable member has a great deal of difficulty. He ought to avail himself of a further briefing and take Dennis Bree with him. I suggest Dennis because he is a man of substantial intellect.

Mr Bailey: When you do not know what you are talking about, you go for the man.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, in regard to the budget papers that we have before us, there is quite adequate explanation as to why there is a rebate on the item. I repeat that, as much as anything else, it was because the tender price had to be reappraised to assess what operational conditions might apply or might not apply. That is the end of the story.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I gave the minister prior notice of some queries that I have on items relating to his portfolio. The first relates to the construction of the bus interchange at Palmerston. In the 1989 budget, the figure was $740 000 and, this year, it is $944 695. I would like the minister to tell me if the original 1989 figure has been rebudgeted and upgraded or whether the 1990 figure is an additional sum?

The next question relates to the Stuart Highway duplication from Bees Creek Road to the Arnhem Highway. The 1989 budget figure was $1.92m. The 1990 figure is $1 938 858, which is $18 858 more than in 1989. Does this indicate that the amount originally allocated has been carried forward to the 1990-91 budget or is this an additional sum for the project? I am aware that a practice is tolerated whereby allocations for capital works items that have not been undertaken in the year in which they were budgeted for or when the money was not required, are carried through to the following year. However, in a way it appears as though somebody is pulling a swiftie. This is what constituents have said to me. The item relating to the Bees Creek

Road to Arnhem Highway duplication of the Stuart Highway was what drew my attention to a series of similar duplications in the budget this year.

The last item that I would like the honourable minister to enlarge on is the construction of the Tiger Brennan Drive entry to the central business district. In the 1989 budget, an allocation of $4.9m was put aside for this. In the 1990 budget, the figure was $743 989. I ask for details of what the budget allocation for 1989 was spent on, and what the proposed budget allocation for this year will be spent on in relation to that item?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, if you go through the whole budget paper, you will find similar examples. In fact, you would probably even find at times that ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I mentioned that.

Mr FINCH: There is certainly no skulduggery. If you look at the programmed capital works and the cash to meet the program, we have a much healthier ratio this year than we do normally. Normally, we are miles in front of the federal government for example. In 1989-90, we had $212m cash to meet a $392.7m program. Of that $392.7m program, $187.2m was rebate carried over from the previous year for works that were either only partially completed or, in some cases, had not really started - and I will come back to that later - and a new program of $205m.

Mr Bell: I would like you to tell us about the Tempe Downs road in that context.

Mr FINCH: Yes, you can ask about that.

In this year, 1990-91, we have a $347.4m program total and that is down $45.3m in the program figure. However, the cash to meet that reduced total program is only $3m less than last year. We had a little over 50% cash for the previous year and are much healthier again this year.

I am glad that the honourable member asked this question because it reminds me of something that I forgot to say earlier. The reason why I cannot say what the federal government's capital works program is this year is that nobody knows.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did not ask you for that.

Mr FINCH: But it is relevant. The reason that nobody knows is that ...

Mr Collins: Warren Snowdon advertised the same project several years in a row.

Mr FINCH: That is exactly right. Mr Chairman, you may recall the sort of skulduggery that the ALP got up to with the Wanguri by-election. It claimed almost $500m-worth of capital works. I remember the pamphlets circulating in the electorate: 'What we promise, we deliver'. The reality was that, for that year, the federal government had programmed only $34m cash. It had $34m in cash to meet a capital works program of $500m.

We have a ratio of better than 50%, and there is a good reason why 100% is not allocated in 1 year. Some projects are very large and take more than 12 months to complete. We do not start every job on 1 July. Some jobs start on 1 March and they might last for 18 months. Naturally, only 10% to 20% of the work is done in that financial year and only 10% or 20% of the

amount is required to meet that. However, the federal government does not talk only about works for the next 3 years as being in its capital works programs but also for the previous 3 years. Tindal stage 1 had been finished for 2 years when Warren Snowdon and Bob Collins announced it. They have never answered that question as yet, Mr Chairman. That simply demonstrates the integrity with which the budget papers are put together.

In relation to the Palmerston bus interchange, the scope of the works was estimated originally at $740 000. However, changes to the bus interchange and, more importantly, additional car parking areas and some roads that are now needed have increased the cost. It is now budgeted for at $950 000. As I understand it, the building itself has been reduced in value and size the better to suit the requirements for the interchange. Originally, some type of major commercial development was to be associated with the interchange but that is no longer the case. It will be purely and simply an interchange. Thus, the cost of building has decreased, but roadworks, car parking and landscaping have boosted the cost to $950 000. Last year, we spent only $5305 and, therefore, the unexpended authorisation carried forward to this year is $944 695.

In regard to the Stuart Highway duplication, this was a straightforward estimate of $1.92m. That was increased to $2.15m, based on updated estimates from the final design. When the design was fully completed, a larger pipe was required to accommodate a greater flow of water than had been anticipated previously. The project is funded at $2.15m under ACRD and is fully audited by the federal government. Last year, we spent $212 000 and therefore there is an unexpended authorisation of $1.938m carried through to 1990-91.

Another reason for getting projects formally on the program is that, even though they may barely be started by the end of the financial year, authorisation is needed to proceed with design. More importantly, tenders cannot be called until the project has status on the government's capital works program. The project may not even start in that financial year, but the tender process must be gone through, and that authorisation is needed for that purpose. It is a commitment by government.

For the CBD entry, $4.9m was budgeted originally. That was reduced subsequently to $3.5m, and $743 989 is carried forward into this year's program. That is the balance of the works for the first stage. These are fairly major works which will provide a good base for what will be a major arterial road for the next 50 years. The next stage is about to be put to tender. The project is being done in stages and will continue over the next 10 years or so.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, there are 2 matters which I want to address in relation to this division. One of them relates to a subject I raised in the second-reading debate - that is, the status of roads in my electorate. I am looking forward to hearing the minister's response in that regard. The second matter relates to the Darwin Airport, specifically the aviation services provided by the Department of Transport and Works.

Frequently, we overlook the aviation responsibilities of the Department of Transport and Works because the major responsibility for aviation lies with the federal government. Although there is no separate allocation for aviation expenditure by activity, it would come under the transport expenditure of $9.770m. I will also make a couple of comments in respect of airspace management with which the Minister for Transport and Works clogged up question time.

Mr Finch: What has it got to do with the budget?

Mr BELL: The honourable minister would be aware that he has some responsibility for aviation. I presume that that allocation for the Transport Division of his department will be spent, in part, on the provision of advice to him which, as I will explain later, he seems hellbent on ignoring.

The status of roads in MacDonnell leaves a great deal to be desired. Last year's capital works program included an allocation of $15m for the Areyonga to Tempe Downs Road. That was not spent, and I want a clear and detailed explanation of where that money went in the Roads Division program for 1989-90. The allocation does not appear in works in progress. I notice that there is a Wallara/Kings Canyon/Glen Helen/Hermannsburg road that is described in the budget papers as being works in progress. That did not appear in last year's capital works program. As far as I am concerned, that is an error, and I would like some explanation of that.

Mr Finch: Where is that?

Mr BELL: At page 36 of Budget Paper No 5, there is an item of $1.370m for Wallara/Kings Canyon/Hermannsburg/Glen Helen road stage 2. I do not recall that being a work in progress in the last budget. At page 35, the $208 000 for the Areyonga to Tempe Downs tourist link has gone. My recollection is that, last year, we voted $15m for that road. Does that mean that $14.8m has been expended on that? I would like an explanation of that.

I want to register once again my protest at the government's failure to develop a sensible road development program. It has been far too ad hoc. As a local member with responsibility for vast tracts of ground in the Centre, I am continually bemused by the failure of this government to set up a 5- or 10-year program for road funding. The Plenty Highway is half sealed. The road from Alice Springs to Hermannsburg, which carries a stack of traffic, is half sealed. About 3 or 4 years ago, we voted to seal the stretch from West Waterhouse through to Ellery Creek. That dropped off the program. We have all heard this crowd opposite squeal when the federal government has rolled back a capital works program yet they do it with impunity - or imagine they do it with impunity - in Labor-held electorates. Decisions like that are not announced publicly.

Equally, I urge the case of my constituents in the eastern MacDonnells, at Ross River Homestead. Mr Geoff Adler has concerns about road upgrading in that regard. A ring road out to Arltunga and back through Ross River would be a wonderful feature. It is an area that needs to be part of a 5- or 10-year program. I have talked about this matter on numerous occasions. I believe that the government's ad hoc approach to road funding is entirely inadequate.

Not only should ordinary citizens of the Territory be allowed to know what the longer-term priorities of the government are, but it is particularly important for the business community and the tourist industry in particular to have an idea of which roads will be built and when. Nobody minds if, for reasons beyond its control, the government has to reduce road funding by 5% or 10% for this year. Times are tough and it may be necessary to roll back projects. That is exactly what Telecom has had to do. It has a 30-year program, yet these people belly-ache and stir up trouble because it has rolled that program back a couple of years. That is entirely irresponsible. As I said earlier today, what is sauce for the goose is

sauce for the gander. I am saying that you blokes will lose this election because you refuse to put forward programs like that. I want to hear some sensible long-term ideas about which roads the minister believes are important in central Australia and which are not. Of course, that should be an approach he adopts right round the Territory. However, we never hear about it. It is all adhockery. You people have run out of steam.

Let me turn now to the question of the relocation of the Darwin Airport. This is an issue on which the minister wants us to vote $9m to the Transport Division to provide him with expert advice, which he then goes ahead and ignores.

Mr Chairman, I seek leave to table, firstly, an exchange of correspondence between the federal Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support, Senator Bob Collins, and the Minister for Transport and Works. I want also to table a letter from Executive Air Charter of Darwin.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to draw to the attention of members of this Assembly what an idiot the minister has made of himself in this regard.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr Finch: I would be insulted if it were anyone but you.

Mr BELL: I withdraw the word 'idiot', Mr Chairman. The Minister for Transport and Works has made himself the laughing-stock of the aviation industry, as this exchange of correspondence indicates. The minister has his ear to the ground in the aviation industry. He is also a member of the Darwin Aero Club, as I am myself. When he heard there were concerns about the location, instead of being statesmanlike, as one would expect of a minister of the Crown, he set about deliberately fermenting discord between existing operators and the Federal Airports Commission. I hasten to assure him that he is not the only member of this Assembly who receives representations in respect of operators at the Darwin Airport. I would like to point out to the minister that the questions that have been fed to him ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member's time has expired. You will have an opportunity to ask another question shortly.

Mr FINCH: On all counts the member for MacDonnell is totally wrong again. Let me deal with the roads. The Roads Division has had a 5-year forward programming system in place for longer than I have been involved with the department. The program is available to all and is often relayed to interested parties, whether they be tourism promotion people, individual developers or anybody else. I invite the member for MacDonnell to seek a briefing on the 5-year forward program on any road system or section that he is interested in.

Mr Bell: An overall picture - which roads you are going to build next year, the year after and so on?

Mr FINCH: The program covers the next 5 years. Of course, there will be some minor changes because of the available level of funds. Some major projects are programmed for more than 5 years in advance.

Mr Bell: Why don't you table it?

Mr FINCH: Which one do you want? The whole lot, or what?

Mr Bell: I would be interested.

Mr FINCH: Many people are interested. All they have to do is ask and they will receive a copy of the program, complete with coloured bar charts.

Mr Bell: Why don't you table it? Why don't you make it available?

Mr FINCH: Ring the department. You can have a full briefing on roads anywhere in the Territory.

Of course we have not gone any further on the Plenty Highway. What do you think we are going to do - build a bitumen highway to the border and then go into the bulldust? You do not even know which of the 5 legs to take once you reach the border. The member for Braitling knows, because he has been across it. You have to change into a 4-wheel-drive vehicle as soon as you reach the border. What is the point of providing bitumen to the border when there is not even a goat track on the other side? We provide bitumen where the traffic is heaviest - from the Stuart Highway out. There is no justification to go any further at the moment, nor is there any priority for it.

The same applies to the Tanami Highway. The bitumen extends only as far as the zone of heavy traffic. Certainly, we will take it further when funds are available and, naturally enough, that is in the program. The same applies at Hermannsburg.

Mr Bell: You knocked that out of the program 3 or 4 years ago and never put it back! The section of road near Hermannsburg would be one of the most heavily travelled tourist roads in central Australia.

Mr FINCH: Let me come back to some specifics. The road from Areyonga to Tempe Downs was never a $15m project, as the member for MacDonnell suggested. It might have been $1.5m or so, but it was not $15m. He was exaggerating slightly.

Mr Bell: It was to be an all-weather road, and it would have been cheap at $15m.

Mr FINCH: There is an ability for the department to move priorities as it requires.

Mr Bell: I thought it was crazy when you put it up, but you did put it up.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FINCH: What was on the program was a $1.5m or $2m project. However, the Central Land Council, Aboriginal people in the area and one of the pastoralists said that they did not want a road along the projected route. We then adopted a second option for the route - via Hermannsburg, Mereenie and Kings Canyon. There is money for the section between Wallara and Kings Canyon. In fact, this year's program will see the completion of the bitumen seal all the way from Wallara to Kings Canyon. It has had a change of name because of the changed circumstances. There is no mystery about it. The Aboriginal people there said that they would prefer the alternative loop road through Mereenie and the department is obtaining

formal approval to do that. There is no mystery, no problem and no adhockery.

It is barely worth addressing the question of the relocation of the Darwin Airport terminal. The federal Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support and now the member for MacDonnell are in disgrace over their decision to turn their backs on the actions of the FAC in respect of the proposed increases in rentals. I do not give a darn whether we are talking out threefold, fivefold, sixfold or sevenfold increases. They are dramatic increases. Let us not quibble about percentages. The federal minister has to address the fact that there is a substantial increase. People are being forced to abandon usable facilities - sheds, offices and hangars - to move to the north side. It has been suggested that the RAAF wants them to move, but I have doubts as to whether that is the truth. The FAC wants them on the north side so that it can obtain the income from the dramatically increased rentals.

I will not attempt to quantify the increases exactly because I would hate Bob Collins to say that it is not eightfold, but only sevenfold. We should be having some action from the federal minister on these matters, but it is all a bit too much for him. He boasted that he would quit if he did not achieve success on the waterfront within a year. He is starting to worry about that now. The irony is that, if he keeps out of the way, the Port of Darwin will enable him to succeed in signing an enterprise agreement within a year.

In relation to the airport, is Senator Collins addressing the fact that people have to hand over their new buildings to the FAC at the end of the new lease period?

Mr Bell: There are ongoing negotiations.

Mr FINCH: Ongoing negotiations! The people have to be out of their present premises by March 1992. That is less than 18 months away. They have to arrange designs and carry out lease negotiations in relation to the space that they need. They have to negotiate with banks to obtain some money, call tenders, bring in builders. They cannot do all this at the snap of a finger.

Mr Bell: No, but they can do it in 18 months.

Mr FINCH: They do not have to start in 18 months. They have to be finished in 18 months.

Mr Bell: Hang on, Fred. I think that even you are flexible enough to do it in that time frame.

Mr FINCH: That is the most substantive argument that I have heard from either the honourable member or Collins, because I have heard nothing from Collins.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Chairman! If I am requested to withdraw my reference to the minister, at least he could have the courtesy to refer to the Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support in another place by a more appropriate sobriquet.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is a point of order. I might add that it is not appropriate to use personal names in interjections across the Chamber. Members should be referred to by their proper titles.

Mr FINCH: Senator Collins has not addressed that question at all. The excuse that I could do it quicker is the best I have heard from the Labor Party to date.

I turn now to the increase in CAA charges. The renewal fee for an IFR licence has gone from $110 to $700. Such increases have not been addressed by the honourable minister. Certainly, he is a busy man but he has many helpers. He has to make the decision, particularly when people out there are hurting.

What about the 4.4¢ avgas levy? We have written to him and his predecessor about that. What about all the flight service fees? Formerly, they covered landing fees but the FAC, with its you-beaut commercial approach, charges landing fees in addition. There has been no reduction in the avgas levy, and now the level of service to pilots and their customers is to be reduced and they are to be put at risk. Some 30 or 40 people are to be sent back to Adelaide and put on the scrap heap or whatever, but that does not matter to the honourable member at all.

Mr Bell: It does actually. It does matter to me considerably.

Mr FINCH: It is about time you gave us some support on it. I am frustrated about all of these matters affecting our aviation industry because, although we are discussing the Territory budget now, I do not have any power in relation to them. We would not have this mess if I had the power to do something.

Mr Chairman, that is my answer to those few flippant questions. Could I suggest to the member for MacDonnell that he might like to take up some of those matters himself. The Darwin Aero Club is to have its AGM within the next few days. Minister Collins is due to meet with the CAA employees. The member for MacDonnell should talk to those employees and find out why 150 of them have had enough. If he thinks that poor morale is not already affecting the way things happen, he is kidding himself. The consolidation, which involves the transfer of staff to centralised locations, is having an effect, together with the abandonment of search and rescue. What about the impact of offshore gas activities? Perhaps we should not be talking like this because there is a definite problem.

Mr Bell: You certainly should not be talking like that.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I would welcome some constructive participation from members of the Labor Party when, eventually, they discover the impact these matters are having on aviation.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, this is an issue of vital importance to the Northern Territory. The number of Northern Territorians who fly is high as a proportion of the population. The approach the minister has taken to this issue has been appalling. We have had 2 diatribes in question time already this week. We heard similar diatribes in question time during the last sittings. During the last sittings, he was asked an absolutely absurd dorothy dixer: 'Can the minister confirm that the Darwin Aero Club is considering selling its fleet of aircraft in an effort to raise the finances to move to the new northside general aviation area?' It is to sell all its aircraft. That is the sort of disinformation that the minister has been spreading.

As the correspondence that I tabled shows, the minister has been gaily referring to these figures of 560% increases in rentals etc and the

surrendering of buildings, when there is an ongoing process of negotiation. He spoke in this House about a figure of 560% and, subsequently, that was shown to be completely false and groundless. It was simply the result of some figure scrawled on a chalkboard at the Darwin Aero Club. There was no formal basis for that, yet he dragged it into this Assembly. The minister ought to be ashamed of himself. In an area where it is important that we obtain as accurate information as possible, the minister is prepared to rely on scuttlebutt for the sake of 5 or 10 minutes in question time. It is time that we saw a more sensible approach to this issue.

The minister mentioned that there is 18 months to go for relocation to the north side of the airport. He ignored the different sites that are available and the different rates that may be available for different sites on the north side. We have heard none of that although that is mentioned in this exchange of correspondence. I suggest that his half-smart offer of an area of Northern Territory government land for these other buildings was shot down in flames. It was offered contrary to departmental advice, contrary to the advice of people who will share in this $9m that we are voting for the Transport Division which is there to provide advice to the minister. The minister flies in face of it. He should have known that that proposal to use land owned by the Northern Territory government on the south-east corner of the airport was an idiot proposal. He should have known that the RAAF would not cop that because such a taxiway would have been crossed by vehicles carrying armaments, bombs etc. Nevertheless, the minister rises in here and suggests that we should be dealing with him in a serious fashion and treating his concerns seriously.

I come to a serious proposal. There are a number of issues that must be debated in this Assembly. There is no time to do that now and all I can do is to lay out an agenda. If the minister wants to debate the relocation to the north side of the Darwin Aero Club or Arnhem Air Charter or any of the other operators, I suggest that he make a statement to this Assembly and we will have a debate about the negotiations and the basis on which those people will move. We should do it on the basis of information that is accurate and not on the basis of scuttlebutt of the sort of scuttlebutt that the minister introduces continually into this Assembly in question time.

Secondly, if the minister believes, as I believe, in the very real concerns of flight service officers with respect to the operation of remote area air space management, the solution is not to go off his head in question time and write idiot letters to the Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support. Let me indicate the tone of these letters. As a minister of the Crown, he wrote to Senator Bob Collins. In this paragraph, he had his nose badly out of joint because Senator Bob Collins would not speak to him on a flight back to Darwin. He wrote:

> In closing, I too would have preferred to discuss this matter with you at ATAC, but your long absences from the meeting itself, including for issues of significant importance to the Territory, and your total unavailability during any of the breaks, precluded that. That was further aggravated by your sour mood during our return flight to Darwin. Despite my attempting at least 5 conversations, you chose to play 'no speaks' until exiting the aircraft in Darwin.

Goodness me, 'No speaks'. Oh Fred! What a way to do business. He expects the federal government to treat with him in a serious fashion and he writes letters like that.

If the minister wants serious debate in the Assembly and a serious public debate in the lead up to this election - and if he wants to do it from the opposition benches afterwards, we will show him how to do it - about the relocation to the north side and about air space management around this country, I suggest he do it in a little more sensible fashion than by writing idiot letters like that and by going off his cruet in question time when it suits him.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, let me complete the scene that led to my frustration, as you might call it. As far as I am concerned, the less I have to do with the honourable Senator the better, because he certainly does not act in the slightest bit responsibly himself. On 10 September, I wrote him a constructive, 2-page letter - there was no aggro - expressing the genuine concerns of the general aviation industry as they were related to me. The 540% was the Darwin Aero Club's figure based on the change from $4.50 to $15. On the honourable Senator's good advice, it was $14 not $15 and therefore it was a 490%, not a 540% increase. The Senator rejects the proposition that $14 and $15 a square metre is being put forward to the industry there. There is correspondence indicating it. He ought to be careful what he says. He ought to find out the facts on the ground. People have had put to them that they ought to be paying $15 a square metre.

Mr Bell: What sort of site?

Mr FINCH: It does not matter. You do not pay that rate in NT House. That land was given to them.

I displayed no aggro. However, I did have the temerity to suggest that he had failed to address numerous issues that were raised. I raised those things that he and his predecessors had turned their backs on concerning the general aviation industry. There was no flippancy in that letter. What did we get? 6 pages of comic opera that was not sent to me, but to the media. If the member for MacDonnell reads that correspondence, he would understand why I felt like really giving him a smack in the nose rather than writing back to him at all. Among all that, he said: 'After all of this, I also find it extraordinary that you failed to raise any of the issues contained in your letter with me during the breaks in the ATAC meeting in Hobart'. As I said in the letter, he attended hardly any of it. He did not attend any of the luncheons or other functions which afford opportunities to get some of that business done. Any normal minister worth his salt would be getting some value out of those functions. He could not even stay in the meeting when we were talking about road freight, road safety, registration fees, and the Northern Territory railway. He could not stay for those discussions. He is less than useless.

I am not a vindictive person, Mr Chairman. As I said in my letter, my grandad taught me a few things and one of them was that it is pretty poor if you cannot even say 'good day' to somebody despite the fact that you may hate or despise them or think them a slob. I walked into the airport manager's lounge and said: 'Hello, Bob'. He was the only person there. He looked down, around and across. I thought he had a few things on his mind. When we went out to the aircraft, I said: 'How are you going, Bob?' No speaks. That did not worry me and I was happy to go my own way. Lo and behold, when I got aboard the aircraft, I was seated next to him. My God, we could not get off the ground fast enough. I said: 'You won't mind if I move across here, Bob, and do a bit of work?' No speaks again. It really did not bother me, but I had started to think it was a little humorous by then. When we got to Darwin, I said: 'The end of another long trip, Bob', and I got a response. He said: 'I have been getting on and off aircraft

for the last 2 weeks. Isn't it a terrible job? I cannot stand it. I am tired and cranky'. That was what I got from a minister who is representing Territorians. Mr Chairman, it is no wonder that I become frustrated and annoyed. If you cannot communicate with people, you have a big problem. Bob has a big, big problem.

Mr Chairman, there is nothing else that I should respond to.

Mr Bell: No. Sit down and shut up.

Mr FINCH: Let me just rub a little more in. The honourable member received the same correspondence as I received from the Darwin Aero Club. What did it suggest, Neil? What are our options for the club so that we can afford the $300 000 building on the north side?

Mr Reed: Be honest.

Mr Bell: The July newsletter?

Mr FINCH: The one with the big questionnaire. I do not know if it was July's. The only plausible option was to sell all of our aircraft and lease them back.

Mr Bell: That is nonsense.

Mr FINCH: It is there. If you cannot read, you have a bigger problem than I thought. Sell them to obtain the $300 000 and then build our new building which we will have to hand over in 15 or 20 years time, when the lease expires. Then, we lease the planes back. I ask the honourable member whether he would like to be paying $89 or $95 an hour for his plane hire? Remember that, because it is very true. The assets of the Darwin Aero Club have been built up from blood, sweat and tears. Thousands and thousands of hours of voluntary work have been put into its own building. The member for MacDonnell would not remember that but, as a member, I was out there. I put in hundreds of hours myself, after the cyclone, on design work and on hammering and nailing and painting to get the place up and running again. Hundreds of members did the same. We have developed an asset there to be proud of. We own some 10 aircraft at present. Now, we will have to bulldoze the old clubhouse and sell the aircraft, and the member for MacDonnell thinks it is funny. He is making a clown of himself over this issue.

As for what he called the government's 'idiot offer of the south-east corner', I would have to admit that I was clutching at straws on that in a desperate bid to find a solution. In the end, it did not work, but I did not offer it as a solution. I said that we should investigate it as a possible solution. My officers met with the RAAF and the CAA and determined that it was not an option. However, it was worth a try. It involved 15 ha of empty land against the end of the airstrip. It was worth a try. I did not know, and nobody else knew until the RAAF told us, that it was needed for a number of reasons. It was all pretty confidential stuff. CAA said it could not use it at night because it was too close to the strip. I had not realised that that location was only 150 m from the centre line of the strip. However, it was worth a try.

We looked at land on the other side, but it was too far for taxiways. We tried. If it had provided a solution, you can bet that it would not have cost civil aviation people a fraction of what it will cost them under the Labor government's commercialised thrust for financial independence that

takes no account of community service or community responsibility. The reality is that, under a Territory government proposal that was put to the federal government years ago, not only would we have had a fully-completed new terminal but we would have had all the general aviation people across on the north side with a $5m contribution towards their $8.2m estimated cost to relocate and they would have been paying the same rental. The proposals are there in black and white for the honourable member to have a look at. He obtains all his other correspondence from the federal minister's office. Let him tell the minister to dig back a bit and send the actual proposals from the Territory government.

Mr Bell: Why weren't they tabled here?

Mr FINCH: They have been tabled in here.

Mr Bell: Nonsense!

Mr Hatton: They were tabled years ago.

Mr FINCH: I will table them again. That is not a problem.

Not only that, but the passengers going through that new terminal would have been paying $8 that would be incorporated in the cost of their ticket.

Mr Bell: You are getting your new terminal over there and now you have to find something else to whinge about. You want another tractor to stand in front of with a spade.

Mr FINCH: If you care to remember, I wanted a new terminal in 1985. The federal government wasted nearly $20m on the north side ...

Mr Bell: It is not okay for the federal government to roll back capital works programs, is it?

Mr FINCH: Roll back? That is dead and buried!

Mr Bell: Yes, the Hermannsburg road, for example, and the Plenty Highway. You are hypocrites.

Mr FINCH: I must try to find the video of the Prime Minister up there on his bulldozer. That will be a beauty for the campaign. The ALP has used that airport for 4 election campaigns. I will give them credit that it is reaching completion. A few fingers will be burnt along the way, but it is reaching completion and I am pleased to acknowledge that. However, what about the civil aviation people? The member for MacDonnell will have to hide his face when he goes there to hire an aircraft.

Mr Chairman, there lies the answer to the honourable member's question. It had nothing to do with the budget, unfortunately, but it was worth saying.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, my question relates to the Alice Springs Bus Service. I note there is an allocation for that service again in this year's budget. How effective is the service? How much is being returned by the fare paying passengers and by how much is it being subsidised? A figure was mentioned in the media some time ago. Perhaps the minister can provide an updated figure that will indicate what it costs in dollars and cents for each passenger.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, in response to suggestions from Mayor Oldfield and others, who suggested that Alice Springs should have a bus service as a matter of equity, the Territory government guaranteed to underwrite a bus service to the extent of $170 000 per annum. I think I have that figure right.

A member: For how many years?

Mr FINCH: I do not think we put a time on it. We had review periods to examine the extent of the service, the fares being charged etc. The basis was that the fare per kilometre ought to be the same as in Darwin. Effectively, we were looking for a similar return on a similar level of underwriting. However, we recognised that, in the early days, the service would need to be built up as people became accustomed to using it. Naturally enough, with shorter distances to travel in Alice Springs, there is not quite the same demand as there is in Darwin. The council negotiated a contract that was expected to cost $235 000 per annum. That is all water under the bridge. We did not jump or squeal when the council signed without reference to us. I guess we accepted it in good faith even though we could see that we would be up for a few more dollars.

At the time, Mayor Oldfield's justification was that the service would not commence until September and therefore only $170 000 would be needed for the remainder of the year. Obviously, the Mayor was not too interested in what would happen the year after. Sadly, what happened was that the patronage levels were low and the $235 000 increased to $285 000. I raised that with the council, as a matter of concern, and asked that we try to bring it back to $235 000 at most. The council went crook and said that that was not possible. It wanted an open-ended deal from the government. The extent to which the service was underwritten was of no concern to the council. It wanted to expand the service in all directions, with a night service and a service on Saturdays and Sundays, in the belief that the Territory government would pick up the tab. Of course, I said no to all of it.

Recently, we have written saying that we expect improvements, that any improvement in the efficiency of the service will be passed on to the government and that the absolute maximum we will pay this financial year is $285 000. We will not pay a cent more than that and all savings are to return to the Territory's coffers. It is up to the council to assess where the service goes from there.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in respect of that last answer, even if the honourable minister spends $285 000 every year, the amount per capita at which he would be subsidising the Alice Springs Bus Service would be approximately one-tenth of the per capita rate at which he is subsidising the Darwin Bus Service. Let us have some perspective in the argument.

Mr Finch: I will give you a perspective in a minute.

Mr EDE: All right. The rest of the matters I would like clarified are unashamedly parochial.

Mr Perron: What about Alice Springs having an airport right in the middle of town? That makes a bit of a difference.

Mr EDE: What?

Mr Perron: Go back to sleep.

Mr EDE: I am on my feet. You are the one who is asleep.

Mr Chairman, in the identifiable new works in the budget, my electorate received $1.3m out of the $166.6m that was allocated. It is true that not all of that is identifiable and I hope that we will do substantially better in the unidentifiable sections. The honourable minister spoke earlier about 5-year road plans. Every year, I have asked what he intends to do about the Yuendumu road and the fact that it is carrying a massively increased traffic load as a result of the construction of the Tanami Mine, the Granites Mine and the exploration works there. An increased amount of tourist traffic goes through to Halls Creek along that road. There have been incredible increases since the last time any major works were done on that road. Each year, the response is that something may be done and that perhaps the government should have a look at it. I recall that, on the last occasion, the minister said that the traffic using the road had not even been assessed. A starting point might be to install a meter to determine vehicle numbers. I would suggest that he start at Yuendumu because, obviously, the traffic at Yuendumu will be much greater and the traffic beyond Yuendumu substantially less, but still increasing in volume at an incredible rate. He might be surprised by the results.

The Tennant Creek to Lajamanu Road is another that I have brought to his attention time and time again. In fact, he told me that he had driven over that road recently so he will have seen for himself the time saved by taking that route. It has real potential for assisting Tennant Creek which is in the commercial doldrums. I can tell him that business people in Tennant Creek fully support development of the road, as do the people of Lajamanu. With a little negotiation, it could develop as a tourist route.

The minister spoke about sealing of roads in the Harts Range area and said that it could not go all the way to the border because the road on the other side is not too good. I drove over that road the other day and I can assure him that he is correct in respect of the Queensland side. However, why does the bitumen stop at Ongeva? Nobody lives there. Surely the sensible thing would have been to take it as far as Harts Range, and that is what should happen.

I have spoken to the Minister for Transport and Works, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and the Minister for Health and Community Services about the new airstrip that is required for the Urapuntja Health Service. They say that it is only a 40 km or 50 km drive for people from the health service to reach the existing airstrip. Thousands of people in that area rely on the Urapuntja Health Service for their medical facilities. The 40 km drive is not along a nice bitumen highway but over an extremely rough road which crosses a number of subsidiary creeks and the Sandover River. After heavy rainfall, it is impassible for days. Even after the airstrip dries out, one still cannot get through because the creeks are up and the condition of the road makes it impossible.

During the last sittings, I spoke about the health clinic at Ti Tree. All we are ever told is that it will be developed next year. Certainly, I will ensure that happens when we are in government. Over the years, this government has shown itself singularly unable to ...

Mr Finch: You are going to be waiting a long time for that airstrip.

Mr EDE: I suppose I might have to as long as you are the minister. However, thank goodness, you will only be in office for a few more weeks.

Mr Finch: Have faith. I will ensure that it happens when it is scheduled.

Mr EDE: You might be able to tell us when it is scheduled.

Mr Finch: I have written to the community about it 4 times.

Mr EDE: You must have the wrong airstrip.

Mr Finch: Which one are you talking about?

Mr EDE: It does not have an English name. It is the one associated with the Urapuntja Health Service.

Once again, the community education centres at Maningrida and Yuendumu are listed under works in progress. I think that they have been under works in progress for 2 years now, with the qualification 'subject to Commonwealth funding'. Last year, they were removed from the 'subject to Commonwealth funding' category and put into the normal program. However, we were told later that that was a misprint. What type of approach is that? Many buildings there are substandard - schools and houses for teachers, health staff and police.

Mr Reed: Is that because they are smashed up? Why are they substandard?

Mr EDE: Because the maintenance work has not been carried out, year after year.

Mr Reed: That is right. You cannot keep up.

Mr EDE: What would you know about this? Sit down.

Mr Reed: I am sitting down. You are standing up.

Mr EDE: Let's keep it that way.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: Schools throughout my electorate and most other rural electorates in the Northern Territory are absolutely substandard in comparison with schools in urban centres. There is no doubt whatsoever that maintenance programs are lagging a long way behind in those areas. The Minister for Education has been involved in the cuts and, obviously, there is a lack of will to catch up on the backlog in maintenance programs for those schools and houses. The facilities at places like Stirling and Napperby are temporary only, and I suppose that we should be thankful for small mercies. Those facilities account for something like 50% of the total budget outlays in the electorate. The honourable minister may say that he has a program for the upgrading of all these facilities and, if so, I would appreciate receiving a copy. The standard of the school buildings in rural communities throughout the Territory is way below the standard of those in Territory urban areas and in comparable rural areas throughout the rest of Australia.

Mr FINCH: Because I was given no notice of the honourable member's questions about a number of minor works, I am not able to provide answers at present. The details are contained in departmental records and could have

been provided if the honourable member had given some notice as to which areas he was interested in.

Mr Ede: All of them.

Mr FINCH: Of course he is interested in all of his electorate. I have never heard so much parish pumping before, and that is the big difference between this government and the opposition.

The programs are developed by individual departments. A few major programs receive particular attention in budget Cabinet but the greatest proportion of work is allocated in order of priority by departmental officers who are out assessing which communities ought to be given priority over others. The distribution of funds to the southern region is much higher per head of population than for the northern region, as it should be. Of course, much of the major infrastructure is in Alice Springs and regional centres. That is where the major hospitals and schools are located and where a fair bit of the money is spent. For reasons of equity and fairness, however, and because of the high cost of delivering services and facilities, more money is spent in the more remote areas, and this government is proud of its record in that respect. I do not think that the federal government would be too proud about how much it spends on airstrips, roads or barge landings in remote Aboriginal communities.

Mr Ede: Because it is your function.

Mr FINCH: It is our function, Mr Chairman. That is the only comment the member for Stuart can make. It is a good thing that this government is delivering those facilities and services. It would be much easier, however, if the federal government, which likes to talk about equality for all, displayed its conscience by helping Aboriginal communities in the bush instead of blowing money on whacky organisations and groups all over the countryside. It would make it a great deal easier.

Mr Ede: That is why it gives you funds to spend through the Grants Commission differentials.

Mr FINCH: Here we go, backing away again. According to the federal government, we only fund roads on private property in Aboriginal areas. We have put together a paper, and hopefully the Commonwealth will take some notice of it ...

Mr Ede: You fund access to cattle stations.

Mr FINCH: Historically, yes. Back in the Commonwealth days, when a grader driver was in an area, he would grade the local cattle station road. We have a program of moving away from that. It has been in place for 4 or 5 years. By agreement with the pastoralists, they can negotiate on cash terms for a number of years ahead to bring the roads up to an acceptable standard. These are single access, private roads. Where there is common usage or public access, there is an ongoing commitment on behalf of the general public.

In places like Arnhem Land and the Cobourg Peninsula, all of the roads are paid for by the Territory government. We have funded totally 6000 km to 8000 km of roads on Aboriginal land. I will give the honourable member a copy of the submission as soon as we finish it. The Department of Transport and Works has been pretty good at putting together convincing submissions in

order to extract funds appropriately from the federal government. It did very well in the case of the Victoria Highway.

Mr Ede: I thought you said that it had not been able to get much.

Mr FINCH: We did 3 extensive reports on the Victoria Highway. We have received $9m of the $17.2m, and that is a start. We are not quite there yet. If the honourable member had been in the Chamber earlier, he would have heard me say that we are still waiting on the balance of the funds. I am not crying about that at the moment, but I will not count my chickens until they are hatched.

In our submission, we talk about the roads, airstrips and barge landings which we construct on Aboriginal communities. We think it is pretty reasonable to ask the federal government to support us in such activities, and I would seek the opposition's support for that approach. As for the airstrip in the Utopia area, I have had a considerable exchange of correspondence, some of it with Hon Gerry Hand. For 2 or 3 years, as in the case of the Bathurst Island strip, I have been saying that it is on the priority list and will be completed in 1990, 1991 or 1992. Of course, the work could be done much sooner if we could obtain some supplementary funding from the federal government which, on a moral and philosophical basis, should be helping to bridge the gap. To accomplish all these things in the short term would cost an extraordinary amount. The submission uses a figure of $60m or $70m and, with the few million dollars that we have available each year, it will take a long time. Mr Chairman, I seek the support of the member for Stuart in this regard.

The honourable member referred to the Alice Springs Bus Service and a per capita subsidy comparison with the Darwin Bus Service. A comparison on that basis is is not reasonable nor in the least bit fair. What he needs to consider is that we fund school bus services separately from the ASBUS. Secondly, the distances travelled etc are different. The only real measure of comparison is the proportionate subsidy that the taxpayer pays for the travelling passenger. In Darwin, the subsidy from the Territory purse is 66%. The level of subsidy for Alice Springs people is 89%. They pay only 11¢ in the dollar for the service.

Mr Ede: That is irrelevant.

Mr FINCH: Of course it is not irrelevant. Are we to run an urban transport system all around the Territory regardless of what the underwriting will be? The honourable member must be reasonable and fair about it. It is worth remembering that Alice Springs passengers pay only 11¢ in the dollar whereas Darwin passengers pay 34¢ in the dollar.

Mr EDE: I was told by the Minister for Education that both he and the Minister for Transport and Works were conducting a review of school buses in the Ti Tree area. I have been waiting for that for over a year. Members opposite were talking today about the problems of having a review of the freight equalisation scheme on fuel. No wonder they were worried because, if they review something, it takes years.

I would like a copy of his report on the roads because it is strange that roads are excluded from Grants Commission considerations. That seems to be an anomaly. One of the difficulties with the proposals under the ISC report was that, as it was to be distributed, the funding would not have included funding for roads on Aboriginal land. That is something which I took up with the minister concerned. Also, I raised the matter of the

methodology used under the ISC Report in determining whether a road should be constructed. It said that it would be a standard methodology right across Australia. The methodology was based on the time that would be saved multiplied by the number of vehicles that would use it at any given time multiplied by some factor. That is all very well when talking about a road from North Ryde to Manly. However, it has very little relevance when you are talking about roads in a developing part of Australia.

We should be looking at our roads on a World Bank methodology which determines the incremental benefits which will accrue in developmental terms as a result of building the road as against the cost of that road discounted over an agreed life. I am quite sure that it would be possible to have an agreed methodology which could be used in the developing parts of Australia. We could utilise that and leave the other system for urban roads. If we could put that in place when the ISC process is eventually completed, that in itself would be of major benefit to the Northern Territory and the future of road construction here.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, none of that relates directly to the budget at the moment.

Mr Ede: School buses for Ti Tree.

Mr FINCH: School buses are a matter for the Minister for Education.

Mr Ede: He says that it is your responsibility.

Mr Harris: No. You will find out next week. You will have the opportunity to comment on this.

Appropriation for division 60 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 27:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have submitted 2 questions to the minister. A third has occurred to me. I will ask it first and perhaps he could get some assistance from his staff.

At page 165 of the Detailed Estimates, I note that, in the expenditure by activity program, the amount budgeted for against racing has dropped by some $147 000. That is not a significant amount in terms of the total budget, but it represents a 12% reduction in the allocation from the previous year. The description over the page indicates that the racing program provides controls for the conduct of racing in the Northern Territory. I do not know that the number of races in the Northern Territory will be reduced dramatically over the next 12 months. Either there are matters within that program other than the control of the conduct of racing, and of which I may not be aware, or perhaps the commission has found new ways of saving money. I would like to know how the commission is able to reduce expenditure in a 12-month period to that degree. If inflation is taken into account, that is a reduction of 20%. If the commission is able to reduce expenditure by that amount and maintain the same program, perhaps we should all learn how it is done so that we may save significant amounts in other areas of the budget.

The 2 questions which I gave to the minister refer to revenue-raising within the portfolio. The 1989-90 receipts from what are now called gaming taxes were $1.39m. Last year's budget papers projected receipts of $2.668m for casino taxes and fees or gaming taxes. Can the minister explain why

there was nearly a 50% drop against expectations? Can the minister further explain why the projected receipts for 1990-91 are only $1.8m? This is still significantly less than what was anticipated in 1989-90.

I can anticipate part of the minister's answer. Quite reasonably, much of it will relate to the pilots' dispute. The reduction in visitor numbers would have affected casino revenues. We all dearly hope that there will not be a repeat of that episode in the next 12 months. However, perhaps there needs to be a little more substantial reason than simply saying that the pilots' dispute knocked the hell out of the gaming taxes.

The second question relates to the Northern Territory casino operators, who pay a tax of only 8% on gross profits. This is the lowest tax in Australia. Interstate casinos pay between 15% to 20%. When Federal Hotels managed the Darwin casino, the government's tax was 20% on the Darwin casino and 15% on the Alice Springs casino. Can the minister explain why that tax on Northern Territory casino operations is so much lower than that anywhere else in Australia? Given the anticipated drop in revenue from that source, it would seem ludicrous to maintain the lowest tax regime on casino activities in Australia.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the $147 000 reduction for racing is part of a total reduction of $169 000. The break-up is: racing - $147 000, and administration - $22 000. The bulk of that variation is attributable to the reduction in payment to the Industries Assistance Fund in accordance with the Bennett Report apportionment of TAB profit. It was the agreement that we had to get it going. The Industries Assistance Fund is reducing marginally year by year until it will plateau out at some time in the future.

In regard to the first question, the casinos were not initiated as a source of revenue. The aim was to provide some additional tourism infrastructure and attraction to bring additional people to the Territory from interstate and, more particularly, from overseas. Initially, we established a tax level that was comparable with that in the states. In the 1984 budget, the Treasurer explained the rationale behind the move to the 8%. It related to ensuring that the new arrangements attracted people from overseas, the high-flying gamblers, and encouraged the casino to introduce some additional facilities. We are interested in a first-class facility. The place was a bit run down by then and there was a need for the new operators to make an additional injection. In changing the tax, it was not simply a matter of changing the percentage. As well, we changed some of the things that could be accredited against profits. In other words, we went from a net profit situation to a gross profit situation. That accounts for some part of the change.

In the second part of the honourable member's question, he talked about 15% to 20% tax interstate and, of course, that was true until recently. Originally, the Queensland casino was on 15% but has found that that was totally uneconomical in itself. The Queensland government has reduced it to 10% with Breakwater Casino in Townsville. It has done that in order to keep the facility viable. Like us, it realises that the attraction with the smaller casinos is to use them as a catalyst for other things. That is what it is all about. In Darwin, we are now getting a higher proportion of high-rollers than we have ever had. I do not frequent the high-rollers room, but newspaper reports indicate that it has the highest stakes in the world that are equalled only by a casino in the United States. I understand that $100 000 chips are used there, and that these gamblers come from Europe and Asia with millions of dollars to gamble over a few days. Predominantly, they come from Asia. With the high-rollers, as with any form of gambling,

inherently high-risk factors are involved for the business until continuity is established with the clientele. That is the reason why expectations were not met in the past year.

The casino in Darwin suffered substantial losses on junkets during the 1989-90 year, resulting in a reduction of $527 000 in the anticipated revenue in casino tax for that year. However, as the casino's taxation year runs from 1 October to 30 September, the casino was able to carry some residual losses. It copped a bit of a hiding over a 3-month period. I am pleased to say that I am advised that it has climbed back. Those big peaks and troughs are inherent in the business. The casino operators were able to carry forward into this year an effective loss that gave them a $728 463 reduction in taxation for this current year. Had the casino not experienced those heavy losses over that 3-month period and had the business run normally for the year, its tax would have been about $1.9m. If losses of $750 000 had not been carried over to this year, profit would have been about $2.6m. However, that is not the case. The business experienced a trough for a period.

The main point is that we are attracting high-rollers to the city. Many of them spend a number of days here. They visit Kakadu, go fishing and play a game of golf. They spend a bit of money while they are here, and that assists our economy. In addition, they boost passenger numbers on the incoming flights and help to make them viable. Many other people come in with those high-rollers, particularly from Malaysia. These people are more modest gamblers who come as much for fun as they do for the heavy punting. I understand that many of the heavier punters are the bookmakers who rush down for 2 or 3 days and then return for the Malaysian races. That is fine. It all helps to utilise the facility and to boost the general economy. As I said, it was not the aim in the first place to make this purely a tax-raising venture. That is a bit of cream on the side, if you like.

I hope that the casino can continue to attract the big gamblers and build up a consistent clientele. However, a 2- or 3-month period can be experienced when not many of these people visit. That can lead to pretty heavy losses and that is what has happened. I understand that one person who did well at the Darwin casino also had a large win in the United States on his way home. Those people talk in millions of dollars. I cannot comprehend what it would be like to gamble at that level. If the casino continues to attract these gamblers, as it can and does by treating them well, hopefully it will continue to prosper. However, that would not have been the case if the operators had not upgraded the facilities. It is possible that we will see higher profits in the years to come but, given the nature of gambling, we cannot be certain about that. I will leave such predictions to those who know more about it.

The 8% is comparable to the reduced rate of 10% in Townsville. We cannot feed off the local community to the extent that occurs in Brisbane, Hobart and Perth. That is not the purpose anyway. From the point of view of the local community, the casino is simply another form of entertainment that is available. I do not think we should try to lean heavily on the local community. That is not the aim at all.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, did the minister say that the casino operators could carry over losses or a downturn in profits from one 12-month period to another in their accounting? If I heard him correctly, he said that the casino operators operate an October to September budget and are, in fact, carrying over losses in our budget. Is that correct?

Mr FINCH: I will check to be absolutely sure before I answer.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to cover a number of issues. I intend to refer both to the budget paper and to the liquor commission's annual report for 1989, which was tabled in the Assembly on 27 February this year. I wish to refer also to questions placed on notice by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition which have been on the Question Paper since 20 February this year, the week before the tabling of the annual report. Does the minister want a copy of the questions or has he actually seen them?

Mr Finch: I have not seen them.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would like an explanation from the minister as to why it has taken 7 months to answer the questions asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr FINCH: What questions?

Mr BELL: Why has it taken 7 months to answer the questions put by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition?

Mr Finch: I am asked a lot of questions. You will need to be a little more specific.

Mr BELL: They are on the Question Paper. You have had ample notice of these.

Mr Finch: I do not have the Question Paper in front of me. Explain which questions you mean.

Mr BELL: I presume that, even for somebody as slow as the minister, 7 months should be long enough. The questions refer to liquor licence applications: the number of applications, the number of approvals and rejections between 1985 and 1988, the number of rejections of applications for renewal, the number of applications changed to provide for takeaway sales, the number of applications for new licences, renewals or changes that were opposed by commercial or community interests and the number of proposals ultimately granted.

I want to make a general comment. Under the heading of 'Racing Gaming and Liquor Commission' in Budget Paper No 4, it says: 'The liquor program regulates the orderly sale and supply of liquor in the Northern Territory'. I do not believe that anybody could describe the sale and supply of liquor in the Northern Territory as 'orderly'. In that context, the word is most inapposite. The opposition has constantly espoused the view that the liquor commission should be separate from the Racing and Gaming Commission, as it used to be. That separation needs to occur if it is to devote itself to the complex policy issues now being addressed by a committee of this Assembly. In the Territory, we have a critical situation in terms of the alcohol problem. As I have done before, I congratulate the government on having set up the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community. In spite of a few glitches caused by unwise statements, particularly from the Chief Minister, the government's approach to that committee has been positive.

I note with regret that the committee meeting scheduled for Friday has been called off. My colleagues, the members for Stuart and Wanguri, intended to give evidence at that meeting, as did the member for Koolpinyah, but not one government member wanted to give evidence. Given the fact that

the Chief Minister has been expressing all sorts of viewpoints in that regard ...

Mr Finch: How do you know that no government member wanted to speak?

Mr Smith: He is on the committee.

Mr Finch: The committee has not met to talk about it. The honourable member is in trouble.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I believe that it is quite appropriate in this context to refer to what has been happening in that regard. I have mentioned it in passing because it irritates me intensely.

Looking at the commission's annual report, I note the distinction that is drawn between public hotels and private hotels and I would like the minister to explain that distinction to me.

Mr Finch: What page is that on?

Mr BELL: It is at page 28 of the annual report

Mr Finch: This is the budget debate.

Mr BELL: I am aware of that, but I point out that the different categories of licences attract different fees and I expect the minister to be able to explain the different categories of licence.

Further, I notice that the highest number of licences held in the Territory are held against the category 'store'. I do not expect the minister to have this information at his fingertips, but I would like to know how that compares with a similar category of licence in other jurisdictions. I suspect that there is an inordinate number of licences in that category in the Territory, and that is also a matter of concern to me.

Let me turn to the question of revenue. The 1987-88 and 1988-89 figures refer to revenue of $9.3m and $5.1m respectively. The reduction occurred because there was a decrease in receipts from licence renewal fees from $9.2m in the first year to about $5.1m in the second. I am interested in the minister's explanation for that. I am aware that, as the annual report notes, the government made a decision to reduce licence fees paid by storekeepers. That may account for part of it. I would appreciate an explanation because of the contrast between those figures and the further contrast with this year's projected figure of $15.5m, which represents a staggering 60% increase.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, to answer the only question from the honourable member that related to the budget papers, I can inform him that the apparent dramatic increase in liquor fees this year, from $9.6m to $15.518m, is a result of changing to a quarterly collection system. We now collect fees in advance, on a quarterly basis. We have an extra collection this year because of the flow-through of the last full annual collection.

Mr Bell: In fact, it is 2 years in 1?

Mr FINCH: It is between 1 and 2 years, depending on when fees fall due. An average of 1.5 would apply.

The honourable member's other questions related to the annual report, and I do not have a copy of that document with me. He referred also to some other written questions.

Mr Bell: They are questions on notice which have not been answered for 7 months.

Mr FINCH: Much of the information has been provided already, as the honourable member would no doubt be aware.

Mr Bell: It had not as of Tuesday.

Mr FINCH: I have corresponded with the member for Stuart in relation to this. We were not able to provide all of the details requested and correspondence both ways indicated that the commission would have to examine its records painstakingly manually in order to do so. We are not prepared to spend thousands of dollars on additional staff to do that. The information will be needed sooner or later, but it will be collected in due course. In the meantime, the great majority of the questions have been answered. We have accessed the more readily available information. In future, the situation will be different. The more recent information is on computer and it will simply be a matter of pressing a button to obtain particular information. The historical information will take longer to provide.

The member for MacDonnell spoke about splitting up the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. At this point, I will simply say that it is most inappropriate for the opposition to suggest that the liquor commission should be under a bureaucracy. The Leader of the Opposition has been quoted in the media as saying that, if he and his colleagues were in government, they would appraise each and every application, take into account various contributing factors and make a decision as to whether licences should be issued or not. That is an outrageous and inappropriate suggestion. This government keeps its hands off the liquor commission. It is an independent body with a board comprised of community members of the highest standing, of the broadest experience and of the greatest integrity. The board takes community views into account in accordance with its charter. In terms of being separated from the racing and gaming commission, the fact is that the separation already exists. There is a common chairman but each functions separately with an independent bureaucracy, with the exception of some administrative functions. Otherwise, they are 2 separate functional parts of a commission.

The member for MacDonnell made outrageous comments about a sessional committee of this parliament. I do not know where the honourable member obtained the information that no government members would attend a meeting on Friday and that it had to be called off. The committee has not determined whether there would or would not be such a meeting. This could constitute a breach of a privilege.

Mr Bell: I think that you should refer it to the Speaker.

Mr FINCH: I would like the honourable member to tell me where he got the information that Friday's meeting had to be called off because government members would not be there.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I was told that it had been called off. I was going to attend.

Mr FINCH: Others might. I know of 2 or 3 government members who wanted to be there.

Mr Bell: Well, let's have a meeting.

Mr FINCH: Unfortunately, there is a Cabinet meeting on Friday morning. Did anyone think to check that? Can you remember the Alice Springs meeting where you were very supportive of an outrageous statement on the ABC? I would not be at all surprised if you had planted it. You well knew that your 2 committee colleagues were not scheduled to be in Alice Springs because it was a subcommittee of 3.

Mr Bell: It is not true.

Mr FINCH: A subcommittee of 3 was delegated to hold the Alice Springs hearing. You allowed that outrageous comment on the radio.

Mr Bell: I have no control over the comments of ABC journalists.

Mr FINCH: The comment was that the 2 government members, with no excuse, had not seen fit to attend. The grin on your face tells me that I am spot on in my assumption.

Mr Bell: I am just over-tired.

Mr FINCH: I will try to get the tape because some of your comments were very close to being totally inappropriate. The member for MacDonnell should have learnt from that Alice Springs experience. Nevertheless, he is now quoting what is really the business of the sessional committee without the sessional committee even being aware of it.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I note the increase indicated in the budget paper from $9m to $15m. That includes some annual payments as well as quarterly payments and I accept that distortion. Looking at the annual report, the figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 indicate a 44% decrease from $9.2m to $5.1m over those 2 years. It is back up to $9m for 1989-90. That probably deserves some explanation as well.

Before I get off the annual report, I noted the comments at pages 26 and 27. These give an indication of some of the issues involved with liquor policy in the Territory. It refers to the problem of vehicle seizures on Aboriginal communities, the legislation passed in October 1988 altering the access of minors to licensed premises and a couple of other policy issues. It does not refer to the critical situation that has been the subject of the committee's concern, and that bothers me. In broad budgetary terms, it is appropriate for any government in this country to have in its statement of accounts some comparison between the revenue generated from the liquor industry and the cost to government of the liquor industry. I recall that the cost estimates came up for public debate in those unfortunate circumstances of press releases where truth and objectivity are often very reluctant of apprehension, if I might say that. An estimate of the cost of the liquor industry was put by the member for Araluen at $200m a year. That contrasts dramatically with the $15m that the industry generates in licence fees etc.

If it costs $3.4m to run the commission, we should not say that it is a net earner because $20.3m is returned to Consolidated Revenue. That is not the way we ought to be doing our sums. Even if we take one of the lower estimates of the cost of the liquor industry in the Territory, when hospital

costs and the cost of wrecked motor vehicles etc are added, the figure will be huge. The opposition debated this and we came up with a figure of some $50m in our press release. We were well and truly eclipsed by the member for Araluen who put it at $200m.

Mr Collins: That might be an underestimate.

Mr BELL: I think $50m is probably an underestimate. However, as well as being creative, the opposition is also cautious. That means that we have a $30m shortfall on liquor revenue in the Territory. I think that is a matter of serious concern. I am not trying to score political points here. I shall not beat the government over the head in this regard. However, I honestly believe that they are the type of figures that should be showing up in the budget papers.

I appreciate that those figures cannot be generated with the same objectivity and specificity that licence renewal fees can be. However, I believe that they should be entered into the statement of accounts for the Territory. On the basis of various statistics, we can estimate how much of our hospital costs are attributable to alcohol. We could determine the percentage of our policing costs that are attributable to alcohol. There are probably other costs that we should be entering into our statement of accounts. Rather than saying that we have a $17m gain because the licence renewal fees have outstripped the cost of running the commission, we should be saying that we have a $30m shortfall on our returns from the liquor industry.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the honourable member opened by saying that he was still on the annual report, and he finished there. I do not know why he was on the annual report anyway. It is totally irrelevant to this debate. When annual reports are tabled in this parliament, the honourable member can debate them to his heart's content. Today we are here to debate the budget.

Mr Bell: Presumably, the budget is there to put into effect some broad policy considerations.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FINCH: The only thing relating to the budget was the member for MacDonnell's suggestion that we increase liquor fees by 300%. That is supported and acknowledged by the Leader of the Opposition. That ought to be front page headlines.

Mr Bell: I am just pointing out that we have a $30m shortfall, on a conservative estimate.

Mr FINCH: It is totally irrelevant. What he fails to recognise is that liquor fees simply go into Consolidated Revenue. They are a means of raising taxes. Our liquor fees are at the upper end of the scale and I do not think there is any need for us to debate whether they ought to be increased by 300%. What is relevant is what the Northern Territory government is putting into alcohol-related matters. It is doing it through the Department of Health and Community Services and through the Department of Education. More than $50m goes into those services from Consolidated Revenue.

Mr Smith: What rubbish!

Mr FINCH: The whole point is that that has absolutely nothing to do with division 27 of the Appropriation Bill.

The honourable member asked for the difference in fees and a definition of private hotel and public hotel. It is the same fee - 11%. In private hotels, the consumption must be on premises and by bona fide visitors, guests etc. Public hotels include taverns.

Historic variations have nothing to do with this budget. The honourable member quotes from his annual report ...

Mr Bell: No. Your annual report, Fred.

Mr FINCH: I see no point in wasting this House's time.

Appropriation for division 27 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 12:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, a number of questions have been provided on notice to the honourable minister. The budget shows an overall cutback in nominal terms and more than 10% in real terms. In view of the minister's statements about reviewing operations and the implications for decreased training and rehabilitation functions, how does he intend to fulfil these promises with less funds? What functions of the authority will be diminished. Will the minister provide an update on the injury rates in the past financial year? How many death payments have been made in the last 12 months? How many workers have been reduced to 70% of their normal salary and how does this compare with the numbers in the previous year? How many workers have been successfully rehabilitated in the last year and how does this figure compare with the previous year.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, last year, there was a one-off payment of $260 000 which related to the development of the authority's computerised database. That is not required to flow into this financial year. If that is taken into account, the downturn in funds available to the Work Health Authority is probably more akin to the downturn in funds to most other bodies across the board.

In relation to the specific initiatives of training and rehabilitation, internally, the training will be related to the changes in emphasis that are currently under way. These changes will relate primarily to the planned amendments to the occupational health and safety provisions of the Work Health Act. They will be achieved by consolidating training moneys and efforts and specifically focusing on upgrading skills and capabilities in areas that will become more important. These will include expanding understanding and appreciation of broader workplace safety issues as well as general inter-personal and communication skills. This will better equip the authority's staff to carry out their planned future role.

Major planned external training initiatives relate to rehabilitation coordinators in the public sector and the establishment of appropriate training courses reflecting matters arising out of the proposed legislative amendments. The efforts in relation to rehabilitation are not funds intensive. They will be undertaken by existing staff and will be a reflection of the maturing of the scheme and where the authority sees evolving needs for emphasis and attention. Both are capable of being attended to within the appropriation proposed.

The second question related to what functions of the authority will be diminished in light of reduced funds. I have pointed out that, while the funds have been reduced, they have not been reduced dramatically. In light of reductions in funding, obviously, there will have to be some cutbacks in the administrative functions of the authority. Those will relate mostly to travel. As you would be aware, Mr Chairman, members of the authority travel interstate on a fairly regular basis to take part in interstate bodies that deal with the standards and so on. Probably, we will have to curtail some of that travel. Obviously, we ought to attend some meetings of that kind, and we will continue to do so. There will be limited cutbacks in promotional activities. We will probably use less costly measures of promotion rather than some of the high-cost television advertising. However, there will a need to utilise that to some extent. We will reduce after-hours work and overtime, where possible, and limit travel when it is not entirely essential.

If we are looking for an update on the injury rates in the past financial year, these are not necessarily associated with the appropriation. Since the Work Health Authority is not responsible for compensation for injury, its level of work probably remains fairly static. There is some information here. It is fairly raw data but it may be of interest. The data is still under analysis at present for publication in the authority's annual report.

In relation to injury rates over the past financial year, I can advise that a total of 4011 work health claims were lodged. The following question asked how many workers had been reduced to 70% of their normal salary and how that compares with the numbers for the previous year? Of all claims in 1989-90, approximately 2% were reduced to the lower benefit. That means that approximately 2% went beyond the 6 months following the injury. That is about the same rate as in the last financial year.

How many workers have been successfully rehabilitated in the last year and how does this figure compare with the previous year? It is a little difficult to know what interpretation I can put on 'successfully rehabilitated'. For the purposes of providing some measure, the authority has used finalised claims. Really, the only measure we have is to look at the finalised claims. If the person is back at work and the claim has been finalised, obviously we can regard that as successful rehabilitation. However, if a claim has not been finalised, it does not necessarily mean that a person has not returned to work. As at 30 June 1990, 79% of claims made in 1989-90 were finalised. Of claims made in 1988-89, 94% were finalised. I cannot give any information on the number of death benefit payouts at this time.

Mr BELL: I would be very interested to hear about the death benefit payouts, Mr Chairman. However, there are a couple of issues that I want to raise with the minister. These relate to matters that have already been the subject of debate during these sittings.

In question time yesterday, the minister attempted to say that the work health arrangements in the Territory were at least as good as those anywhere else in the country. I do not believe that that is the case. I believe that the work health arrangements in the Territory and the benefits payable under the Work Health Act are some of the most meagre in the country. I have provided here a table of those for the minister. I seek leave to table it.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: I provided a copy for the minister during this debate.

The 2 issues that I want to concentrate on are the death benefit and weekly benefits. I will start with the death benefit. As the honourable minister will observe, the death benefit will soon be the lowest in Australia. On Tuesday, he mentioned that the Queensland benefit was lower. Our information is that the $77 000 death benefit, which is payable currently in Queensland, is to increase to $89 000. The interesting comparison is between Comcare and the Territory scheme. If you have a Commonwealth worker and a Territory worker working side by side and both of them die as a result of a work-related injury, the Commonwealth government employee's family receives $139 000. His Territory counterpart receives $80 000. I do not think that that sort of inequity will be lost on anyone.

On Tuesday morning, the minister tried to argue that the weekly benefits in the Territory were infinitely better. He said that our arrangements are 26 weeks on normal weekly earnings which drops to 70% of normal weekly earnings after a period and that that continues indefinitely. He contrasted that with the arrangements in Queensland and Western Australia. He said that the arrangements in Queensland were significantly less than those payable in the Territory. He went on to say that the industrial award, with no benefits, was paid in Western Australia. I have 2 complaints with that argument. The first is that, in both of those states, an action in common law is retained for a pain and suffering component. That is not available in the Territory any longer.

I must admit that, until I started to examine these relationships more closely, I had been labouring under the illusion that most jurisdictions in this country had substantially eliminated common law actions. As that table indicates, that is not the case. In the same way as the opposition opposed the removal of common law rights of action in 1986, we note that most jurisdictions have retained them. They are retained in Western Australia, Tasmania, South Australia, and to a degree in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales and with Comcare for Commonwealth employees. I believe that that indicates that this scheme is a pauper's scheme.

Before I pass on from the weekly benefits issue, I want to draw the attention of the minister to the fact that the situation in the Territory is not even as he has said it is. After his comments on the radio on Tuesday morning, I received representations from an officer of the Transport Workers Union, who said to me: 'When the minister says that people receive full normal weekly earnings, and that includes overtime, he is wrong'. I am not going to give the specific example because I am not prepared to identify the particular officer involved except to say that he is a member of the Transport Workers Union who was employed in a situation where he received some overtime payment. He was injured and unable to work. His employer believed that he would be eligible for normal weekly earnings. Overtime was averaged out over a period and the employer decided that this was a fair amount. He took that along to the TIO. The TIO said that it would pay only the industrial award. Let us remember that the minister was belly-aching about the Western Australians paying only the industrial award under these circumstances. The employer is suing the injured worker for $3000-worth of back pay that the TIO would not pay.

At page 31 of the Work Health Authority's Annual Report, we have some details of the performance of all insurers in relation to workers' compensation business transacted in the Territory for the year ended 30 June 1988. In that period, the net premium receivable was $27.6m. In that period also, the claims incurred were $15.5m. There are other issues

involved but I calculate the profit on those premiums to be somewhere between $10m and $12m. That is not a bad earner on a turnover of $27m. It is 40% or thereabouts.

Mr Chairman: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, perhaps the honourable member would like to say where he obtained his figures. I assume he has done a phone around and has come up with some figures, but they are by no means comprehensive in the information that they provide. I have comprehensive figures on what is provided interstate. If I could talk about some of these, I might throw a little more light on them for him. He compared the death benefits in the Northern Territory with those in Queensland and Western Australia because those were the 2 states with which I compared death benefits earlier in the week. Unfortunately, I do not have with me today the figures that I had earlier in the week. Without that information, I cannot respond in a meaningful way. I will obtain the information and provide it to the member later.

In Queensland, the total weekly benefit is about $53 000. Where the person was on average weekly earnings, the benefit would cut out after $53 000 had been expended. There is a limit on the amount of weekly benefit payable. In the Northern Territory, there is no limit. In fact, persons injured in the Northern Territory receive full, normal weekly earnings for 26 weeks and, after that, 70% of normal weekly earnings for as long as they are out of the workplace, until retiring age if necessary. That is a very substantial benefit. In Queensland, it cuts out after a couple of years and the injured person would go on either unemployment or sickness benefits and become a burden on social security.

Mr Bell: Wait on. There is a common law right of action too, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: They would become a burden on social security.

Mr Bell: No.

Mr McCARTHY: They will.

Mr BELL: No, they have a common law right of action.

Mr McCARTHY: And they will wait 7 years to get into a court. If they decide to access common law, they lose their rights to weekly benefits. If they are unsuccessful at common law, after waiting 5 to 7 years to get to court, it does not make any difference. They do not receive back pay for those weekly benefits. They lose them as soon as they start to sue. That is the case in most of the states where common law applies.

Mr Smith: That is nonsense.

Mr McCARTHY: It is not nonsense.

Mr Smith: It is a separate payment for pain and suffering.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I am not talking about the separate payment for pain and suffering. I am talking about common law action ...

Mr Smith: For pain and suffering.

Mr McCARTHY: In some states, there is a component for pain and suffering. If people want to use common law, they lose all benefits in some of the states. They have no right to weekly benefits, medical benefits, rehabilitation benefits or any other benefits if they access common law. There is no going back. Once you have taken the decision to sue at common law, you have lost your chance.

That is not what we are about in the Northern Territory. We are about putting people back into the workplace. We know what the system was like under the old workers' compensation system where people waited for up to 6 or 7 years to get into a court and then faced a very good chance that they would not obtain anything anyway. In the meantime, they had wasted 6 or 7 years. We have managed to turn things around under the new act whereby there is the capability of people to return to the work force. In some of the states, it is almost impossible to access common law. The criteria are so narrow that, in most instances, it is almost impossible.

I do not know where the member obtained his advice. In relation to the member of the TWU to whom he referred, overtime has never been part of normal weekly earnings. There are a number of allowances that would be included as normal weekly earnings, but not overtime.

Mr Bell: What is the difference between that and the Western Australian agreement?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, overtime is paid if you actually work overtime. Other allowances are paid as a set allowance each week and would be included.

The honourable member referred to a figure of approximately $10m made by insurers in the first full year of the operation of the Work Health Act. At that stage, not all beneficiaries had moved into the long-term benefits. In fact, because the figure was fairly high, there was a downturn in premiums. The figures that are about to be produced this year will show that the profit was down to about $4m. The figures for the year following, which will not be available until next year, are expected to indicate a profit of even less than that. That is $4m over 12 insurers. It is not necessarily a big profit considering that there is likely be a call on some of that money for long-term beneficiaries even though there is an allowance made for that in their figures.

Mr Bell: I still think that $12m is a fair whack on premiums.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, it was in the first full year. They were unsure of what the claimant numbers would be and, when they realised that there was room to reduce premiums, that happened. We are at a point now where premiums are at about 4% on average, across the board. That is not too bad considering that some were as high as 40% before this act came into place. I think that has been a significant improvement for the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I would like to comment on some of the remarks that have been made with respect to the adequacy of the current Work Health Act. I have a particular interest in this. As many honourable members will be aware, there has been some public discussion recently about the adequacy of some of the provisions of the Work Health Act. Because of my previous professional involvement, prior to going into politics, I had a significant involvement with workers' compensation in its many forms, both in New South

Wales and in the Northern Territory, including a period in the 1970s when I served on the Workmen's Compensation Board in the Northern Territory. I have been involved from an employer point of view, from an association point of view and, of course, I was the minister at the time responsible for the carriage of the Work Health Act through this parliament. To hear much of the argument that is occurring tonight really makes one's blood boil a little.

Mr Tuxworth: How do you boil a little?

Mr HATTON: Just a gentle bubble.

What has been overlooked in this debate is the fact that the common law issue is very complex. It is all very well to make a bit of political capital by jumping up and down in this House, but we are talking about things that are fundamentally important to people who are in a state of trauma following accidents at work and people who are suffering serious injury or illness. Common law actions are in fact actions against an employer for alleged negligence under the employer's common law duty of care. Statutory workmen's compensation provisions developed this century as a means of providing for accidents in the workplace and dealing with the common law duty of care but, particularly, to do away with the necessity for the employee to go through complex and expensive legal procedures in the courts in order to prove the negligence of the employer.

A dual system operated. It involved workmen's compensation benefits under a no-fault type of scheme, with provision for claims under the common law duty of care. The 2 were not mutually exclusive. If a person were successful in a common law case, the judgment would deduct all payments received under workmen's compensation. All medical and related expenses were deducted, together with the costs of fighting the case. After deductions, the balance went to the worker. Media articles quoted the amounts awarded - $100 000, $800 000 and so on - but they never indicated the actual amount which the poor worker received at the end of the day after all the expenses were deducted, including those of the ambulance-chasing lawyers, after years of fighting in the courts about pain and suffering. I have seen too many such cases to believe that such an approach is rational or logical. We debated the issues very strongly in 1986. If my memory serves me correctly - and I would like to check the Hansard record in relation to this - the Leader of the Opposition, although not completely happy with the removal of common law, recognised that there was some logical argument for a more rational process to be adopted.

Under the present system, people do not have to prove that their employers were negligent and they do not have to suffer countervailing claims that they contributed to their injuries by their negligence and that compensation should therefore be reduced. Instead, people with work-related injuries automatically receive the weekly benefits. All medical and related expenses are met. Where rehabilitation programs are involved, they are paid for. If it is a permanent incapacity, payment is made right through to retirement. That is built into this scheme. In addition, where there is loss or impairment of bodily functions, or disability, the act provides for an additional lump sum payment to be made.

All of that has to be compared with the single lump sum awarded under the process of the common law action. It is not a matter of receiving workers' compensation together with rights under common law. Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition says, it is not common law for pain and suffering but common law for negligence. It offsets against the workers'

compensation insurance under previous schemes. That is where the fights really start. I can quote examples, including my own brother who went through 7 years of court cases when he lost his liver in a work accident. The lawyers talked him into taking a negligence action against the employer for pain and suffering. For 7 years, he had himself so badly psyched that he could not drive a car or ride a motor bike. At the end of the process, after 7 years, he received a settlement of $8000 for the loss of a liver. From that, he had to deduct all the expenses that he had incurred. He ended up with nothing! Once the case was over and the lawyers had stopped telling him how badly damaged he was psychologically, he was back on a motor cycle within 6 months. That is not a sensible or proper way to deal with workers' compensation injuries.

If we are going to argue about whether the benefits are high enough, that is fair enough. The legislation provides for a ministerial advisory council whose job it is to monitor the administration of the act and to deal with any other matters referred to it by the minister. Under the act, it has statutory powers to look at any concerns.

I might advise honourable members that a Mr David Pettigrew, who lives in or near my electorate, came to see me in relation to his concerns. He is Chairperson for the Injured Persons Association for Fair and Just Compensation. I believe that the association is preparing a submission in respect of this matter. I have been in contact with the association as a member of parliament to advise that I would assist it in developing any submissions that it wishes to make. That is the appropriate way to approach the matter - by dealing with the ministerial advisory council, not playing around in budget debates.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition that, if the lump sum benefits are inadequate, he should argue to increase them, if the weekly benefit provisions are wrong, he should argue to change them and, if some overtime provision should be included, he should argue for its inclusion. However, he should not carry on a debate like this in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. He should do it rationally and properly, with a fully argued case seeking legislative amendment through an appropriate body like the ministerial advisory council.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I do not think that it will be forgotten in the next few weeks that the member for Nightcliff was in fact the prime architect of a work health scheme which, as was pointed out at the time ...

Mr Hatton: No, get your words right. In fact, the prime architect was the member for Barkly.

Mr SMITH: The duckshoving has begun. The member for Nightcliff was the prime architect of a work health scheme which, in its short term, has caused more than its fair share of human tragedies. I am now aware of at least 2 or 3 people who have been forced to sell their houses. I am aware of a woman who had to sell her video-recorder in order to buy some food to feed her kids. All of us now know the name of the man living in New South Wales who, just last week, was forced to sell his house. Because of the way the system has treated him, he owes between $50 000 and $100 000. His life has been wrecked and the system has failed to compensate him adequately or to look after him because of his selfless act in saving the life of a fellow worker on Groote Eylandt. This system is not protecting people who are injured at work. In a number of cases, it is causing extreme hardship. It is not good enough for the honourable members opposite to sit there and say

that it is the best system in Australia because obviously it is not. It is forcing people to live in penury.

I pointed out the potential for these problems when this House debated the legislation. We have situations in which people depend on working overtime to earn a reasonable wage. Often, these people, including police and prison officers, are working in our essential services. We have a wages system which gives them a decent living through constant overtime. Nevertheless, when it comes to them being injured, we do not take that into consideration. We expect people with long-term injuries to accept a reduction in income from $40 000 or $50 000 per year to 70% of the $23 000 or $24 000 which is their base salary. In the debates at the time, I pointed out the problems that that would cause, and what I said has come true. People cannot afford to pay their house payments and are having to give up their houses. That is a major problem. For other people, there are other problems and I gave the example of the woman who was forced to sell her video-recorder in order to buy food for her kids. What sort of system is it that puts people in that type of predicament? What type of government administration is it that does not take any action in relation to this until a public campaign is raised?

I know that many of these people have put their complaints about the system to the Work Health Authority and there is no doubt that these have been passed on to the minister, yet the government has been content to hide these matters under the carpet until a public outcry has been raised. Unfortunately for the government ...

Mr Coulter: It got to my electorate office well before then.

Mr SMITH: Yes, there were a couple of prime examples in your electorate that I know of. In fact, the member for Palmerston has said to those people that he could help them and that the system is wrong. He found out for himself that the system is not protecting those people at all.

Unfortunately for the government, but very fortunately for the people involved, this is coming to a head in the election campaign. I predict that the weaknesses of the Work Health Act will play a very important role in the election campaign. It is a disgraceful situation when people are being subjected to so much misery.

I take the point of the member for Nightcliff that the common law scheme that we had previously was pretty terrible too. I know of examples. Another fellow who was injured on Groote Eylandt, who happens to be a constituent of mine, was living off the smell of an oily rag for 5 or 6 years until he could get into court. I agree that the common law system, which meant that you made a choice between regular weekly payments or the glittering prize of a lump sum 6 or 7 years down the track, was not working and should have been replaced. However, as I said at the time, there was room - and I believe there still is room - for a common law element for pain and suffering in the case of negligence. If that is tied to premiums, it provides one of the most effective ways of creating a safer workplace. I am sorry indeed that the government has not seen fit to take up that particular option.

The member for Nightcliff is right. The main question is not over the common law provisions. The main question is over the level of benefits and the right that people injured at work have to some dignity and to a standard of living that is not too far removed from what a normal Australian family would have. Those are the basic questions that need to be addressed. Those

are the basic deficiencies in the present scheme because it does not allow people with long-term disabilities to develop a lifestyle that is appropriate and that is not too far removed from what an average Australian family would have.

People do not choose to be injured at work, though sometimes they may contribute to it through their own carelessness. At other times, it is a problem of the system and a problem of employer negligence but, whatever the case, people who are injured at work should not be expected to go through a lifetime of pain and suffering, sometimes with the loss of a limb or of bodily functions, and have to put up with a dramatically reduced lifestyle on top of that. People should not have to put up with that. In this day and age, there is an obligation on us to put in place a work health scheme that protects people from such a fate. That system is not there at present. Luckily for the injured persons, the whole matter is now being highlighted. Hopefully, as a result, we will obtain a system that has a better balance between reducing premiums for employers and ensuring that proper provisions are in place for people who are injured at work.

Mr McCARTHY: The Leader of the Opposition has suggested once again that the Work Health Act is very deficient. In fact, I have indicated previously to him and to others that we will be addressing any deficiencies in the legislation. This week, I have given notice that the Work Health Advisory Council will be reviewing the level of benefits payable to beneficiaries under the act and, if it is found to be deficient, we will act to ensure that that does not continue.

Mr Chairman, I would like to compare, once again, our benefits with those paid in the states. In the Northern Territory, the injured worker receives normal weekly earnings for 26 weeks. Thereafter, 70% of normal weekly earnings, to a maximum of $540, is payable to retiring age or 65, whichever is the later. In Western Australia, the injured worker receives the industrial award rate of pay to a maximum of $83 376. When that runs out, there is no further payment. After a couple of years, that person would be on skid row. Queensland provides payment for 26 weeks at the award rate and thereafter 26 weeks at the minimum wage plus 17%. However, this is limited to a maximum of $55 800 and, after that sum has been paid, the person will be on skid row. The Victorian situation is as follows: 52 weeks at 80% of normal weekly earnings, to a maximum of $506, and 52 weeks at 60% of normal weekly earnings if the level of impairment is less than 15%. The New South Wales situation is: 26 weeks normal weekly earnings, to a maximum of $577.50 - and, where there is no award, it is $319.80 - and thereafter 26 weeks at 90%. Tasmania provides normal weekly earnings to a maximum $83 808. Thus, after 2 years, the person would have no money coming in at all. The ACT provides 26 weeks at normal weekly earnings and 26 weeks at $226.23, plus $59.53 for spouse and $27.78 for children. That is okay if you have 10 kids, but it might be pretty hard if you have none.

Let us look at the death benefits, Mr Chairman. I did not have this information in front of me earlier. In the Northern Territory, the amount is $80 449, plus 75% of average weekly earnings for dependants per week. In Western Australia, it is $80 983, less any amounts paid for maims or weekly benefits. If the person was in hospital for a few weeks before he or she died, that cost would be deducted. The amount in Queensland is $77 740, less any amounts paid for maims or weekly benefits. No one can say that that is better than in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: I said that it is being increased to $89 000.

Mr McCARTHY: Ours is about to increase also.

The figures for Tasmania, ACT and South Australia are $83 808, $79 379 and $80 000m respectively, less maim payments. They are hardly better than that in the Northern Territory.

Let us look at the permanent impairments. In the Northern Territory, all injuries over 15% are compensated as a percentage of $53 000. That is about to increase. In Western Australia, there is the maims table and $80 983, less weekly benefits. Thus, in our scheme, the weekly benefit is in addition whereas, in Western Australia, any weekly benefit is deducted. The figures in the other states are: Queensland - $55 800, less weekly benefits; New South Wales - a maximum of $92 450; Tasmania - maims table and $83 808 maximum; ACT - maims table and $78 565; and South Australia - maims table and $80 000. Thus, we are not a long way behind. It is important to recognise that we have the addition of the weekly benefit rather than it being deducted.

This week, I have announced that the Ministerial Advisory Council will be reviewing all benefits payable under the Work Health Act and, if they are found to be deficient, we will address the deficiencies. I think that is appropriate. The opposition would decide simply that the benefits were not sufficient and increase them, without examining what that would do to the scheme. That is the way they operate: straight off the cuff. I gave the people of the Northern Territory and the opposition the chance to come to the government with their concerns in relation to the Work Health Act late last year. That review has been under way for months. In fact, we did not receive a single submission from the opposition. Not even from an individual of the opposition did we receive a submission to indicate that they had a problem with the level of benefits under the Work Health Act. The member for MacDonnell had the hide to say earlier in the week that he had been aware of the problem for 12 months. He did not bother to give us that information when we had the system under review. I was about to introduce amendments to the Work Health Act which would have addressed some of the problems. I have had to delay that in order to reopen a review on the level of benefits.

I believe that it will be found that we are not so far behind the eight-ball, if at all, when that review is carried out. If it is seen that there is a need to raise some of those benefits, that can be addressed at the appropriate time. In the meantime, I do not think that any benefit is to be gained by attacking what has been, and what continues to be, probably the most progressive Work Health Act in this country. It has not run the Northern Territory into the debt that is crippling Victoria and New South Wales at present. Governments are abrogating their responsibilities in other areas because of the debt. In Victoria, the government is getting out of almost everything. In South Australia, they are cutting their departments by 50% because they can no longer afford them. They have handed over local government entirely. It is now entirely the responsibility of the Local Government Association. In fact, in South Australia they are not even going to attend ministerial councils or hold ministerial councils because they can no longer afford it. That is what has happened in South Australia and Victoria because of the way that they have administered their work health schemes and a range of other harebrained ideas that the Labor Parties everywhere seem to come up with and because they made decisions on benefits without giving due consideration to what effect those would have on their economies.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the debate tonight has centred around the philosophical approach of the 2 different parties who are arguing it at the moment. It is probably time to look at it a little more objectively. I have some rather indelible memories myself of compiling the Work Health Act. As I recall, the 2 basic premises of the act were, firstly, to ensure that as many people got back into the work force as soon as possible and were able to maintain themselves and contribute to the society in which they live and, secondly, that those people who were unable to return to the work force should be sustained in some dignified way to enable them to maintain what little they had left of their lives as a result of their accident. It is fair to say that, at the moment, the Work Health Act is not everybody's piece of pie. In fact, some people would describe it as an absolute shambles.

I will raise 2 particular cases with the minister. I have written to him a couple of times about these. I put this on the record because it indicates the frustration that employers and employees are experiencing over the system. The first relates to a public servant, a lady who sustained an injury. She went off work and received benefits for the stipulated time. At some stage during the process, all her payments stopped and she went for 6 months without receiving any payments at all. She used her savings and, eventually, she started to work into her husband's income. They knew that they were going downhill and she came to me and asked what she could do. I rang the Work Health Authority and the file was dragged out. They said that it was a genuine case and that they felt sympathetic towards the lady. There was a problem with her medical records and they needed to talk to the department. To their credit, within a couple of days, the Work Health Authority people rang back and said that they thought they had it all back on the rails.

The point that I make is that the lady, who is Asian, was not terribly au fait with our system. She went through a very traumatic and depressing period wondering where her next dollar would come from and what she would do if people decided that they would not pay her at all. I was somewhat surprised by the revelation that there was virtually no communication between the department concerned and the Work Health Authority in relation to the lady or her file until the matter was raised with them. The department seemed to be somewhat indifferent to the fact that she had not been paid. The Work Health Authority seemed to be a little concerned that it was unable to intervene until the department did its part of the work. It is all very well for bureaucrats to have these little sideshows, but it is not of much benefit to the recipient.

The second case was one that I wrote to the Chief Minister about some time ago. It involved MACA. It really epitomised the bureaucratic process doing what it wanted to do when it liked. It revolved around a young fellow who had been involved in a motor accident out on the Barkly. He had a very serious accident. Eventually, he went back to New South Wales and was being supported by his parents. A long paper war and dispute followed about his entitlements, what scheme he should have been under and whether he was driving the car. At the end of the day, the parents could not get enough money from the scheme to be able to modify the bedroom and the bathroom and to do the basic things which a work health scheme was especially designed to take account of. I think that this young fellow's case fell under the MACA scheme but the principles embodied in the 2 schemes are pretty much the same. We should be ensuring that those people who cannot return to the work force for whatever reason are able to live with some sort of dignity.

Another interesting thing that has been brought to my attention as a pretty vocal complaint in recent weeks is the fact that the TIO and the Work Health Authority have a different view on what payment people are entitled to. They each have a different formula for working it out. The TIO says that it writes the cheque and therefore it will make up its mind. The Work Health Authority says that it knows how the figure should be arrived at. If a member of the public and a recipient under this program is being subjected to that type of drivel and tripe, it is understandable that the person will get himself or herself into a pretty fair knot. I think that it would not be out of court for me to say that there are many people in the community with friends and relatives who are waiting to settle a few scores when the ballot box opens. That is a pretty sad way for us to have to address the issue of equity for people who really thought that they were in a scheme that gave them some justice if they felt they needed it.

The minister and others have reflected on the comparison with the states. That is all right up to a point. It is a fairly valid comparison, but the other factor that we need to take into account is that the average weekly earnings in the Territory are among the highest in Australia and our cost structures are certainly among the highest in Australia. To be asking our recipients under the Work Health Scheme to be accepting the same sort of payments that they would get in one of the states, simply because that is an equitable comparison for us to make in money terms, is probably a little unfair. It might be fair and reasonable now to introduce the T factor. The T factor is that extra cost of living factor that people have to bear here in one way or another. We talked about it today in relation to the cost of fuel.

There is no doubt that there is a need for our system to be reviewed from top to bottom because you do not have to travel far around this community to get a spray about any aspect of the Work Health Act. The minister sought feedback and submissions from people about the Work Health Authority review. As I recall, I did send a paper to him and I forwarded a couple to him that were sent to me by the business sector in Tennant Creek. What seems to have been lost in all of this is that the thousands of people who are running businesses, who are barely keeping their doors open, do not have the luxury of the time and expense to write submissions about what needs to be done with the work health program and the system we have for compensating our injured. Those people would make their points reasonably and validly. However, they do not have the time to sit down and write a report on how it affects them.

I was out at a station on the Queensland border earlier in the year and the manager said to me: 'I would go back to the old system tomorrow and I would pay the extra 40%. I would do it willingly to avoid the 6 hours of paperwork that I have to do every week to keep the Work Health Authority people happy'. If that is the level of support that the Work Health Authority has received in the business community - and that is one man who is running a fairly big station - we have a long way to go before we bed it down to the degree that ought to be done.

The minister made the point earlier that no one had made submissions. I would put it to the minister that, if he sent a half a dozen people into the business community to interview people for a half an hour on their problems, he would probably obtain constructive feedback that would go a long way towards making the Work Health Act a very acceptable piece of legislation for everybody to work by. At the moment, it is a long way from the starting line and whoever fixes it up has a great deal of work to do.

However, the basic principles are sound. We should stick with them and build on them.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, perhaps I could start by reminding the member for Barkly that, at the time that the Work Health Act was put in place, he was the Chief Minister in this House. As the Minister for Health and Community Services pointed out, he was responsible for it. Whilst saying that, I have some sympathy for some of the things that he said. I am aware that there are people who are hurt because they have been injured and find it difficult to make ends meet. I am aware of that. There are many people who are injured, and not only in the workplace. People are injured in car accidents and people are injured when they slip on the rug at home. If you slip on the rug at home, unless you have a decent insurance cover, there is nothing to help you. The facts are that people in the community are hurting and not only because they have been injured. People are hurting generally at present because of the actions of the federal government and the way that it has reduced the standard of living in the Northern Territory and Australia generally.

The first case that the member for Barkly raised indicated that the person did not obtain adequate advice, possibly because the lady did not seek advice. One would think that the average public servant in the Northern Territory would know where to go for advice on work health matters. However, in its wisdom, the scheme that the member for Barkly was responsible for at the time, decided that this responsibility rested with the insurance companies and that the insurance companies ran the scheme in a way.

In fact, our Work Health Authority was established as a lean, mean machine to monitor the Work Health Act, and it has remained a lean, mean machine ever since. It has not grown in numbers. Apart from the numbers that have come with new functions from the Department of Mines and Energy and other places, it has not grown in numbers at all since it was established. It has continued its monitoring role under fairly difficult circumstances because it is dealing with insurance companies which are relied on to provide information to ensure that the Work Health Authority can do the job that it is supposed to do. There were some teething problems that have been mostly sorted out although I must say that there are some insurance companies, which are registered under the act, that do not yet understand that we have a genuine no-fault scheme. We do have insurance companies that are not doing what they are supposed to do, and that is to ensure that every individual is aware of his or her rights under the act, and is able to obtain the benefits to which he or she is entitled.

The public servant mentioned must have been fairly easy-going not to have sought advice until 6 months after her payments ceased if she needed them so desperately. I am certain that the Work Health Authority would have provided more timely advice had it been aware of the problem. Obviously, the insurance company involved had decided that this person was able to go back to work and therefore payments should cease or that, in some way, the injury was not work-related. The insurer may have been wrong. Had the Work Health Authority been made aware of that, obviously action could have been taken earlier. The fact that action was taken when the matter was brought to the authority's attention and that the benefits were reconfirmed would indicate that the Work Health Authority was able to do something in that case.

I think the honourable member referred to his other example being a case under MACA. We do not have responsibility for MACA here and we are not

talking about that act. We are talking about the fact that the family could not have modifications done to their home. Under the Work Health Act, if modifications are required - for example, rails in the bathroom and ramps to the house - these should be and are provided to ensure that the person can safely access all the facilities that they would normally access in the household. That is a normal part of the scheme. If it did not occur and if the Work Health Authority had been made aware of it, I am sure that action could have been taken. With 4000 reported accidents a year and an extremely small, hard-working authority, it is impossible to monitor every case fully unless the information is provided to the authority.

As I said, there are some insurance companies that have not yet understood that we have a genuine no-fault scheme and that anybody who is injured at work ought to be compensated. That is being addressed. If there are some mistakes in that the person did not really suffer the injury at work, redress can be sought later. In fact, in very few cases have payments been ceased because the injuries were not genuinely work-related. It would not be difficult for insurance companies to take a chance on that, look after people immediately following an injury and then, if necessary, take action against those who may have hoodwinked them. I think the onus is on the insurance companies in that regard. The teeth that the member for Barkly provided for the Work Health Authority in this regard lay in the power to remove from the scheme those insurance companies which did not respond well to the scheme. If it is necessary to deregister companies which will not accept that we have a genuine no-fault scheme, perhaps that is action that we will need to take.

The member for Barkly talked about the continuation of normal weekly earnings and comparison of normal weekly earnings in the Northern Territory with earnings in the states. In fact, normal weekly earnings in the Territory are higher than they are interstate and, as a consequence, when normal weekly earnings are maintained, the person is paid more in the Northern Territory than would be the case interstate. When we pay 70% of normal weekly earnings, the person will continue to receive more in the Northern Territory than an injured person would receive interstate if they were on 70% of normal weekly earnings.

In relation to different views taken by the Work Health Authority and the TIO, every piece of legislation is open to interpretation. If that were not the case, we would not have so many court cases. Lawyers love legislation. I am sure they draw it up to suit themselves so that they can argue about it in court. In fact, there are always differences of opinion about the interpretation of legislation and we have moved ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, before he starts interrupting, we moved to prepare amendments to the act to tighten up those areas that insurance companies have been interpreting in a way that was contrary to the views of the Work Health Authority. In fact, when I bring the amendments to this House ...

Mr Smith: When will that be?

Mr McCARTHY: They would have been here by now if you had done your job and given us a submission 12 months ago.

When we do bring them into this House, the amendments will ensure that there is no doubt as to what interpretation was intended. I guarantee that that will be done.

The next point raised was that people did not respond in terms of making submissions. I did not say that. I said that the opposition did not make any submission. In fact, we had a substantial number of submissions from industry. A number of people came directly to me, and a number of people responded in writing, and we have taken into account what they had to say. We have taken into account what other people who came forward had to say. However, I think the opposition stands condemned for not even bothering to respond.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I must pick the minister up on one of the points that he made. He said that the public servant 'did not seek adequate advice'. That is a somewhat patronising statement because the lady in question had been a public servant in Tennant Creek for 12 years. She did not have a good command of English. She is a very good worker and a steady and quiet person. She made weekly and sometimes twice-weekly visits to the pay section of the department at which she had worked in order to ask what was happening about her money. She was told that the matter was with the Work Health Authority and that the money would come. If you live in Tennant Creek, there is no Work Health Authority office which you can go to and you have no one on whom you can rely. If it is not in a person's nature to jump up and down in an effort to get some satisfaction and justice, then it is very unfair to say that the person did not try to obtain adequate advice. To her credit, I believe the lady did try to obtain adequate advice. She was very decent about it and, considering the treatment she received, I thought she was very gracious about the way she received it.

The honourable minister also made a point that is very pertinent to the problem. He said that it is impossible to monitor every case fully. I would have thought that that was really the crux of what the Work Health Authority is about. Its primary role is to get people back into the work force as contributing members of the community. It is the job of people in the authority to monitor and to do whatever has to be done to ensure that people are being looked after and rehabilitated.

Together with the rest of us, the honourable minister would have met a man the other day who claims that he has not had treatment for his disability in 9 years, and no one seems to give a damn about it. Therein is the flaw. The Work Health Authority really has the function of ensuring that the people who are out of the system and out of the workplace are shepherded back into it as soon as possible. The insurance company will not do it. The employer has plenty of other things to do; he will not do it. The Work Health Authority has a vested interest in ensuring that as many of the accident victims as possible return to the work force as soon as possible. It is naive to put that onus on the insurance companies. All they want to do is settle, and to take as long as they possibly can to do it.

If the minister is in any doubt about that, I draw his attention to the case of a man who was injured underground at Peko some time ago. As a result, he is barely able to move and lives in constant pain. At the beginning of this year or late last year, I had to become involved in a barney with the insurance company and the employer simply to get this gentleman into a hospital which helps people manage pain. We were not talking about rehabilitation, merely pain management. I believe that such altercations are totally unnecessary. The Work Health Authority ought to be

ensuring that similar situations do not arise again. I believe that there is a great deal of work to be done in this area and the review is none too soon.

Mr BELL: I want to pick up a couple of points from what could fairly be described as the minister's diatribe. He said a couple of times that I have taken no interest in the amendments circulated. In February of this year, a discussion paper was circulated. At that stage, on 10 February, I wrote to the chief executive officer of the Work Health Authority in these terms:

> Dear Mr Moore,
>
> Thank you for your letter of 22 December, enclosing a copy of a discussion paper on proposed amendments to work health legislation. Although at this stage I do not have specific proposals for inclusion in the proposed amendments to meet your deadline of 16 February, I have been garnering information from various sources and will be making input at some later time.

I believe, Mr Chairman, that I have done so.

Concerns about this discussion paper have been expressed by a group of people who have gathered in recent weeks under the name of the Injured Persons Association. My garnering of information leads me to the conclusions which I have attempted to impress on the minister tonight. He seems to vacillate between saying that there is a problem and there will be a review and saying that there is no problem and that nothing needs to be done. I wish he would make up his mind.

Mr McCARTHY: I really must respond to that. There is no vacillation on my part. What I was saying was that, if you want to talk about comparisons between the states, we stand up well. If you want to talk about whether I think that we need to review the level of benefits or not, I think we do. That is what we are doing. I called for the review and it is occurring. If that is vacillation, I am proud of it.

Appropriation for division 12 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 13:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have submitted a couple of questions to the minister. Firstly, there has been a cut of 11% in real terms in the labour services activity. What impact will that have on programs within that important area, which encompasses employment and training, industrial relations, human resources and equal opportunity?

Secondly, there has been a 12% cut in 'Local Governing Bodies' Grants and Subsidies' and 'Other Local Government Administration and Grants' which has been translated into some very dramatic cuts to funding of some town camp organisations. The figures are well known. Yesterday, the Tangentyere Council gained some publicity for the cuts which it has experienced from both the Territory and federal governments. Of course, Mr Chairman, you will be very well aware that there have been very significant cuts to the Bagot and Kulaluk communities as well. I have 2 concerns about the Territory government's cuts to town camp organisations. The first relates to the manner in which it was done. The Bagot community is the one with which I am most familiar because I have spent quite some time talking to people there about the impact of the cuts. The cutbacks at Bagot are

savage. This might not be important to the minister, but it is very important to the people at Bagot.

Mr McCarthy: I am listening. I am hearing every word. Don't worry about that at all. I can hear what you are saying.

Mr Smith: It is a pretty good indication of your attitude.

The situation at Bagot community is this. Last year, it received about $300 000. For the September quarter of this year, it received $75 000. It was informed roughly 2 weeks ago that it would receive a little more than half of what it received last year. It had already spent the $75 000 received for the September quarter and it was being asked to survive on $87 000 for the next 9 months.

When the $75 000 was received for the first 3 months, the amount being roughly a quarter of what was received last year, the community naturally assumed that it would be about a quarter of what it would receive this year. It now finds out that it must manage its programs for the remainder of the year with $87 000. I would like to ask the honourable minister how he expects the people of Bagot to do that. I would like to ask him how he would expect any organisation to be able to do that. I would like to ask the honourable minister how he would feel if his funding organisation - the Commonwealth government - did it to him.

Mr McCarthy: It has. Why do you think we had to do it?

Mr SMITH: I would like to ask him how he would react.

Mr Setter: A 46% decrease over the last 4 to 5 years.

Mr SMITH: This particular small organisation has had a 50% decrease in 1 financial year after having been given an indication that its funds for the year would not be affected at all. That is one level, and I would like to hear the honourable minister's comments on that.

The second level, and obviously the more important level, is the impact that that will have on these town camps. I am the first to accept that savings can be made, certainly at Bagot. I have been through the Bagot figures and I know that it can save some money in electricity. In a sense, it has had a rough deal with electricity because it has been paying commercial rates as a result of bulk billing. There are no meters. If meters were installed, $10 000 to $20 000 could be saved. Given some help and guidance, there are other areas where savings could be made. These communities are not high-powered organisations with highly-paid executives. They operate with very basic levels of staff and with people who really are not all that skilled in how to make savings and run highly efficient organisations. I would have thought it was part of the department's role to assist communities in determining where savings could be made. I ask the minister whether, even at this late stage, he is prepared to have his departmental officers give constructive assistance to those communities that will enable them to work through the problems that he has caused for them. That is the second level.

There is a third level, and that is the impact that these funding cuts will have. It has been put pretty well by the Tangentyere Council in its press release of yesterday. Obviously, Tangentyere is a much bigger organisation than Bagot or Kulaluk, but the principles still remain. They are employment agencies and they will have to cut back on the number of

staff whom they employ. They run essential public health programs. They are responsible for the collection of litter and for hygiene and, as Tangentyere says, there will be fewer camp clean-ups. Some communal ablution facilities will have to be closed down. There will be no power or water to some communal areas, leading to reduced public safety and increased vandalism. Parks and gardens will suffer also, and there will be increased fire hazards on town camp leases and surrounding areas resulting from the lack of town camp maintenance. Tangentyere talks also about the diseases that are commonly found in Aboriginal communities, and its concern that the incidence of these will increase - hepatitis B, gastroenteritis, scabies, trachoma and upper respiratory tract infections. I guess the major concern of Tangentyere is in that public health area because it has been doing an outstanding job in providing services to town camps. It provides many more services than most other town camp organisations are able to do.

Whether it is Tangentyere, Bagot, Kulaluk or any of the others, these communities have been faced with crippling cuts to their funds. I would like the honourable minister to tell me how he expects those town camp organisations to cope with those cuts and still enable the people to live in some comfort with at least basic facilities. Let us not forget that we are talking about communal ablution facilities, basic public health and basic litter control. Those are the areas that I would like the honourable minister to respond on right now.

Mr McCARTHY: I will answer first the question about labour services. In dollar terms, the cut is 4.7% or $356 000. As indicated in the question, the labour services activity covers a range of programs, and the best way to answer it is by addressing each of the individual areas. Employment and training has been reduced by a total of $195 000. The bulk of this reduction, $167 000, is in the 'other services' category. Far from being a negative cost-cutting exercise, it is a reflection of success with some of the school-leaver programs, which this government introduced 2 years ago now, being taken over by industry, as was always the intention.

Mr Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition was abusing me a while ago because I was not listening to his question. He is now wandering around while I am trying to provide an answer. That indicates to me that he is not interested in the matter.

Mr Smith: At least I am still in the Chamber.

Mr McCARTHY: And so was I.

This relates particularly to the Work Start Program which is run by the Industry Training Councils with funding from the government. Another area of significance in the school-leaver program is in the pre-vocational area. This is a program which was funded jointly with the Commonwealth. Now, the Commonwealth has decided to discontinue its special funding of trade-based pre-employment courses. Current trends and figures suggest that apprenticeship opportunities continue to increase whilst, at the same time, there is a decrease in numbers of school leavers entering the work force, and therefore there is reduced emphasis on these courses. This is a trend which will continue with the national trend towards vocation-linked courses in the last 2 years in high school. Some of the savings from these programs have been channelled into travel and accommodation costs for apprentices who need to travel interstate for their off-the-job training.

Industrial relations has been reduced by $74 000. This saving results from the completion of the consultancy contract with Cullen Egan Dell for

the Job Evaluation System which is now being implemented in the NTPS. The continuing maintenance of the system will be undertaken by our own trained evaluators.

The Human Resources Division has been reduced by $80 000. In 1989-90, the division was funded for a special initiative on recruitment and retention for the public service. The initiative included media recruitment campaigns within Australia and also in Hong Kong, in association with the NT Expo. The reduction reflects the one-off nature of the initiative. The campaigns were successful in drawing attention to the Territory as an attractive place to live and work, and resulted in a significant increase in responses to job advertisements. Recruitment from Hong Kong is in the order of 65 to 70 people in hard-to-recruit categories within Australia.

The Office of Equal Opportunity has been reduced by $11 000. Last year's budget contained funding for analysis and printing of the equal opportunity survey in the NTPS. That is not required this year. I think that covers the questions with regard to labour services.

With regard to the question of support for town camp organisations and the funding reductions that some have had to suffer this year, I would ask honourable members to recall that, a few years ago, Tangentyere was receiving quite large sums of money from the Commonwealth. Then, in 1 year, the Commonwealth decided that it would no longer pay. It left the Tangentyere Council in the lurch. The Northern Territory government moved in immediately and picked up the shortfall. It supported Tangentyere and continues to do so.

That same action has been taken by the Commonwealth in relation to most of the town camps. In fact, if my memory serves me correctly, this year it is finally cutting support to Kalano. Certainly, there was a threat that that would happen. I am not certain whether or not it has actually happened. The Commonwealth has been moving out of that area quite positively, and that has affected quite dramatically the money available to the Northern Territory for distribution to these organisations.

I do not like to see decreases in funding to anybody. However, over the last few years, I have made it clear to those organisations that I expected that they would rationalise their functions somewhat and would seek to obtain more support from their municipal councils. Given that town camps are in municipalities, which receive Grants Commission funding on a basis of servicing all of their citizens, in my view, they have been neglecting their responsibilities in town camps for some time. As a result of quite savage cuts from the Commonwealth this year, we were forced to take cuts in the Office of Local Government and had to find savings somewhere. As the Office of Local Government, we have a prime responsibility to service genuine local government and, in the Territory, that is interpreted as being municipal councils, community government councils, other councils under incorporation, and other local governing bodies.

We have some difficulty with the ongoing servicing of town camp organisations in relation to some of their functions. That is so because, as was indicated by Tangentyere yesterday, they have been using local government funding to fund what are really individual services. For instance, we have no responsibility through local government to fund health services. The Department of Health and Community Services offers a very good health service at Bagot which duplicates, in some ways, health services available to the wider community at the Royal Darwin Hospital and at various clinics in town. That is an added cost to government which probably could

be said to be a duplication of services. However, it is done. As the Office of Local Government, we do not have a responsibility to run health services in those places, but I recognise that these communities have been reliant on government funding for some time. We did give a warning with their funds for the first quarter that they could not consider that that would reflect the money they would receive this year. At that stage, we did not know what money we would have ...

Mr Smith: Oh! That is a big help!

Mr McCARTHY: It might be a big help. When we decided how much we could give them in the first quarter, I did not know that I would have to reduce their funding. At that stage, we did not know what funds we would receive from the Commonwealth.

I have had to look at where our primary functions lie. They lie with those very disadvantaged communities in the bush which do not have the opportunity even for duplicated services. They have no capacity to have something done unless they do it themselves. That is not necessarily the case in town camps, and I am not denigrating town camps. I have a great deal of respect for Tangentyere and the town camp in Tennant Creek is doing an extremely good job for its people. I am a little more concerned about organisations like Bagot and Kulaluk in that they are single, urban communities. In a way, they could be likened to a unit title development and, in my view, they should operate along those lines. Many of the people there have been living in Darwin for some time. They are living in very good accommodation and they have a responsibility to contribute for the services that they receive. I believe they can rationalise what they are doing quite dramatically.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to that. He agreed that there was opportunity to save money in relation to electricity costs etc. I am writing to the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority, following my meeting with the Bagot community yesterday. I met with the Bagot community and we discussed a range of options that might be available to it. I offered the assistance of the Office of Local Government which will be sending a senior officer out to talk to the Bagot community and look at means of rationalising what it is doing. In fact, I have indicated that I would be quite happy to receive from the community a submission for funding to hire a consultant to examine what can be done to improve Bagot's financial situation. I believe that many options are available to it. It is situated on a valuable piece of land and I am sure that it could utilise that to some effect, perhaps by hiring out areas for certain functions that people might want to hold there. I believe the old adviser's house could be used to establish an outlet for Aboriginal artifacts. There are many things that the people could do to bring themselves an income. I am quite happy to provide some support to examine all the options. I believe that the Darwin City Council also has a responsibility to support ...

Mr Smith: How?

Mr McCARTHY: I think it has a responsibility even to provide garbage services to the community. A garbage service runs by the gate of Bagot community and, if it was a unit development, that service would pick up the garbage at the front gate. I know that Bagot is like a rather large unit development but, if an agreement were made with Bagot, the garbage trucks could come in and pick up the wheelie bins in the community itself. Things like that can be done.

The community could look at programs like CDEP to keep some of its people employed and to maintain the very large areas of park land that it has and which any other community of its size could not afford to have. I do not think it is necessarily the responsibility of the people of the Northern Territory to maintain that very large area of public land at Bagot. When I say 'public' land, I use the word advisedly. It is public in their view because it is for the benefit of the wider community of Bagot.

Mr Chairman, if you look at the funding that we have been providing to town camp organisations, on a per capita basis, Tangentyere is receiving $347 per capita and Alice Springs is receiving $34 per capita. The local government funding flowing into Bagot is $773 per capita and, for Darwin, it is $16 per capita. Obviously, there are clear anomalies in that which needed to be addressed. They have been addressed. It is appropriate that functions that ought to be picked up by bodies other than local government should be picked up by those other bodies and, if there is a requirement for a greater contribution from the individual - and I am not sure what contribution the individual makes to the upkeep of Bagot - the community needs to examine that as well.

I do not like having to cut funds, however, it was better that I cut them from Bagot and Tangentyere rather than from Kintore and Port Keats. Our first responsibility is to look after those local governing bodies that definitely need our support. These are struggling even though we contribute $11m on top of the money provided by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth contribution is only $6m, $3m of which goes to the remote communities. $11m of untied Territory funds go to local governing bodies around the Territory other than municipal councils. In addition, we spend a further $10m on capital items, most of which goes to those same remote communities.

I think that, through the Office of Local Government, we have fulfilled our responsibility to local government very effectively. However, I do not think that we can continue to support many of the functions that we were supporting. Geoff Shaw made it quite clear yesterday on television that we were subsidising many of their commercial activities through the Office of Local Government. I do not think that that is necessarily appropriate. I do not mind that they do that if they can live within the means that we can afford to give them based on the criteria on which we distribute funds in other places. We have not distributed funds to town camps on the basis of criteria similar to that which we use for distribution of funds to other local governing bodies. Historically, we have had a figure, which has increased continually, which we have granted to them each year. This year, for the first time, we have used Grants Commission criteria to assess the funding to be made available to them. As a consequence, their money has decreased. It does not make me happy, but I believe that it was the right decision and I stand by it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the minister's hypocrisy staggers me. How can it be a right decision in any interpretation of the word 'right' to cut their funding by 50% without notice and to give them half of what they receive for 3 months and expect them to live on the other half for 9 months. In any interpretation of the word, how can that be right? Tell me ...

Mr McCARTHY: You had better ask Bob Hawke what he did when he cut Tangentyere's funds by 100% a few years ago.

Mr SMITH: Tell me how that can be called right? Let the minister tell me how he can stand there and tell the people at Bagot that they have to cut

expenditure somehow - he will not tell them how - because he does not have the guts to talk to them properly to tell them in advance what their funding program is likely to be and to help them through those problems. He can sit there in his little ivory tower and pretend it is not causing real heartache and real hardship to those people, that somehow or other they will find savings amounting to 50% of their expenditure last year and it will not have an impact on the basic lifestyle that they have at present. How can that be right in anyone's view? How can you expect any group of people, let alone a disadvantaged group, to make those savings without notice at any particular time. He is a hypocrite. It simply cannot be done. He has asked those people to undertake an impossible task. They are prepared to accept, as he no doubt knows, that they can make some savings.

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Chairman! The word 'hypocrite' is totally unparliamentary. The Leader of the Opposition should be asked to withdraw it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is a point of order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the word.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I withdraw. Of course, the member for Sadadeen would not even begin to understand what I was talking about.

Can we have something constructive from the minister opposite? Can we have an answer to the very simple question that I asked him: how does he expect any group of people, let alone a disadvantaged group of people like this, to make those savings in any particular year? Can we have a commitment from the honourable minister that, after these people have made their own savings, employed a consultant if necessary and negotiated with PAWA and the Darwin City Council, if they still find themselves short of money, he will provide additional money to help them through this process?

I want to make it clear to the people of the town camp communities throughout the Northern Territory that a Labor government is committed to restoring their funding levels and then working with them to identify areas where savings can be made. I have no doubt that savings can be made, that functions can be divested to other groups, that individuals living in those places may be able to pay more and that basic savings in terms of electricity can be easily achieved. However, to do it without warning and to do it in such a dramatic manner shows that the government has lost any sense of what it is there for. The government is there to provide a service to the people of the Northern Territory and to provide them with a regular and reliable funding arrangement that enables them to undertake some type of forward planning. That funding arrangement may well change over time as government moneys decrease, and I accept that government moneys decrease. However, the government should not treat others in the way that, quite legitimately, it complains very loudly that the Commonwealth treats it. The Commonwealth is roundly criticised by members opposite and by ourselves on occasion for cutting funds and for not providing sufficient notice on occasions. However, it has never done it so dramatically as this government has done it to the Bagot community and the Tangentyere community. It has never done it with so little notice and it has never done it after having given every indication that the funding arrangements for the following financial year would be very similar to the funding arrangements for the financial year past.

In a very real sense, the honourable minister has demonstrated, by the way that he has handled this matter, that he is not a fit and proper person to handle such an important and sensitive area. He is not a fit and proper

person because he has said blithely to people in the town camp communities: 'I am sorry but I have had to make some cuts and you are the poor bunnies who will bear more than your fair share'. I know that the honourable minister was rolled in Cobourg and that he had to hive off $1m ...

Mr McCarthy: Oh, you were the fly on the wall, were you?

Mr SMITH: No. But there were flies on the wall there, I can tell you.

Mr McCarthy: Probably the grub under the leaf.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, he had to hive off $1m from his budget. I know that that was the case. However, why pick on a group of defenceless people in town camps spread throughout the Northern Territory to bear more than their proportionate share? That is a key point. Why did he pick on that group of people when, with a bit of sense and a bit of wit, he could have spread the burden more equitably among the people of the Northern Territory for whom he is responsible? I do not expect to get a sensible answer from him on this matter. He has shown that he is incompetent and incapable of running his portfolio properly.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition has indicated to us again tonight what a Labor government would do in the Northern Territory. A Labor government in the Northern Territory would do exactly what a Labor government has done in Victoria and what a Labor government has done in Tasmania. It would run the Territory into so much debt that it would be broke by the following budget. The Leader of the Opposition has just made a promise that he would restore town camp funding to its original level overnight. However, that is not the only promise he has made. He has been making such promises to everybody whose budget has had to be reduced over the last few years because the Commonwealth has cut the Northern Territory year after year without warning. He will restore it all. Is he going to borrow it? Where will he borrow it from? We no longer have a guarantee for our borrowings from the Commonwealth.

If the Darwin City Council were to be funded on the per capita rate on which Bagot was funded last year, we would have to provide it with $100m this year. Even on the cut rate, we would have to provide $50m to it. I am quite happy for him to tell people that he will increase that funding again and that he does not care about blowing-out budgets. If he ever became Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, he would increase funding for all these harebrained social activities that he wants to put in place. All of it is duplication: duplicate health services, duplicate education services and black local government and white local government. That is what they are talking about. They are trying to establish, on the same lines as the Commonwealth, separate services for Aboriginal people. I do not know where he expects me to find the money. Does he expect me to take it off Kintore or Utopia or Oenpelli or Maningrida? Where am I to take it from? I have to take it from somewhere and I believe that, as a responsible minister for local government, my first obligation is to try to maintain funding to those organisations that are really carrying out a local government function.

As I said, I do not like seeing their funds cut. In fact, everybody to whom you provide $10 will spend that $10. However, if you give them $5, they will have to trim their sails. Unfortunately, that is the case. The Commonwealth has said it to us. It is not nice, but it has to be done. I have no doubt that, as I guaranteed, with the advice that Bagot and other communities receive from the Office of Local Government, we will find ways for them to reduce their spending and the duplication that has been in place.

To say that I have done this without warning is patently false. When I became minister responsible for local government, one of my very first moves was to warn the town camp organisations that they would have to rationalise what they were doing as compared to what the municipal councils were doing in the areas where they operated. I reiterated that on a continuing basis. I got myself into hot water with the town camp organisations when I spoke about this because they do not want even to think about it. However, there has been some discussion and some councils have taken up the cudgels. In fact, the Katherine Town Council has been fairly responsive in this regard. It has put in place measures to pick up some of the functions of the town camps and to assist them in many ways.

Some consultation is occurring in Alice Springs but the Darwin and Alice Springs councils are a little less inclined to do what they are funded to do, and that is to cater for all of their citizens. If those town camp organisations are carrying out functions which are not local government functions, I do not have a responsibility, historically or otherwise, to continue to fund those functions. I have a responsibility to ensure that those bodies that are truly carrying out a local government function - and I am talking about Kintore, Papunya etc - receive a reasonable level of funding. Will I take it from them? Where will I get it from? I do not have any more money. It has to come from somewhere.

The Office of Local Government spends more than 90¢ in the dollar on the ground in Aboriginal communities. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and ATSIC obviously do not perform nearly as well because of the enormous bureaucracy which they must maintain. They spend only 40¢ or 50¢ of every dollar on the ground. Those great consumers of funds, the land councils, spend no dollars on the ground in Aboriginal communities.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I seek information about the cuts to Julalikari's funding. I must say that, in comparison with other Aboriginal town camp organisations, Julalikari's cut was quite small, being in the order of $13 000 to $17 000. I want to make the point that the organisation itself was quite bewildered by the way in which the cut was made, particularly because the level of the cut bore no relationship to anything. I ask the minister: was the cut made simply on the basis of a percentage figure designed to help the minister balance the books, or was Julalikari carrying out functions which the minister did not wish to fund? If the latter is the case, which are those functions? Further, what steps is the minister prepared to take to help the organisation to manage the cuts?

The Leader of the Opposition pointed to difficulties which the Bagot community will encounter, given that the cuts have occurred halfway through the financial year. Although I have had my share of blues with Julalikari over the years, I have to say that it faces similar difficulties. It is an organisation which is trying really hard. When people working in such an organisation receive an unexpected and unexplained belt in the teeth like this, they feel like throwing in the towel. These organisations are not complaining about the cuts so much as the fact that they do not understand why they were made, what they were meant to achieve and how they should be managed. That is what makes them despair.

I understand the minister's complaints about the arbitrary and unreasonable cuts which the Commonwealth has imposed on the Territory over the years. I understand that better than anybody. However, the reality is that, at his level of government, the minister has enormous resources and some very competent people to help him to manage expenditure reductions. Smaller organisations, in Aboriginal communities and town camps, do not have

that level of expertise. There is a program of seminars which uses a game to teach Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory about the system of government expenditure and revenue-raising. The game has been developed as an instructional aid and it plays a very important role but, having seen it in operation, I am absolutely stunned at the lack of knowledge which many Aboriginal people in the Territory have about things which members of this House take for granted. It highlights the lack of expertise, understanding and experience available in some Aboriginal organisations to deal with the very problems which the minister has passed on to them.

Perhaps the minister feels that Julalikari has been careless with its money or has been doing things which it should not have been doing, and simply wants to bring it back to the field. If that is the case, he could help Julalikari by telling it about that in the frankest possible way. At the moment, people feel pretty depressed about the way they have been dealt with and the expectations in terms of their ability to manage with their depleted funds. The only answer they see is to reduce staff and cut programs. It is possible that, with some guidance and advice from the minister's department, they might be able to manage the expenditure cut without slashing their wrists and biting the carpet.

Mr McCARTHY: The member for Barkly is correct in saying that funding for Julalikari was cut by less than funding to many other communities. In fact, the amount was $17 000 as he indicated. Had he been in the Chamber a little earlier, he would have heard me say that our funding to town camp organisations was based simply on historical levels. In most cases, we inherited these funding levels at the time of self-government or when the Commonwealth withdrew funding to particular organisations, as it did in the case of the Tangentyere Council and other organisations. In picking up such funding, we inherited historical levels.

In funding Aboriginal councils apart from town camps, levels are not historically based. We use set criteria to assess what level of funding an organisation should receive, starting from a point of all organisations being equal. This year, for the first time, we have started funding town camps on the same criteria. Had we implemented this in a single year, the effect would have been far more dramatic than it is now. For example, the Darwin City Council receives funding at the rate of $16 per capita. That can be compared with Bagot at $773 per capita, Gwalwa Daraniki at $706 and ADF at $230. The Katherine Town Council receives $67 per capita whilst Kalano receives $197. The Tennant Creek Town Council receives $95 per capita whilst Julalikari receives $277. In Alice Springs, the town council receives $34 per capita whilst the Tangentyere Council receives $347 per capita.

Obviously, funding to town camps has been well above the norm. Historically, their funding levels have also been much higher than those of remote Aboriginal communities which are functioning as local governments, doing everything for themselves without outside assistance. When such historical levels apply, it is hard to reduce them. I certainly know what it is like to take a reduction in income. However, we have to get back to taws. If we are to be genuine about this - and I would hope that we are - over time, the town camp organisations should receive even greater cuts.

It cannot be said that the cuts came totally without warning. I have warned town camp organisations repeatedly that their high funding levels could not continue, that they would have to be funded on similar criteria to other organisations receiving local government funding, that local government funding could be provided to them only to perform local

government-type functions, and that we could not continue to provide funding for all of the things they wanted to do. The funding is untied and could be used for functions not normally associated with local government. However, the result is that some traditional local government functions cannot be performed. The same applies to untied funds that we give to any council. We give them untied funds designed for local government functions but, if they decide to use the money to dig a hole to the South Pole, that is their responsibility. The untied funds could be used to build a store if a council wished to do so. They can be used for any legal purpose.

It is not as though I have done anything which was not justified. We had to make cuts somewhere. In terms of the total local government program, the town camps situation was a clear anomaly. We have partially addressed the anomaly. We have applied to town camp organisations the same criteria we apply to the funding of all other local governments. They cannot say that they have been disadvantaged in that regard. We have phased in the cuts. Obviously, that means that there is a possibility that further cuts may be made with the passage of time.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I have to come back to the minister's proposition that the comparative level of funding between town camps and local government bodies is out of kilter and has to be brought back into line. If that is the object of the exercise, we really have to establish some parameters. At this stage, there are none. The cuts are being made, but the rules are not understood. In the case of the local government bodies, there are specific rules which relate to funding and the Grants Commission makes a determination. No such rules exist for the town camps. If the Grants Commission is to apply certain criteria to the funding of town camps that is fine. However, the organisations should be told about the criteria and how they will be applied, and they should be helped to manage the cuts.

One of the things which Julalikari does is to cut wood and cart it to various locations around the town for old people to use. Members of the Grants Commission would probably fall out of their chairs if they knew about that. Nevertheless, it is very important for the people themselves. Julalikari does it so that the old women do not go hungry for the lack of fuel for cooking fires and so that they do not die in the cold. The old women are the ones who would miss out if the service did not continue.

I do not know what all the other town camps do, but I have a pretty fair idea of what goes on at Borroloola and at Elliott. However, if the minister is moving to establish common criteria for the funding of town camps, the criteria should be spelt out fully. The organisations should be given at least 12 or 18 months notice that this is to happen and they ought to appear before the Grants Commission so that communication between the 2 parties can start very quickly and so that the education process can begin.

I do not accept the proposition that the honourable minister has told these people that the level of funding cannot continue and that they have simply to sit and wait for some unbelievable figure to arrive through the mail so they know what their plans for the year can be. That is unreasonable in anybody's terms. I do not argue with the proposition, if he wants to do that, but there is a way to do it. All it has done at the moment is cause a crash in morale among people who are needed. These are the people who, at the end of the day, will provide many of the services in the Aboriginal town camp communities that local government will never serve.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, in responding quickly to what the member for Barkly has had to say, I must apologise because I did not pick up his earlier comment that many of these people lack expertise in running their communities and that they require a little help. I had answered that question previously for the Leader of the Opposition. I told him that I had asked the Office of Local Government to provide all assistance possible to help them manage the cuts in income. In fact, I gave that guarantee to the Bagot community when its representatives came to see me the other day. I offered them some support in obtaining expert advice on how best to manage the situation in which they now find themselves. I can extend to all such organisations my assurance that we would like to assist them to rationalise what they are doing and to work out how best to manage the cuts that they face now.

Mr Chairman, I would not fall out of my tree, and I do not think the Grants Commission would fall out of its tree, if we knew that a local governing body was chopping wood for its pensioners. That is quite a legitimate function of a local government. If that is what it chooses to do with its untied funds, it can do that and nobody will complain. What we have to recognise here is that town camps are not local governments and, whilst some of them are carrying out local government-type functions, they are not local governments and they will not be assessed by the Grants Commission. Currently, they are being assessed on the same criteria that the Grants Commission put in place to provide the funding to all of those other local governing bodies. However, these are not local governments, albeit they are carrying out some local government functions.

There are other people with responsibilities for them. ATSIC has a responsibility in this regard as well, but it is not being very supportive at present. It has far more funds than we have to play with, but it is not doing much. I think that that is something that needs to be addressed. In order to pick up some of that shortfall, ATSIC needs to look at what it can do to assist in some of those social programs that are not local government functions and that are not necessarily the responsibility of this government at present. We can go only so far with what we have and I think that we have done that. I have managed to maintain, as nearly as possible, last year's levels to all of those bodies that are really local governing bodies. I had to make cuts somewhere, and it was obvious that the town camps would have to face that prospect. Certainly, they were aware of it and ...

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr McCARTHY: While that might be denied, they were aware that this would not go on forever. I had hoped that we would not have to cut their funding so deeply in one year, but that was not possible to avoid unless I had cut the funding to some of the remote communities that did not have the ability to pick up other support. I did not have the money to go any further.

Anyone can say that I lost out at Cobourg. We all lost out at Cobourg because we lost out at the Premiers Conference. Because we lost out there, it had to be passed down the line. All government departments have taken cuts, and they have taken them reasonably quietly. Unfortunately, some areas have had to take bigger cuts than others.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I corresponded with the minister about his attitude to the Tangentyere Council. I recall receiving a letter in which the minister commented on the annual report from the Tangentyere Council,

and it was a particularly carping letter. Tangentyere Council had been critical of a number of federal and Territory government departments and their actions. The particular issues of which it was critical are not relevant at the moment. Certainly, at the moment, I cannot recall them. The surprising factor was the reaction of the minister. He chose only to be very defensive about the criticisms of the Territory government and that struck me as rather unnecessary under the circumstances. I thought there might be a hidden agenda and, lo and behold, in spite of what the minister has said, these funds were removed with no prior warning. It makes life very difficult for an organisation that provides what are essentially welfare services.

While I am on that issue, I think the decision to appeal the Supreme Court judgment which confirmed the benevolent institution status of Tangentyere as far as payroll tax was concerned was another waste of government money. It was not one of the appeals that I mentioned when the division with respect to the Department of Law was discussed. However, I think it is absolutely absurd to appeal that particular case.

I believe that the way this decision was made was quite inappropriate and that brings me to the second point. There is an underlying problem with this reduction in funds to Tangentyere. Tangentyere is not simply responsible for providing services. It is a central form of organisation for a group of people whose connections with majority society can reasonably be described as tenuous. The majority of the people in the housing associations that come under the Tangentyere umbrella do not speak English as a first language and, as the member for Barkly said, they are not familiar with the institutions and processes that are part and parcel of public administration that we deal with on a regular basis in this Assembly. Every now and then, it is worth while to pause and appreciate how difficult it is for the constituents of those housing associations, that in turn are constituents of Tangentyere, to come to terms with programs and with the extraordinary processes of social change that are required of them.

The minister says that town camps have difficulty with the type of criteria used with local government. He should not be amazed by that. The fact is that the town camps do not fit easily into our idea of local government. The problem is that, because of its dedication to this process of mainstreaming, this government has foisted local government on the town camps, and they simply do not fit into that. If a little more imagination were employed in that regard, we might get somewhere.

Mr Coulter: Where do they fit? How do they define themselves?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Palmerston. As I have said in this Assembly on many occasions, because mainstreaming does not work, there really is no alternative but to have a department of Aboriginal affairs or a bureau of Aboriginal affairs .

Mr Coulter: If you were in government, would you have that?

Mr BELL: CLP governments have never done that. I am not in a position to give an undertaking with respect to the administrative organisation of a Labor government nor to say that we would or we would not have a department of Aboriginal affairs or an office of Aboriginal affairs. However, I do believe - and I trust I am not cutting across any policy initiatives here - that it is important to have coordination of Aboriginal affairs and to consider the differences in delivery of government services to Aboriginal people. The minister identified quite fairly the difference in need between

a community like Kintore, for example, with that of local governing entities elsewhere. That is chiefly the result of isolation. I recommend to the minister, a recent book about mobility in central Australia, by Kim Doohan and Elspeth Young, 2 well-known Australian ethnographers. What they have to say about Aborigines and mobility in the Centre has important implications for this debate. I suggest that, if he were to read that, and to consider what is in the minds of Aboriginal people who live in those town camps, and often live elsewhere around central Australia in this instance, he would be convinced. I do not believe that coming to terms with those ideas will be served by slashing 40% from the funding for Tangentyere.

One final point that I want to make is that the minister said that a federal agency had removed all funding at one stage, and that that was picked up by the Office of Local Government. I do not believe that that was the case. I am not suggesting that there are not criticisms to be made of the approach of federal agencies to the funding of some of those organisations, but I do not think it is reasonable for the minister to paint history in a way in which it did not occur. I do not believe that this reduction in funding was responsible.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we are talking about a 40% cut in real terms for Tangentyere. I have worked with Tangentyere for many years and I can assure the honourable minister that, in the close working relationship that I had with Tangentyere over those years, there was nothing ...

Mr Coulter: Are you going to ask a question about the appropriation, or are you just making a statement about the 40% reduction?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The Leader of Government Business will please be quiet.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the honourable minister said that the funding levels were historical. I can tell you, Mr Chairman, that Tangentyere Council has been subjected to more funding reviews, consultants' reports, analyses, budget dissections and work value cases than any organisation that I know of.

Mr McCarthy: By the Commonwealth.

Mr EDE: Yes. They were used to establish funding levels. Whilst this government may have inherited those levels, they were less than the original levels established following a most comprehensive review by the federal government over many years, not only by the Labor government but by the previous Fraser government.

The minister has cut $300 000 from this organisation, and that amounts to a 40% cut in real terms. The minister says that the Northern Territory government has received its share of cuts, and that is true. However, it has never faced cuts as draconian as this. What the minister has done in this case is the equivalent of the federal Treasurer delivering a $360m cut to the Northern Territory in a single budget year. A 40% cut in real terms is what Tangentyere received.

Mr McCarthy: You just said that is was $300 000.

Mr EDE: $300 000 is the real value of the cut.

Mr McCarthy: Oh, come on.

Mr EDE: It would equate to a $360m cut in federal grants to the Territory. If this government received a cut of that magnitude, members opposite would rant, rave, parade in the streets, slash their wrists and self-immolate. They would take every action they could possibly think of, including the calling of elections.

The cuts are absolutely ridiculous. They are economically irrational. During the last couple of years, both the Territory and Commonwealth governments have contributed millions of dollars to the Town Camp Health Improvement Program. That is a very good program but now all the expenditure is in jeopardy.

Mr Coulter: Didn't you do a bit of consultancy work for Tangentyere?

Mr EDE: I certainly did. In those days, the relationship between the organisation and funding bodies was more rational, but the minister's cuts are absolutely ridiculous. Significant capital infrastructure will be jeopardised due to the fact that maintenance levels will have to be reduced substantially. To take a single item, $600 000 has been spent on infrastructure for tree planting, irrigation etc. There is no way in the world Tangentyere will be able to continue that program. The whole $600 000 will be wasted because of the $300 000 cut. What a ridiculous situation!

I am glad that the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority is in the Chamber because I believe that something can be done to improve the situation. If the minister were to reinstate the power subsidy of $96 000 as an offset against the $300 000 cut, it would not solve all of the problems but it would go some of the way. What does the minister expect Tangentyere to do with the communal power, water and sewerage bills?

Mr Coulter: Charge for it.

Mr EDE: How do you charge for communal power, water and sewerage?

Mr Reed: I have to pay for mine.

Mr EDE: What do you pay? You pay for your power, not communal power.

Mr McCarthy: How does the Alice Springs council play for the power it uses in street lighting? It does it by means of rates and other charges.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: By rates! Tangentyere Council does not have a revenue base. It does not have the ability to impose rates. It pays rates! It does not have a loan-raising capacity of the same nature as the town council. That is why the per capita funding figures quoted by the minister are phoney. They do not take into account the fact that Tangentyere does not have its own revenue base or loan-raising capacity. Those 2 factors explain why a very substantial proportion of that per capita difference exists. The remainder can be explained on the basis of disadvantage and the fact that town camps are coming from a long way behind.

If the power and water subsidy of $96 000 remained, it could possibly save the 4 full-time jobs and 15 part-time jobs which will otherwise be lost. It would also ensure that the communal ablution facilities remained open. I cannot see how, if the cuts remain, Tangentyere will be able to keep the communal ablution facilities open and pay power, water and sewerage bills for the communal areas.

Mr Chairman, the economic irrationality goes further than that. The fact is that, in other ways, eventually, the government will have to pick up much more than it is currently saving. This occurred in the years before Tangentyere was in operation. Largely because of its efforts, disease levels are nowhere near what they were 7 or 8 years ago. What happens if litter is not controlled and if power and water are cut off in commercial facilities because the bills cannot be paid? Health standards will fall, leading to increased health expenditure requirements. Vandalism and crime will increase and we will have to spend more money for policing, with all the negative social consequences. Tourism will suffer because of increased litter. Like the member for Flynn, recently I went on a bus tour with a group of tourist operators who pointed out some of the trouble spots in terms of litter etc in the area south of the Gap. That area is not the responsibility of the Tangentyere Council. It seems to be one of the areas which fall outside anyone's control. I can say, however, that the next time tourist operators organise such a tour, litter will be well above its present level because the programs which address the problem will have been cut.

I believe that the government has been extremely shortsighted in relation to this issue. I refer to the government rather than the minister because I think it is a government responsibility rather than this minister's responsibility. I am told that his portfolio was cut savagely during the budget deliberations. I can understand why. Such negotiations are pretty tough and are no place for wimps. I understand how the minister failed. However, it is really a matter of government priorities. While the government continues to fund what others have called the 'Red Star Furniture Factory', the 'Great Wall Hotels' and ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr McCARTHY: I would like to respond to the member for MacDonnell's comment about my being upset about the Tangentyere Council's annual report. I did take exception to the Tangentyere annual report, and I believe I had every reason to do so. Whether the member opposite wants to recall this or not, 3 or 4 years ago the Commonwealth told Tangentyere that it would withdraw operational funding and that those funds would have to be found elsewhere. This government provided that operational funding which amounted to a very substantial sum. We did so in order to allow Tangentyere to continue to function as it had functioned in the past. The Commonwealth withdrew those funds without warning. It withdrew all operational funding. This year, it threatened to do the same to Kalano. It has done it to other communities.

As a result, we found that we provided Tangentyere with funding of $526 000 last financial year. Basically, that was the amount of funding which we provided to Galiwinku which is a community of about 1000 people. Tangentyere does not have anything like the local government functions which Galiwinku has. In spite of that, Tangentyere criticised the Territory government for its lack of support. It did not say a word about the Commonwealth, which had totally withdrawn its funding, and it did not say that this government had provided those funds. Indeed, it criticised this government. I wrote to Tangentyere and expressed my opinion that, given what this government had done, the criticism was rather unfair. However, there is no connection between that matter and these funding cuts. Those cuts applied to other organisations as well, organisations such as Julalikari, Bagot and Kalano. They were made because we had to rationalise what was happening to town camps.

We decreased our funds to Tangentyere this year by $168 000. I do not know how the member for Stuart arrives at a figure of $300 000, unless he is adding it to the ATSIC figure. This year, without warning, ATSIC also happened to cut its funding of Tangentyere by $168 000. I assume that the amount was arrived at quite by chance. Nobody is criticising ATSIC for having done that. That magnificent organisation ATSIC, which supposedly will provide so much extra funding to Aboriginal people on the ground, cut $168 000 from Tangentyere. There was no criticism from members opposite.

I cannot justify continuing to fund Tangentyere at the same level as Galiwinku. It simply does not make sense. Galiwinku has a far greater responsibility. The matter has been well and truly debated tonight. There can be no change because there is no ability to change. If members opposite want to criticise the Northern Territory government for cutting funds to Tangentyere, let them also criticise ATSIC, the Aboriginal organisation that was supposed to work wonders, for doing the same thing.

Appropriation for division 13 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 92:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like the honourable minister to explain the drop in the appropriation for Fisheries Management from $2.019m in 1989-90 to $405 000 in 1990-91. What did the government pay out for drought subsidies in 1989-90? I would like a breakdown showing who received the subsidies. I asked a similar question of the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority the other day and I thank him for the comprehensiveness of his reply. I would like the honourable minister to explain also the inconsistency between the federal government's figures for BTEC payouts and the Northern Territory government's figures. I might add that these questions were delivered previously to the minister in writing.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member for Stuart for providing prior advice of his questions. In relation to the fisheries question, the $2.019m in 1989-90 included $1.7m for the Barramundi Buy-back Scheme which commenced on 1 January 1989 for 2 years. The remainder, $319 000, was for salaries and operational costs. At 30 June 1990, the scheme had removed 6 licences and there remained $1.493m in the Barramundi Buy-back Trust Account. As no further response is anticipated, some of those funds - $1m - have been returned to the Treasury, although additional funding will be provided should a number of late buy-back offers be received. The $4.05m for 1991 is only for salaries and operational costs and shows an increase of $86 000 over the previous year. This increase confirms the Territory government's commitment to fisheries management and has been provided specifically to cover the introduction of management plans for the barramundi, mud crab and mackerel fisheries.

In relation to the question on drought subsidies, the government paid out $709 756 in drought subsidies in 1989-90. The subsidies consisted of relief on the cost of: freight for livestock destocking - $581 143; fodder - $53 998; and livestock restocking - $74 615. Drought subsidy payments were dispersed over pastoral regions as follows: the Alice Springs region - $266 368; and the Barkly Tableland region - $443 388.

Mr Coulter: You wanted the names, didn't you?

Mr Ede: Yes.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, there is a problem in that the information has some producer confidentiality in relation to the funding arrangements and the reciprocation. I will examine whether I can provide some information to the honourable member on a confidential basis.

Mr Smith: It is public money.

Mr REED: It could be confidential from the producers' point of view in respect of their commercial activities. I think that confidentiality should be respected.

In February 1988, the Australian Agricultural Council set the estimates for the national BTEC program for the period 1988-89 to 1991-92 at $167.1m plus inflation. A review of estimates by the National BTEC Committee in April 1990 found that this estimate would be exceeded and the committee sought approval from AAC to revise the estimates upwards by $34.7m. The upward variation was the result of the endorsement by AAC of the operational management review recommendation that the deadline for the eradication phase of the program be extended to 31 December 1992, the implementation of AAC policy that compensation be based on market value and other more minor costs not envisaged when the estimates were prepared in 1987. At AAC in July 1990, the Commonwealth advised that it had approved an additional $4.6m instead of $6.9m as its 20% to the increased funding required. AAC approved the revised estimates for 1990-91 - $63.4m nationally and $37.8m for the NT - because commitments for the program had already been made. For the remainder of the program, AAC requested the BTEC Committee to review plans and budgets and to report out of session. The estimates were reviewed by the BTEC Committee on 6 September 1990. Some states were able to make savings and, when the inflation factor was applied, a small surplus of $1.28m was the result.

BTEC is funded on a 50:30:20 basis by the cattle industry, the Territory government and the Commonwealth government. In the Northern Territory, the approved budget is $38.88m, net of cattle sale proceeds, and the Territory budget is limited to a contribution to $7m, without inflation, with the rest of the Territory share to be funded off budget. The details are set out. I seek leave to have those incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

	$000	
Net BTEC budget	37 878	Cabinet decision No. 6497 excluding 8% inflation
Thus Commonwealth share 20%	7 576	
Thus industry share 50%	18 939	
Thus NT share 30%	11 363	
NT contribution from budget	7 000	Cabinet decision No. 6497
Thus NT contribution off-budget	4 363	Deferred payment
TOTAL	11 363	

Net budget expenditure	= net BTEC budget - off budget component
	= 37 878 - 4 363
	= 33 515 Appropriation
Proceeds from sale of cattle	= 10 000 (estimate)
Thus total gross BTEC expenditure on budget	= 43 515
Thus total gross BTEC expenditure	= 47 878

Mr REED: The Northern Territory will be deferring an amount of $4.363m during the 1990-91 financial year. We will be averaging our BTEC payments - which are $21m until the end of the program - at about $7m a year. However, because our commitment this year was $11.3m, we will be making up the balance with deferred payments and we will be funding that outside the BTEC program because it cannot be included in it. That is for compensation for animals this year. Where payments will have been deferred with the agreement of the pastoralists, we will have to pay interest on those payments. Destocking will continue as planned for the 1990-91 program. However, special arrangements have been made with the individual producers to complete their destocking in 1990-91. Those who agree will have payment of compensation deferred to 1992, with interest payable from outside the BTEC budget. These producers are also paid the abattoir receipts and the compensation due for their stock is the amount that attracts interest.

In 1990-91, the Commonwealth BTEC budget for the Northern Territory is $28.6m. This consists of the industry contribution at $18.9m and the Commonwealth contribution at $7.6m. With 8% inflation, that total of $266.5m becomes $28.6m.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I make the point that the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority was able to provide me with the figures on a per-property basis for the dry bore subsidy. I cannot see why drought money should be treated differently from the dry bore subsidy. I will explain what I am after and perhaps the minister can provide me with the figures before the end of the sittings. It is obvious that oppositions have to keep an eye on drought subsidies by their very nature.

Mr Reed: Worried about Queensland, are you?

Mr EDE: Yes, basically. There are different means by which people can have their properties declared. This question should reduce this list substantially. I would like to know the names of and the amounts involved for properties that received a drought subsidy of some nature over 3 successive years or where a property received more than 10% of the total allocation. I am trying to determine whether there was a disproportionate beneficiary or whether somebody has made a meal of it. If we can have some agreement on that, I will drop my request for a total list.

There are 2 other areas. I have not given notice of these and I do not expect the minister to provide the information tonight. I would like to know the status of the people who took up the buffalo development loans. How many of them are still viable and will continue? I do not want the

names of the properties. I simply want information to the effect that such and such a number of properties have achieved such and such a level etc.

Finally, probably it would be a good time for us to have a retrospective look at the ADMA program, and Pam Rixon from Oolloo Station mentioned this subject on the radio this morning. I am not advocating a witch-hunt, although I know that some people would dearly love to go on a witch-hunt over ADMA. I am asking for a retrospective cost benefit analysis of the program. It is not often that governments have maintained a deep commitment over such a long period to something as philosophically based as ADMA was and have then terminated the program. We could argue all night whether it was a benefit or a cost overall. I have my feelings about it and no doubt the honourable minister has his.

We could look at the accumulated costs, and the benefits in terms of the revenue generation levels in broadacre crops that are currently being achieved on those properties. We could treat it as if all the costs of ADMA were an investment. We could look at where we are now and project the benefits forward, possibly with some sort of discounting arrangement. I think the economists in the department would be able to work out a way of doing it.

I am not trying to say that this or that was the factor that made it a success or a failure. The first thing that we have to do is to decide whether, in purely economic terms, it was a success or a failure. If it turns out that it was a success in purely economic terms, we have achieved that. If it was marginally below break-even level, we can investigate whether that was weather-related or whether the concept of broadacre farming in the Northern Territory was flawed. These are matters on which we have to make decisions on the basis of the experience that we have gained. If we do not learn anything from this experience, the money has been wasted. If we are able to learn from it by doing this type of analysis now, the money will not have been totally wasted.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, on that basis, we should be able to provide some information to the honourable member on the drought relief program.

In relation to ADMA, the appropriate time to have raised this matter might have been in the debate on the bill that was introduced in February. We would all have liked ADMA to have succeeded much more than it did. On the other hand, there have been some successes. We have a farming operation now that did not exist previously. By and large, the farms are expanding into mixed farming. I think that that is a sign of the times as they look for opportunities to expand their income base and their general operations. Of course, we have other very important and very useful infrastructure from the point of view of grain depots and the like. I will be happy to provide the honourable member with some information on that at some time, and I guess we have to take on board his suggestion that a more thorough review be undertaken, and we will give that some consideration.

The other matter that he raised in relation to the buffalo development loan scheme probably does not really apply to the Appropriation Bill 1990-91. However, I will endeavour to obtain some information for the honourable member in relation to that.

Appropriation for division 92 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 79:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I hope that the honourable minister can answer the question that has been provided. I have an additional question: what is the future of Giles House?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the question indicated that, in 1989-90, the appropriation for juvenile justice was $2.477m whereas actual expenditure was $3.219m. This year's appropriation is $2.711m based on a simple CPI increase on last year's budget. In addition, staff was increased from 52 to 59. The question asked for an explanation of what services will suffer as a result of these cuts.

The staffing increase for juvenile justice by 7 to an average paid staff of 59 results from the use of casual employment to maintain minimum staffing levels. The use of casuals is implemented only when the level of permanent staff drops below the minimum requirement of rostered posts. These 7 positions are actually the full-time equivalent of a pool of casuals which can be called on if necessary. The salaries allocation to juvenile justice is based on the permanent staff of 52. The department will absorb the cost of casuals where it is necessary to use them. Actual expenditure for juvenile justice in 1989-90 was $3.219m. The budget figure was $2.665m, and the 1990-91 budget allocation of $2.711m shows an increase of $46 000 over the 1989-90 budget allocation. The difference between the 1989-90 budget and the actual expenditure reflects the government's initiatives in addressing significant problems that existed at that time. These included inadequate training and a high rate of abscondings. This expenditure was a one-off cost of $149 000 and has resulted in properly trained staff and a dramatic reduction in the number of abscondings since July 1989.

The balance of the $508 000 variation over the 1989-90 actual expenditure of $359 000 relates largely to the pool of casual staff and the significant reduction in juvenile detention and, therefore, consumable costs. The number of juveniles in custody has decreased to a point where rationalisation of services could take place, and the decision to commence winding down Giles House should make up the shortfall. Yesterday, Giles House had only 2 detainees, and that leads me to the other question raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Coulter: The rest have absconded!

Mr REED: They have not absconded, Mr Chairman.

The operation at Giles House in Alice Springs is being scaled down to reflect the consistent decline in the total juvenile detention population in recent months and the need to prepare operationally for the future role of Giles House, given the opening of the Don Dale Centre in May 1991. The department is to explore the implications of retaining services to reflect the current detainee occupancy. Staffing levels required for the secure and safe custody of the predicted number of juveniles are being maintained. No permanent staff are being disadvantaged and, indeed, the secretary of the department had discussions last week with union representatives and staff at Giles House.

In 1989, less than 20% of the detention centre population comprised juveniles from central Australia. In anticipation of the opening of the Don Dale Centre in Darwin in May 1991, which will reduce the role of Giles House, and in view of the consistent trend of declining numbers of juveniles held in detention, the scale of operations at Giles House has been reduced. The 7-year historic daily average of juveniles held in custody across the Northern Territory has been 34 to 38. This has reduced markedly, to a daily

average total since 3 August 1990 of 21. Juvenile justice staff have worked most efficiently ...

Mr Smith: Since 3 August?

Mr REED: 3 August 1990.

Mr Smith: To?

Mr REED: 21.

Mr Smith: The average since 3 August has been 21 per day?

Mr REED: Yes.

Mr Smith: Is that a statistically viable period?

Mr REED: That is across the Territory. I just give that as a comparison with what it was a year ago.

Mr Smith: There has been a decrease?

Mr REED: Yes, a dramatic one. I am not suggesting that the current detainee numbers will be what the future operations will be based on. I am simply giving you an indication of the reduction.

Mr Smith: There is a pretty good rule of thumb that the bigger the institution, the more people you will have in it.

Mr REED: Juvenile justice staff have worked most efficiently to reduce the number of juveniles in detention by providing highly-credible sentencing alternatives and by implementing very effective case management plans for those at-risk juveniles. The daily number of juveniles held at Giles House has been 6 or less since 1 August 1990 and 2 or less since 28 August. To address the obvious cost inefficiencies in maintaining a staffing level adequate to supervise 22 inmates when there are only 2, the scaling down of Giles House operations has been in progress for some weeks. Staffing has been rationalised, particularly in the use of limited tenure and casual employees. Permanent staff will be retained at the facility or redeployed into other areas. Giles House will function now principally as a remand centre for Centralian juveniles who are refused bail. Most sentenced juveniles will be detained in the 2 Top End detention centres.

Based on past figures, for 90% of the time there are 4 or less remandees - that is, persons awaiting sentence - from central Australia. History shows also that for 25% of the time, there are no remandees in this category. Over the next few months, the department will be exploring possible community and government uses of the school and hostel areas of the facility, to best meet the needs of the Alice Springs community.

There has been a decline because of alternative programs that the government has in place relating to the placement of juveniles with people in town and on stations and the like. I think that that is a commendable program ...

Mr Coulter: That is true. That is absolutely magnificent.

Mr REED: It is a success story. It is much better to have kids out in situations like that than locked up in Giles House. As I indicated in a

response to a press release issued by the member for Flynn last week or the week before, at this time there is no intention to close down Giles House but, clearly, there is a need to reconsider the future of Giles House in the light of the construction of the Don Dale Centre and the success of the other programs. Of course, the staff will be involved in the process that has commenced. I have asked the Juvenile Justice Management Board in Alice Springs to consider the future of Giles House and the useful purposes to which it might be put.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, my telephone has been running hot about Giles House for the last few weeks, and I very much appreciate the greater detail that has been provided by the minister. I am particularly interested in the impact on inmate numbers at Giles House that alternatives to being interned in Giles House have had, and I suggest to the minister that a fuller statement and analysis of what has happened to what has presumably been a relatively constant number of juvenile offenders would be of great interest. We have all been aware of the ups and downs over a few years. In the context of the government seeking to make parents vicariously liable for juvenile offenders, it is very important that the opposition take particular notice of the government's program in this regard. Given the fact that Giles House is 1000 miles from Darwin and 1000 miles from the alternatives, it will be important to ensure that any offenders who are committed to an institution do not have a lesser opportunity for rehabilitation because the only alternative is to move 1000 miles away. That brings me to my question.

The minister has just told us that there was to be a scaled down arrangement for Giles House and I would appreciate him telling us what the nature of that scaled down arrangement will be. If he is not able to tell us this evening what that arrangement will be, will he give an undertaking to do so in the near future?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, most of the kids concerned have been participating in what is called the community-based supervision scheme. I understand that that results from the courts gaining more confidence in the success of that program. The children are released from the courts and supervised by officers of the department. I guess it could be compared to some extent with the Home Detention Scheme, but they are not confined to home so strictly. Of course, that is a much more favourable circumstance than being locked up in Giles House, and it seems to be working fairly successfully. I will be happy to get some information and some figures together for the honourable member in relation to that but, of course, I do not have those to hand tonight.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I have given the minister prior notice of my question and it is in a similar vein to others I have asked other ministers. In the 1989-90 budget, there was an item of $1.5m to construct the Don Dale Centre. In 1990, the budget figure is $1 999 104. Could the minister please explain these figures? Is it the same sum of money that was allocated in 1989? If it is, I know the reason why it has been revoted because other ministers have given answers. Can the minister give an explanation of why the amount is greater?

Mr Coulter: It started late in 1989-90.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You be quiet. I am not asking you the question.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, when the decision was first taken to replace Malak House, estimates were obtained which were in the order of $1.5m. As I understand it, those estimates were based on building another Malak House at

another place, and it was found that that would not be all that satisfactory. As a result, an estimate was made for construction of a new facility, and I think that estimate was $3.4m. As a consequence, a further review of those plans was undertaken and the design was further refined. That process took some time, as may be imagined and, for the information of the honourable member, the review of that design included staff who work in the juvenile justice area so that the design was as practical as possible and suited as much as possible to the function for which it will be required. That is only common sense, but I guess common sense does not always prevail. Certainly, from the point of view of the design of the facility and the cost now of $2m, it was sensible. I understand that contracts are to be let soon. The planning and documentation is in the final stages and it is still programmed for completion ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Where is it to be built?

Mr REED: It is programmed for completion by the middle of next year, and it will be constructed on a site adjacent to the Berrimah Prison. That contributed to the reduction of costs in that, for example, the food provided for the Don Dale Centre will come from the prison and therefore there will be a joint use of the facilities from the point of view of the food supply. Of course, we own the land already. That centre will definitely be a big advantage to the juvenile justice area. It will be designed on very modern principles. It will incorporate a school and other services. There will be areas for teaching kids how to do some basic homecrafts and the like. I feel sure that all honourable members will look forward to the completion of the facility.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I have on notice a question about Giles House, but I believe that has been answered satisfactorily, and I thank the minister for that.

Mr Coulter: We have to close it down.

Mr COLLINS: I heard it. There are speakers around the buildings.

Mr Chairman, my question to the minister is in relation to the new Alice Springs jail which is proposed to be built on Owen Springs Station, a station owned by Mrs Milnes. In fact, she is the only woman who owns a station outright in the Territory. She was a Hayes before she was married.

Mr Coulter: What about Bulla Station?

Mr COLLINS: I will stand corrected if the Leader of Government Business can substantiate that.

Mr Coulter: I would say that there are 1 or 2.

Mr COLLINS: It is good to know that there are other women pastoralists. Certainly, Mrs Milnes is a grand lady of the Territory. During the very limited negotiations which occurred, she had a visit from the Department of Lands and Housing suggesting that the government might be interested. Following that, an announcement was made indicating that the site would be on her property. It happens to be on an area which she used as a holding paddock prior to moving mustered cattle across the highway to the trucking yards. She felt that she had not been treated kindly by the government. I know that she has received legal advice and there has been an exchange of correspondence with the minister. I ask the minister, if he has an opportunity, to have a chat with Mrs Milnes. She is not an easy woman

but she is certainly a very fine Territorian, with the sort of toughness Territorians need to survive the kind of tough times she has lived through. By pouring some oil on troubled waters, the minister could demonstrate that the attitude of the government is not always as portrayed by busy officers of the Department of Lands and Housing who tend to rush in an out without taking a little thought and observing common courtesies.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the honourable member is correct. A 60 ha site is being negotiated for with the owner of the lease. If an opportunity arises when I am in Alice Springs, I will meet with those concerned. I will have to be careful about the technicalities, given that the site is being negotiated between legal representatives of both parties.

Mr FLOREANI: Mr Chairman, I was rather interested in the minister's response to the Giles House question. Obviously, the programs have proved to be successful and I would like the minister to explain them in a little more depth. It would seem obvious from his response that young offenders from central Australia will be housed at the Don Dale Centre. Does that mean that serious offenders would have to travel to Darwin? If so, has the minister considered the fact that they would be away from their families and, in some circumstances, tribal groups and so on in central Australia?

Mr REED: As I have already indicated, I am happy to provide some details concerning those programs. As far as the transfer of detainees is concerned, I point out that less than 20% of offenders detained in Giles House are from central Australia. In any event, already, a large number of offenders are brought to the Top End to take part in the program offered by the Wildman River Wilderness Work Camp. That program enables offenders to gain some work experience and a few skills which they may be able to apply when they are released and return to their communities or homes. The benefits of the wilderness work camp have been fairly well explained on previous occasions.

The future of Giles House will continue to be reviewed. It is pointless to maintain a staff of 17 if the current low number of inmates continues, and the aim is to provide a level of service appropriate to the level of demand which applies at any given time.

Appropriation for division 79 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 20:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have submitted 2 questions to the Minister for Tourism. I am concerned that a reduced level of funding has been provided to the Tourist Commission and that savings have been made in marketing, both domestic and international. That comes at a time when it is quite clear that the tourist industry in the Northern Territory is going through a difficult patch. We have heard from a number of ministers this week that the market has not recovered fully since the pilots' dispute, particularly in the 5-star sector, because of continuing scepticism overseas about Australia as a reliable destination. I find it strange, given that tourism is the main generator of employment in the Northern Territory, that there has been a funding reduction in real terms. I would like the honourable minister to address himself to that question.

My second question may no longer be valid. I seem to recall seeing recently a newspaper advertisement for an Aboriginal tourism position in Alice Springs. Perhaps the honourable minister might like to confirm that when I finish my question. If that is the case, it is a very positive and

encouraging sign. A woman from Adelaide visited my office recently. She is setting herself up in destination marketing. I must admit that I had to ask her to explain what destination marketing meant. I think that it might mean different things to different people. She was quite excited about the possibilities for her type of client, who is generally well-heeled, enjoys some pampering, but is looking for a different experience. She was quite excited about the prospects of Aboriginal tourism in the Northern Territory and the potential which it offered for such clients. In that light, it is encouraging to see that the Tourist Commission is taking on a second member of staff to work in that particular area.

I have not given the minister notice of my third question which relates to concerns being expressed by local tour operators about the value that they are receiving from the Tourist Commission bureaus throughout Australia. I am fairly sure that the Minister for Tourism will be aware that one prominent local tour operator has written a letter about this, although I am not sure whether the letter went to the minister or the Chairman of the Tourist Commission. It raised the question of whether this operator was getting value for money from Tourist Commission bureaus in terms of bookings for his own operation. Judging by the figures that I have seen, there is some basis for his concerns.

The operator's concern is that he spends an enormous amount of money on advertising. In fact, he has won Territory awards for his advertising efforts. I believe that he went very close to winning a national award for his advertising efforts, although I am not quite sure of that. His concern is that Tourist Commission bureau staff throughout Australia seem to have a bias towards big national companies when it comes to marketing the Northern Territory. Perhaps that is because the big national companies are better known to many staff and it is easier to sell their packages. I would like the honourable minister to comment on that.

Are staff in Tourist Commission bureaus instructed to pay particular attention to the products of local operators so that their products are mentioned and fully explained to potential tourists to the Northern Territory, and to ensure that it is not simply a case of promoting the big operators whose names are known to everybody? I believe that we should be telling potential customers about local operators and that we have an obligation to promote local operators and the local product as much as possible. It is becoming increasingly difficult for local operators to be competitive. Big national companies are moving in as our tourism activity increases and they are integrating vertically as much as possible. That trend is squeezing local operators very tightly. Certainly, we should be looking after those operators. I must say that I was concerned to receive this information that indicated that perhaps the Tourist Commission bureaus interstate, excellent job though they do, were not putting sufficient emphasis on support for local tour operators.

Mr VALE: Mr Chairman, I will take the last question first and I will be fairly brief for obvious reasons. I promise the Leader of the Opposition a full briefing at a later stage. Recently, I undertook a tour along the eastern seaboard and I observed at first hand the operations of the tourist bureau staff. I must say that I detected no sign of staff in any of the offices in Brisbane, Sydney or Victoria showing a preference for large operators over the small Territory-based operators. In fact, if my memory is correct, in Melbourne there were more expressions of interest from tourists coming in with inquiries for the smaller, more personalised operator. It should be noted that, in the last 12 months, the bureaus have written around $20m-worth of business. I will obtain further details for

the Leader of the Opposition. I am not sure whether I have had a letter from a Territory-based operator or not.

In response to the question about an Aboriginal liaison person, another advertisement has been run to fill the position in Alice Springs and over 40 applications Territory-wide have been received and are now being evaluated. In addition, the commission has employed a young Aboriginal lass in the bureau in Alice Springs. That indicates the continuing and growing importance of Aboriginal tourism in the Territory.

Of course, Mr Chairman, the budget this year is $3.2m up on what it was 2 years ago ...

Mr Smith: 2 years ago! What about last year? Don't provoke me.

Mr VALE: Mr Chairman, it should be noted that last year's award winning television advertisement will be used again this year and that will result in considerable savings.

Appropriation for division 20 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 71:

Mr BAILEY: Mr Chairman, I have 2 questions that have been given already to the honourable minister. Why are receipts for the Sports and Recreation Development Fund estimated to decrease by $480 000 in 1990-91? In 1989-90, ethnic affairs had a budget of $460 000 while actual expenditure was $630 00. For 1990-91, the budget is $533 000. There are staff increases from 34 to 43 within his areas and cuts in subsidy grants of $349 000. What factors were responsible for the budget blow-out in 1989-90? What additional functions will be provided by the additional staff and how does the minister justify the increase in staff to the department given cuts of 5% in subsidies? Which organisations will be affected by the cut of $349 000?

My final question was not supplied to the minister. Will he consider providing any funding to finance SBS once the new relay transmitter is built on Northern Territory House as suggested by the Labor Party?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honourable minister, given that your voice is deteriorating, I offer a suggestion. If you have written answers to the 2 questions that were given on notice, perhaps you could seek leave to have them incorporated in Hansard.

Mr VALE: Mr Chairman, I have written all over this. I will have a clean copy delivered to the member tomorrow and seek leave to have it incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Q.1 Why are the receipts for the Sports and Recreation Development Fund estimated to decrease by $480 000 in 1990-91?

A. In view of the tight budget position in 1990-91, the government decided to do no more than approximately maintain total expenditures by the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs in nominal terms. Total expenditures actually decreased by $15 000.

In order to achieve that result, payments from the Lotteries Trust Account to the Sports and Recreational Development Fund were reduced in accordance with section 18(3)(c)(i) of the Lotteries and Gaming Act. (Under that clause the Treasurer can determine the amount of lotteries money that is to be paid from the Lotteries Trust Account into the Consolidated Fund. The residual in the Lotteries Trust Account then transfers to the Sports and Recreation Development Fund.)

Q.2 In 1989-90, ethnic affairs had a budget of $460 000 while actual expenditure was $640 000. In 1990-91, the budget is $533 000. There are staff increases from 32 to 43 and cuts in subsidies and grants of $349 000.

a. What are the factors responsible for the budget blow out in 1989-90?

A. Additional costs were incurred through:

1. Instigation of a Jobtrain program mid-year through the Department of Employment, Education and Training program established in December 1989, to assist overseas trained doctors to gain accreditation. ($43 000 allocated.)

2. Increased demands by government departments and authorities resulted in an increased expenditure of $26 000 above budget allocation for the Interpreter and Translation Service.

3. Mid-year allocation of $30 000 from the Department of the Prime Minister for the Language Services Needs of the NT Tourism and Export Industries.

4. Advance of $78 000 from Treasury to offset delayed payment from Commonwealth for the Interpreter and Translator Service.

b. What additional functions will be provided by the additional staff? How does the minister justify the increase of staff to the department, given cuts of 5% in subsidies? Which organisations will be affected by the cuts of $349 000?

A. Following the establishment of the Office of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs in September 1989, 3 new positions were provided for:

1. Chief Executive Officer
2. Secretary for CEO
3. Youth Affairs Officer

As a consequence of hosting major events in the Territory, additional staffing has been provided for the Honda Central Australian Masters Games:

1. Manager
2. Administration Officer
3. Typist/Reception

Similarly, 3 additional positions were provided for the Arafura Sports Festival:

1. Manager
2. Administration Officer
3. Typist/Reception

The subsequent economic benefits to the Northern Territory in respect of these major events positions can be expected to completely justify the staff increase.

Whilst there appears to be a nominal 5% reduction in subsidies and grants, this is not the real case in terms of funding provided to the community organisations. Total funding to community, sport and recreation organisations in 1990-91 includes the $5.84m Trust Fund plus capital works funding of approximately $7.5m for major facilities; for example, Marrara athletics track and football stadium.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, my question relates to the Centre Centre in Alice Springs which was opened as a drop-in centre and a youth support facility several years ago by the late Don Dale. Despite a tremendous effort by Darren Rumbal, the last organiser ...

Mr Coulter: Can you relate it to the Appropriation Bill in any way?

Mr COLLINS: I will.

Darren did a fantastic job and made every effort. He devoted a tremendous number of hours beyond those for which he was paid to try to make it work. Many of the young people who are working in Alice Springs today obtained employment as a direct result of Darren's skills, training and encouragement. He acted almost like a very good employment agency for some young people who had difficulties in getting into the work force. As the minister would know, the operation was expensive. The rent was something like $80 000 a year. Often, the centre ran discos and that was 1 of the more successful parts of its operation. The electricity bill was something like $20 000 a year. Now that the lease has been terminated, what has happened to the equipment and what form is it proposed that the operation will now have? I understand that it has not been wiped completely.

Mr VALE: No, Mr Chairman, it has not. We are in the process of moving out. Through the Office of Administrative Services, we have notified the owners of the block that we are shifting. We need to sort out exactly who owns what equipment. I understand that some of it may belong to the Youth Centre. As part of a reorganisation of youth policies in central Australia, we are looking to open a smaller facility with an office shopfront somewhere in the Todd Street area. Applications are being called for the position of a youth coordinator in central Australia, who will work not only with the Office of Youth, Sport and Recreation but also with all the other government instrumentalities and private organisations in order to draw them all together. I have a question on notice from the member for Sadadeen and additional information will be supplied.

Mr FLOREANI: Mr Chairman, I gave advance notice to the minister of my 2 questions. I am most interested in the Masters Games in Alice Springs, as I am sure all members are. What particular grants does the minister propose to provide for the Masters Games events? $6.794m is provided under the

heading of 'Subsidies and Grants'. I would like to know the details relating to youth projects rather than sporting projects. Specifically, I would like to know the amount involved with projects for disadvantaged youth.

Mr VALE: Mr Chairman, our expenditure for the Master Games is $370 330.

I will have the answer to the question relating to grants-in-aid for youth activities typed up and incorporated in the Parliamentary Record.

Grants-in-Aid for Youth Activities

In 1989-90, the office provided $647 550 for Youth Recreation programs, conducted by 14 community-based organisations. A summary of funding by the organisation is provided below, while the attached list is a guide to the services each organisation provides. These lists do not include Vacation Care Programs which are mainly aimed at children of primary school age.

Funding specifically for youth recreation was from the following sources:

Appropriation
Sport and Recreation Development Fund

It may be noted that general funding for sport and recreation activities is related to development of activities, from which youth will benefit as part of the general population served. This applies for sport and development funding and for special purposes such as the Aboriginal Recreation Program.

It is inherent in the nature of the programs that they are available for disadvantaged youth, and the intention of funding is to enable a wider choice of opportunities, at a subsidised cost, to be provided for young people in the Northern Territory.

Organisation	$
Darwin YMCA	110 500
Darwin YWCA	112 500
Australian Red Cross	81 000
Girl Guide Association	34 500
Scout Association	53 250
Darwin City Council	17 500
Alice Springs Youth Centre	85 500
Gap Youth Centre	20 000
Hamilton Downs Youth Camp	15 500
Nhulunbuy Youth & Community Group	14 000
Central Australian YMCA	30 500
Katherine YMCA	37 500
Tennant Creek Town Council	30 000
Jabiru Youth & Citizens Association	5 300

Youth Recreation Services	1989 $
EAST ARNHEM	
Nhulunbuy Youth and Community Group	14 000

Recommenced activities last year after a lapse of some 12 months. Assistance for operational costs. Has developed programs of interest to youth and the broader community.

DARWIN

YMCA - Darwin 110 500

The YMCA of Darwin receives operational assistance ($15 000) for its activities in the Darwin area, and salary assistance ($15 500) for its Recreation Officer/Program Director.

The YMCA of Darwin operates the Palmerston Youth Entertainment Complex (Y-Joynt). $80 000 was provided to underpin the costs of the service in 1989-90. Wages for 2 employees is the main component of funding.

YWCA - Darwin 112 500

The YWCA in Darwin receives operational assistance ($15 000) for its general 'Y' activities, and salary assistance ($15 500) for a Recreation Officer.

The Tardis is operated by the YWCA to provide a safe accessible centre where young people may develop personal and social skills. Funds ($82 000) are provided for the wages of 2 youth workers, and operational and administrative expenses.

Australian Red Cross 81 000

The Fire Escape, renamed the Lookout, is a Youth Leisure Centre operating at Casuarina. It aims to meet social educational and recreational needs for its 150 or more clients. Support of $81 000 was provided in 1989-90 for wages and operational costs.

Girl Guide Association 34 500

Salary assistance ($20 000) is provided to employ a Field Officer, who is responsible for training and development throughout the NT. Funding of $10 000 is also provided for the costs to maintain a NT headquarters organisation, with its NT and national responsibilities.

Scout Association NT 53 250

Support is provided to offset the cost of NT operations, including employment of a secretary and assistance with a training budget. Funding last financial year also provided administrative assistance to host a National Scout Executive Meeting in Alice Springs and to retain the services of a full-time General Secretary.

Darwin City Council 17 500

Grants are available as salary assistance for a Youth Officer and administration of the local Youth Forum. Communication and information dissemination to youth agencies is a high priority as is involvement in the training of youth workers and working with

local youth to provide encouragement and assistance in presentation of issues.

JABIRU

Jabiru Youth & Citizens Association 5 300

Assists with employment of part-time youth worker. Activities are relative to population base with regular weekly drop-in centre the main focus of activities.

KATHERINE

Katherine YMCA 37 500

Operational funding for the management of the Recreation and Leisure Centre. Wide variety of programs on offer including gymnastics, judo, skating, youth club.

TENNANT CREEK

Tennant Creek Town Council 30 000

After the closure of the local Recreation Centre (YMCA), the council accepted responsibility to coordinate and extend recreation services to cater for youth. Funds provided to employ staff for this initiative.

ALICE SPRINGS

Alice Springs Youth Centre 85 500

The Youth Centre consistently offers high-quality programs and ongoing operational and salary assistance is provided.

The program offered through the Centre has seen a downturn in clientele in recent times.

Operations generally are under review to ensure the most effective way to service local youth.

Gap Youth Centre 20 000

Ongoing operational funding assists with employment of Co-Ordinator and associated administration costs. Staff changes of late have interrupted services.

Hamilton Downs Youth Camp 15 500

Funds for employment of a Camp Director. Facility heavily utilised by school and youth groups as an outdoor recreation centre.

Central Australia YMCA 30 500

Ongoing operational and salary assistance for Recreation Officer to present wide variety of community programs.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question is that the appropriation for division 71 be agreed to.

Appropriation for division 71 agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

TABLED PAPER
Publications Committee - Sixteenth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Sixteenth Report of the Publications Committee and move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about the Mulholland inquiry. I asked the honourable Leader of Government Business a couple of days ago whether I could have leave to make a statement and he thought that that was inappropriate and that I should make my remarks in the adjournment debate. I will do that now.

I have given long and serious thought to the steps that I believe should be taken as a result of my meeting with Mr Mulholland, in the presence of the Chief Minister, the Leader of Government Business, the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Conran from the Department of Law. This meeting was agreed to reluctantly by Mr Mulholland as a result of the continuing controversy surrounding allegations of impropriety within the police force, and a perceived cover-up by the government in the way it was handling the allegations being levelled by some policemen against other policemen.

I have raised my concerns about the supposed Mulholland inquiry in the House on several occasions during debate, and I believe some matters should be raised again, particularly because of the seriousness of the allegations that have been made and, more importantly, because it is now obvious to me that these matters are unlikely to be addressed by Mr Mulholland.

During Mr Mulholland's opening remarks at our meeting, he stated: 'Our brief is therefore to advise on certain matters. It is not an inquiry'. Mr Mulholland went on to say:

> Whilst it has been made clear to us that we can recommend an inquiry if we think fit, we see no present need to make such a recommendation nor do we consider it likely that the need to make such a recommendation will arise in the future.

Later in his address, Mr Mulholland made the comment:

> There is no intention on our part to make any findings concerning particular allegations. Indeed, it would not be possible or

> proper for us to do so having regard to the fact that we are not conducting an inquiry.

During discussion on the issue of Mr Mulholland collecting and hearing evidence from interested parties, he said:

> The ethics of our profession require that we receive instructions from a solicitor. Very simply that means that, in this case, any communication must come to us through Mr Conran.

After further clarification, he later conceded: 'In an exceptional case, we might recommend that a lawyer conduct the investigation'.

Quite clearly, the course that Mr Mulholland is following will not address the matters that have been raised in the public arena and that are of concern to myself and other Territorians. To start with, Mr Mulholland has made it clear that his role is to advise on matters and that he is not holding an inquiry. In fact, Mr Mulholland made it quite plain that it would be impossible for him to interview any witnesses unless he interviewed everybody concerned, and he was not prepared to do that. The fact that he could see no need to recommend a further inquiry in the future whilst, at the same time, he was not prepared to interview the parties mentioned in the allegations, in its own way pre-empts the result of his report.

The fact that Mr Mulholland was not prepared to make any finding on particular allegations is difficult to understand. He said it would not be possible or proper to do this because he was not conducting an inquiry, yet his whole involvement in this matter was brought about because of specific allegations made against some officers. If these specific allegations are not dealt with in his report, then the public could justifiably believe that the whole investigation has been a whitewash from day one.

Mr Mulholland offered me the opportunity of a private briefing so that I could be aware of the investigations that the police were conducting. On the basis of the information I received in the briefing, he invited me to provide any information to him that I had available to me. This offer seems reasonable enough on the surface. My displeasure with the offer is that it should be available to anyone in the Territory who wishes to give Mr Mulholland any information in confidence or, alternatively, before an open inquiry. I do not believe that this matter should continue to be handled in such an offhand way and, for this reason, I will place on record today the allegations that have been made to me with the object of seeing that an open inquiry is held.

Honourable members would recall that, earlier in the year, a reaction that resulted in Mr Mulholland's appointment was forced from the government when it was learnt that a television report was about to announce connections between the impropriety of some police officers and some members of the public, and the further connection between these people and what is commonly known as the Ferguson River drug bust. The 7.30 Report went to air and, during a series of programs, alleged that a police officer, who is now know to be Officer Peter Woods, had (a) maintained an illicit liaison with a prostitute; and (b) offered the assistance of a friend in government to help her should any difficulties arise.

Through the 7.30 Report, it was alleged also that a Mr X, who I am informed is Officer Dennis Hart, took a tape-recording of the conversation between Peter Woods and the prostitute, Rhonda, on the occasion of an illicit liaison. The 7.30 Report further alleged that the prostitute known

as Rhonda was interviewed at the Berrimah Police Centre by an officer who, I am advised, is Commander Tom Baker and that, during the course of the interview with the prostitute, it is claimed that Commander Baker told her that they wanted her out of town, that they would provide her fare and that, if she did not appreciate their concern, they would get their friend in the government to speak to her.

These allegations, in themselves, are serious enough, but the fact that Mr Mulholland is not to comment on the specifics of these allegations is inexplicable. In my view, there are certain issues that need to be explained and tested very thoroughly, and I am not convinced that Mr Mulholland's terms of reference allow this to happen.

Firstly, it is alleged that Officer Woods, who had the liaison with the prostitute and who offered the support of this friend in the government, was in fact offering the support of none other than the Attorney-General. It is further alleged that the Attorney-General and Officer Woods were close friends and partners on the beat when the Attorney-General was in the force and that, because of their previous association, the Attorney-General was employing in his office, Officer Woods' wife during the period that he was acting in an unprofessional manner. It is possible that, at this time, Officer Woods could have been the subject of an investigation by the law authorities of the Territory and it may have been totally inappropriate for his wife to be in the Attorney-General's employ. It is claimed also that the government was providing indemnity against prosecution for the prostitute, Rhonda, and this indemnity would have been approved by the Attorney-General. The request for such an indemnity, if it came from Officer Woods, is a matter of great concern.

It has been claimed also that Officer Sean O'Sullivan, a partner of Officer Dennis Hart, also had a tape-recording of the liaison between Officer Woods and the prostitute. It is claimed that Officer O'Sullivan reported to his superiors that he believed Officer Woods to be a bagman for pay-offs, and it is claimed to me that his superiors told him to 'forget about it'. It is also claimed to me that Officer Woods had in his possession evidence against senior officers that would not be helpful to the advancement of their careers and that Officer Woods advised his superiors that, if he were given a hard time during the course of Mr Mulholland's investigations, 'he would take them with him'. There is a range of other allegations that are peripheral to the issues that have been raised in this statement and these may become matters of consequence if a public and open inquiry is set up to investigate the issues that have been raised so far.

Two further matters have been brought to my attention, and these are matters that I believe are of grave concern and require thorough investigation. I received advice that 2 persons are prepared to come forward and give information about drug charges that were brought against them, provided they are given indemnity against prosecution. I have had the opportunity to speak to one of the persons concerned, and I have been given the names of the officers and a lawyer involved in a scheme that would appear to be highly irregular.

It is claimed that offenders were apprehended with considerable amounts of marijuana in their possession, that they were charged subsequently with being in possession of one quarter of the drugs that they had when they were apprehended and that the evidence that was produced in court against them was not in fact the marijuana that they had in their possession when they were apprehended. It is further claimed that these offenders were instructed by Drug Squad officers to use the services of one particular

solicitor. The person that I have spoken to claims that he was told to use a certain solicitor, in which case he would face only one charge. He was advised by Drug Squad officers that, if he was not prepared to do this, he would face 5 charges. The person I have spoken to is prepared to come forward and give further evidence about the situation that he was involved in, but he is prepared to do this only if he receives indemnity against prosecution as he would only further incriminate himself.

I have no way of knowing whether any, some or all of the propositions that have been put to me are absolutely true or even criminal in their nature, but I do know that they are worthy of thorough investigation by way of an open inquiry. My prime concern is the relationship between the Attorney-General and officers of the force. If it is the case, as has been alleged, that officers of the force offer the good services of the Attorney-General during interviews they hold with witnesses and suspects, and informants that they interview in the course of their duties, then this would be a contravention or abuse of the convention surrounding the separation of powers between the ministry and the police. It is a matter of concern that, at the time the allegations were made, the Chief Minister did not investigate those allegations himself and advise this House whom the allegations referred to, whether they had substance and, if they were true, whether the police were acting with the minister's knowledge and authority.

At this time, only a public inquiry will satisfy the concerns of the community. There will be those who claim that I am doing damage to the standing of the force by bringing forward the allegations that I have raised. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that there are many police officers and their spouses who would like to see this inquiry opened up and the wrongdoers exposed so that the other 99% of innocent members of the force can have their names and reputations cleared in the eyes of the public. As one police wife said to me: 'Because the public do not know who the crooked cops are, they are judging us and treating us as though we are all involved in the capers that Woods and company get up to'. Under the circumstances, I believe the Chief Minister has no option but to set up a full inquiry with the terms of reference agreed on by this House.

Mr Coulter: I guess you do not know whether any of this is true or whether they are simply allegations or what, do you?

Mr TUXWORTH: I will continue to press for such an inquiry.

Mr Speaker, I will now pick up the interjection of the Leader of Government Business and say that I am quite happy to see that these matters are tested. Whether they are true or not is the whole essence of the argument. If they are true - any, all or in part - then we have a very serious situation on our hands.

Mr Coulter: And if not?

Mr TUXWORTH: In treating the issue in such a cavalier manner, the Leader of Government Business shows a total disregard for the seriousness of the situation.

Mr Speaker, I say to honourable members that there is a serious degree of doubt because of the people who are prepared to come forward and make these statements. They say quite openly that they know they are putting their head on the block when they come forward. They are prepared to come forward to do that if they are given some protection. However, they are not prepared to make statements to Mr Mulholland or to the police or to the

Ombudsman and take their chances with what will happen to them at a later time.

Mr Coulter: That is regarding the solicitor and the marijuana. What about the other ones?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I say to the Leader of Government Business that the matters that I have raised tonight are of absolute importance. They are very serious and they are not matters to be treated lightly. I have no intention of seeing them regarded simply as a lot of poppycock that is not worth following up. Mr Mulholland's meeting with the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Minister, Mr Conran and myself was an education in itself because what that meeting highlighted was that Mr Mulholland is so tied in what he is doing that he will never find out answers to the questions that I have raised tonight.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I utterly reject any inference that I have acted in any way which could be considered improper. I wish to express in the strongest possible terms my repugnance at the actions of the member for Barkly. In choosing to make the inferences that he has tonight, clearly he is driven by the most cynical of motives - that is, to smear my reputation and that of the government. There can be no other explanation for his motives in raising this allegation before Mr Bob Mulholland QC has submitted his report to the government. The member for Barkly could not wait for that report to be submitted and released because he was well aware that, had he done so, that report would have cleared me completely of the inference that he has raised tonight, and that would have derailed his agenda to cause the maximum possible damage to the government regardless of the unfounded nature of his allegations.

During the period 13 February 1984 to 23 January 1989 - that is 15 months ago - Mrs Sandy Woods was my secretary. Her husband is the police officer allegedly connected with the prostitute. I have never worked with that officer on the beat. The investigation of that officer's conduct is one of the matters being oversighted by Mr Mulholland. According to the 7.30 Report, the officer once said to the prostitute words to the effect that he had a friend in government whom she could speak to about her concerns. According to the 7.30 Report also, the prostitute refused his requests to approach the politician on the matter. I have been identified now as that politician. Indeed, I have been the subject of many rumours and much inference to that effect in recent months. Until now, the people peddling those rumours have been too cowardly to repeat them in public or to my face. It is typical of the nature of the member for Barkly that he would choose to shelter in this coward's castle rather than await the outcome of the rigorous investigations which are presently under way. As I mentioned earlier, he is not interested in seeking truth, but only in seeking publicity for himself and political damage to the government and to myself.

Mr Speaker, I would like to state categorically that I have never received any approach from the officer in question, or the prostitute or any person involved with either of them, to influence my actions in any way. Had I received such an approach, I would have rejected it out of hand and I would have reported it to the proper authorities immediately. However, as I have said, I have never received such an approach in the first place. I have willingly given that information to the investigating officers and it has been forwarded to Mr Mulholland.

I am acutely aware of the responsibilities of my position as a public figure, a politician and the Attorney-General and I have always striven to

carry out my role with complete integrity. I believe that that integrity is unchallenged in both the legal system and in the community in general. I resent deeply what is a completely gratuitous attempt by the member for Barkly to smear my name and reputation with the taint of corruption. I believe the actions of the member are beneath contempt.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, at the last sittings, I raised matters concerning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Tonight, I would like to put some information on the Hansard record because some people say that these conventions and treaties with the United Nations are not legally binding. I have a document called 'The Conclusion of Treaties and Other International Arrangements' which is issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This makes it very clear that we are bound under international law by these conventions. Let me quote from section 3 of the summary in 'The Conclusions of Treaties and Other International Arrangements:

> There are a number of terms commonly used in state practice for instruments within the definition of 'treaty' in the Vienna convention on the law of treaties. The crucial question in determining whether an instrument is a treaty is whether it is intended to be governed by and to be legally binding under international law, in which case it will be a treaty whatever its designation. This includes the term 'convention'.

I could go on, Mr Speaker. There are some 12 points which are all relevant. It makes it very clear that, when a convention of the United Nations is ratified through an executive decision of the government of the day, it binds this country under international law and removes our sovereign right to determine the laws under which we live. Such ratifications are not debated in the federal parliament or brought to the attention of the people. Our rights are simply signed away. In my view, that is treachery.

The other matter that I would like to raise tonight concerns a lady whom I telephoned on Monday evening after she had taken the trouble to write to me. Mrs Betty Preston, President of the Grey Power Brighton Branch, is 84 years of age and walks with the aid of a frame. However, she has a very fine mind and I thoroughly enjoyed talking to her. She sent some information to me and I think it is worth quoting a short letter which she had published recently in a South Australian newspaper. The letter very clearly points to the way in which our sovereignty is being given away. Its heading is 'Who Voted for these Constitutional Changes?'. It says:

> Mr Keating was not joking when he said Australia was a banana republic. How many electors know that we now have a new constitution, that the Australian Request and Consent Act of 1985 was passed without a referendum and the 1986 Australia Act was also passed, and that it commences as follows: 'An act to bring constitutional arrangements affecting the Commonwealth and states into conformity with the status of the Commonwealth of Australia as a sovereign, independent and federal nation'. How many electors remember voting for such a change?
>
> Chapter 8 of the 1970 Constitution reads as follows: 'This Constitution shall not be altered except in the following manner. The proposed law for the alteration thereof must be passed by an absolute majority of each House of parliament and not less than more than 6 months after its passage through both Houses. The proposed law shall be submitted in each state to the electors

qualified to vote for the elections of members of the House of Representatives'.

Did we get a vote to pass these 2 acts? Did we have a referendum? If not, why has the Constitution been changed? Even more frightening, how much more can it be changed without the consent of the voter? What could happen to this wonderful country and the freedoms for which so many have given their very lives?

Time is running out, tomorrow could be too late, stand up and speak for the secure future of your dear ones, if not for your country. We have a proud flag, let us fight to keep it for Australia.

Mrs Betty Preston
President, Grey Power,
Branch of Brighton,
South Australia

Mr Speaker, it is a pity that many more of us do not know a great deal more about the Constitution. I had to confess to the good lady that there were many parts of the Australian Constitution with which I was not familiar and that, in many ways, I had only scratched the surface. If a person of her age can take an interest in what is happening to the country, and be alert to it, it behoves the rest of us, particularly politicians, to be familiar with the Australian Constitution and to keep tabs on what is happening in Canberra. We should move away from the 'trust me' attitude which we tend to have and our automatic allegiance to one political party and not the other, because they both seem to be moving in the same direction in terms of grabbing power over the Constitution. Both seem to be hell-bent on giving that power away to a foreign body.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, there has been a great deal of public comment in recent days regarding my alleged involvement in one of the police investigations which are now being oversighted by Mr Bob Mulholland QC. As time has passed, the issues have become increasingly confused with the result that my name is linked daily, in the press and on radio and television, with alleged police corruption.

This situation can do nothing but damage my reputation and that of the government, and it is causing enormous distress to my family, my friends and myself. Having looked at the facts of the allegations time after time in recent days, I can only surmise that this damage, personal and political, was the whole reason these allegations were made at all. The allegations were, I believe, an act of the most calculating malice. They were made under the coward's castle of parliamentary privilege so that they could be widely reported in the media without giving me access to the avenues of redress through our system of justice which are normally enjoyed by members of the community. This House is the only forum left open to me in which to state clearly the allegations made against me, to answer them and, most important of all, to demand proof.

Last Thursday, the member for Barkly used the adjournment debate to link my name to that of a former police officer who allegedly had an affair with a police informer, a prostitute now known as Rhonda. The officer was identified by the member for Barkly as Peter Woods, a former CIB detective. The member for Barkly claimed that: I had been a very good friend of Woods and had worked on the beat with him; as a result of this relationship, I had given his wife a job on my staff and she would be working for me while Woods was under investigation for misconduct; and I had issued an indemnity from prosecution to the prostitute at about this time, as a result of approaches from Woods. Certainly, I was a friend of Woods and I employed his wife for a considerable period. I have already placed those facts on record. However, those are the only aspects of the member for Barkly's allegations which are remotely correct. I can conclude only that he has used this tenuous link as the sole basis for the tissue of lies he presented to this House on Thursday night.

The first thing I should point out is that Woods and I never had a close relationship, as claimed by the member for Barkly. Certainly, we never worked on the beat together. Indeed, to my knowledge, we never worked in the same building. The member's allegation is untrue. The second point is that Mrs Woods left my staff in July last year, about 15 months ago. It is my understanding that the investigation into the conduct of Mr Woods commenced early this year. Mrs Woods was not on my staff at the time her husband was under scrutiny. That is 2 untrue allegations. The third point is that I have never issued the prostitute known as Rhonda with an immunity from prosecution nor was I ever approached by Woods to obtain an indemnity for Rhonda, as was suggested by the member for Barkly. Those are 3 untrue allegations. Those 3 allegations were the basis for the inference and allegations that the member for Barkly made in relation to my involvement in this matter. They are each and every one of them totally untrue. Over recent days, I have described these allegations as 'filthy innuendo' and 'malicious lies', and I can see no reason to change those descriptions now.

There are 2 issues which have become particularly confused in recent days which I should also clarify. These are, firstly, whether or not Rhonda

had an indemnity and, secondly, whether I was ever formally approached and identified as the member of government whose name was allegedly used by Woods to reassure Rhonda. The short answers to both of these questions are no and no. In a television interview on Friday, I stated that I had not issued Rhonda with an indemnity and that, as far as I was aware, I was the only person who could do so. Those statements were both correct. An immunity or indemnity is a formal document, issued under the hand of the Attorney-General, granting a person indemnity from prosecution for offences which they may have committed. It is generally given when witnesses in a case will incriminate themselves when giving evidence. Such an indemnity or immunity allows witnesses to give their evidence without the fear that they may later be charged with criminal offences.

The Attorney-General's formal role arises only when a specific, formal document is required for presentation in court. This has not been required in this case, although it may yet be as a consequence of the investigations now under way. For the present, the prostitute known as Rhonda has a written authorisation from a senior police officer, issued under section 76 of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act, which authorises her to possess cannabis in order to help police gain information about people involved in producing and trafficking in this drug. I table a copy of that authorisation. She has also been given a guarantee, reinforced by a letter to her lawyer from the then Senior Crown Prosecutor, Mr Ray Minahan, that she will not be prosecuted for offences she commits which are instigated by the police during her work as an informant, and I table a copy of that letter. I should point out also that these protections are normal around Australia for people who assist police in the highly dangerous world of drugs.

The question of an indemnity for a police informant involved in a police operation to penetrate a drug ring in the Territory was canvassed in general terms with me early this year by Mr Minahan. I say 'in general terms' because the approach from Assistant Commissioner Grant to Mr Minahan was so cautious that Mr Minahan believed the informant to be a man, and he conveyed the information to me in those terms. This approach is usual for 2 reasons: firstly, that members of the ministry should not be involved in day-to-day operational activities and, secondly, to protect the identity of informants to the greatest extent possible. I agree strongly with both of these principles as would any rational member of this Assembly. In the event, with the advice of the Senior Crown Prosecutor, I agreed that, if the circumstances as described by Mr Minahan were presented to me, along with recommendations from the Solicitor-General and the Crown Prosecutor, I would be prepared to offer an indemnity to the informant. This position was conveyed to Assistant Commissioner Grant by Mr Minahan in a letter of 2 March 1990, and I table a copy of that letter.

At the time of my discussion with Mr Minahan, I had no knowledge whatsoever of Rhonda's involvement or Woods' involvement. I have since been advised that the informant was the prostitute known as Rhonda. I was not aware of this at the time. In fact, I have never been presented with an application for an indemnity for Rhonda. However, I would like to make it clear that, if it is necessary to continue this protection for Rhonda during the trial of people suspected of producing and trafficking in drugs, then I will not hesitate to give it. After all, that is what this matter is all about: the need to track down and punish those people who prey on the community through the drug trade, and I will never step back from my commitment to put those people behind bars for as long as possible.

The issue of my identification as the politician whose name was allegedly used by Woods is even easier to put to rest. I have never - I repeat, never - been approached formally by either the media or the police to say I was the member of government referred to in the 7.30 Report on 26 April. The approaches from the media have been along the lines of: 'Shouldn't the politician identify himself?' or 'Shouldn't the Attorney-General issue a statement clearing up this politician question?' On each of those occasions, my response has been that it would be totally ridiculous for a politician to identify himself on the basis of the media's interpretation of an alleged conversation between 2 identified people. Nor was it ever put to me during my interview with the police in respect of issues relating to this particular investigation that I was the politician whose name allegedly had been used by Woods. Certainly, I spoke to the police in general terms about whether or not I had given an indemnity to Rhonda, and about my general relationship with Woods and whether he had ever approached me in relation to an indemnity for Rhonda. At no stage was it indicated to me that my name might have been used by Woods to Rhonda, or to anyone else.

To this day, I have still not been advised formally of the alleged conversation between Woods and Rhonda in which it has been alleged that I was named. Mr Speaker, what would be the point of asking me about this alleged conversation? I could not say whether it was true or not. It is alleged that a police officer may have used my name. It is not alleged that I made the alleged statement or that I was involved in the alleged conversation, and I have stated already that Woods did not speak to me regarding either Rhonda or an indemnity for her. I still do not know, and very properly so, how many members of parliament were interviewed by the police following the 7.30 Report. Contrary to some reports, I was not interviewed by the police soon after the 7.30 Report on 26 April, but nearly 2 months later, on 25 June.

To summarise, I believe that I have been able clearly to refute the allegations against my name and to clarify the confusion over some of the issues. My statements on this sorry saga have been characterised by 1 important feature - the truth. Despite this, my integrity has been dragged through the mud by the member for Barkly and, no matter what happens, my reputation in the Territory will never be the same again. Indeed, the most recent questioning from the media indicates that, because I was asked to provide some information to police, already I have been convicted of some kind of impropriety. The presenter of the 7.30 Report has also provided information to the authorities on these matters. Are we to assume that Dennis Driver is now a criminal?

Mr Bell: He was not named.

Mr MANZIE: What about the members of the opposition, who have enjoyed the hospitality of the police force? Of course, the member for Barkly has had a long association with the police. Are we to assume that he also is a criminal? I leave honourable members to make up their own minds.

Mr Speaker, I call on the member for Barkly now to account for himself before this House. Let him stand up on his supposed honour before this Assembly and prove his charges against me. Where is his proof that Woods and I ever worked the beat together? Where is his proof that Mrs Woods was working for me while Woods was under investigation? Where is his proof that I have issued an indemnity to Rhonda at the instigation of Woods? Where are the papers, the statutory declarations, the names of the people willing to testify - the evidence to back up his claims?

I would like to make it very clear that the member for Barkly cannot justify his appalling behaviour in this matter by claiming that it is in the public interest. It is illogical for him to claim that he disagrees with what Mr Mulholland is doing or what Mr Mulholland will or will not be able to achieve within his charter, when Mr Mulholland is yet to report. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, the time for those judgments to be made is after Mr Mulholland has submitted his report, when it can be analysed. Indeed, only a congenital idiot would suggest otherwise.

Nor can the member for Barkly claim that there is no other way of ensuring that his allegations are fully investigated. The member for Barkly was given a personal assurance by Mr Mulholland himself that, if he wrote or recorded his allegations, they would be sent directly to Mr Mulholland, unread and unheard. The member for Barkly has chosen to take neither of those 2 options. In fact, by implying that Mr Mulholland would allow himself to be hamstrung in his investigations or to be part of some cover-up, the member for Barkly has attacked the integrity of one of the most eminent and respected criminal lawyers in the country. This is further evidence of the depths to which the member for Barkly's political cynicism will sink. It is the action of a bitter man, hunted from high office because of his own questionable behaviour, who knows he has reached the end of his political career. He has used the privilege granted to him as a member of this House to make the most serious allegations against my personal and professional integrity.

I believe his only legitimate excuse for such action would be that he had actual evidence to substantiate his claims. If he is unable to provide this substantiation, then he forfeits all claim to personal honour and integrity. He forfeits whatever right he had to represent Territorians as a so-called honourable member of this House. I call on the honourable member for Barkly, if he cannot now present evidence to support his allegations, which I have refuted, to resign immediately and to apologise publicly to my family, to myself and to this government.

STATEMENT
Review of Aboriginal Education

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, my statement relates to my review of Aboriginal Education, entitled 'Talking is Not Enough'. The review has taken almost 2 years to reach this stage. It has been a very difficult, painstaking endeavour, but I must make it clear from the outset that the process is not yet complete. This report has been produced by myself, as Northern Territory Minister for Education. It is not a statement of policy presented on behalf of the Northern Territory government, nor is it a Northern Territory Department of Education report. However, I believe that, once feedback on the report has been received from throughout the Territory community, the principles I have outlined should form the basis for future policy.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would like a clarification in respect of standing order 258 which states that a 'minister may make a statement on government policy, or on a government decision, or on government action or on proposed government action at any time ...'. The minister has stated that this is not a statement of Northern Territory government policy and that it does not relate to a Department of Education report. I believe that the review cannot properly be the subject of a ministerial statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable Minister for Education provide a copy of this statement?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the statement and the report are tabled. It was approved by Cabinet.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Irrespective of whether or not it was approved by Cabinet, there is no point of order under standing order 258, as the honourable minister has provided copies of the statement to be made available for distribution to members when the minister commences his statement.

Mr HARRIS: Within this report are strategies flowing from the hopes, concerns and plans of the hundreds of Aboriginal people in dozens of remote area communities with whom I discussed education and its place in their future. I would have thought that the member for Stuart would have been interested to comment on this very important issue. Instead, he stands to raise a point of order. I am making a statement, and I will be interested to hear his remarks on it.

Visions of those meetings are very clear in my mind today. Many of those Aboriginal people, who made time to speak to me, hold very firm views on education. The vast majority agree that it is a master key which must be used with skill to unlock the future for their children and their communities as a whole. It is important for members to understand that, although the proposals outlined in this report are very clear and specific, and are firmly directed in the way in which they target problems identified by Aboriginal people, this is their first public airing. Every opportunity must be given for public discussion and comment on these proposals before they are considered for adoption and implementation. The review process will be complete only when feedback has been received and considered, and decisions made. To that end, the text I have presented today will be published with photographs and circulated. Public comment on the report is to be submitted to the Northern Territory Minister for Education.

I am sure that members will find the views, concerns and ideas put forward by Aboriginal people in their discussions with me to be most interesting and challenging. I am also sure that members will find the points raised and initiatives proposed in this report to be very thought-provoking. From the start, I set out to confront the most difficult problems affecting remote Aboriginal communities, not by calling on the experts but by speaking to the Aboriginal people themselves. As I have stated in the review, often governments and the public hear an articulated version of Aboriginal concerns. Often too the issues involved are highly sensitive and I suspect that, in many instances, the emphasis of the message we receive depends on where the messengers believe safe ground lies. As a result, Aboriginal education has become a field in which code words and phrases are often used in a vague and generalised way where specifics are necessary. Words like 'empowerment' and 'two-ways' education are used in various contexts, the vast majority of which are not understood by those who are destined to receive the services involved.

It is important that we address the many serious problems in Aboriginal education openly and honestly. I think the approach we need to take is best summed up in the title I have chosen for my report. Indeed, talking is not enough if we are determined to lift success in terms of the educational outcomes achieved by Aborigines in remote areas of the Territory to those of other Australian students.

I have endeavoured to put together an account and a series of recommendations which are open and honest about Aboriginal views of the problems and the possible answers. Education is perceived by many of these people as the central issue for the future of their communities. To be realistic and to take their points of view, I have not limited the range of my consultation strictly to educational or Northern Territory government matters. It was in this way that the review came to consider the dilemma of jobs in communities, the need for improved cooperation with the Commonwealth and the impact of health problems such as substance abuse.

In closing, I ask members to note the recommendations concerning the need for a review of educational issues affecting Aborigines in urban areas. I have stated in the report that the problems affecting educational opportunities for Aboriginal people in urban areas are serious. However, they are quite different from those which have concerned the many Aboriginal people in remote areas and others who participated in my many visits and discussions over the past 2 years. In making my report, I have endeavoured to portray the problems put to me in detail. To skim over any area or to cloak it within a larger document would be to undermine the value of the information put forward by the many who contributed. I have directed my attention to the areas of greatest need and, in order to move forward in those areas, I believe it essential that we be prepared to take on board the comments which have been made.

Soon after my most recent appointment as Minister for Education, I presided over a review of the regulations concerning the operation of school councils. One of the principal recommendations flowing from that review was that those schools in which a significant percentage of student enrolments were Aboriginal should ensure Aboriginal representation on their school councils. I suspect that such initiatives will play a big part in overcoming the problems which Aboriginal people in urban areas face in education. However, it will be important for those problems to be considered and addressed honestly, openly and in detail. To achieve those results, a comprehensive investigation, such as the one proposed in my report, will be necessary.

Mr Speaker, as mentioned earlier, the report as presented is not in its final form. The text will remain the same. However, the layout will be considered in more detail and a number of photographs will be included in the designated spaces in the report, which will be widely distributed. The report will include the address to which submissions and comments are to be sent.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I made my point of order advisedly. I wished to clarify whether or not the report is a statement of policy. I am advised quite clearly that it is not and that it is not a report by the Department of Education. Therefore, it has no status beyond being a record of the personal views and observations of the minister following a very extensive trip around the bush. As we all know, the minister is leaving politics at the end of the term. He decided that, before he left, he would make a very thorough tour of the Territory, visiting a large number of communities, and that he would present what is little more than a self-indulgent report on what people said to him.

I had the misfortune to be present at a couple of his consultations and, frankly, I was appalled at the methodology which he used to elicit the views of Aboriginal people. It involved nothing more than the minister

standing up and reciting a range of areas in which be believed that there were problems until he found somebody who looked as though they were nodding or in some way indicating agreement, at which point he would say: 'That is right. That is right. You agree with that, eh?' People were totally bemused, wondering what he had said. It was the most amateurish attempt that I have ever seen anybody make. If a high school student were to use such methodology, the teacher would give the report a fail mark. The whole process and the report represent nothing more than self-indulgence on the minister's part.

Thank goodness the report has absolutely no status. It is wishy-washy in the extreme and it says virtually nothing. In fact, all it does is condemn Aboriginal education to another series of high-minded thoughts, reviews and speculations. I presume that, after having spent a number of years in government, off and on the ministerial benches, the minister sees the report as his magnum opus. It is not a report which I would like to put my name to, but no doubt the honourable minister has different standards.

I would ask how much the report cost because I believe that it must be one of the most expensive reports put forward to this government. Enormous cost must have been involved in transporting the minister and his entourage around the Territory. It was put to me the other day that the minister's review was the best thing that could have happened because it got the minister out of the hair of the department and let it get on with its business. Departmental staff thought it was a wonderful thing that the minister was out bush.

Mr Harris: Talk about Aboriginal education, will you?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, any honourable member who watched the excellent episode of 'Yes Minister' on television last night will know what I am talking about.

Mr Reed: Oh, is that why you have not read this? You were watching television.

Mr EDE: It was an excellent episode. Actually, it raised a point of relevance to the member for Katherine - that the first action of a minister, when he is under attack, is to dump responsibility on the department. A second point was that the most wonderful time for the people in the department is when the minister is out travelling.

The report must have cost a fortune. Its contents are the type of thing that might have been written by a teacher who had spent 1 year in the bush. Where are the new and courageous moves in this? Where are the commitments to anything? The title is 'Talking is not Enough'. That is true; talking is not enough. We have heard a great deal of talk on this subject and really it is about time to move on.

I opened the report at random. It fell open in the middle of recommendation 1.14 which recommends that the Department of Education and DEET should meet as a matter of priority to consider incentives. Recommendation 1.15 says that the Department of Education, with the Department of Transport and Works, should review the transport policies. Thus, one is 'to consider' and another is 'to review'. By 1.16, a comparative study of various systems is to be made. Recommendation 1.17 says that 'efforts should be made'. That is a pretty strong statement! Recommendation 1.18 is that the Northern Territory and Commonwealth

governments conduct a joint investigation. Thus, except for one, all the recommendations on that page relate to reviews and consultation.

I thought I might have been a bit hard and therefore I flipped over to the end of the document. Recommendation 8.2 suggests that 'further investigations be made'. Recommendation 8.1 suggests that 'efforts be made to identify'. By 7.2, it is further recommended that the Commonwealth government 'recognise the significance of Community Education Plans'. No community education plans currently exist. They are recommended in this in the same way as they were recommended in Towards the 90s. There is nothing new in that. That is old departmental policy. By 7.1, consultation is to occur. Recommendation 6 refers to 'a review of the educational needs and difficulties'.

It is called 'Talking is Not Enough' yet it is full of 'review this', 'consult that', 'discuss this', 'meet with that' etc. It is convicted out of its own mouth. I really thought the honourable minister would come up with something. I have told him what he has to do in this regard. There are fundamental things that have to be put in place for Aboriginal education. They are all in the Parliamentary Record and I will not rehash them now. Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal schools is a fundamental key. It is absolutely essential that we move rapidly to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers. We must set goals to achieve this. We have stated that it will be an ALP priority within the first term of a Labor government to move substantially down this road. It may take 2 terms at the most. By then, the majority of Aboriginal children would undertake the greater part of their school life under Aboriginal teachers.

Mr Harris: We have to get to that point. That is the whole emphasis in this document.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the minister seems to be saying that it is a chicken-and-egg situation and that it is impossible because he cannot reach the point where he has the Aboriginal teachers. That cycle has to be broken, but this is not the way to break it. The Aboriginal teachers have to be put in place. I know the minister went to Santa Teresa recently and that he knows of the large numbers of people there who are taking up the challenge of training as Aboriginal teachers. He knows that the same thing is happening at Ali Curung. The people and the opportunity are there. It is not good enough to say that they do not have sufficient qualifications to undergo teacher training and therefore we have to start with the 3-year-olds and that, in 15 or 16 years time, we can bring them into the teacher education program. That is simply not acceptable. We must get the RATE programs fully operational and provide the teachers. Only then will we have a situation where the Aboriginal children will have role models they can follow which will provide them with incentives to continue their schooling and go on to higher education. That can be done in a couple of years.

Mr Harris: You have not read it, Brian.

Mr EDE: In addition, we need to ensure that the existing teachers have adequate incentives to remain there over the period. Each time that I have asked questions about when the incentives package will be announced, the minister has told me to wait for this report. There is nothing here.

Mr Harris: You are joking! Have a look at the very point you read out about the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has a responsibility too.

Mr EDE: I am sorry. The minister did mention the need for incentives, and flick-passed it to the Commonwealth government.

Mr Harris: Flick-passed nothing. We must be prepared to do it together, mate.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, those incentives are crucial. At the moment, in the central region, the average retention period for teachers out bush is something like 6 months. Until that is increased to 2 years, you will be bashing your head against a brick wall. There are things that must be done to achieve that. Some of those are financial and others relate to the quality of the assistance that is provided to the teachers, the quality of the infrastructure in which they work and the quality of the houses in which they live. The quality of all those factors in the bush schools is far behind those in comparable urban schools. I do not think the minister would deny that. Those facilities are necessary to improve morale and to increase the time that people will stay in the bush so that there will be non-Aboriginal teachers working alongside an increased number of Aboriginal teachers.

With those 2 sets in place, we need to ensure equality of outcomes. We do not want to run a second-class system. We need a hard-nosed system which sees Aboriginal education as a system wherein people will achieve at the same level as everyone else, not a system where failure is somehow excusable, where programs continue for years and students fail, but somehow it is okay because, after all, everybody else has failed in Aboriginal education.

Those 3 aspects are essential. It is not enough to be weak-kneed, to talk about how talking is not enough and then to continue to talk about reviewing this and that. I had hoped that the honourable minister would come up with a few key points that he might have learned, maybe by a process of osmosis because he was not listening when he was out there. I would have hoped that he might have discovered something which would have led him to say: 'Aboriginal teachers are crucial. An Aboriginalisation program is crucial. Non-Aboriginal teachers should work alongside Aboriginal teachers to increase retention rates. A full commitment to such a program will make it strong, ensuring that it will not brook failure'. If the program sets the levels at which students are to achieve, the involvement of Aboriginal people in the communities and of consultative groups like FEPPI will ensure that problems like absenteeism are addressed at the appropriate level.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I would be willing to bet with anybody in this House that that was one of the worst, if not the worst, performances seen from a shadow education spokesman on a matter of such great importance. I am appalled that the shadow spokesman obviously did not bother to read this very worthwhile report by the longest-serving Minister for Education in this government.

The Minister for Education has shown a real commitment to education in the Northern Territory over the last 4 or 5 years. As a sign of that commitment, he set about talking genuinely to people on the ground. Sometimes I wonder whether the member for Stuart talks to the people in his electorate, which is really not so different from my own. When I talk to Aboriginal people on the ground in my electorate, they tell me that they are far from satisfied with the left-wing views put forward by people who purport to be teachers and on the side of Aboriginal people. I am not denigrating all teachers. The vast majority of teachers in Aboriginal

schools have a genuine desire to improve the position of the Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, the member for Stuart denigrates a very comprehensive report put together by the Minister for Education which, for the first time, addresses some of the concerns of Aboriginal people.

Some of the comments which appear in this report are the type of comments which I hear when I am out in my electorate. One comment was made by Walter Kerinaiaua of the Nguiu Council who has had long experience in education, having been a teaching aide for many years as a young man. He said that 'the Tiwi children are not getting the same education as the children outside of the islands and that their education may be inferior to the white education'. A genuine concern of people in the bush is that, in some way, they are being relegated to receiving something less than that which people are receiving elsewhere.

Jacob Lansen of Ngukurr said that 'the people from Ngukurr community were interested in what was going on for the Tiwis. He said that they were modelling their situation around the Tiwi and that the Tiwi islands had everything, but would fail if they did not have confidence. He said that if the kids could be encouraged to get out of the Aboriginal system and into the European system, they must have 'a European education without forgetting their culture'. That was addressed in this report. Jimmy Tipungwuti, the Chairman of the Tiwi Land Council, explained that it was his wish for the Tiwi people to begin to integrate with the modern world now. He explained that they had come a long way and that, 'whether they liked it or not, they had to learn how to survive now for the future'.

The Tiwi people have come a long way in terms of accepting those parts of our European culture which are suitable and which they see as worth while. They have not given away their culture because of that. They have sought deliberately to develop those areas which they believe to be of benefit to them, and they are concerned that the direction of education is being commandeered by left-wing elements who are trying to promote the idea that, in some way, Aboriginal people lack the power to set their own directions. Often I hear that view being put forward by left-wing teachers. As I said, they are not the majority. However, they seem to have grabbed the agenda in the remote areas. They are talking about the need to empower Aboriginal people to take over the education of their own people.

That is not the way of Aboriginal people. It is the way of a few left-wing teachers and, I am sorry to say, a few left-wing lecturers in places like Batchelor College. I can recall a time, in the 1950s and 1960s, when our universities and teachers colleges were taken over by a similar element, and we are seeing some of the results of that now. Fortunately, there has been more balance in recent times. However, during the period when the left was in control of the agenda, all sorts of harebrained schemes were put in place. In Great Britain, even fairy stories were banned from the education system because they supposedly denigrated people in some way. What rubbish! Even Peter Rabbit was out of favour as being racist because he had long ears or whatever nonsense was current at the time. The book was actually burned.

I am appalled that some people would allow our education system for Aboriginal people to be dragged down that path. However, I see it time and time again. New groups of lecturers are coming in. I recall that, when health education was introduced at Batchelor College, the health educator was looking for a book on empowerment. She said that she had been told to teach empowerment to the students and that that was the direction that she had to take. She wanted to know how to empower people.

In the Aboriginal people, we have what is probably one of the strongest lobby groups in the Territory - 22.4% of our population who currently own 37% of the land and potentially could own almost 50% of the land. It is probably the most powerful group in the Territory and these left-wing fanatics are telling us that we must teach them empowerment. The Aboriginal people know the power they possess. Talk to the Tiwi people or the people of Ngukurr who recognise the power that they have. They do not say that they need this at Batchelor.

We can read the words of James Gaykamangu. I recall this letter. I am not denigrating James in this. James is a man for whom I have a great deal of respect, but the letter would indicate to me the level of understanding of English, for a start, that students of education have when coming out of our college. James Gaykamangu asked:

> Why students are doing too many community research and electives and not what we as student teachers should be learning what we are being taught in our schools. We should be learning maths, 6 + 13 = or English reading writing spelling literacy sports and so on, which we as Aboriginal teachers should be learning in the college, because we won't be teaching our children in our school about community research and electives in the classroom when we finish from studying at Batchelor College.

Aboriginal people want to have an education equal to that which the rest of the community receives. Currently, they are not getting that and that is not because of the direction of this government. We have only to look at places like Batchelor College which was established and mostly funded by this government over the years until now. I know the Commonwealth is starting now to accept its responsibility in that regard and that it is placing a greater commitment on it but, until now, it has been largely the responsibility of this government. It is the only college of its kind in the country.

Talk about the support of Labor politicians interstate! There is no support for Aboriginal people interstate. They do not know the meaning of the word. Talk to the government in Victoria. Its big 'do' for the year is to develop a 20-acre paddock, and it is not doing even that on its own. It is being done jointly with the Catholic Church, but that was a big deal for Aboriginal people in Victoria in the last 12 months. Talk to the Western Australian ministers. They say: 'Aboriginal affairs is a federal responsibility. We do not want to become involved in all this housing and community development. That has nothing to do with us. That is a Commonwealth responsibility. Leave it to ATSIC. Why should we get involved?'

That is not the way we do business in the Northern Territory. We establish facilities like Batchelor College. We improve our school system year by year, and currently it is being hijacked by a few left-wing people. Reports that have been written on the education system and the teacher training program at Batchelor College by level-thinking people have been buried, and that is unfortunate because it is essential that we do not lose the agenda of Batchelor College. It is essential that we do not lose the agenda of education for Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

I am aware of some of the saner lecturers who come to Batchelor College being forced out of the system. In fact, they are frozen out. One lecturer, in an area as important as the arts was frozen out completely. No student of the Teacher Education Program was allowed to use his arts program

for a whole semester. The purpose was to drive that person out of the system because he did not subscribe to the views of the lefties at the college. That is of great concern to me. It should be of great concern to the members opposite, but I know it is not because they subscribe to the same view: 'If they do not agree with me, get rid of them'. That is the view of Labor politics everywhere. Forget about equal opportunities and forget about freedom of information with Labor Party politics because no such things exist.

Mr Ede: You want to get rid of the lefties.

Mr McCARTHY: No. I want to ensure that the lefties do not grab control of the agenda. I recognise that there is a reason and a need for a balanced view in education, and I recognise that the people of the left have every right to put forward their view, but it cannot be and is not the only view. Unfortunately, it is being put across as the only legitimate view that is suitable for Aboriginal people, and I know the Aboriginal people are not prepared to wear that, nor should they be prepared to wear it.

The member for Stuart talked about this review as being something which has no depth or value. I believe it has enormous depth and value. For the first time, it puts down in words the problems that exist across the wide spectrum of Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory. For the first time, it highlights what the government is doing and has done in the past. It offers some real suggestions about what we ought to do in the future to ensure that Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory remains where it has been - at the top in this country - and that it is not hijacked by the left. It is not a self-indulgent report. It is the report of a man who has shown his commitment to education over a long period, and not only during his time as minister. The Minister for Education has been strongly committed to education for as long as I can recall. Deirdre Jordan produced a report on Batchelor College a couple of years ago. I know that her report was very difficult to obtain but, obviously, the Minister for Education was able to obtain it because it has been used in his review. One of her fears was that the standard of education in Aboriginal communities would suffer because of the standards which Batchelor College was accepting from outgoing students.

It is quite clear that we cannot have teachers leaving Batchelor College without being able to utilise the English language effectively and, in some cases, without being able to understand fairly simple mathematical problems. I am aware that there are people who have gone through the system at Batchelor College and who have had assistance in writing their reports and in a range of other areas simply to enable them to get out into the community and start teaching. I am not prepared, and I am sure that this government will never be prepared, to accept that we must get Aboriginal people through teacher training at any cost. They have to receive genuine qualifications, and that is what they themselves want. It degrades Aboriginal people to allow them to proceed through a system in that way and gain a qualification to which they have no right.

There is no reason at all why Aboriginal people cannot fit into a system that is equal to the entire system throughout this country. Aboriginal people have the capacity and the desire to become teachers in their communities. I have never had the slightest doubt that they have the capacity to do that and will do it. However, they will never achieve that goal while we have left-wing idealism overriding practical common sense. I am not prepared to allow the left wing to gain control of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. I have no doubt at all that people like the

member for Stuart would be content to sit idly by - as he did last night when he watched television rather than read this report - and allow this to happen.

I am genuinely concerned about where we are heading, not only in education for Aboriginal people but in training generally for Aboriginal people. It is something over which I have left no stone unturned in my time as minister responsible for employment. I have sought to get some rationality and some balance into what we provide by way of training to Aboriginal people, and to ensure that that training is most effective. I would hope to have the opportunity to continue that into the future.

I will not sit idly by and have the member for Stuart denigrate our Minister for Education who is unequalled in his concern for Aboriginal people and their education in the Northern Territory. He has put himself out. The member opposite tried to suggest that this round of community consultation was a farewell holiday trip. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that, as much as I appreciate my Aboriginal constituents, it is no holiday to travel the way the minister travelled over a long period, which was his responsibility, to ensure that he consulted the people who were using his education system throughout the Northern Territory. The member for Stuart has indicated that he would not do that. If he were the minister responsible, he would not spend taxpayers' money on consultation with people. It is not the way of the Labor Party to talk to people on the ground. That is because Labor has its own agenda. It is not prepared to look at change if it does not suit its agenda. That is how it operates. We all know that. I do not know why we pussyfoot around when we know that the ALP does not listen. It does not want to see any changes in the system because that would not suit its own agenda.

I am confident that the Northern Territory government will treat this report with the seriousness that it deserves and that we will implement many of its proposals. I believe it to be one of the most balanced and comprehensive documents on Aboriginal education that I have seen in the Territory.

Debate adjourned.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 291)

Continued from 23 August 1990.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I want to indicate the opposition's reservations about an approach to this issue which is characterised by a concentration on the policing of the 2 km law. I have no intention of being other than quite frank in respect of the 2 km law. I continue to have reservations about the value of that law which, I believe, does not impact particularly strongly, either positively or negatively, on the problems of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. In numerous debates in this Assembly, many of them during the last 12 months, I have spoken about alcohol abuse and the difficulties we have with it in the Northern Territory. I have congratulated the government for having the courage to establish the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community. I have put a great deal of effort into the work of that committee and I believe that it is the appropriate forum for the consideration of a proposal such as this.

I suspect the government's motives in introducing a bill of this sort at this time and I foreshadow that, at the conclusion of the second-reading debate, the opposition will move, pursuant to standing order 183, that the bill be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community. For that reason, the government ...

Mr Coulter: Speak to your local policeman and he will tell you where it should be dealt with.

Mr BELL: I intend to raise the problems of policing in this regard and, to satisfy the Leader of the Government Business, let me point out to him that I have spoken to many police officers. I have a close relationship with the police, at least in central Australia, in respect of their difficulties in policing problems associated with the use and abuse of alcohol. I believe that only the opposition has taken a broad view of the problems. The politics underlying this bill are based simply on a law-and-order approach. From the point of view of many residents in Alice Springs or Katherine - and shortly I will speak about the untruths that the member for Katherine has been peddling - the opposition has taken a broad view, appreciating the fact that people in the community need to be protected. When public drinking involves offences against citizens, usually those offences are committed against fellow drinkers. Let us face it, 99% of the crime resulting from alcohol abuse in public places rebounds on the very people who are breaking the 2 km law. Very rarely does it impinge on people outside of those groups.

Mr Reed: Is that right!

Mr Coulter: And 75% of all prison inmates are there because of alcohol-related crime.

Mr BELL: At least on a proportional basis, there is no doubt that the homicides and serious assaults that are associated with alcohol abuse impact particularly on Aboriginal people who are drinking in public places, and I believe that that is the problem that we should be concentrating on.

Mr Coulter: We are. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr BELL: The Leader of Government Business interjects and tells me that we are. In putting forward a proposal like this, there is no evidence that the government is doing so. If the government were genuine about adopting an attitude like that, it would be quite happy to see this bill referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community.

Mr Coulter: Let us have a review! Let us have a task force!

Mr BELL: The Leader of Government Business tells me that we should have a review and we should have a task force. I noticed that he did not bother to present any material to the sessional committee when he had the opportunity to do so last week. However, the opposition and I have never doubted that there is a law-and-order issue associated with alcohol abuse that has to be addressed, but I do not believe that this proposal will go any way towards achieving that end.

I had the opportunity to be briefed by the Commissioner of Police in respect of the operation of the 2 km law, and I do not believe that this proposal will assist matters one iota. As the honourable minister outlined in his second-reading speech, the proposal is that police be

empowered - perhaps I should not use that word for the sake of the member for Victoria River because I know how much he dislikes the concept of empowerment - to do 3 things. Firstly, they will be empowered to seize or empty opened and unopened containers of alcohol in the presence of a person believed to be drinking in a public place. Secondly, they will be empowered to seize unopened containers of alcohol in the immediate vicinity of a person believed to be drinking in a public place and, thirdly, to seize unopened containers of alcohol in possession of persons in the immediate vicinity of a person believed to be drinking in a public place.

It needs to be reiterated that the Northern Territory is one of the few jurisdictions in the country where simply drinking alcohol in a public place is illegal. In many jurisdictions in this country, if not all of them, drinking in a public place is legal. What is illegal is fighting, causing distress to other people etc. I noted that the Attorney-General is going off to seek some advice. I will look forward to the fruits of the research of the Department of Law. When the Attorney-General sums up, it will be very interesting to find out in exactly how many jurisdictions drinking in a public place is illegal. From the debate when the 2 km law was brought in in the early 1980s, my recollection is that it is not an offence to drink in a public place anywhere else.

To reiterate an argument that I had thought might have some impact on the government in this regard, I believe that the question of law and order in respect of alcohol abuse is something that western societies have had to come to terms with in relatively recent times by means of liquor licensing legislation. Basically, this is a post-industrial revolution, post-urbanisation phenomenon. In debates in this Assembly, I have referred to the fact that I believe that the difficulties that we experience in the Territory with the abuse of alcohol by the non-Aboriginal community is, at least to some extent, a response to isolation from extended family.

In the Aboriginal community, at least in part, alcohol abuse has its genesis in the massive cultural dislocation of which we are part and which is part of the historical time in which we live. I believe that history will judge us by the type of response we make to that situation and that our response to that situation must be to take into consideration equally the needs of the community whose lifestyle is disturbed by drunks. I have no doubt about that, but I believe that it has to be considered in a balanced way, and that is the reason why we have congratulated the government for supporting the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community. I believe that, if that committee continues to do its work, some positive results will flow. Of themselves, the meetings of the committee are an important part of the educative process that must go on in the Territory community so that we can solve the whole range of problems that are associated with the abuse of alcohol. I do not believe that this screwing down of the 2 km law will assist in that law and order process.

Let me mention briefly the 2 broad approaches to this issue. There is, if you like, a left-wing and a right-wing approach to it. A left-wing social action approach might be to set up a variety of government programs in the hope that the interest in abusing alcohol will diminish. The right-wing approach might be to legislate to empower the police to ensure that these people are not visible and that people are deterred from abusing alcohol. I shall not nail my colours to the mast of either a left-wing or a right-wing solution to this issue.

Mr Coulter: It is in your policy.

Mr BELL: Hear me out.

I believe that the social action approach has benefits and that the deterrent approach has some things to recommend it as well. I was hoping to bring an example before the Assembly at a more appropriate time. Without anticipating anything that is on the Notice Paper, I do not believe that the proposal from the member for Sadadeen is an appropriate approach. However, I will outline a deterrent issue which is of value and which needs to be pursued through the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community.

This group of people is involved in a descending spiral towards premature death as a result of alcohol abuse. Few people are as close to that group as I am. I believe that this legislature, through the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community has a responsibility to develop a mechanism through which to confront those people and to indicate that, as a society, we are not prepared to stand by and see them continue to drink themselves to death. This could be done through the courts, but I want the committee to do its work before proposals of this sort are made. I believe that it is already on the statute book. In fact, Senator Bob Collins referred to section 122 of the Liquor Act, which I do not believe has been used in 10 years. Broad consideration needs to be given to the circumstances in which the courts are approached to declare people unable to be served alcohol.

Mr Manzie: Is there any way we can approve that?

Mr BELL: I believe that exactly that issue needs to be addressed in the context of considering the whole range of problems associated with alcohol abuse. That is one of the reasons why this sessional committee must be allowed to do its work.

I will pursue this for a minute. At least 4 or 5 times on any one day, somebody will come to my office looking for assistance with social security benefits and sometimes seeking assistance to book a bus fare back to a community or something like that. They are people whom I know, whose families I know and to whom I am very close. I am continuing to become more and more convinced that simply satisfying people's needs in that regard and getting them through the door as quickly as possible is not a satisfactory response. I might say that I often play the real paternalist when I talk to these people. I say: 'I am sick of going to funerals. If it is not week after week, it is at least month after month that we attend funerals because someone has died as a result of alcohol abuse'. I say to them in Pitjantjatjara: 'I do not want to go to your funeral'. People laugh politely, thinking no doubt that I am going quietly off my head. They walk out the door and generally go back to the riverbed with another cask, beginning the whole cycle again.

Mr Deputy Speaker I believe that some sort of deterrent approach is needed to indicate to these people that we are not prepared to sit by and watch them kill themselves. We have done some things which reflect the type of social action approach favoured by the left.

Mr Setter interjecting.

Mr BELL: In answer to the member for Jingili, we have set up sobering-up shelters in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. I believe that those centres have assisted considerably in implementing a more humane approach to the problems of alcohol abuse.

However, I believe that we have a long way to go yet and that the sessional committee is heading in the right direction. I do not believe that this bill will provide assistance in that regard.

One of the unintended effects of the 2 km law was that it led to the policing of people drinking in the bed of the Todd River in Alice Springs. Prior to the 2 km law, when there was no policing of people drinking in the Todd, many more homicides and serious assaults occurred. Because the police are keeping an eye on those people, albeit as an unintended consequence of the 2 km law, there has been an improvement in that milieu.

I could speak at length about the broad issues involved in the question of public drinking in Alice Springs. The Tangentyere social club is relevant in this context. I said a few minutes ago that western society has been grappling with the problem of liquor licensing in relatively recent times. Parliaments in the United Kingdom and in the United States have felt the need to legislate to control the consumption of liquor because of deleterious social and economic effects. We must consider the problem of where people drink and how they drink in that context. The Tangentyere Social Club approach has been positive in that regard. We have to look at the lives of the people involved in drinking in public places that often results in alcohol abuse, murder and mayhem, and we have consider what solutions can be found. The Tangentyere Liquor Committee has gone a long way in that regard. The government's attitude towards the social club proposal has been equivocal. It is to be congratulated for providing some land for the project.

Mr Vale: That is not all. Check your details.

Mr BELL: I am not aware of the extent of other government assistance, but I will certainly look forward to the member for Braitling giving us more details of further government assistance.

The government's attitude in that regard has been somewhat equivocal because it has sponsored objection to the licence. I find that attitude equivocal to the point of schizophrenia. Either you believe the social club proposal should be given a go or you believe it should not. I would have thought that, having provided the land and other assistance as referred to by the member for Braitling, the government would have let the process of the liquor licence application proceed unfettered. However, members of the Chief Minister's staff have been encouraged to oppose that licence. The Minister for Health and Community Services, as the Chairman of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, raised this issue when he visited Papunya with that committee. He found that people at Papunya were not too interested in constitutional development, but that they were interested in the problems of alcohol abuse. He went way beyond his brief on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development ...

Mr Hatton: Separate meeting.

Mr BELL: ... and decided to encourage people to oppose the social club proposal. It irritated me intensely at the time, and I think it is probably worth while that I place my irritation on record. The people at Papunya had enough to deal with, given that there was a meeting with the Select Committee on Constitutional Development in the morning and a meeting in the afternoon of the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community, without the Minister for Health and Community Services further muddying the waters by conducting what he now tells us was a private meeting

of his own to canvass this equivocal attitude towards the Tangentyere social club proposal.

Mr Hatton: Absolute nonsense.

Mr BELL: The Minister for Health and Community Services can rise later in this debate and tell us what his attitude is, what actually he did at Papunya that day and ...

Mr Hatton: It has nothing to do with this.

Mr BELL: That says it all, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Health and Community Service says that it had nothing to do with this. The thrust of the opposition's attitude to this bill is that it has everything to do with this. The people of Papunya visit Alice Springs, many of them to buy alcohol. Their attitude towards organisations like the Tangentyere social club and towards law-and-order issues are important. The chief problem with this government is that it is unable to relate to issues. Some cheap politics are being played with this bill at the expense of a constructive attitude towards solving the problems associated with alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. The opposition, which is shortly to become the government in the Northern Territory, will continue its constructive attitude.

My attention was drawn to comments made by the member for Katherine in the Katherine Times in which he was playing his own bit of local politics with questions relating to alcohol abuse and public drinking in Katherine. As he is given to doing - without putting too fine a point on it - he distorted the truth with breathtaking ease. The member for Katherine said that a Territory Labor government would repeal the 2 km law. Presumably, the member for Katherine will recall his comment in the Katherine Times to that effect. If he would like me to go to my office and get the actual clipping that passed across my desk to that effect, I am more than happy to do so.

The member for Katherine should be aware that a Territory Labor government will allow the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community to do its work, and will consider the recommendations of that committee. No undertakings have been given that a Territory Labor government will repeal the 2 km law, but I will go so far as to say that I look forward to a time when a 2 km law is not necessary and when a 2 km law is not on the statute books in the Northern Territory, because such a law will no longer be relevant. That will come about because we will have provided the appropriate mix of social programs and deterrents by way of legislation and penalty ...

Mr Hatton: Tell us about them.

Mr BELL: ... to make it unnecessary.

All I can say in answer to the minister's interjection is that screwing down on the 2 km law like this is not the way to do it. I look forward to the contribution of the Minister for Health and Community Services in this debate, although I expect that he will not contribute because really he is not interested. He says that the question of the health of the Territory community is irrelevant to this bill and he is entirely uninterested. I think that is a shame. I think that the Minister for Health and Community Services should be prepared on contribute to the broad questions. This bill is unnecessary and, as I say, the opposition will be moving that this be

referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest to some of the points that the member for MacDonnell made in his contribution to this debate. I am pleased to note that he has noticed what I have mentioned a number of times since this law was introduced first in 1983, which is that the incidence of homicides in the Todd River has dropped considerably following the introduction of the 2 km law. My interpretation of that was along the lines that Alice Springs is surrounded by some 13 different tribal groups who, before the white man came - and, no doubt, for a long time after the white man came - were not known to mix with one another. In fact, in the tribal days, I understand that it was taboo even to learn a word of another tribe's language. Inter-tribal bitterness and fighting was suppressed, but it would flare up under the stimulus of alcohol. There were so many homicides in the Todd River that one became almost blase about how many there would be each week. A homicide might rate 2 or 3 lines at page 17 of the Centralian Advocate. It is a terrible state of affairs when the community becomes blase about people being murdered.

I put it down very much to the fact that the various tribal groups were mixing with one another or drinking close to one another. The old antagonisms would flare up and they would go at it hammer and tongs with the result that people would be killed. I do not say that there are not people being injured in Alice Springs now as a result of the abuse of alcohol, but it tends to occur more among people of the same tribe. It would seem to me that, in general, the extent of the fighting and injuries is not as great. Plenty of people go into the hospital. Unfortunately, almost every night, it is like a battleground there. That used to be the case on pay nights, but it seems to have become worse from what one hears from people at the hospital.

As I have said before, one of the good effects of the 2 km law is the tendency to push the various tribal groups further away or into the town camps for their particular tribe. I know that has created some problems for the town camps and that the Tangentyere Council would very much like to exclude the troublemakers. Often, it is the dregs of their society who have come into town because, as a result of their behaviour, they are not accepted in their own tribal areas. They come into town and try to get into the Tangentyere camps. That has created problems there. We would be foolish if we did not admit that that has happened. However, by the same token, the actual number of homicides resulting from grog related violence and inter-tribal fighting have been reduced significantly.

When I look back to 1983, I can see very clearly in my mind's eye the Alice Springs Town Council lawns as they were every day. They would end up in a filthy, littered state. I recall vividly the tension in the town at that time. I well remember that a lady, for whom I have a great regard, had a shop opposite the town council chambers. On numerous occasions, she contacted me to say that an Aboriginal man was in the area and was abusing people with obscene language. Such behaviour was creating tensions in the town. I recall also that, when my office was near the Flynn Church, I heard a ruckus one day outside in Todd Street. I went out to see what was happening. An Aboriginal man was trying to belt a woman over the head with a brown 26 oz bottle. Fortunately, he missed. He was obviously very much under the weather. However, the glass from the smashed bottle was spread across the street.

The 2 km law has done a great deal of good. I believe that it has done much to improve relationships between many whites and Aboriginal people. It has certainly made our town much cleaner and safer, and that is a key point. Law-abiding citizens, no matter what their race, should not have to be subject to abuse, rubbish and so on. In the general public areas, therefore, there have been some positive aspects of the 2 km law.

I have circulated some proposed amendments. I believe that, when a provision does not work, is costly to implement, does not enjoy the support of the police force and has become, in many ways, a bit of a joke, then that provision is no longer appropriate. I am referring, of course, to the $20 on-the-spot fine. The list of people who have been fined under this provision would be about 5 km long. Of course, 'on-the-spot fine' is a bit of a misnomer. People are not actually fined on the spot. They are issued with a ticket saying that they have to pay $20 within a certain time or face the prospect of court action.

Enforcing this provision takes up the time of our police force. We know that, in these tight economic times, our police force is short of staff. We would like to have more police but it seems that the funds are not available. Our police are spending time writing out these tickets. Attempting to catch people who default on fines can be very difficult because they are not always easy to locate. When a person is taken to court, if Aboriginal Legal Aid decides to mount a defence against the charge of not having paid the $20 fine on time, 2 police officers may be held up in court for anything up to 4 hours, doing no useful policing work whatsoever. All this is for the sake of $20. My proposal is to get rid of the on-the-spot fines. I am told that even the police prosecutors are ignoring these cases because they feel that they are a waste of time.

The effective provision is the one which allows open alcohol containers to be emptied by police. In debate last week, I said that it has come to my attention that very little is being done to enforce this provision. Figures comparing 6-month periods from 1 July to 31 December in 1988 and 1989 indicate that the number of occasions when police enforced this provision dropped from about 800 to about 15. People are starting to abuse the 2 km law because they find that it is not being enforced.

Tipping out liquor is effective. Although I understand the problem, I do not think that the government's proposal will solve it. People - and it does not matter what their race is - may be sitting down drinking from open cans, with 6 cartons of unopened cans on the ground beside them. The police are empowered to issue $20 on-the-spot fines or to empty the open cans. However, the police cannot sit around watching all day. They are working flat strap in Alice Springs. As soon as the police leave, there is nothing to stop the people from opening the other cans. That is the problem which the government is trying to address. The government proposes to solve this problem by allowing the police to impound the unopened liquor containers, issuing receipts and storing the alcohol at the police station for a period before allowing people to claim it again. Incidentally, if the government intends to keep the $20 on-the-spot fine, it should require that amount to be paid before people can reclaim their liquor.

I believe that enough of the time of our police force is wasted already. The government should bite the bullet, as the Katherine committee did, according to the minister in his second-reading speech. Where the police are satisfied that section 45D has been contravened, they should be able to empty all liquor containers, opened and unopened. That may sound harsh but there is ample opportunity to spread the message through the media

in the following terms: 'If you are drinking in a public area and if you have open and unopened liquor containers, a police officer is entitled to empty out all those liquor containers'. Imparja can spread that message. I believe that, if people have plenty of warning about the provision, it will not be long before they obey the 2 km law.

Mr Manzie: Doesn't section 45H do that?

Mr COLLINS: It seems equivocal. The impression that I have from police officers is that they do not want to collect quantities of grog and to issue receipts.

Mr Manzie: Under section 45H, if the police think that they will be consumed, they can empty them.

Mr COLLINS: Perhaps the only difference would be a change from 'may' to 'shall'. Aboriginal people appreciate strong law. I believe that would be most effective. Just as emptying the grog from opened containers has been effective, this will be even more effective. If we are to have a 2 km law, let us ensure that it is obeyed. Let us make it quite clear, and the Aboriginal people will respect that. This would have to be applied fairly and squarely across the board.

The last proposition related to a situation where there are no opened containers but where the people are in a public place with a large quantity of grog. If the police feel that that liquor will be consumed as soon as they depart the scene, they should be able to order the people to move beyond the 2 km limit or on to private property. They could be given 30 minutes to move beyond the limit or the police may tip out the grog.

The 2 km law has had many positive effects. It is being abused again and is not being policed in the manner which was intended. The shortage of police is part of the reason for that. Let's not bind the police down with things which do not work. I appeal to all members to consider the court costs and the costs in police time of a $20 on-the-spot fine. When it was introduced, I said that it would not be effective and that we would end up with a pile of paperwork which would do nothing to assist. I said that tipping out the grog would work, and it has worked. The law is there for the purpose of making public areas safe and attractive for people who are prepared to obey the law and who wish to enjoy such places without being confronted with visual and verbal pollution and embarrassing behaviour.

I commend the proposed amendments to honourable members. I am a little sorry that I did not have a little more faith that the parliament might sit this week and have circulated them a little earlier. However, honourable members are quite intelligent enough to be able to follow the gist of what I intend. I hope that at least some of it will be picked up, even if it is only the first amendment, from the point of view that it is a waste of police resources and court resources and, in effect, is being ignored virtually both by the police and by the court system.

Mr Manzie: You are removing the option of seizing?

Mr COLLINS: The police see that as another burden on them. They have to spend so much time picking up people and placing them in protective custody and then having to pick up the same people again the following night. It is a merry-go-round. I am sure it is not what many people who join the police force believe that policing should be about, and I am equally sure that the community feels that that is not what the police

should be occupied with. To add the further burden of having to issue receipts, take the alcohol, store it and then have to find it again will not be effective. That is my belief and I think the police feel the same way.

Let us make it a little harder. If grog containers are open and section 45D, drinking in a public place, has been contravened, let us go the whole hog and tip all the grog out. If the message is spread - and this can be done through the media - that this will be enforced after a certain date, I believe the 2 km law will be respected in the way that it ought to be. It will have the effect of pushing the tribal groups further out and away from one another and that should result in fewer homicides. Of course, I am looking at this from the Alice Springs perspective because we have something like 13 different tribes. At times when they are drinking, the further they are away and the more separate they are, the better.

As for the Aboriginal drinking clubs, at present people who have a drinking problem and who are shunned by their own communities as a consequence come into Alice Springs to drink in the Todd riverbed. They are used to the bush and they drink in the riverbed in contravention of the 2 km law. I wonder how these people will feel about the Aboriginal drinking club situation and whether they will feel comfortable with it. I think that they would find it somewhat difficult. It may be a far better idea to provide areas, outside the 2 km limits, where people can sit down and do their drinking. Such areas may not have any very fancy amenities, but would provide places where they can go. That would take the pressure off the Tangentyere camps, and I do feel some sympathy for the people in these camps who do not wish town camp areas to be the place where the drinkers - the fighters and the offenders - come in and disrupt the peace and order of their daily lives. I commend these thoughts to honourable members and I will appreciate their responses.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for MacDonnell for his kind comments in relation to matters that I have written about in the Katherine paper, but I will come to that later.

I believe that the 2 km law has been effective, but perhaps not as effective as it could have been. Since its introduction, it has been the subject of considerable criticism. A frequent criticism in Katherine is that it is not policed. The reason is that the police face a difficult task in enforcing it. Where people are drinking from a carton of beer within the 2 km limit, the police will empty any opened containers. However, before the police vehicle has moved 100 m down the road, other containers are opened and the people are drinking again. That leads to the perception that the law is not being enforced by police. That is one of the difficulties that have confronted the police in the present application of the law.

The member for MacDonnell suggested that any revision or consideration of the 2 km law should be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community, and I do not necessarily support that suggestion. There are some actions that could be taken now to improve the situation that we face in relation to the abuse of alcohol, and that can be done outside the considerations of the sessional committee without breaching the purposes for which the committee was established. I do not think it is appropriate simply to keep referring matters to committees. Here there is an opportunity to act. I think that the government should act, and that there is a belief on the part of the public that the government should act. I think that is what we are here today to do.

I object strongly to the comments made by the member for MacDonnell in relation to the fact that offences are committed principally against fellow drinkers. He is not incorrect in saying that, but I object to that statement for a couple of reasons. Firstly, should we allow a situation to continue whereby drinkers are abusing each other? That is not an excuse for not putting in place the legislative amendments that we are discussing today. Secondly, I object to the member for MacDonnell's comments on the basis that other people are suffering. The broader community is suffering very badly and the member for MacDonnell must be aware of the suffering that is being endured. I can imagine that the same problems are being experienced in Alice Springs as are being experienced in Katherine. I refer to women being accosted in the car park at the shopping centre and their empty shopping trolleys snatched from them as soon as they have unloaded their groceries because people want the dollar deposit on the trolleys.

Mr Ede: A dollar? It is only 20¢ in Alice Springs.

Mr REED: It is a dollar in Katherine. When you live in the centre of the universe, it costs a little more!

A member: You get the dollar back.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, in Katherine, you get it back if you are lucky.

It is not only the trolleys that may be taken. There have been instances where food and other items that have been purchased by people have been stolen before they have had the opportunity to remove them from the trolleys. Children have been accosted on their way home from school. They have been abused, pushed off their bikes and assaulted. I find that offensive and I am amazed that the member for MacDonnell could ignore that situation in his comments. Indecent behaviour is involved. People are to be seen fighting, urinating and engaging in sexual acts in the streets. It is offensive to the whole community. For the member for MacDonnell to suggest that the offences committed are against fellow drinkers only indicates that he has missed the point to some extent. I can assure honourable members that the people of Katherine have made their concerns very clear to me. They attest to the fact that they are experiencing these problems and want something done about them. From the repeated representations that have been made to me, I know that, by and large, the community is very supportive of these amendments.

The member for MacDonnell said that this is the only jurisdiction in Australia which bans drinking in public in this way. I do not have a problem with that. This legislature has introduced a great deal of legislation which has not existed elsewhere in Australia. However, much of that legislation has been taken up quickly by other jurisdictions. I am not saying that this will be. However, I am saying that we should be proud of that fact and it should not deter us from being different. Certainly, I would not want to follow some of the actions that the states have taken, but I recognise that many of the actions that we have taken have been adopted by the states. We have led other jurisdictions in many respects and we should be proud of that fact.

The member said also that the unintended impact of the 2 km law was to stop drinking in the creek bed. I do not quite see what he means by that. If it occurs on public land within 2 km of a liquor outlet, whether it is in the creek or in a public street or wherever, I would have thought that that was the intention of the legislation. I believe that the Aboriginal people suffer considerably from alcohol abuse and I sympathise with them on that.

I know that many of them are very concerned about it. The point is that it is a community problem and there is an expectation that something should be done about it. The support in Aboriginal communities for dry areas illustrates that. Honourable members opposite have argued against those laws.

Mr Smith: When?

Mr REED: It speaks for itself that the people want to find solutions. I know many Aboriginal people who support the 2 km law. Certainly, they have not expressed to me any great concerns about the amendments that we are talking about today.

I want to turn now to comments made by the member for MacDonnell in relation to an article that appeared in the Katherine Times. It might have even been in the column that I write in the paper each week. The honourable member said that I had stated that the Labor Party would abolish the 2 km law. I do not resile from that comment at all, whether it was in my column or whether I was reported as saying it. The source of my information was the party platform of the ALP. Clearly, the member for MacDonnell is not aware of what is in his party's platform. For his benefit, I will quote it to him. I will read item 30 at page 90. It is under the heading 'Privacy': 'Abolish demeaning provisions relating to search and seizure of alcohol in public places and repeal legislation prohibiting drinking alcohol within 2 km of licensed liquor outlets'.

By way of interjection, the Leader of the Opposition says that that is correct. Clearly, the ALP would stand by its platform in the unhappy event that it were to win government. Indeed, the legislation would be withdrawn. That was the point that I was making to the people of my electorate because that is of concern to them. I believe that I have not only the right but also a responsibility to draw those matters to their attention because the honourable members opposite certainly do not. That has been displayed very effectively in these sittings. Opposition members, including the Leader of the Opposition, have raised every possible smokescreen to take up the time of this House. Given that they believe an election is imminent, the public would expect them to be stating their policies and telling Territorians what they, as an alternative government, would do. If they are not prepared to state their own platform, I object to the member for MacDonnell saying that I was wrong to do so. It is in the ALP platform. We are all aware that Margaret Gillespie, the President of the ALP, is on the public record as saying that all ALP candidates have to sign an agreement to stand by the party platform. I do not think that I need say any more on the matter than that.

The member for Sadadeen suggested that the option to seize the alcohol should be removed. I do not really see the benefit of that. If the police have an option to seize or to empty containers where people are drinking, that would be sufficient to address many of the problems in many of our towns. These problems are being experienced by members of both the Aboriginal and the white communities. Aboriginal people are also seeking legislation to relieve the problems that they are experiencing, and these amendments will help to achieve that. On behalf of my constituents in the Katherine electorate, I strongly support the amendments.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, my address will be brief. In deference to my long-term parliamentary colleague, the member for Koolpinyah, I shall not take up too much of the time of the House. It is my simple belief that, if honourable members want to do something about the

rate of consumption of alcohol within our community, there are some straightforward steps that we can take. We can restrict the number of outlets. Indeed, we could reduce the number of outlets. Secondly, we could provide the consumers of alcohol with as much information as possible about the effects of their consumption on their health and the social effects of their habits.

Nhulunbuy has numerous outlets for alcohol, including an hotel and several licensed clubs. However, a chain store there - and I will not name the particular store - has had a licence for 18 months, but has not used it.

Mr Hatton: There will only be one.

Mr LEO: There is more than 1 supermarket in Nhulunbuy.

Mr Hatton: That is not a chain store.

Mr LEO: A supermarket in Nhulunbuy has held a licence which it has had the power to exercise for some 18 months. Recently, it has indicated an interest in exercising its option to sell liquor within the community of Nhulunbuy. As I know that all honourable members are ardent readers of that wonderful tabloid the NT News, I am sure that they are aware that there has been a great deal of community concern about the desire of that retail outlet to exercise its option. Despite that concern, in both the Aboriginal and the European communities, the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission seems unable or unwilling to review the application of that licence and the ability of that particular potential outlet to exercise its right to sell alcohol.

We can spend endless time debating in this House but, until the liquor commission, in this case, and this House seriously consider what the community desires, as opposed to what retailers desire, we will be chasing our tails. We can write whatever we wish into legislation, but we have a real problem when the interests of retailers are allowed to prevail over the express wishes of the community because of a legal technicality. I appreciate the legal difficulties which the commission and the government find themselves in. However, when legal technicalities dictate such matters, as opposed to the broad community view, we will continue to chase our tails in this Assembly. I am a great respecter of the law. It is perhaps one of the few things which defines a civilised society. However, when the law is demonstrated clearly to be an absolute ass as far as a community is concerned, we have to question whether the law is serving the community or simply itself.

I sympathise with what the member for MacDonnell said. I have attended too many funerals of intelligent young human beings not to be struck by the absolute tragedy of their lives and those of their families. I am sure that a number of members in this House have witnessed the dreadful human tragedy which overtakes some people. I do not believe, and I am sure that nobody in this House honestly believes, that prosecuting people will solve that problem. We have been prosecuting people for drunkenness since time immemorial. We have been prosecuting people for vagrancy since time immemorial.

A member interjecting.

Mr LEO: I hear what you are saying, and it is true that we no longer have vagrancy laws. However, we continue to prosecute people and put them

before the courts for alcohol-related offences. All that will not change anything. The only hope lies in education.

I am optimistic enough to believe that there is some hope for people who are already in the grip of the dreaded grog. I know that we can educate young people, people who do not yet seek the unconsciousness which alcohol provides. That is what alcohol provides for many of these people. It provides a means to obliterate painful awareness, and that is what they seek. I would hope that this parliament can devise some mechanism that will allow us to provide some hope so that we do not have to prosecute those who seek to obliterate their consciousness. We may have to live with that in respect of many of the people who are in the grip of alcohol. We can keep sending them to prison but if, as a collection of so-called intelligent beings, our only answer is to say simply that we will wash our hands of people and send them to the slammer because we cannot devise any measures which will provide them with some hope, we have real reason to wonder why the hell we are here. This legislation is only about getting rid of social embarrassments. In this House, we have never even attempted to address measures which might somehow reduce or overcome this tremendous social problem which we face constantly in the Northern Territory, and this bill will achieve nothing in that regard.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, recently, I attended a meeting in the rural area which was convened by the Women's Advisory Council. One chap was present, but the meeting was a well attended by women of different ages, not only from the rural area but also from Palmerston. Over the years, I have learnt something in this job which other sensible members of parliament will have learnt as well, and that is that we are here to represent the views of the people in our electorates. I have tried to do that in all the years that I have been a member of this Assembly. Whether, initially, such views are my own or not, they are the views of the people I represent and therefore they must become my views. In this case, I had no problem. I had no trouble in accepting the views put forward by these women, some of whom were older, some of whom were younger, and some of whom had small children.

It became very clear that these women were sick and tired of being accosted and disturbed by drunks in public places. They were not wowserish women; they were ordinary women whom one might meet anywhere. I stress that because their views are the views of the community. They mentioned particularly the bus interchange at Palmerston as a place where they encounter problems of this kind. If a woman is carrying a child or pushing a child in a pusher and she is accosted at the bus interchange by a drunk who asks her for money or makes vulgar suggestions, perhaps with nobody else present, she will feel rather unsafe and insecure even if the police station is not far away. Why should she have to put up with indecent remarks from some drunken lout or mongrel in the community?

The women at the meeting had been in such situations or had witnessed them. The people who are accosting such women, and who are permitted to board buses where they continue to accost them, are drinking alcohol within 2 km of licensed premises, namely the Palmerston Tavern. I know that there is a law which says that members of the public are not permitted to drink in public places within 2 km of a licensed liquor outlet but, like other honourable members who have spoken before me, I know that this law has not been policed as well as it might have been in terms of community expectations. I intend no slur on the police force. Other honourable members have given the reasons for that, and those reasons are accepted by the community.

Regardless of the cant and pious diatribes that have come from members of the opposition as they explain why they oppose this legislation, I believe that we have to consider the views of the community, particularly of those who feel themselves unable to deal with the irregular behaviour of people who are under the influence of alcohol. Of course, it is a serious matter when one is accosted, abused or assaulted by drunken people, and I am not necessarily talking about people of one colour or another or one sex or another. However, nearly as serious a matter is the need to cater to the sensibilities of the community, which will be dealt with by the provisions contained in this legislation. I do not use the word 'sensibilities' in a frightfully twee way. I am talking about the normal expectations of a community. I think community standards are affected by the behaviour of certain people in the community, who drink in public places and then make nuisances of themselves.

I have not experienced it at first hand, but I have heard about the problems associated with drinking in Alice Springs, and no honourable member has spoken of the effect this has on the women in that town. I recall that, when I represented Bathurst and Melville Islands some 10 or 11 years ago, the women there were very much against increased amounts of booze being brought to the islands. They were worried about the abuse the women would suffer when the men overindulged in alcohol. I remember attending meeting after meeting on the subject. Meetings were called not only by the women but by the communities there, and by affected government departments whose representatives went over to Bathurst and Melville Islands. The story was always the same. Usually, it is the women who pay the price of the fellows drinking too much and, if this happens in a public place, not only does the woman who is actually in the company of the man who has overindulged cop it, but it is not unknown for other women in the vicinity to cop it too. I have not had experience of this unfortunate behaviour, and perhaps I would be in a position to do something about it if I had. However, simply because I have not had personal experience of it does not mean that it does not occur.

As I see it, this legislation will go some way towards overcoming the problems of drinking in public places. I would not die at the stake for it, but I would query the member for MacDonnell's assertion that this is the only jurisdiction that has restrictions on drinking in public places. I believe that Western Australia had restrictions under a previous government, if not under the present government. However, I could not swear to that.

I tend to agree with the amendment proposed by the member for Sadadeen. His amendment seeks to enable police officers to seize not only opened containers of liquor but unopened containers as well, and to empty them on the spot. To my way of thinking, that amendment would streamline the provision although it might present problems at the actual scene. It could be open to abuse and it would have to be carried out well. However, I am inclined to favour the amendment because I believe it would save a great deal of unnecessary work on the part of the police force because, if these unopened containers of liquor are not claimed within a certain time, they are destroyed by the police anyway. There could be a logistical problem in that, if someone has a couple of cartons and a couple of casks with him in the mall because he intends to have a drinking session with his mates, and the police empty all those containers, the mall will be awash with alcohol. Whilst I am in favour of the amendment circulated by the member for Sadadeen, I think the practicalities of its application would militate against its implementation.

The Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community was to have held a hearing last week and I did wish to appear

before that committee. Whilst not being a wowser, provided I do not intend to drive, if I am at home or am in a social situation, I like to have a few drinks, and perhaps sometimes it is more than a few drinks, but also I am aware that alcohol has to be your servant rather than your master. It is a very good servant to have, but it makes a very bad master.

If we are to consider the damage that overindulgence in alcohol leads to, I think we have also to consider the opportunities people have to buy alcohol. Whilst I am not in favour of prohibition as such, because I think prohibition would only create the situation that existed in the United States in the 1930s, nevertheless I believe that alcohol is perhaps a little too freely available in the Northern Territory. A serious examination has to be made of the hours that all these establishments are open, the types of establishments they are and where they are situated. Having regard to the fact that we cannot close liquor outlets to one group of people, the community should be considered as a homogeneous group, not as small ethnic groups. A place should not be closed or have its trading hours restricted for the benefit of one section of the community. Its trading has to be considered to be detrimental to the community as a whole before that happens. All groups must be equally subject to the provisions of the legislation.

On television and in the press, I have seen and read about the meetings of Aboriginal women from outstations and outlying areas from Alice Springs protesting against the overindulgence in alcohol by menfolk, and making a general request that government payments, such as social security payments, be paid to the place of origin of the men, which would be the places out in the bush away from Alice Springs. It was stated that they thought that, as a consequence, the men would not have such free access to booze and, as a result, the women's lives and the lives of their children would be much happier.

If this legislation is passed, no doubt some of its provisions, such as the emptying of liquor containers, will appear draconian. However, I think the lesson might sink in. Some of the people affected - and I believe they are mostly men - may realise that it is not a good thing to be drinking in public places. Even if it encourages only a few of them to stay at home with their wives and families and not to spend so much money on booze, I think this legislation will have achieved something. I speak in favour of it not only in relation to the Aboriginal drinking problem, as I have heard about it in Alice Springs, but also as it would apply to the drinking problem elsewhere in the community.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the problem of excessive alcohol consumption has existed in the Northern Territory for a long time. I have been scanning through a Hansard from 1982, when the original Summary Offences Bill was introduced into this House. I noted that the honourable minister indicated that it came into operation on 1 January 1983. The type of debates held then were very similar to the type of debate that is being held today. We still have the same kinds of problems. In fact, I noted particularly some of the comments and interjections made by the member for MacDonnell who said essentially the same things today as he said all those years ago. He has not changed much either.

I can confirm the comment made by my colleagues earlier that this problem dates right back to 1982-83. Years ago, I can recall seeing large groups of people sitting around on vacant blocks in this city consuming copious quantities of alcohol, be it cartons of beer or flagons of wine. Those people would sit there hour after hour and, eventually, that vacant

block would be littered with empty cans and cartons. A moment ago, the member for Koolpinyah spoke about the results of that kind of behaviour which frequently was that women and perhaps children would be assaulted or abused.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, at the Palmerston bus interchange.

Mr SETTER: That problem has not gone away but, as a result of the 2 km law, people are no longer able to sit on vacant blocks or in parks in the town and legally consume alcohol the way they used to all those years ago. We have achieved that much at least. Whilst I would be the first to admit, having travelled extensively up and down the length and breadth of the Northern Territory over the last 6 years, that you still do see ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: When are you going to come out to the Litchfield Shire?

Mr SETTER: I am out there regularly.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Are you? You don't come and see me.

Mr SETTER: I will next time.

You do see people sitting on nature strips and in parks in places like Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. It is not so evident in Darwin, but inebriated people can be seen. Whilst they may not of have been sitting in a park within the 2 km zone whilst they were actually consuming alcohol, they have been in the pub all day or half the day or they have been down the creek bank consuming their supplies, and then they stagger into the town area. When I was in Katherine about 18 months ago with the constitutional development committee, we went into the township at about 10 am. In particular, we were trying to make contact with Aboriginal people. We found a number of them lined up outside the Katherine Hotel. As soon as the doors opened, they rushed in and, within a few minutes, there were probably 50 people in that bar.

A member interjecting.

Mr SETTER: I did indeed. I went in and spoke about constitutional development.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: In a bar?

Mr SETTER: It is absolutely true. I went into the bar and talked to a number of those people about constitutional development. We handed out our brochures on constitutional development and chatted away for half an hour or so. That showed real dedication to duty, don't you think? It is a sign of our commitment to the responsibilities of the committee.

In his typical socialist approach, the member for MacDonnell suggested that we should not pass these amendments today, but should hive the problem off to the alcohol abuse committee. Whilst it may well be the type of reference that the committee could consider at some time, the reality is that this government recognises the problem and is prepared to address it. It is prepared to amend this legislation to control the problem. The honourable member suggests a typical socialist approach. The Prime Minister and his cronies are experts at this. Whenever a problem arises, what do they do? They appoint a committee and hive it off into the too-hard

basket. We have seen it happen time and time again. Alternatively, they have a conference or a convention.

Mr Ede: Or a review.

Mr SETTER: Why not have a review? We have plenty of them today.

Mr Ede: Come in sucker!

Mr SETTER: No. I do not mind talking about that at all. There are several reviews occurring in relation to the issues that I have discussed. If you want to talk about it, I can tell you the details of that.

However, what we are talking about today is amending the Summary Offences Act. Instead of having the gumption to make a decision and to introduce an amendment to the current act, the member for MacDonnell wants to hive it off to a committee. The committee may not report for months and the problem will continue in our community. As I indicated earlier, it is a typical socialist ploy.

I felt some concern for the member for MacDonnell during his speech because he did not seem to know where he sat within the socialist spectrum. He indicated that, whilst the socialist left approach was to do so-and-so, that did not sit easily with him. I know that he professes to come from the right of the party and that is why he is ostracised in the back corner and nobody wants to talk to him most of the time.

Mr Ede: What is your excuse?

Mr SETTER: I gather that he joined the member for Stuart and became non-aligned. Are you still non-aligned? No comment. He is a misfit. He is non-aligned.

This act has been implemented by the police since 1983. I was surprised to learn that they did not have the power to seize the other alcohol in the possession of the alleged offending persons. It appears that the act empowers them to seize only the particular can or bottle of alcohol that was open and being consumed. I was amazed by that because it is obvious that the people concerned would proceed to consume the rest of the alcohol as soon as the police were out of sight.

I am very pleased that we have come to note this concern and have decided to amend the act to give it more teeth. I believe that is long overdue. I must say that I have some sympathy with the comments from the member for Sadadeen, because I believe it is something of a bureaucratic nightmare for the police officer concerned. It is fairly straightforward to issue the receipt, but then he has to take the offending alcohol to the police station where it must remain for 48 hours before it can be reclaimed. Another 14 days are allowed for it to be claimed.

I believe the appropriate course of action would be for the alcohol to be seized and a receipt issued. The alcohol could then be taken back to the police station and destroyed. Why set up a bureaucracy or create extra work for somebody to store it, catalogue it, stocktake it and return it to people who most likely will take it to a public place and consume it? It would be much simpler to issue an on-the-spot fine, seize the alcohol and destroy it. This seems to be too bureaucratic. Maybe it keeps people in jobs.

This amendment is long overdue. From time to time, we all have problems within our electorates. There is no doubt about that. I have had such problems in the Rapid Creek Water Gardens and in Moil Park from time to time. I am sure that other members have had similar problems where people have broken this law. It is possible to obtain a special licence to consume alcohol in public places such as parks. When I have had problems, the police have responded quickly, removed the offending alcohol and spoken to the people involved. Whilst I have had those problems in my electorate from time to time, they do not seem to be as great a problem these days as they were some time ago. This is a step in the right direction. More needs to be done, but let us put this amendment in place, monitor the situation and, if necessary, further amend the act.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, no one on either side of the House wants the continuation of the high mortality and morbidity rates associated with the over-consumption of alcohol. No one on either side of the House would deny the ravages which occur when alcohol is consumed to excess. No one, with the possible exception of the member for Sadadeen, sees total prohibition as the answer. Probably every member of the House agrees that there are limits to when, where and how much alcohol people should consume.

I want to be quite clear about this. I hate to see families broken up, and mothers and children going hungry. I hate seeing people lose their jobs. I hate seeing the projects which have collapsed and the careers which are threatened. I hate seeing the drunks fighting, in the streets or wherever, or men and women beating up each other. I hate all that. I hate being hassled by drunks. I hate seeing other people hassled by drunks. I hate walking in the vicinity of my office in Alice Springs and seeing drunken people giving other people a hard time, giving each other a hard time and giving me a hard time.

Recently, I read an article about drunkenness as exhibited by groups of people in the United States. It detailed the various waves of immigration experienced by North America, commented on the situation of American Indian people and demonstrated how, as each successive wave of immigrants arrived, particularly during the last century, the immigrants became the drunks. The drunken Irish comprised one wave. They settled in towns and in slum districts and, over a period of time, gained self-respect and power in their new country and moved on. It is not commonly known that the largest language group among immigrants was not the Anglo-Saxons but the Teutons. The drunken Dutchman was a common classification at one stage. The phrase 'drunk as a Dutchman' originated in the period when a wave of Teutonic immigration was occurring in North America. Gradually, this group got its act together, gained power, self-respect and the respect of their fellows, and moved on to better things. Then there were groups such as the Russians and Poles. The 'drunken Polack' belongs to this period. It was commonly asserted that these people were a mob of drunks until such time as they moved on to better things.

The article pointed out that the situation of the American Indians had not followed the same pattern. In the main, it parallelled the situation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. As the various waves of immigrants arrive, the newcomers move up the ladder, stepping over those who remain at the bottom. The article linked high rates of drunkenness among Amerindian people with high mortality and morbidity rates. A very similar situation exists in the Northern Territory. Between 1978 and 1981, when I was Director of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, the clinic was swamped at night by people with broken heads, broken arms and cuts to their bodies. It was incredible. Often, the place had to be closed a couple of

times a night in order to allow people to clean the mess out with a fire hose. That happened regularly. I thought that perhaps things were improving recently when somebody said to me: 'It was terrible last night. We had to close the place for a while to clean it up because it was such a mess'. In my time, that happened twice every night. To attribute that change to the 2 km law is, however, to fall into the logical fallacy of post hoc, ergo propter hoc - after this, therefore because of this.

The fact is that improvements in the social situation in Alice Springs have been brought about as a result of social programs which have involved Aboriginal people. Organisations such as Congress and Tangentyere are working effectively and strongly with Aboriginal people to improve the standard of their lives, and to lift people out of their feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, their lack of self-respect, and their perception that others do not respect them. Those programs are making the major difference to what is happening and to the social situation in Alice Springs.

The government has introduced this bill simply so that, before an election, it can say to people that it will amend the 2 km law in order to fix their problems. The temptation on this side of the House is to let the matter go without comment because we know full well that people like the member for Katherine and others will seek to make political capital by saying that the opposition opposed the strengthening of the 2 km law. We could decide to let it pass on the basis that we could rectify the situation after the election.

However, one has to be fair dinkum with people on a matter as important as this. It is no good trying to hoodwink people by pretending that something will work when it is no more than a red herring designed to distract people and will make no difference in terms of solving the problem. That is not to say that powers are not needed. Earlier in my remarks, I referred to situations which I hate. Such situations involve breaches of laws other than the 2 km law. It is against the law to abuse and assault people or to snatch shopping trolleys from them. We have laws about such happenings, but we do not do enough to address the social problems which arise as families break up and children go hungry.

We say that we will legislate to eliminate a problem. Legislation has never eliminated a social problem. Legislation can only set in train certain powers. We have legislated already for powers relating to a range of liquor-related offences, in relation to underage drinking and serving drunks with alcohol. I once asked how many people have ever been prosecuted under that legislation and it appears that 1 attempt has been made to prosecute and that there has not been a single successful prosecution. That is an absolute outrage. We are talking about strengthening this law when, in years, only 1 attempt has ever been made to prosecute somebody for underage drinking and that prosecution was unsuccessful. There has never been a prosecution of somebody for serving alcohol to a drunk. Why don't we utilise the laws which we have already?

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr EDE: I suppose the minister will tell us that there is no problem, that wholesale underage drinking does not occur and no one ever serves grog to drunks. The practice is rife throughout the Territory!

Mr Finch: So what do you suggest?

Mr EDE: I suggest that we prosecute under the laws that we have.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will remain silent.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the minister want to be named?

Mr Finch: Not this week.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then the minister will know what to do about it.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I suggest that we provide our police with the support they need to enable them to enforce the laws which I have been talking about.

When I discuss the 2 km law with police, they tell me that they hate it. They will hate these provisions even more. The member for Sadadeen was correct when he said that on-the-spot fines do not work. More than that, the 2 km law itself is flouted with absolute impunity in Alice Springs. These amendments will make no difference to that, and I will tell you how people flaunt it. They skite about it. Honourable members from Alice Springs and people who visit the town will know that, in the main, drinking camps are in areas where they are easily seen and where approaching police vehicles can be easily seen. If men and women are sitting around drinking from a flagon and they see a police car approaching, a woman simply puts the flagon under her dress. What can the police do? They walk around prodding the ground with sticks because sometimes people hide cans in holes in the sand, but they cannot touch those women. People are not stupid. They find ways around the law and, if we try to add more provisions, they will find other ways to get around them. We have to attack the root cause of the problem. It will not take long for people to realise what they have to do to thwart the provisions of this bill.

What will happen when the police impound grog and issue receipts and $20 on-the-spot fines to the same person? It will not be the person who has to pay the $20 fine who will collect the alcohol. Somebody else will arrive with the receipt, as is their right. What will happen when grog is lost? Surely we are not asking the police to maintain the same level of security over amounts of Tintara wine and Coolibah claret as they do over other goods? Some alcohol will be lost. People will come in with their receipts and find that the grog is not there. Arguments will rage about that. It will give me an incredible headache because people will traipse into my electorate office claiming that the police have knocked off their grog. I will send them straight around to one of the CLP members. I will say: 'Go and talk to him. He passed the law'. Probably, they will all end up at the office of the member for Sadadeen. There will be blues and it will make the job of the police more difficult. It will not have the effect that the members opposite desire. It is another attempt to create the perception that they are doing something rather than admitting that they do not know the answers. I urge honourable members to support the amendment proposed by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr FINCH (Racing and Gaming): Mr Deputy Speaker, the problem of the abuse or the excessive use of alcohol ought to be considered in the light of the damage that it does to the persons themselves and also the damage that it does directly or indirectly to others. This is only one of a number of

amendments that this government has in the pipeline for implementation in the near future. It is not our intention to do as the member for MacDonnell urges and wait until we can solve the whole range of problems relating to alcohol abuse. Would he have us shelve the current bill to amend the act in respect of underage drinking simply because we ought to wait for the sessional committee to complete its work before we do anything? Time stands still for no one in this regard, and this government is about making decisions.

Mr Ede: It certainly is running out for you.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, fortunately, members on this side of the House will be here for many years to implement legislation continuously, as indigestible as that news might be for the member for Stuart. Of course, he will not be around for too much longer to be worried about these things. He can go back to his Congress and continue the devious work there that he started years ago.

Why shouldn't government implement practical means to address specific problems? The aspect of the problem of alcohol abuse that this amendment comes some way towards addressing is its impact on others. The member for Stuart himself says that part of his difficulty lies with people hassling him about drunks fighting in the streets and stirring up trouble in the town area. That is what the 2 km law is about. It is about ensuring that people do not drink in public places.

Mr Ede: Are you going to close all the pubs?

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, draft legislation is being prepared for consideration by Cabinet in relation to more practical ways of implementing the existing requirement on licensees not to serve intoxicated persons. Would the member for MacDonnell have us sit on our hands and wait for the sessional committee to finish its work before we proceed with that? Quite incorrectly, he gave the impression that nothing has transpired in respect of the existing act. It is true that there have been many technical difficulties and these are being addressed. Many actions have been initiated. Many of those actions have not come to the court but there have been actions nonetheless. It has been explained to licensees that, whilst a case may not be proved, they have contravened the intention of the conditions of their licence - that is, that they must not serve intoxicated persons.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Would the honourable member have us sit on our hands and do nothing about the current difficulty with evidentiary requirements? I do not know why we waste our time trying to explain things to the member for Stuart. He has a block head in relation to these matters and it does take some concentration for him to hear the bells ring on calls for division.

What is required are practical approaches to identify problems as they arise. The 2 km law has been difficult. The honourable member explained himself that ladies can hide casks under their dresses. Maybe they can hide whole cartons. I do not know. The point is that, if the police had the power to empty those cartons of beer or those flagons, I do not think it would take too long for the culprits to get the message that they ought not to be drinking there. It is not a big deal at all. They will have to go 5 km out of town and that will remove the nuisance value to him and others in his electorate.

Perhaps it would have only a minimal impact on the amount of alcohol that the culprits consume. However, if they have to walk an extra 3 km or 4 km into town to pick up their alcohol, perhaps that will provide a disincentive. More importantly, they will be out of everyone else's way. It will not solve the inherent problem of those people's abuse of alcohol and nobody is suggesting that it will. However, it will tidy up the town a little. I think that is a worthwhile motive. Certainly, the majority of people in the Northern Territory believe it is.

The member for MacDonnell referred to Bob Collins' vociferous rejection of the Chief Minister's suggestion that people who are incapable of drinking ought to be prohibited from drinking. That was not an expression of the Chief Minister's own thoughts. It came from traditional Aboriginal people who were asking for help in relation to people who abuse alcohol. Bob Collins berated members of parliament for their drinking. Of course, there are members of parliament here and elsewhere who do not mind a cold beer on a hot day. The odd ones may - although not in this parliament, of course - drink excessively. Other members may know a personal example. Hon Senator Collins has the hypocrisy to be talking about other people's drinking habits when he himself is a champagne socialist. If there were a prohibition on the consumption of champagne, I suppose Senator Collins himself would have a great deal of difficulty in coming to terms with it. Mr Speaker, quite simply ...

Mr Coulter: I would not mind the champagne, but I would hate to have to supply him with the food.

Mr FINCH: I can remember a time when he used to knock over 6 hamburgers with the lot and 2 cartons of iced coffee for lunch. However, those times have changed. Now he can travel first class and drink as much champagne as he likes.

I have a difficulty with his interpretation of section 122 of the act. Whilst it gives a power to prohibit a person from drinking, the process is very cumbersome. A separate application must be made for each individual. Groups of people cannot be dealt with. Each individual must be passed through the entire process of the law, which is an extremely cumbersome process that provides a totally impracticable solution. The emptying of cans of beer and flagons of wine in the Todd or wherever else will have an immediate impact. There is no doubt at all that it will discourage people from consuming alcohol in a public place, and that is the intention of the legislation.

The ALP policy to discard the act altogether is shameful. Residents of towns have a right to move quietly about their own areas without being hassled by drunks. The combination of strategies that this government is attempting to implement to remove this half of the problem - that is, the effect on others - will be seen to be practical. We are moving on a number of fronts, including the investigation of more effective ways of enforcing the current requirement to not serve alcohol to intoxicated persons.

To conclude, a matter was raised by the member for Nhulunbuy in regard to a licence in his area. It has nothing really to do with this bill, but it might as well be addressed. He suggested that the liquor commission was not facing its responsibility in terms of interpreting community attitudes. In fact, quite the opposite is the truth. Through its normal processes, the commission advertised that an application had been made by the supermarket in Nhulunbuy, and that was the time at which the community had the opportunity to express its view - not now, 2½ years later, when it is too

late. The licence has been approved and granted. The management of the supermarket has determined not to proceed as yet with the implementation of the opportunities that that licence provides to it. I do not know when or indeed if it intends to utilise the licence. But, if and when they decide to do so, there will be another opportunity for the community to express its concern if it is believed that the licence is having an adverse effect on the community.

Unfortunately, in his slack fashion, the member for Nhulunbuy cries 2½ years after the licence has been granted. If he was aware of the concerns of this community at the time when the licence application was made and advertised in the press, he should have said so. He should have encouraged people to put submissions to the commission. However, they did not do so. I do not believe that the honourable member is even in touch with the views of his constituents at the moment, and I think that the sooner we see the back end of him the better. This is a practical, meaningful bill, and I support it.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the whole subject of alcohol is an important issue. That is why I have stayed in the Chamber throughout this debate to hear the contributions and I must say that, on the whole, they have been of a high standard. There is no doubt that there is a recognition across the Chamber that we are dealing with a very serious matter. We may have some differences of opinion about how that may be best handled, but certainly no one denies that it is important that something be done. I think the debate has been carried on in a positive frame of mind, and that it has been meaningful.

For example, I find myself agreeing with many of the comments of the member for Katherine, and I do not often find myself in a position to say that. I thought that the member for Stuart, probably more eloquently than most, expressed the concern, the distaste and, on occasions, the horror that we all experience from time to time in relation to drunken people in our community. There is no doubt that drunken people in our community are a bloody nuisance, to be blunt about it, and they impinge on the lives of many of us. I have found that, particularly if you are a politician, they are a damned nuisance on many occasions. But, to be frank, I do not find that many of those who are drunk and a damn nuisance are in that condition as a result of drinking in public places. When I have been accosted by drunks, it is more likely that they have been on licensed premises, are staggering out of licensed premises or have returned home from licensed premises.

The other side of it is this. Recently, I had occasion to go to a small Aboriginal urban community at 9 am or 9.30 am. I found that a considerable number of the population already had started their drinking session for the day. Frankly, that is where I come from in this debate. We have a major problem with a group of people in the community. The affected black people are more visible than the white, but there is a group of people in the community who are using alcohol irresponsibly. If they are drinking at 9 am, and I have no doubt that they do it on a regular basis, I believe they are drinking alcohol irresponsibly and at a considerable cost to themselves, to their families and to the community in general. We all know what the cost of alcohol is to the community in general. Actually, we do not know, but stabs have been made at a figure and $200m a year was a reasonably well-accepted stab. That is an enormous cost both for the individuals and the community.

In a sense, when that type of problem is facing us in the community, it does not particularly matter where the drinking takes place. The major

problem is that the drinking occurs in such an uncontrolled and desperate manner. However, to qualify my statement that it does not matter particularly where the drinking takes place, I accept as well that, as a community, we should not be allowing drinking in public places where it will interfere with and reduce the lifestyle of others. I accept that as a basic premise, but let us not avoid the main problem we have which is that some people in our community are literally destroying their lives, whether they are drinking in public places or whether they are hiding it and drinking in private places in their own homes or in camps or whatever. That is what they are doing.

The problem that I have with a measure like this is that it is not even a short cut. It is distracting us from the main game. We are out on the sidelines, playing with measures of this kind, when the main game is somewhere else entirely. That is happening whilst people's lives are being destroyed, whilst for whatever reason - low self-esteem, the fact that they are at the bottom of the heap, personal tragedy or whatever - day after day, people are drinking themselves into an early grave. That is the main problem and, unfortunately, propositions like those that have been put forward today do not address that because, in a very real sense, the best that this proposition can do is shift the problem that those uncontrolled drinkers might create. And let us not kid ourselves: we are aiming at problem drinkers. It will shift them from a visible public place to a less visible private place. It will not alleviate the problem and it may even exacerbate it. As I have said, the problem remains.

That is why it is important that we look at the problem in a broader context. As the member for MacDonnell suggested, that context is provided by the sessional committee. It is not simply a matter of where people drink, it is also how much they drink and what access they have to alcohol. A number of people have raised the problem of access to alcohol. I will give one example: underage drinking in our community. There was 1 woman, who is very well known to us in this community, who was distraught 4 or 5 years ago because her daughter, normally a well-behaved 16- or 17-year-old, obtained access to alcohol and fell over the cliff at Nightcliff. She is a paraplegic and will spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. That woman undertook a personal crusade for some action to be taken against the licensee for selling alcohol to underage people. She did not get anywhere. She received no assistance whatsoever from the government or from the liquor commission. In relation to an episode like that, where an underaged person obtained liquor and sustained serious and permanent injury, I would have thought that the government could have stepped in and made an example of a licensee. Nothing happened.

Similarly, nothing happens about licensees who continue to serve drunks. The member for Stuart made the point that, as far as we are aware, there has not been a successful prosecution of a licensee for continuing to serve drunks. In essence, there does not appear to be an effective licence inspection system for licensed premises. I have a feeling that, if we were able to strengthen the implementation of that aspect of the legislation, and stop supplying alcohol to drunks in pubs and to underage people in pubs and takeaway outlets, we would go a long way towards resolving part of the problem. Even though it is only part of the problem, it is an important part.

As the member for Stuart said, existing laws which are designed to control alcohol in this community are not being enforced. Perhaps we should start there. Perhaps we should start by enforcing the laws we have already. Perhaps we should start by tightening up access to alcohol, and

there we could look at the Ludmilla supermarket example. How long do we intend to allow people to submit application after application for a liquor licence when previous applications have been refused and when, quite clearly, the local community does not want another liquor outlet? Isn't it time for us to take a stand and to support the people in the community who say that alcohol is too freely available, that we have enough liquor outlets and that enough is enough? The Ludmilla supermarket example is a very good one in terms of the government's failure to support a very simple amendment introduced by this opposition.

I have taken the trouble to talk to the people who will be most directly affected by the enforcement of this amendment - the police. Mr Speaker, I can tell you that police officers do not support this legislation. They do not believe that the 2 km law, as it presently exists, has been particularly successful. The reason why they do not support these additional provisions is simple. For them, it will mean an additional role. It will mean an increased likelihood of conflict and violence being directed towards them for what they see as a limited purpose.

The member for Stuart indicated quite clearly how this law will be avoided and that it will not resolve the problems that everybody acknowledges exist. In a recent example, an Aboriginal person died in the water gardens in the member for Jingili's electorate. That death was probably alcohol-related and I understand that it is possibly a case of homicide. It occurred on Crown land. This legislation will not resolve the problems which lead to such situations. The first task is to find out why people choose - if that is the right word - to live in such environments. The next task is to get them out of those environments. That is how the problems will be solved.

Those people who live in that isolated part of the electorate of Jingili - and, in a comparative sense, it is isolated - will have all the time in the world to see or hear the police coming, to hide their opened cans of alcohol and to make this law ineffective. Of course, that is really beside the point. I have no doubt that, in that community and in similar communities which are dotted around our urban areas, there are people whose lives are at risk. There are people who are steadily, and sometimes quite quickly, literally drinking themselves to death. I believe that, as a community, we have a responsibility towards those people. We are not exercising that responsibility by introducing this simple amendment. It will not do the job.

To return to a point which I made earlier, I accept that no one in this community has the right to hassle other people in public places or to diminish our lifestyle by their actions in public places. In fact, one of the major problems resulting from drinking in public places is the litter that is left behind. That is a problem of quite considerable consequence in certain parts of the Darwin urban area. I go past places on a regular basis where there is more and more litter every day. Recently, I had occasion to telephone the Department of Lands and Housing to ask it to clean up a block next to the Nightcliff Hotel. Extensive drinking had been occurring on that block.

The point is that laws exist at present to deal with that type of hassle. Laws exist to deal with people who accost others, who demand money from other people and who try to seize supermarket trolleys from other people. Laws exist to cover eventualities of that kind. However, the amendments which the government is advocating today do not address the real issue. The minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor

Commission gave the game away when he described the bill as being designed simply to tidy up the town a bit. As I have said, there are existing provisions that would enable us to tidy up the town a bit if we were serious about it. Nevertheless, we have other responsibilities.

We have responsibilities towards that large number of people, black and white, in our community who, for whatever reason, are steadily drinking themselves to death. Some of them do it in public places. I suspect that the vast majority do it in private. My problem with this bill is that it distracts us from the major objectives of trying to stop those people ruining their lives, of trying to turn them into productive citizens, of trying to take them off the social security system and of trying to take them out of our hospitals so that there is not only an improvement in their lifestyle but also a reduction in the costs which the whole community has to bear. Those are the real objectives which must be addressed.

That is why the member for MacDonnell has suggested that this bill should be considered in the context of the work of the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community where it can be viewed in the context of an overriding aim. In that light, it is extremely unfair for the member for Jingili to remark that the member for MacDonnell is saying the same thing now as he was saying in 1982. During the last few years, and almost single-handedly, the member for MacDonnell has raised persistently the problem of alcohol abuse. His efforts in this Assembly led to the establishment of the sessional committee, a step which has been very important in generating debate on this very important issue.

It would not hurt the honourable members opposite to forward this proposed legislation to the sessional committee to allow it to assess whether it is appropriate in the broader context of the sessional committee's charter - that is, whether it will make a valid, long-term contribution towards the improvement of the life of those people afflicted by alcohol in our community and whether it will contribute positively to lifestyle of the remainder of the community. Instead of that, instead of what could have been a significant contribution to that debate, we have a short-term, quick-fix solution which does not address the major problem.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I have listened to this afternoon's debate with some interest. Unfortunately, I cannot share his views on the quality of the debate, particularly the contributions from those opposite. Taken in isolation, those contributions would lead one to conclude that this government is proposing an amendment to the 2 km law as a panacea to all the problems with alcohol in the Northern Territory and claiming that the amendment will provide some type of magical fix.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth and honourable members opposite should know that. They were present in the Assembly last week and participated in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. They asked me a specific question in respect of drug and alcohol problems, to which I gave a very comprehensive answer. The answer indicated that, this year, we have provided a 27% expansion in the funds available to drug and alcohol programs in the Northern Territory relating to prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation. The vast majority of that is directed towards alcohol because that is by far our most significant problem. Did we hear anything this afternoon, any recognition at all of the extent to which the Northern Territory government is dealing already with the issues of treatment, education and prevention. I did not refer last week to the various projects run by the police through the community

policing programs or the very exciting DARE program on resistance to drugs and alcohol that is also being being run by the police.

We have not lost sight of the main game in any way at all. We know that we have to address the causative issues. We know we have to educate and prevent, and that we have to deal with some of the social circumstances that are causing people to drink. On a per capita basis, we are spending 3 to 4 times what is spent by other state governments on such programs. Quite significant funding is going into that area, but we heard not a word from the members of the opposition about that. They are frightened to mention that because it does not happen to be critical of the government. It would involve praising the government because we are well ahead in doing that.

I could not believe my ears this afternoon when I heard the member for MacDonnell actually criticising me for having the audacity, as Minister for Health and Community Services, when I happened to be in Papunya on another matter, to take time out to meet with the community to discuss health issues and to develop in that community a health committee for ongoing consultation and development of Aboriginal health strategies. He criticised that. I cannot believe it. I did not go there with the aim of talking about alcohol. I do not remember even mentioning Tangentyere or its strategy. I know that I discussed the health status of Aboriginal people and the need for Aboriginal people to accept responsibility for their lives, and I was most pleased at the response I received from the community. I was most pleased that, in that community, as with most other central Australian communities, we were able to develop a health committee.

Regional health committees are evolving. We are involving Aboriginal people in setting the direction in respect of dealing with their health status and their health issues, many of which involve lifestyle problems which can be dealt with by means of behavioural change. I am really proud that I have done that. If the member for MacDonnell wants to criticise me for that, I hope he will go to Papunya and tell the Papunya community, together with the Mutitjulu, Imanpa, Docker River, Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and other central Australian communities, that what I am doing in terms of trying to involve them in Aboriginal health issues is wrong. I hope he does that because I know the response that he will obtain from the communities. They will strong and vitriolic, and they will not be positive towards him. They want to be involved, and I intend to involve them.

If I happen to be in a particular community for the purpose of a parliamentary committee meeting, as I was on that particular occasion, after I finished my duties on that committee, I will take the opportunity to carry out work for which I am responsible as a minister. I do not care what community it is. I will do the same wherever I am. I hope people will criticise me for doing it because it will rebound on them if they do. Why should I waste government money on making a separate trip to consult with a community? When I am in a community for any reason, I will maximise the time that I am there for the benefit of the community. I love the fact that the member for MacDonnell criticises me for that. In fact, I might even go out of my way to ensure that central Australian communities are aware that the honourable member does not like me consulting them, as Minister for Health and Community Services, on health issues or alcohol-related issues. I might just take the time to pass that message on to his current constituents.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You will not have time to do that before the election.

Mr HATTON: You never know your luck in a big city!

These alcohol-related issues are serious. None of us knows the answers. What we do know is that we need to work with the community to address them, and we need to address education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Each of those aspects is important and must be addressed. We need to address the underlying causes and the social conditions in which people are living. There is no question about that. However, there are 2 sides to every coin. Whilst we do all those proactive things to try to deal with the causes of alcoholism and the consequences of alcoholism and alcohol abuse, we have a responsibility equally to the rest of the community to say that, no matter what the reasons, people with alcohol problems cannot be permitted to impose disgraceful behaviour on the rest of the community.

We do not allow drunken loutishness or loutishness of any sort. The community expects the government to protect it from that and to provide laws that give us the ability to deal effectively with that. Along with the educational programs, there has to be censure for improper conduct. This law is part of the censure for improper conduct. It is saying that we will not allow people to become drunk and harass people. If possible, we will not allow people to hassle people for their shopping trolleys in order to obtain money for a beer. We will not tolerate the type of harassment that the member for Koolpinyah and other honourable members referred to. We have all had the experience of being bitten at bus stops, outside shops and in the streets.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: And having to walk through messes on the footpath.

Mr HATTON: That is right. No one likes that, and no one should have to accept it. If people do it, they should be subject to the censure of the community by means of its laws.

There is a law in existence now that says that people shall not drink within 2 km of licensed premises. The community says that it is unacceptable behaviour. It is true that the purpose of that law is to prevent people sitting down to binge in parks, riverbeds, in the mall in Darwin or any similar places. It is unacceptable behaviour, and it should be prevented. This law was put in place to prevent that, but it is only part of the story. It does not affect our need to control the serving of drunks. We need to clamp down on that and also on underage drinking and to provide educational programs. Equally, we have said as a community that people cannot drink in public places within 2 km of licensed premises.

As a result of experience, it has become patently obvious that there are deficiencies in the law. If a person has an opened can of beer and is drinking in a public place, a police officer can empty the can or remove it. However, the police officer cannot touch the other 23 unopened cans in the carton beside the person who is drinking. What sort of joke does that make of the law? Clearly, he intends to remain there and, as soon as the police officer walks away, he will pick up the next can, open it and start drinking again.

This amendment provides that, in such circumstances, the police officer may confiscate all the alcohol. It would be quite a significant act of censure for an alcohol abuser to see his entire supply of alcohol taken away. It is a greater penalty than his being taken to a sobering up shelter or being put in the cells where there is a warm bed for the night. He will lose his grog and he will not gain any benefit from the money that he spent

on it. That is the strength of this provision. It will make the law bite when these people lose their grog.

I do not know about this business of ladies hiding flagons under their dresses that the member for Stuart spoke about. What I do find outrageous is to see a member of this parliament sitting in this Chamber and gloating about the way in which people will break a law. He was not suggesting a way to circumvent that circumstance; he was gloating over it. Promoting civil disobedience would be the best way to describe it - giving people ideas on how to go about it. There may well be ways to deal with that too. I am not going to predict ways in which the police may wish to deal with those activities but I am certain that it can be done, and without offending people's civil liberties. I am sure the police, who are members of a very professional organisation, can think of ways to deal with that circumstance, particularly now that they have been alerted to it by the member for Stuart.

This legislation should be supported because it is aimed at making an existing law more effective. That is all that this is about. It drives home the message that that behaviour is unacceptable in modern society. You cannot sit around drinking and abuse and harass people. Other laws can and should be introduced too. If they are unenforceable, we should find ways of making them enforceable. We should continue to reinforce the other side of that coin through education, treatment and rehabilitation programs for substance abusers. We should be dealing with the underlying social causes of substance abuse in society, but simply dealing with those issues is not enough. We need also to deter unacceptable behaviour. This law will give teeth to an existing means of censure in our society, and I fully support it.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I will be fairly brief although one could speak on this subject for some time. We have debated alcohol issues many times in the Assembly, in particular alcohol issues relating to Aboriginals. It was interesting to hear the member for MacDonnell say that he had been briefed by the Commissioner of Police on these matters and I am pleased about that. The Leader of the Opposition said that he had spoken to the police about it. What a shame that neither of them can speak to police about other matters which are raised in this House from time to time in relation to police investigations. Why is it that they are prepared to accept their social responsibilities in examining the provisions of a potential law which is before this House at present, yet they are not prepared to receive information which would enlighten them about other matters of some public interest. What a shame that we have this double standard in the House. To reinforce that they know they are right, they have said that they have spoken to the police. I urge them to speak to the police on a couple of other subjects. I am sure that both the Commissioner of Police and the Police Association would have a great deal of advice for members opposite.

The Leader of the Opposition seems to be walking away from yet another section in the ALP's official platform. We have heard that the platform is binding on ALP members. Recently, members of the opposition have walked away from a string of sections in their platform. We raised the requirement in their platform to have employers ensure that employees are correctly enrolled or face a penalty. They said that they would not implement that section of their platform. We raised the matter of the shipping service subsidy, which includes a subsidy for the ship to travel to overseas countries. The Leader of the Opposition said that they would not implement that section of the platform. We raised the matter of political parties being funded by the taxpayer. He said that they would not implement that. The most recent example occurred on the 7.30 Report. He was asked in what

period of its term a future Labor government would implement its platform policy on the legalisation of marijuana. This was to include the ability for people to grow their own at home. He said that it would not happen in the first year.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not in the first term was what he said.

Mr PERRON: No. If I recall rightly, he said not in the first year. I wondered whether it would be in years 2, 3 or 4. However, it did seem that he was backing away rapidly from yet another section of the ALP platform. One might be pleased that they are backing away from their platform, but it does make one wonder what the community is supposed to expect from a political party that holds up a document as being what it stands for and then walks away from it so readily and so often.

What does this have to do with the current debate? In that platform, there is a pledge to abolish the 2 km law which is described as a 'demeaning law'. What did we hear today? Is this yet another walking away from the platform document? Perhaps it is. I confess that I did not hear every speaker, but I did not hear any member opposite take the opportunity to say that not only should this law not be amended but it should be abolished. That is what the ALP platform requires. There was not a word about that. They are all lambs. The strongest they could say was that they did not think that this amending legislation would work.

What do they stand for? I do not mind them disagreeing with the government. The more they disagree, the better. I would like people in the community to know that there are very clear distinctions between this side of the House and that, and indeed there are. I am happy for them to have policies that vary from ours. I simply think they ought to have the courage to stand up and support them.

My last point relates to a statement by the member for Nhulunbuy who should know better. He has an electorate which includes a significant number of Aboriginals and I concede that probably he has some experience of Aboriginal attitudes. Nevertheless, basically, he ran a line which we hear from time to time: if you reduce the number of liquor outlets, you will reduce the consumption. I am afraid that I have not been convinced of that matter yet. We have evidence of planes being chartered and $100 paid for a carton for beer every week because the local club has shut down. We hear of the enormous lengths to which chronic Aboriginal drinkers will go to obtain vehicles to reach the nearest drinking hole. It is naive to think that, if 1 roadhouse is shut down, that does not simply transfer the problem to yet another. The same applies in a town, particularly a town like Nhulunbuy. As the honourable member said, it has a hotel and a club and ...

Mr Collins: Supermarket.

Mr PERRON: The supermarket has not quite got a licence yet. The other is a surf club. To think that, if we took 1 or 2 of those licences out of Nhulunbuy, there would be any less drinking is sheer nonsense. Is the honourable member saying that the people in Nhulunbuy would not walk 0.25 km to the next outlet? Of course they would. What a load of drivel we hear from members opposite about those matters.

Finally, in the past, we have all been guilty of saying that Aborigines cannot handle drink and that they are the problem in the community. From my observation, I would say that the percentage of Aborigines who drink alcohol is probably far less than the percentage of non-Aborigines who drink

alcohol. It is very wrong to say baldly that Aborigines cannot handle the grog and that they are all alcoholics. Sadly, the small number of Aboriginals who drink to excess, or even to what might be termed gross excess, is a matter of great concern to all of us. Of course, to their credit, many Aboriginals do not drink and will not touch a drop. Many are self-reformed alcoholics. I have met such people. Without education programs or rehabilitation centres, they have decided to forgo the booze because of its effects on their friends and family and, I suppose, because of the way they have often felt in the morning after a heavy night.

We will continue to pursue answers to the problems. I do not expect them to come quickly. I look forward to the report of the sessional committee when it has completed its comprehensive evaluation. In the meantime, I believe that the community seeks laws like this to correct practices which are quite unacceptable.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, some interesting comments have been made today. Members of the opposition have been most conspicuous for their movement away from this form of legislation. As has been explained, that is fully understandable when one considers that they are obliged to follow their party platform, which states very clearly that, if elected to government, they would remove the 2 km law completely.

It is important to realise that the 2 km law is not designed to prevent people drinking. It is not an attempt to lower alcohol consumption. Its objective is to provide a better environment for the community. As well as providing programs to educate people about the effects of alcohol, and providing controls on the ability of people to abuse alcohol, there must be an understanding that the community needs protection from the drunken behaviour of people who abuse alcohol in public places. The 2 km law is designed to remove people who consume alcohol in public places and who behave in a manner which society finds unacceptable. This law does not prevent people from consuming alcohol, but it does prevent them from doing so in a situation which inconveniences other people. In such situations, it allows action to be taken to stop the consumption of alcohol. Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments and, I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community for its consideration and report as soon as possible.

I do not intend to speak to this motion at length. The reasons which underlie it were debated in depth during the second-reading debate on this bill and government speakers have indicated that, unfortunately, the government does not intend to support this positive proposal. I indicate that, because of the strength of its feeling on this issue, the opposition will be calling for a division on the motion.

I did not have the opportunity to hear what the Attorney-General had to say when summing up on the second-reading debate, although my impression was that he did not say a great deal. Perhaps I will read his remarks in the Parliamentary Record at some later stage.

Mr Speaker, as I said, I will not rehearse any of the arguments which have been put forward. I do not believe that either this bill or the government's political motives in putting it forward should be supported. I

believe that the bill ought to be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 15
Mr Bailey	Mr Collins
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Finch
Mr Smith	Mr Firmin
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

New clause 3A:

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 126.1.

The purpose of this amendment is to repeal section 45G of the principal act, thereby removing the $20 on-the-spot fine. The fine has not worked and is time-consuming. The list of uncollected $20 on-the-spot fines must be a mile long. There have been cases in which people who have not paid the fine within the specified time have been dragged before the court, wasting a great deal of court time and the time of the 2 police officers involved in the issue of the fine who may have to remain at the court for up to 4 hours. Our police resources are very limited and I believe that the community would get far better value from them if their time was not wasted in this way. The costs involved, which often include overtime for the police officers concerned, must be at least $100 an hour. That is probably a very conservative estimate.

The on-the-spot fines must create an administrative nightmare. In fact, I believe that the natural consequence is occurring and that the courts are now refusing to prosecute fine defaulters for the sake of $20. The fine is not necessary. The effective provision in the law is the one which allows grog to be poured out. As far as I am concerned, the $20 fine is the result of bad law and bad law should be removed.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the officers have the ability to issue a $20 on-the-spot fine. They have that option in enforcing the law and I believe that it would be a retrograde step to remove it. For that reason, we will not be doing so.

New clause 3A negatived.

Clause 4:

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 126.2.

With the defeat of the previous amendment, this amendment has no further purpose. It is consequent on the repeal of clause 45G.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 126.3.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The committee has now agreed to clause 4, which amendment 126.3 would amend.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, I was not quick enough.

Clause 5:

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move amendments 125.1 and 125.2.

Under circumstances specified in the act, police will be able to seize alcohol and provide receipts for the same. If flasks or bottles or containers are not self-sealing or cannot be conveniently corked, then those particular circumstances do not apply. Obviously, storing alcohol which can go off is not very productive. That is the reason for the amendment.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I would like to reiterate a point of view put to me by police in Alice Springs. They are not at all keen on this process of having to collect unopened alcohol containers, list them, provide a receipt and transport the alcohol back to the police station, where the question then will be where to store it, because the amounts that they could collect could become rather large. They will also have to protect it because they will have a responsibility to return it if people come to collect it. I agree strongly with them that it will be a burden to them, and it would be far better to do what I intended to propose before I was cut short, and that is to give them the power to empty containers on the spot. Once it became known that that would happen and that the law would be enforced, it would not be too long before people got the message.

The proposal is not intended to stop people drinking, but to stop them drinking in public places which should be available for law-abiding people of all races and colours to enjoy without being exposed to the abusive behaviour of people who have abused alcohol.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to ask 2 questions, 1 of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and the other of the Minister for Health and Community Services. In relation to the question put to the Minister for Health and Community Services, which referred to the perceived misuse of schedule 7 poisons in horticultural and farming practice, the minister asked if I had any suggestions, and I will be writing to him on that. However, I do not believe that any big changes are necessary either to the act or the regulations. Perhaps both could be amended slightly or perhaps only one. To some extent, there is a similarity between the spraying of horticultural poisons and the practice of burning off illegitimately.

You cannot get a permit to burn legitimately unless you have your fire breaks in and you have a reasonable history of doing the right thing, and you burn at a particular time of the day. I have never been asked to notify neighbours. I do not know whether that is an initiative by the fire service people or whether they know that I do not have immediate neighbours but, if I did have neighbours, I would agree to notify them if I intended to burn off, and the same could apply to the spraying of schedule 7 poisons. I believe that it would be reasonably simple to alter the licences that are issued to people who request them and who have a reason to be spraying schedule 7 poisons, and a principal consideration should be the notification of immediate neighbours. Another factor that could be considered is wind drift, although the person who sprays with very expensive schedule 7 poisons and does not consider wind drift is rather silly. These poisons are very expensive and, if the spray drifts away from its direct target, it is wasted from the point of view of the person spraying. When a responsible person uses these sprays, he does it in the correct way. Notification is given to neighbours, spraying is not done in windy conditions and general consideration for the well-being of the community is uppermost.

I have received a considerable number of complaints. I have been speaking on this subject for about a year. I would like to stress that, in all the complaints that have been put to me by people who are concerned about these sprays, the complainants say they do not want to see a ban placed on the use of sprays. They recognise that people have mango trees, rambutans or whatever and that they need to spray them from time to time to eliminate pests. However, they do want consideration to be given to their own welfare as well as the welfare of the people who have the trees and who spray the poisons, and I can see their point of view. They are expressing a legitimate concern.

I think that consideration could be given also to including in the terms of the licence a requirement that neighbours be notified of the actual poison that is being sprayed, because some poisons that I use have a vile smell ...

Mr Collins: It is hard if you have a greenie for a neighbour.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No. It is not greenies who are complaining. These are just ordinary people.

There are some situations where the poisons that are used, whilst perhaps not of the schedule 7 variety, have an extremely vile, obnoxious

odour and these sprays are of concern to people also. Perhaps people in the honourable minister's department could look at a condition to the licence relating to notification to the neighbours of the type of poison that is to be sprayed. An amendment to the Poison and Dangerous Drugs Act might be necessary, stating quite clearly that only a person who has a legitimate use for schedule 7 poisons is eligible for a licence for their use. Nowhere in that act is mention made about misuse of the poisons, and I believe this could be examined also.

It was put to me that there were provisions in the Summary Offences Act to take account of nuisances committed by people in the community against other members of the community but, on speaking to a person who has much more legal training than I do, it would appear that the Summary Offences Act provisions relating to nuisance would be rather hard to apply. That raises the question of the innocent parties, the neighbours, having to take action in order to curb the perceived irresponsible actions of a neighbour. It would be far better if the onus for action were to be placed on the shoulders of the person using the sprays.

I would hasten to add that I am not against the spraying of pesticides at appropriate times because the supermarkets and the shops all have to display fruit and vegetables for sale that are unblemished. The community has come to accept that the thing to buy is unblemished fruit and vegetables. People do not want fruits and vegetables with bugs and insects in them, and they do not want them with sun scald or blossom-end rot or anything like that. Produce has to be perfect for the market and, consequently, pesticides and other sprays have to be used at the appropriate times.

The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries answered my question when I asked him about the draft codes of practice for animal rearing. I was particularly concerned because it was brought to my attention that 2 drafts of these codes of practice have been issued and, whilst perhaps consultation may have taken place with the industry, I do not think that has been done in an adequate fashion. I understand that codes of practice have been drawn up, in this second draft publication, for pigs, deer, goats, transport of animals and saleyard practices. The 2 that particularly concern me are those dealing with goats and poultry, although I would be very interested to read those relating to the other animals.

Whilst recognising that animals have to be treated in a fair and caring way, I know it is only common sense that a farmer who has animals would treat his animals in a fair and caring way. Looking at the bottom line, if he does not, he will not make any dollars out of them. The farmer is in the business of farming animals to make money and, in doing that, naturally he will look after their welfare. Unfortunately, there are some that do not, but these are in the minority.

I have no problem with accepting a certain code of practice but I believe that what I and many other people do is sensible practice which looks after the welfare of the animal. However, what concerns me is that there was inadequate consultation with the industry. I know that there is a subcommittee here and I know there is representation from primary industry on this ministerial committee to represent our views. Perhaps the poultry industry was consulted, but other people apart from the major poultry producers are interested in poultry rearing and breeding in the Territory. I believe those people should have been consulted, and they have not been. There is an extremely active Poultry Breeders Club in the Top End, and I know for a fact that this club has not been consulted by the ...

A member interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, and they have not been consulted. Whilst I may not be the biggest goat producer in the Northern Territory, I would hazard a guess that 2 big producers of goats in the Adelaide River area might have been consulted. However, I have had occasion to speak to one of these producers on a few occasions recently and I believe that, if he had been consulted, he would have raised the matter. As he did not do that, I assume that he was not consulted.

I do not have any information on the draft codes of practice relating to the other animals, but I do have a list of some of the requirements that are recommended for the husbandry of poultry. Some of them make sense, but quite a few of them are way out.

Mr Coulter: How many black leghorns are you permitted to keep?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We are not up to black leghorns yet.

It is recommended in this draft code of practice for poultry that all game birds be dubbed within 72 hours of hatching. When you dub a game bird, you cut off its wattles and its comb to avoid possible danger with cock birds when they reach adulthood. First of all, you have to be pretty skilled to sex chickens within 72 hours of them hatching. There are few people here with those skills. If you dub them before they are 72 hours old, you run the risk of having to repeat the exercise later. As a result, the bird would be subjected to the practice twice.

Mr Coulter: It is not pleasant.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: In my experience, dubbing does not cause a great deal of stress to the birds.

Mr Coulter: You wouldn't like it!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am not a cock bird.

In relation to artificial insemination of poultry, the code recommends that competent, trained personnel be employed. There is a recommendation about blinkers. Blinkers are not recommended on chooks. You only put blinkers on chooks when cannibalism is rife among your flock. Cannibalism is when 1 chook starts to peck the feathers and the flesh of another. It can be pecked to death.

Considerable attention is paid in this report to the temperature at which chooks are kept. It assumes that all the chooks are kept in cold climates. However, there are many chooks up north in the tropics. It indicates how long chickens should be under the heater etc. However, there is no mention of how to keep chooks cool in hot weather. The recommendation that takes the prize relates to a consideration of what boy chooks and girl chooks do together. You can trim your rooster's toes, but you must do it before he is 72 hours old. You are allowed to take the last joint of each of the 2 inside toes on each foot of a male bird within 72 hours of hatching, if you think he will mate. Thus, you have to sex your rooster before he is 72 hours old and decide that you will use him to mate with your hens. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, wait until you hear what you have to do with your hens! Before mating the hens, it is recommended that canvas saddles be made and fitted on them to prevent back and side injury. Have you heard of anything more silly? We do not do that with humans, let alone with chooks.

Mr Collins: Who put this together? The United Nations?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I had it read out to me today.

Things like this make nonsense of any sensible recommendation in any draft code of practice. I would like to be convinced that this matter is being treated with the seriousness that the situation demands and also that the people who are writing these recommendations, especially our representatives from the Northern Territory, are not having a lend of us.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to comment on some of the matters that the member for Koolpinyah has mentioned, notably the S7 poisons. It is likely that I am the only person in this Chamber who is registered to use a couple of S7 poisons for horticultural purposes. This is a matter that I had meant to bring to the attention of the Minister for Health and Community Services, who has the supervision of the legislation.

When I purchase these chemicals, the licence requires me to present a copy of my licence - I presume face to face - to the person from whom I am purchasing them. He has to register and record the purchase. The only problem with that is that I purchase my chemicals from interstate. It is pretty hard to follow those procedures unless we have reciprocal arrangements with the states. Clearly, I have no intention of going down to Adelaide or the Riverland where I obtain most of my chemicals. Some logic and common sense ought to be brought into the procedures. It is simply assumed that people will be able to buy these chemicals locally. That may be the case in Darwin, but S7 chemicals are not used widely in central Australia. I have to purchase them interstate or possibly from Darwin. I think my sources interstate would be cheaper.

In last Thursday night's adjournment debate, I mentioned a document titled 'The Conclusion of Treaties and Other International Arrangements' and a summary which indicates quite clearly that, when the executive of the federal government ratifies a United Nations treaty or convention, it is binding in international law. Because of the lateness of the hour, I forgot to seek leave to table those papers at that time. I seek leave to table that summary.

Leave granted.

Mr COLLINS: I have something in which the Minister for Mines and Energy would be interested. It was brought to my attention that, in last Thursday's Sydney Morning Herald, there was an article headed, 'Ward Treaty Pledges Our Oil to Japan'. Unfortunately, our library receives the Sydney Morning Herald by post, and the edition of 25 September was the latest one available up until this morning. I have a fax copy of the article but, unfortunately, it is fairly hard to read. My secretary has typed the article, but has had to omit a couple of words that she could not decipher. However, the reference is there. I find it rather horrendous that, in 1979, a Liberal government signed a provision which will mean that, in effect, if war breaks out in the Middle East, we will be required to contribute to a pool of oil to be used by countries like Japan, West Germany and Italy. The reference is the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald of 27 September 1990. The effects on this country should be a matter of concern to all of us. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, no doubt you will recall that, during the last sittings of this Assembly, I mentioned the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I mentioned particularly the fact that, when an Australian Bill of Rights was proposed in 1986, the Australian people objected to many powers which it would have contained. The Bill of Rights was withdrawn but, as I pointed out during the last sittings, the federal government slipped the objectionable aspects, those which the Australian people had said they did not want, into the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act, which became law at the end of 1986.

During the last sittings, I tabled a document containing cross-references demonstrating the links between provisions in the withdrawn Bill of Rights which were incorporated subsequently in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act. I have in my possession now a much-improved document which explains various matters, including the meaning of the High Court decisions of 1983 in the Queensland and Tasmanian dams cases, which allowed Australia to ratify a large number of treaties with the United Nations and to bind us to international law. I commend this document to honourable members.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Bill was passed in a single day, with only 20 minutes of debate in the House of Representatives and 15 minutes in the Senate. The opposition, which opposed the Bill of Rights, was sold a pup and supported the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act. It is now law. Mr Deputy Speaker, if I want to lay a complaint against you, under the terms of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act, you will not know that I am the person who laid the complaint, you will not know the evidence on which I made that complaint, you will not even know the nature of the complaint, and you will not be entitled to legal representation. The former federal Leader of the Opposition, Hon John Howard, said at one stage that he would repeal the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act, and well he might. Certainly, if I have the opportunity to speak to Dr Hewson, I would like him to see a copy of this document so that he can have it checked thoroughly.

Mr Coulter: Are you going to see him tonight?

Mr COLLINS: Certainly, I am. I have received an invitation, which I greatly appreciate. I would like to know where he stands in relation to this matter. These powers have been given to a body which is not responsible to the parliament in many of its functions and which I believe is totally un-Australian.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table this improved document which sets out clearly the connections which demonstrate that what I am saying is true and accurate. It can be checked from the public record.

Leave granted.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to expand on a question which I raised last week. The question was directed to the Chief Minister and it related to Aboriginal arts and artifacts. I would like to expand on the point that I was trying to make with that question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you were to check out any of the tourist shops in this or any other town, you would find many items such as bangles and necklaces which appear to be made by Aboriginal people but are actually made overseas or possibly in Australia. These items purport to be Aboriginal art. Obviously, Aboriginal art is of great interest to tourists and I

believe that copying of this art is probably covered under 2 federal acts - the Trade Practices Act of 1974 and the Copyright Act of 1968 - and that anyone who sells products of a misleading or deceptive nature could be prosecuted under these acts. It is obvious that, because of the low value of these items, most people would not take any action under that legislation. However, I believe that the cheap imitations which are coming into Australia have the potential to damage what could be a future industry in the Northern Territory.

I understand that half of the Aboriginal artists in Australia come from the Northern Territory and I believe that, as the parliament of the Northern Territory, we should take a lead in this area. Last week, I showed samples of various items to all members in the Assembly. The prices are very interesting. The copied bracelets retail for $20 whilst the genuine article retails at $40. The artist overseas receives only $1 for the $20 product whilst, in Australia, the artist receives $18 for the $40 product. The copied earrings retail for $8 whilst the genuine articles retail for $30. The artist overseas receives 56¢ of the $8 and the artist in Australia receives $10 for every $30 article. Honourable members will be able to see that, whilst probably we cannot prevent copies being made and brought into Australia, we have what constitutes almost an obligation to protect our local industry.

Many of these products are advertised as being made in Australia but, in fact, they are not. Many shops stock a mixture of genuine articles and copies. The bottom line is that Aboriginal people do not have a great deal going for them, but this is an opportunity for them to move into an expanding industry. I have tried to ascertain just how large this industry is. The only information that I could find was in a research paper by the Australia Council which surveyed visitors who travelled to Australia with international airlines. The summary of findings is very interesting, and I will refer to parts of it.

Half of the visitors to Australia are interested in seeing and learning about Aboriginal arts and culture, and 30% of the visitors surveyed purchased Aboriginal art or items relating to Aboriginal culture. The value of these purchases is estimated at $30m per annum, most of which accrues as a direct economic benefit for Australia. Almost 1 in 5 visitors went to an art gallery or museum especially to see Aboriginal art. Visitors from the USA, Canada and continental Europe are the most interested in Aboriginal arts and culture and were the most frequent buyers of Aboriginal art and souvenirs. Only a small percentage of visitors were able to see a performance of Aboriginal theatre, music or dance. I am attempting to give some idea of how large this industry is potentially. The survey showed that 14% or $4.2m of these purchases were made in the Northern Territory. If this is added to the $3m paid to the 2500 Territory Aboriginal artists for works sold through the states, $7.2m went into the Territory economy.

I was heartened by the Chief Minister's response to my question. He said that he would examine the matter. I believe that the Territory government and this Assembly should apply whatever pressure they can to the Australian government to ensure that copies that are brought into this country have some form of identification indicating where they were made and the fact that they are imitations. In addition, we should police this and provide some form of certificate of authenticity for the work done by our Territory Aboriginals. That might take the form of a logo or a stamp. Indeed, possibly the government should consider providing some form of guarantee that a product is genuine. There are guarantees overseas for jewellery and so on.

In conclusion, whilst these articles are very small, this has the potential to become a thriving industry. The information that I have provided indicates that the industry accounts for approximately $30m in Australia in retail sales. I believe that we are merely scratching the surface of the potential of this industry and that the government and this Assembly should show a lead in protecting our local Northern Territory Aboriginal artists.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Transport and Works has made a number of comments in the last week or so about a variety of aspects of Commonwealth aviation policy that impact on the Northern Territory, the large number of Territorians who use aircraft, and the Territorians who are employed in the aviation industry. With regard the latter, I refer in particular to the flight service officers. This is one issue that the minister has not raised and perhaps I should address that first.

I want simply to place on record my concern for some of those people who not only have made representations to me, but have provided an excellent service to myself as a private pilot in the Northern Territory. I am responding to their concerns. Some of these people have given long and sterling service to aviation in the Territory, providing flight services and both pre-flight information and in-flight advice to pilots etc. Personally, I have very much appreciated their services.

In January this year, without putting too fine a point on it, I became lost somewhere in the vicinity of Yuendumu and Hooker Creek. I flew south from Lajamanu for about 45 minutes. A thunderhead was obscuring my view of the Granites Mine that I was to visit and I had to make a choice whether to divert around it to the east or to the west. I diverted to the west, which proved to be a mistake. I flew around in circles for 30 minutes while I was pacified over the high frequency radio system by flight service officers. Eventually, we got to the Granites. Fortunately, in addition to the statutory reserve of 45 minutes, I had an extra hour or 2 up my sleeve because I had fully refuelled at VRD.

For that reason and a few others, I have reason to be thankful for the service provided by flight service officers. Many of those people have given sterling service in the Territory over a number of years. The decision to reduce their numbers by some 40% to 50% is a matter of considerable concern to me. Decisions have been taken to close down flight service units, and that has already happened at Tennant Creek. There are decisions to close them down at Darwin and at Alice Springs.

Mr Tuxworth: And Katherine.

Mr BELL: The member for Barkly refers to the closure at Katherine. That occurred some time ago.

The decision to reduce those numbers dramatically was a very complicated one. However, what the minister failed to advise this Assembly was that the new aeronautical information service will take advantage of changing technology in that regard. If the minister were doing his job responsibly, he would make regular statements about changes of that kind and the impacts we can expect.

This brings me to something that has been of concern to me about the minister's recent statements. It relates to the changes in air space management. Listening to what the Minister for Transport and Works has had

to say in recent days, one could be excused for saying that the chief crisis in air space management relates to the air space between the minister's ears. I refer, for example, to his comments on the news on Friday and to his comments repeated on Claire Martin's show on ABC radio this morning. He was complaining. What upsets me is that he totally distorts the meaning of the see-and-be-seen proposal. As a private pilot himself, he should appreciate it. This morning, he referred to the radar services available up and down the east coast of the country, where there are high volumes of traffic, and then he stated:

> In the Territory and through Queensland, Western Australia, all over the place, there will be a reliance on pilots being able to see each other but, if you look at a strip like Jabiru, you get on the average about 100 aircraft in and out of there a day, not to mention those that are flying over the top and, when you try to spot aircraft from the air yourself, it is really quite a difficult requirement.

What he failed to mention was that you are also in radio contact with those people. You have a map on your knees and you are able to communicate about altitude and all sorts of separation requirements that the minister is being quite dishonest about. I do not mind him doing that, provided he is prepared to provide an avenue for debate on those issues in this Assembly. He has not done that, but it is about time that he did. I say that because, basically, he is frightening the Territory travelling public unreasonably. Quite unreasonably, he is causing concern to people flying in aircraft day after day by suggesting that these changes will place people in imminent danger.

I believe that there are criticisms to be made of the proposed changes and that there are various ...

Mr Finch: Give us one.

Mr BELL: I will give you one, if you will bear with me, and I am talking about Yulara. That came up before. To inform honourable members, because the Minister for Transport and Works has not been able to do so, 7 categories of airspace are proposed under this new arrangement, and there is considerable debate about the types of airspace that apply in the Territory. The minister was wrong today. On the radio today, he said that it is only Darwin and Tindal that will have controlled airspace, but what about Alice Springs as well?

Mr Finch: September 1991. The first stage, January. September, stage 2.

Mr BELL: No control tower at Alice Springs? No manned control tower at Alice Springs?

Mr Manzie: Nothing.

Mr BELL: I know that there are different points of view about that, because I have seen information to the effect that Darwin and Alice Springs are to be retained as primary control zones.

Be that as it may, that is an issue that, basically, the minister has not taken up and he should have done so. He has failed to inform people that, whenever he flies an aeroplane, he uses a radio and he uses a map. He

tells people how high he is and whether he is north or south of a particular strip.

Mr Finch: You do not do that any more.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the honourable minister interjects. He says you do not tell people that any more. I am not sure whether the minister uses a radio when he is flying an aeroplane or not, but if he has not done so till now, I would be most surprised. At least he should be honest about that because, on radio this morning, he tried to blame that on the federal government. He said: 'Oh, I do not blame the Civil Aviation Authority. They are simply doing what the politicians have set them'. Straight after our bold minister was on the radio, we heard the Assistant General Manager of Operational Standards and Procedures who pointed out that it was a Civil Aviation Authority proposal to alter airspace management requirements. The fact is that, in this day and age, with the capacity for people to communicate by the use of radios, transponders, radar etc, it is highly appropriate that airspace management techniques alter to keep pace with changing technology. I thought the minister was bright enough and honest enough at least to bring that into the discussion:

Mr Finch: Are you supporting this move? You had better turn up on Thursday night and put your views.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will not be accused of accepting wholesale all of these proposed changes. As I said, I expressed concerns about the closure of flight service units. Likewise, I expressed some concern about altered airspace management requirements with respect to some airfields. The honourable minister mentioned Jabiru. I have not experienced difficulty myself flying into Jabiru, and I have done so on 2 or 3 occasions. I have experienced difficulty on several occasions when flying into Yulara. In fact, most times when I have flown into Yulara, I have experienced concern about the regular jet traffic. It seems to me that there is a greater volume of scenic flights coming out of Yulara than I have seen coming out of Jabiru. On the basis of visitor numbers, I suppose that is hardly surprising, but I am concerned about the proposed changes with respect to Yulara. I believe that demonstrates the difference between flying into 2 isolated airstrips, one of which you receive flight information for and one of which you do not. Let us bear in mind that there have been many people flying many hours into airstrips where they gave a 20-mile call on VHF, picked up information through the radio themselves about traffic in the area, not necessarily with the assistance of flight services, and maintained separation on that basis. I suggest the honourable minister have a word with Ozzie Watts, one of the great figures in Territory aviation, about possibilities in that regard.

As I say, the aviation industry has to move ahead with improvements in technology. We have to ensure that Territorians are protected and that Territorians continue to have a safe flying environment. I suggest that the minister's attempt to take this into consideration has been far less than adequate. As I said to him last week, it is about time that he introduced preferably a separate statement on each of these issues instead of getting his rocks off in question time in the hope that people will say what a good fellow Freddie is and that they do not fly in aeroplanes anyway. In terms of actually informing the Territory public, he is doing a woeful job.

During question time last week, I referred to the question of removals to the north side of the Darwin Airport. That makes 4 issues that the honourable minister should address statements to in this House, and I would

like the opportunity to debate them at some length. For his benefit, those 4 issues are: removals to the north side, and the ongoing negotiations on the part of the businesses operating on the Darwin field; the question of the reduction in the number of flight service officers, and the implications that that has for many people who have given sterling service as flight service officers in the Territory; the question of the effect of the closure of flight service units at Tennant Creek, Katherine and, I believe, at Gove; and the question of air space management. I suggest that it is incumbent on the minister to initiate some thoroughgoing debate on each of those issues. Fortunately, there is every good chance that we will not have to put up with him for too much longer and that we will be able to deal with these matters ourselves.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I would like to address my remarks tonight to the Attorney-General. They follow on from the question I asked him this morning, which related to 2 documents tabled in the parliament by the minister during his personal explanation. The relevant documents relate to an indemnity against prosecution for the prostitute known as Rhonda.

One of the documents, the first to which I will refer, was signed by Commander Baker on 16 February and it is of importance. I would ask the Attorney-General whether, at some time tomorrow, he could confirm whether it was necessary for that document to have the approval of an assistant commissioner or a commissioner before it was activated and, if it was necessary, whether that approval was received.

In relation to the second document, I would like to ask the Attorney-General again to address a matter which I will raise in question time tomorrow. It concerns the legal ability of the Senior Crown Prosecutor to sign an indemnity. In the case of the first indemnity, which I have mentioned, signed by Commander Baker, he had the power under section 76 to sign such a document. Under certain acts, the Attorney-General has the power to sign indemnities. As the Attorney-General said this morning, indemnities are not given lightly. The question I ask him again is: under what section of what act does the Senior Crown Prosecutor have the power to sign an indemnity, and do other people besides the Senior Crown Prosecutor have the capacity to sign indemnities under certain circumstances?

The Attorney-General might believe that this particular matter is small beer or irrelevant but, at the moment, it is important in the scheme of things. I would be grateful if he could provide that information to the House at some time tomorrow.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, in responding to those matters, I would refer the member for Barkly to the Court of Appeal before the Privy Council in the case of MacDonald v Regina. The case related to immunity from prosecution, where a finding was found by the Court of Appeal. The matter being considered was as follows:

> Where an undertaking is given to an accomplice to direct the stay of any future proceedings against him, it is immaterial whether such an undertaking is in law strictly binding upon the Crown. Further, where immunity from prosecution is offered to an accomplice by a law officer of the Crown, the undertaking should, as a matter of routine, be shown to the accomplice before a deposition is taken from him.

It was held that the Court of Appeal was correct in maintaining that whether an undertaking to direct a stay of future proceedings was binding on the Crown was immaterial because such an undertaking would always be honoured and that its importance lay in its practical effect on the state of mind of the accomplice when giving evidence. Accordingly, the appeal was dismissed.

There is a power which has been upheld by the courts and the Privy Council and, of course, that is as high as it is possible to go. An undertaking regarding prosecution or immunity from prosecution can be given by a Crown law officer and it is sufficient to provide that immunity. That is quite clear from what has been said. That is the immunity in relation to the letter that was tabled and it is in accordance with that particular finding by the Privy Council.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION
ATSIC, Fair Funding and the Treaty

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that:

considering that this Assembly is the parliament of the Northern Territory and the voice of the Northern Territory people and

recognising that the Commonwealth of Australia has imposed a new administrative tier to the bureaucratic framework responsible for the delivery of services to Aboriginal Territorians and

noting that this organisation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), has circulated a document which specifies that annual funding to ATSIC by the Commonwealth will be inflation adjusted and

noting that ATSIC's expenditure budget for 1990-91 exceeds $660m with additional funds being provided to ATSIC via other Commonwealth departments and

recognising that in real terms the Commonwealth's allocation to the Northern Territory government has declined 26% in the past 6 years compared with 13% to the states and that no other tier of government within Australia is assured of inflation adjusted allocations and

recognising moreover that the Northern Territory has been ably governed by its own elected government chosen by the people of the Northern Territory in 4 successive elections and

noting that the Northern Territory government has consistently allocated higher per capita funding to the needs of Aboriginal Territorians than to non-Aboriginal Territorians,

this Assembly declare unanimously that the people of the Northern Territory desire the Commonwealth to re-establish an equitable basis for the financial treatment of the Territory;

and further we the elected representatives of the Territory people declare that the proposed creation of a treaty or an instrument of reconciliation will create dissent and disharmony among the people of the Northern Territory; and,

accordingly, this Assembly condemn any notion that taxpayers should fund some form of compensation as a consequence of a treaty or an instrument of reconciliation;

and further this Assembly direct that this clear will of the elected representatives of all the people of the Northern Territory be conveyed by the Chief Minister to the special Premiers' Conference on October 30 and 31.

Mr Speaker, this motion goes to the heart of the Territory's future. It seeks unilateral support from every member of this Assembly on the issue of fair treatment so that we can secure that future. It is about justice and equality for all of our citizens, irrespective of race, creed or

colour. It is about fairness for all. It is about justice for taxpayers and justice for our Aboriginal citizens, and it is a call for the bludgers, the opportunists and the federal bureaucrats to get off the gravy train. It invites the Labor opposition to join the Country Liberal government in our stand which puts the interests of every Territory citizen first. It is about the special Premiers Conference, where I wish to say to the Prime Minister that the clear will of all the elected representatives of the people of the Northern Territory is for the federal Labor government to make amends for the unfair and unequal basis on which it determines funding allocations, to question the ATSIC organisation's expenditure priorities, and to reject Labor's treaty notion. The clear will of all the elected representatives of the people of the Territory will not easily be ignored. It would be a unique event in our political history and would serve notice that Territory interests were above party politics.

The combined effect of all these issues in our community promotes a situation whereby many Territorians are coming to the belief that our federal Labor government has embarked on a course that will waste hundreds of millions of dollars and cause disenchantment among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians. Aboriginal Territorians will be shocked by the wastage and inefficiency evident within ATSIC, which I shall shortly document, and the stupidity which has made the all-important health issue a junior program within ATSIC.

The taxpayers, who foot the bill for this empire of bureaucrats, will be appalled by the amount of their money that finances non-essential programs, and how little of that money trickles down to the people in need. The facts are that, through ATSIC, we now have a fourth tier of government, that its annual allocation from Canberra has favoured status, and that the Aboriginal people must now try to understand a veritable labyrinth of ATSIC programs overlaid on federal and Territory government programs and programs of municipal and community councils. These facts are fertile ground for confusion, envy and mistrust.

The low interest by Aboriginal Territorians in nominating for the ATSIC elections and the boycott call on the ATSIC elections are evidence of this mistrust. And what do non-Aboriginal taxpayers think when Labor tells them that they are paying large sums for ATSIC, but that they cannot have a say in how ATSIC runs its affairs? What does the taxpayer think when he or she learns that a Territory government, which serves them, has a worse deal from Canberra than ATSIC does? What do Aboriginal people think when they receive visits from federal, Territory and ATSIC officers on matters including land, housing, enterprise development, health, substance abuse, community development, recreation, sport, law and justice, art, culture and heritage protection? Confusion, Mr Speaker, and make no mistake about it! ATSIC has programs for all of these services and more, as do the Territory and federal governments. It is the supreme irony. When the nation's leadership voices concerns, and rightly so, about duplication of services, we have had created in our midst a new tier of government and a bureaucracy insensitive to the most urgent needs of the very people it has been created to serve.

However, one group of people will benefit and benefit well. The bureaucrats in Canberra are having a field day. ATSIC's budget documents, now before the federal parliament, show that scarce resources have been allocated to install ergonomic furniture for ATSIC employees, and that money has been earmarked to help ATSIC employees to manage their personal smoking problems, and to hire consultants to show these people how to enjoy their personal lives. There are even funds to train ATSIC employees in the performance of the basic tasks they were supposedly qualified for, and for a

series of reviews and research programs which will consume millions of dollars. The same documents show a miserable $5m national allocation by ATSIC to combat substance abuse, and that is a decline of 9% on the previous year. This relates to the problems of petrol sniffing, kava abuse and alcohol abuse, problems which have caused Aboriginal women in the Territory to rise up and demand solutions.

Mr Speaker, the question must be asked: why has the vote for substance abuse slipped by 9% when ATSIC's total budgeted expenditure has risen by 20%? Funds have been found to pamper the bureaucrats but not to address one of the most serious problems facing Aboriginal communities today. The timid explanation in ATSIC's own budget papers is 'the present limited availability of funding'. ATSIC's global program of expenditure this year will be $118m more than was spent last year on the various functions which ATSIC inherited in March. Instead of finding $1m or $2m out of that extra $118m to devote to this most urgent need of Aboriginal people, the ATSIC bureaucrats have cut substance abuse programs by $500 000.

ATSIC's health vote, which is a separate item, shows that total expenditure will rise by a miserable $26 000. It will go from $38.75m to $38.78m. This is appalling. It is well documented that health is a priority need in the Territory Aboriginal community. But, while ATSIC secures for itself $118m extra from the taxpayer, it can fund only a miserable $26 000 increase for health. That would barely pay the wages of a typist.

It is safe to say that, when a tier of government is distant from the people it serves and is not accountable to them, its priorities bear little relation to need. That was the case prior to self-government in the Territory, and that is the case today with ATSIC. The tyranny of distance and the rule from the Canberra armchair is alive and well. In my view, these 2 instances, substance abuse and health, are an obscene insult to the Aboriginal people whom ATSIC supposedly serves and an obscene insult to the taxpayers who are funding this new tier of government.

Before I deal further with this theme of misplaced priorities, bureaucratic wastage and duplication, it is pertinent to look at ATSIC in a wider sense. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission states at page 6 of its 1990-91 budgetary explanatory notes that the federal government has committed to maintain the ATSIC budget in future years in real terms. Page 23 of that document estimates ATSIC expenditure for 1990-91 at $662 521 000 and, at page 194, it notes, almost in passing, that a further $399 289 400 will be spent during this year by other Commonwealth government departments on special programs for Aboriginals. ATSIC's $662m expenditure this year represents a 21.6% increase on 1989-90 expenditures on the functions which it has taken over from the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission. Expenditures by Commonwealth departments of some $400m represent a 7.8% increase. The combined total exceeds $1000m. That is approximately equal to the Territory government's Commonwealth allocation.

ATSIC notes in its budgetary preamble that it welcomes the federal government's decision to maintain ATSIC's global budget in real terms. It goes on to say that inflation adjusted funding means that ATSIC 'can now develop a rolling program of commitments over several financial years without concern that the impact of initial funding will be diminished because of an inability to follow through'. Wouldn't it be nice to have such a commitment? This is a statement of arrogant disdain - arrogant disdain for the taxpayers who fund ATSIC, and arrogant disdain for the

Aboriginal people who will supposedly be elected to ATSIC councils and as ATSIC commissioners to make policy. Before any of them nominated, the ATSIC bureaucrats had laid out their grand plan of waste and duplication, and shown their ignorance of the real and pressing concerns facing our Aboriginal communities. When, and if, ATSIC is ever called to account, it will not have to bear a financial penalty because of the open-ended deal given to it by Labor politicians.

This exercise has turned a basic platform of our democratic system on its head. Governments secure mandates for their policies from the voters. In ATSIC's case, programs and funding priorities were developed by bureaucrats and, some 7 months after ATSIC's creation, it will have 800 regional councillors on 3 November. Later, there will be a second process to elect 17 ATSIC commissioners, all of whom are supposed to have a policy role. Their elections or appointments will be a sham because they will be asked simply to rubber stamp what has already been imposed.

In comparison with federal allocations to the state and territory governments, ATSIC has secured a unique deal. It is well known in the Territory that, in real terms, the Commonwealth has been steadily eroding our funds base. Now we know why and for what. As a fourth tier of government, not only is ATSIC competing with the state and territory governments for funding and resources, and duplicating effort, but it is overlapping with established federal departments. Whilst ATSIC has been playing the Canberra game of whisper and side deal to beef up its dollars, my government contends that, program for program, elected Territorians and Territory public servants can do a better and more cost-effective job of service delivery than can ATSIC's brand of bureaucrats.

I am strongly of the view that, if you asked most Territorians, they would agree with the idea that Aboriginal Territorians require and need a degree of assistance higher than that made available to other citizens. The Northern Territory government has long recognised the humane need to improve the social and economic plight of our Aboriginal citizens. Our per capita outlays have been consistently 80% higher for Aboriginal than for non-Aboriginal Territorians. But, equally, we are concerned that the hard-working taxpayers who fund these expenditures should be protected from wastage and duplication. It is a principle which my government adheres to across the board.

Further, in ATSIC's case, the taxpayers should be assured that they are getting value for their dollar, and that what they pay, by way of income tax to Canberra and a host of other federal taxes, is not dissipated by bureaucratic foolishness. They want also to be assured, as I do, that the funds flow to those who need them and are not wasted on bureaucrats, and that the various ATSIC programs are balanced against need, keeping wastage and duplication to a minimum. They cannot have that reassurance today.

It is interesting to reflect that, in 1967, this country changed its constitution to provide Aboriginal Australians with the right to vote in federal, state and territory elections. In the mood of the times, we were to become 1 nation with all having an equal say in choosing our elected representatives and thus an equal say in the formation of our governments. Now, 23 years after that constitutional referendum, the Aboriginal people of this country have been instructed to elect their own embryonic national government. Non-Aboriginals are paying for it but are excluded from voting.

The world has travelled a long distance from the days of the American revolution when the cry of the colonists opposing English taxes was 'no

taxation without representation'. Australian Labor has invented the mirror reverse, at least for non-Aboriginal people. So far as ATSIC is concerned, for them and for every member of this Assembly, with the exception of the honourable members for Arafura and Arnhem, ATSIC is a case of no representation with $1000m - and rising - in taxation. If the member for Arnhem has his way, the imposition of a treaty, which is part of Labor's Territory platform and a policy commitment by the Prime Minister, will mean the imposition of extra taxes to pay for what he has termed loosely 'compensation'. On CAAMA radio on 2 May this year, the member for Arnhem said that the Territory Labor Party fully supported the idea of the treaty and was looking at cash compensation and other methods of compensation for Aboriginal people.

We are indebted to CAAMA also for insights into some of the political thinking going on in ATSIC. On 26 July this year, CAAMA gave us an insight into how ATSIC regards the so-called provisional Aboriginal government announced by the activist, Mr Michael Mansell. ATSIC's acting head, Terry O'Shane, stated that the sort of agitation Mr Mansell is famous for would play an important role in keeping ATSIC politically attuned. To the white community, the Hawke government denies that ATSIC is a new tier of government, but clearly that is not what ATSIC's leadership believes. It is supportive of the likes of Michael Mansell. Indeed, ATSIC finances many of Mr Mansell's activities.

Despite ATSIC's relationship with people like Mansell and its funding deal from Canberra, I am sure that most citizens would have drawn a degree of comfort from ATSIC if they had had an assurance that it was heading in a direction which would deliver the results it supposedly stands for. I am sure that the ATSIC bureaucrats and the Labor politicians who gave them their head must have had a nervous half year since ATSIC commenced operations in March this year. They have been subject to some scrutiny which recently has come into the public domain. ATSIC's own establishment act created an internal Office of Evaluation and Audit which has not been up to the job. It has had to hire the accounting firm Ernst and Young to have it draft a fraud control plan and develop management techniques for financial risk assessment of ATSIC's vast array of programs. Seven months after ATSIC commenced operations and began dealing with vast sums of taxpayers' money, that work is not yet complete and in place. It should have been the first task undertaken, and it should have been completed before ATSIC opened its doors.

According to its budget paper, ATSIC's internal Office of Evaluation and Audit has a stated goal of 'evaluating every program and office of the commission once every 3 years'. I believe that it would be desirable for the federal minister publicly to direct ATSIC to accelerate this internal work so that, in 6 months time, there can be some reasonable basis for his assurances to taxpayers that ATSIC is using their money wisely and effectively.

Of course, the Commonwealth Auditor-General is better qualified to assure an independent view. Indeed, in a report tabled in federal parliament on 11 September this year, the Commonwealth Auditor-General made some pertinent observations about the Aboriginal affairs portfolio. He said that ATSIC had a series of control weaknesses in terms of how it handled taxpayers' money and he called for the formation of new guidelines. The Commonwealth Auditor-General said that the problem areas included inadequate cross-referencing of grant applications, no evidence of a register of authorised signatures to confirm the bona fides of persons signing on behalf of Aboriginal organisations, problems with documentation, deficiencies in

the controls over grant approval, and no improvement with regard to a review of completed grants. The Auditor-General said that the Australian National Audit Office had been advised by ATSIC that a working party was examining some of these problems and that remedial action was promised. A little further on, the Auditor-General commented dryly that he had been promised also that remedial action would be taken on deficiencies in the recording and control of assets, a matter which the Auditor-General said he had highlighted in previous reports.

His other criticisms of those who run ATSIC included: tardiness by Territory-based ATSIC officials in complying with procedures; no evidence from Territory ATSIC officials that estimate bids by the Central Land Council had been discussed to ensure that only necessary funds were sought; a breakdown by Territory ATSIC bureaucrats in the timetable for processing land council estimates, and the absence of fully-documented budgetary consultation with the land councils; ATSIC officers approving payments without having the necessary delegated authority; insufficient evidence by ATSIC of formal review of financial statements lodged by Aboriginal associations; and insufficient evidence by ATSIC of monitoring associations which had not lodged required audited financial statements.

There is no assurance in any of this for the taxpayers who fund ATSIC, or the Aboriginal people whom ATSIC serves, that ATSIC either knows what it is doing or, if it does, is capable of doing it. But there is a greater responsibility. The people at the ATSIC helm have been handed an open cheque by the Labor government to spend $662m this year and $700m next year and, in addition, they have a say in respect of another $400m spread through federal departments. Last financial year, these people spent $24.5m on loans and grants to help establish Aboriginal-owned businesses under a Business Funding Scheme. But ATSIC's report says lamely that 'considerations in assessing funding proposals will be subject to some research in future years'. Mr Speaker, that is hardly a reassurance. The Business Funding Scheme is obviously something ATSIC realises it has little talent for but that, nevertheless, it is determined to pursue. Part of the money it has been given this year for Aboriginal business loans, it will spend on itself.

This year's expenditure allocation of $17.7m is a 27% reduction and, according to ATSIC, some of those funds are to be spent on 'addressing the training needs of those administering enterprise projects supported under the program'. The focus for this year, says ATSIC, is on improving administration and training staff. If that is the prime focus, the scheme should have been dismantled and the funds placed with the territory and state governments or pushed into the substance abuse program.

On top of the Business Funding Scheme, ATSIC has also an Enterprise Incentive Scheme which deals out interest-free loans of between $10 000 and $20 000 to sole traders and partnerships. Of the $1m allocated last year, ATSIC and DAA administrators managed to find a home for $1 in $4 - that is, 25% of it. They blame 'inadequate information dissemination of the scheme's availability'. There is some wishful thinking a little further on. The ATSIC budget document says that it 'is too early to conclude that the scheme has been unsuccessful'. Mr Speaker, I say to the bureaucrat, who underspent by 75% because of a communications failure and had to be retrained to do the job, that he should find his way to the CES. That is what he ought to do. I would not be giving them a 20% increase in their allocation, or money to spend on new furniture, or taxpayer-funded consultants to show them how to enjoy life and give up smoking. Make no mistake about it, Mr Speaker, I am angry at what has been revealed in the ATSIC budget documents. I am angry

at the waste, the duplication, the piety and, as a Territorian, I am deeply angry at the suffering our Aboriginal citizens will have to endure while millions are siphoned off into half-baked schemes.

Another absurdity is ATSIC's Management Advisory Service which is supposed to make available finance and management consultants to help get Aboriginal-owned business moving. Last year, only 76% of the allocation was spent - $2.6m in total. The ATSIC document notes: 'This component of the socioeconomic development program is not likely to be an area of considerable activity in 1990-91'. Having said that it will not be a priority area, and having virtually admitted to incompetence in administering that section, ATSIC then advises that, in 1990-91, this expenditure allocation has a breathtaking 65% increase - $4.3m against last year's $2.6m - to a program that it did not administer properly in the first place, and which it says is of low priority.

It will spend $4.3m on an area of considerable inactivity. It could have doubled the substance abuse program on this item alone, but it did not. It is a classic case of another organisation ruled by Labor which, like its older cousins in Victoria and Western Australia, places budget management to one side because it believes that the good old taxpayer will always be there to bail it out.

On ATSIC's Training and Advisory Service Program, which is supposed to give management training to Aboriginals, ATSIC says that it is 'currently considering procedures for undertaking an extensive training needs survey. Once the results of this survey are complete, then 'more specific training facilities and courses can be developed'. Another case of money for the bureaucrats. ATSIC came to this conclusion after it and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs managed to spend only 35% of this program's budget last year. This year's allocation is a clear case of ATSIC bureaucrats 100%, Aboriginals nil.

The Aboriginal Organisation Training Program, aimed at training counsellors and staff of Aboriginal organisations, is yet another failure. ATSIC regional offices are supposed to have input to developing regional strategies for this program but, regrettably, last year the Territory officials again let Territory Aboriginals down. Of 2085 Aboriginal people trained under this scheme last year, a mere 41 or 2% came from the Territory. That is inexcusable. Territory Aboriginals comprise some 15% of the national Aboriginal population.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister's time has expired.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister's time be extended to enable him to complete his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, it gets worse. According to ATSIC's budget paper, the big task for the officers charged with spending this bucket of $8.4m this year is to create a list of Aboriginal organisations which have a need for management training. They should not have too much trouble making that list. They are then to initiate a training needs analysis and develop modular training packages. ATSIC says that actual training will commence immediately afterwards. The trickle of gain to the Aboriginal people is slow indeed.

Many communities have had their aspirations raised by ATSIC's Community Development Employment Project, CDEP, which has an expenditure budget of $185.7m for this year. ATSIC claims that 27 000 workers and dependents, 7300 of them in the Territory, participate in this scheme which provides alternatives to welfare dependency through permanent part-time employment. ATSIC claims that CDEP schemes support 10% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and, to my knowledge, CDEP schemes do much good. The ATSIC report says 7 Territory communities joined CDEP last year and other communities now want to join it. They are in for some bad news. Despite its hefty $118m global expenditure increase, ATSIC says that there 'is no prospect for new CDEP communities in 1990-91'. That is bad news indeed for Territory Aboriginals, who had begun to put their faith and trust in at least one federal program.

Contrasted with this, DAA's final report to the parliament up to March 1990, when it ceased to exist, stated optimistically that up to 12 new Territory communities were expected to join the CDEP scheme before 30 June 1990. ATSIC's papers reveal that every new individual added to an existing CDEP community will require the internal generation of $14 000 in ATSIC funds. However, on the sketchy data provided, the best calculations that we can make indicate that only one-third of this actually trickles down to each of the 27 000 people involved. While I hope that ATSIC can provide a more palatable explanation, I have to say that, on the figures, it is unlikely. There is a larger question which ATSIC makes no attempt to answer. How much of its $662m global expenditure budget will be consumed by distressed, heavy-smoking ATSIC bureaucrats? If the CDEP case is typical, not much more than $200m will trickle down to Aboriginal people.

The ATSIC story of administrative horror is endless. $3.4m is to be spent this year on what is termed the Socioeconomic Sub-Program Support Scheme. Two new projects feature under this scheme. One of these is research on top of research. It is a task to create a database on the costly research of 5 years conducted on Aboriginal economic development. In other words, it is to make a list of economic research effort, and this is trumpeted as an initiative. The second new project, to be administered by that other notorious federal organ, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, will - and I do not know what these words of ATSIC really mean - 'identify and assess the factors involved in Aboriginal access to mainstream land degradation programs'. It sounds like a waste of money to me, and the Aboriginal mother whose family life is hell because of alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing would surely agree.

Like health, home ownership should be a priority for ATSIC, but only 3.4% of ATSIC's $662m expenditure is allocated to this item - a mere $22.8m. Admittedly, this is a 33% increase, but closer reading shows it follows a 44% decrease on the previous year. The ATSIC administrators employed on the Housing Ownership Program will each earn, on average, $48 000 this year. That is about two-thirds of the amount of the average estimated loan. These people expect to increase the number of Aboriginals in home ownership throughout Australia by 1290 this year. They expect this year to approve 293 loans but forecast that revenue will be static at $20.6m. That suggests that the policy of low-interest loans has been wiped in favour of no-interest loans. These $50 000-a-year administrators also admit that 17% of their accounts are in arrears, but they hope to reduce this to 14%. No doubt they will, if the home loans are free and, if that is the case, there will never be a break in the economic dependency cycle. I should add that ATSIC hopes to house a further 1000 people this year through its Rental Accommodation Scheme, funded at some $45m.

Within its vast $247.6m expenditure budget for its Social Advancement Program, ATSIC notes at page 82 of its budget document that a major focus will be to address the increasing incidence of domestic violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. That is encouraging news indeed until we locate the funding for this so-called major focus. Out of the $188m extra that ATSIC is receiving this year, this program is funded at a mere $1.4m spread across the nation. ATSIC says that half of that money will come from internal savings.

We have doublespeak on law and justice. ATSIC says demand for Aboriginal legal services continues at a high level yet its expenditure allocation of $18m is, in fact, a 9% reduction.

I am pleased to record that ATSIC praised its joint venture with my government on the Town Camps Housing and Infrastructure Program. ATSIC says several hundred people in Alice Springs, Katherine, Elliott, Tennant Creek and Darwin have benefited from greatly improved environmental conditions, as well as developing self-management skills through this scheme. I trust that the opposition will note this fact.

Like many areas under ATSIC's control, a series of questions need to be asked about Aboriginal Hostels Limited which will consume $22.5m this year. ATSIC states that it places priority on providing hostel accommodation for tertiary and secondary students and the aged. However, barely half of all hostel beds are allocated to people in these categories. According to ATSIC's profile of hostel accommodation, 53% of its hostel beds are used by transients for full hostel accommodation of up to 3 months. It is perhaps the modern version of the walkabout. They are used also by alcoholics. Transients occupy 38% of Aboriginal hostel bed spaces but, regrettably, the ATSIC documents do not indicate what revenues are generated by these people, many of whom ATSIC says are travelling on business matters. One presumes that, if they are on business, they can pay their way and, therefore, ATSIC should consider encouraging more of them into the commercial accommodation sector and thereby free-up space for more students and the Aboriginal elderly about whom it professes to be so concerned.

Territorians will be interested to learn that ATSIC plans to spend $1.4m of taxpayers' money this year to buy an unnamed pastoral lease in the Territory and another $500 000 on preparing reports and hiring consultants to investigate Coronation Hill. That is a carry-over from DAA's plans to halt this mine, to the detriment of all Territorians. ATSIC and the DAA were so inefficient last year that $39.5m or 7.8% of their global budget was not spent because of admitted internal failures. ATSIC promises this year to train staff in systems and procedures, to review staffing requirements, to review financial procedures, to review ATSIC's program structure and to review systems control.

It was way back in December 1987 that the Labor government announced its intention to establish ATSIC, more than 2 years before its actual formation. DAA's final report to the federal parliament says that the ATSIC Task Force, established shortly after the 1987 announcement, was responsible to the minister to develop arrangements for ATSIC, including the design of operational systems. Obviously, it failed. It is obvious from ATSIC's own evidence that the organisation has been in crisis since March this year and has few ideas about practical budget priorities and the needs of the people it is supposed to serve.

The fact that health, substance abuse, domestic violence and home ownership share $68m, which is only 10% of a $662m budget, is an indictment

of the ATSIC bureaucrats and their failure to understand the most immediate urgent needs of Aboriginal people. Of that $68m, ATSIC does not indicate how much will be spent on Territory Aboriginals. I venture to suggest that the bulk of it will go into programs for southern urban Aboriginals and that remote communities will see little return. If the Territory government was awarded a 15% per capita share of ATSIC's $662m expenditure budget - that is, $100m - I am certain that Aboriginal Territorians and taxpayers would be far better off.

The motion before the House refers also to the treaty, which was debated at length in this Assembly in May. To the comments which I made then, I add the following. The imposition of a treaty, and taxation to raise the unspecified compensation advocated by the Smith Labor opposition, will do irreparable damage to our community. Already it is clear that much of the taxation revenue going into ATSIC is a waste and that further demands on non-Aboriginal Territorians will divide this community for generations.

I call on all honourable members to place the interests of Territorians ahead of the Labor Party's hidden agenda, to disown the treaty, to join with the elected government of Territorians and to share with us in a message to the Prime Minister demanding a return to an equitable funding basis for the Territory. Many people are asking why Labor in Canberra can guarantee ATSIC the cushion of inflation-adjusted funding when it has a 6-year record of pruning the allocation which every Territorian has to share. I urge all members of this Assembly to examine their consciences on these issues. There cannot be 2 sets of rules. There cannot be unfairness and lack of equity. When honourable members come to vote on this matter, the choice is whether to divide the Territory or to unite it. I commend the motion to honourable members.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, first of all, I would like to state that, personally, I welcome the statement by the Chief Minister in response to what I believe is a very important step in the history of Aboriginal people in Australia, and one which recognises our needs and aspirations. The Chief Minister's comments indicate that he is aware of the fact - and he would be more aware of it than I - that there is an election in the wind. No doubt, the people who work around him have said to him: 'If you can prove that ATSIC, an organisation created by the federal government to provide services to Aboriginal people, is becoming a fourth tier of government, is providing funds to 25% of the Territory's population and is creating employment, you may be able to win some votes in the Northern Territory'. Mr Speaker, that will not be the case. Once again, we see a blatant attempt by the Chief Minister to create a belief in the minds of Territorians generally that Aboriginal people are getting too much in terms of services. He is trying to drive a wedge between people and to create division so that people will start reacting and screaming. That is obvious.

Mr Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the Chief Minister's motion. I note that it was not a motion to begin with. Obviously, the Chief Minister's advisers told him to present as a motion something which originally took the form of a ministerial statement. I move that the motion be amended by:

(1) omitting the word 'ably' from paragraph 6;

(2) omitting paragraph 9 and inserting in its stead:

'This Assembly commits itself to achieving an access to appropriate standards of living for all Territorians by the year 2000'; and

(3) adding at the end of paragraph 10:

'that results in payments to individuals but rather may include funding from the federal government to state and territory governments and Aboriginal organisations to remove the imbalance and inequities that currently exist'.

Let us get it straight as far as the treaty is concerned. Members on this side of the House support the idea, which is referred to in our platform, of striking a balance between the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and the population as a whole. We see that as a role which governments need to address. In relation to the compensation issue, members on this side of the House have made it very clear that our view is that no compensation will be paid to individuals by a Labor government in the Northern Territory. That is a matter for the federal government. We have stated that very clearly.

Labor in the Territory has a commitment to raising the standard of living of Aboriginal Territorians and of the rest of the population by the year 2000, and we intend to cooperate with the federal government on this issue. We have made that very clear during the last 2 to 3 years, since the proposal for ATSIC has been discussed throughout the Northern Territory. Every state leader and opposition leader, except the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, has supported the concept of reconciliation, and I stress that again. It is important, and part and parcel of our negotiations with the people of the Northern Territory, that we come to realise the fact that there is a group of people who feel that they have lost out, and who still think, in their own minds, that Australia was theirs and was stolen. That that is so is made clear whenever one travels around in the Northern Territory. I am questioned about that a great deal. I said very clearly earlier that the Labor Party in the Northern Territory will consult to ensure that the services provided in those areas not only will benefit the percentage of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, but also that we have better services.

As I said earlier, it is very interesting to note that the Chief Minister has been the lone wolf in respect to striking some sort of understanding and accord with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in relation to coming to an understanding with the Aboriginal people in this regard. As the Chief Minister rightly said in his motion, ATSIC is an administrative body, established by the federal government, which has a statutory responsibility to ensure that services are delivered in Aboriginal communities. If this government changed its policies and its attitudes towards a range of Aboriginal issues in the Northern Territory, the view of people in the electorate would change. People would thank God that the Northern Territory was starting to take into account their aspirations and their desire to be consulted on matters with aspects important to them - for example, land and management and issues like that.

In this House, just the other day, we heard the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services speak at length about upgrading management practices and consultative processes that he has tried to introduce with his people in the Aboriginal branch of the public service. That may be the case as far as the delivery of services to Aboriginal people is concerned. We appreciate the fact that the Territory government has that responsibility and has an

obligation under the laws governing the Northern Territory because we are Aboriginal people who live in the Northern Territory and we are of that population. The government has an obligation, and it is not fair for it to single out the 25% of the Territory population that is Aboriginal and to say that this is what is going to them. We do not single out the pastoralists. We do not single out organisations that are receiving some percentage of funds from the Territory coffers. We do not do that.

Time and time again, we have seen this government run up costs for Territory taxpayers by contesting land claims in hearings where it has not won. A saner government would accept that it was not succeeding in that role and undertake some consultation in that regard instead of spending millions of dollars on disputation and then telling Territorians that the money is going to the Aboriginal people and that the Territory is not being funded fairly. Let them cringe and cry about it because, in the end, it will be their mismanagement that will ensure the end of their days in government.

The Chief Minister mentioned the boycott by the NLC in relation to the forthcoming ATSIC elections. Obviously, he did not read the news item the other day which indicated that this has produced the biggest response in terms of Aboriginal representation through the federal government. Do we hear the Chief Minister complaining about the Women's Advisory Council? Do we hear him complaining about planning strategies in relation to the environmental concerns in Australia and appointing advisers to the government? No, Mr Speaker, he participates in those consultations. I, for one, am disgusted by the Chief Minister's aim in introducing a motion like this. Territorians will recognise that all he is doing is raising an issue which certainly will rebound on him. Territorians are sick and tired of this government and its Chief Ministers raising matters of this kind and announcing an election in an attempt to have it fought on a black-and-white issue. That is about the guts of it. I will keep saying that because that is all it is. It is a classic example of the way in which this government attempts to create a certain relationship in the Northern Territory.

As the Chief Minister mentioned, the NLC has its own difficulties with ATSIC. The member for Stuart said publicly that the NLC has its obligations and responsibilities under an act to ensure that it represents the views of the traditional Aboriginal people, advises governments and lobbies political parties in an effort to obtain the best possible treatment for Aboriginal people. ATSIC has been put in place to ensure the delivery of services to communities like Elliott. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government is not willing to provide money for services to places like Bagot. During the budget debate, the Leader of the Opposition complained about the funding of communities like Bagot. Thank God we have the federal government to ensure that services are ongoing to communities.

I am pleased to be able to say that, as long as this government has that attitude, Aboriginal people will ensure that we have a federal government that puts in place organisations which look after their needs. Aboriginal people have often said to me that, as long as the federal government is there to assist them, they have no intention of turning to the Northern Territory government to be administered totally by it.

Members interjecting.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I am giving an example of what people are saying. As a result of its attitudes towards that 25% of the Territory's population, it fouls its own nest. I will be interested to hear from the

Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government what the people at Port Keats and Daly River think about ATSIC.

Mr McCarthy: You wait for it.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I can tell you that ATSIC was a matter of great concern to me initially because our people at Milingimbi, Ramingining and Galiwinku had no idea about how it would operate. Over a long period, ATSIC officers from the regional department in Nhulunbuy went out to talk to those people.

Mr Hatton: Ideological claptrap.

Mr LANHUPUY: The Minister for Health and Community Services knows that. They took on board the comments and the views that were expressed by those people. The other day, the NLC said that it would boycott the ATSIC elections. After further discussions with Senator Collins, it came to understand that ATSIC would have responsibilities under its own charter. The NLC's responsibilities are totally different from those of ATSIC. It was pleasing to note that the NLC finally accepted that wise judgment and supports the establishment of ATSIC. I support it, and the people in my area certainly look forward to working under ATSIC.

If, even in the initial stages, the Chief Minister and his ministers start by giving ATSIC undeserved criticism, and tell lies about its operations throughout the Northern Territory, it will not have the opportunity to deliver services that the people in the Northern Territory expect. It is pathetic for ministers of the Crown not to give any support for ATSIC, support for what will be given to a whole range of people, people whom land rights forgot, people who are living on pastoral properties. That is where it will be very crucial that ATSIC does succeed in the discharge of its responsibilities.

I would like to commend the commissioners ...

Mr Perron: The Redfern fellows did not have a lot of sympathy for the pastoralists on excisions.

Mr LANHUPUY: It is not fair of the Chief Minister to refer to people from Redfern in New South Wales. Let him look at the issue in the Northern Territory. This is where he is pretty crook, Mr Speaker. He brings in the Mansells and people like that.

I support ATSIC as it is, and it is pathetic of this government ...

Mr Ede: Mansell will not be in ATSIC.

Mr Reed: He is funded by it.

Mr Vale: Read the document, you drongo.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will withdraw that remark.

Mr VALE: Mr Speaker, I apologise, and I do withdraw.

Mr LANHUPUY: If the Minister for Tourism has so much to say, I would like him to get up in due course and contribute to this debate because, as I said at the outset, it is a very important issue. The Chief Minister has expressed his concern about it and, rightly, he has brought this motion to

the floor of the House. To an extent, we agree, except on those areas in relation to which I have moved an amendment. I would like to ensure that ATSIC will have its opportunity to deliver those services to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I believe in giving anyone and everyone the opportunity to exercise what they believe in. The federal government believes that ATSIC will operate, and operate well ...

Mr Finch: They believe in Mickey Mouse, if that is the case.

Mr LANHUPUY: ... to ensure that services are provided to our people,

If the Minister for Transport and Works wants to contribute to this debate, let him get up in his turn and do so. I will be pleased to hear what he has to say. However, it is not fair of him to say that the funding that was received for Milingimbi Airport was from the Territory government. The honourable minister has a responsibility under the Territory funding situation to provide services to the people in remote communities, be they health services, transportation or whatever.

Mr FINCH: It was good enough for you to come and talk about Milingimbi airstrip. Not one cent of it was federal funds. Be fair, Wes.

Mr LANHUPUY: I thank the honourable minister for that.

Mr Finch: A million bucks worth. It was good enough for you to come and ask for it then.

Mr LANHUPUY: That is an obligation that he has as a minister of the Crown, Mr Speaker. He has an obligation to ensure those funds are available to the people of the Northern Territory.

A member: And you are right to tell people this is a fourth tier government.

Mr LANHUPUY: A fourth tier of government? It is a statutory organisation. The people who will be selected for ATSIC will be members of an advisory committee. They will not have the sort of responsibilities that the Minister for Transport and Works has with the kind of personal staff that he has and a budget to work on. Each and everyone of those commissioners will not have the sort of responsibilities that these people have. As far as I am concerned, it is not fair that they should not give ATSIC the opportunity to perform. So often we have heard members of this government say that we should let Aboriginal people do what they can with what is available to them. I believe that they want to assist Aboriginal people generally, but it is unrealistic for the Chief Minister to try to con us into agreeing with this type of statement and the emotion he expressed. I call on honourable members to support the amendment I have moved.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I had expected to hear something a little better from the member for Arnhem. With due respect to him, usually he gives credit where it is due in this House but, today, he delivered a diatribe in support of ATSIC against the wishes of many of his constituents. I am very much aware that many of his constituents are deeply concerned about ATSIC, and are opposed to the principles of ATSIC. Undoubtedly, they will take note of what he has said.

Perhaps the overriding principle of ATSIC is that, if it is Aboriginal, it must be run by Aboriginals. I have a problem with that because, while I

respect and believe in the need for Aboriginal people to take a more active role in the administration of their affairs, I do not see that as the exclusive right of Aboriginals. It is like saying that the administration of the Territory ought to be only in white hands or that this House ought to be in white hands because it is a white institution. It is like saying that, being the second largest Greek city in the world, outside of Greece, Melbourne ought to have a Greek constitution in order to look after the Greek people of that city. That is what it is saying - if it is Aboriginal, it must be run by Aboriginals.

The motion of the Chief Minister covered 3 main areas: funding and administration issues; the record of the government elected by Northern Territorians to provide services since self-government, and the related issues of franchise for all Territorians; and the potential for social harm presented by the prospect of a treaty or a compensation agreement. Those are the 3 main principles covered by the motion, and I will address those 3 principles, particularly where they are relevant to my portfolio.

Let us deal first with the power that is central to the funding and administration issues - the separation of Commonwealth and state or territory powers, the power to set policy. In most areas in the Northern Territory, the power to set policy rests with the Northern Territory government. We set policy in relation to health, education, housing, and on a whole range of issues, yet here we find another elected body of politicians who will make policy with regard to a group of people within our community. The power to develop services is a power of the Northern Territory government, yet that power will reside also with ATSIC. The power to establish priorities when balanced with needs throughout the community is a power that is clearly the responsibility of the duly elected government of the Territory, yet another body will override that policy. Responsibility and accountability to exercise those powers efficiently rests with the Northern Territory government, but we will have another elected group of politicians seeking to do that. And have no doubt about it, Mr Speaker, the people of ATSIC will be elected politicians.

The status of the Northern Territory since self-government means that this government has fewer powers than its counterparts in the states. I will refer to a comment made previously by the member for Arnhem in which he said that state leaders had supported ATSIC. ATSIC means nothing to the states. It will have very little impact because they are not doing anything in the area of Aboriginal affairs. It will have almost no impact on their budgets or their policies because it will be very minimal in the context of their overall budgets.

However, in the Territory, ATSIC has an enormous impact. It has an impact on essential services, health, education, housing and community development generally. That is a matter of real concern to people in the Territory. Priorities in those areas are set by this government, depending on assessed needs. The considerations include the current level of services available, funding and human resources, and assessment of needs for specific services against needs in other areas. Decisions on such matters can be taken only by bodies of elected people who have a mandate from the whole of the community. The only government in the Northern Territory with such a mandate is the Northern Territory government, the government that sits in this House.

Mr Ede: Warren Snowdon has a mandate.

Mr McCARTHY: He does not have a mandate to set policy for the Northern Territory.

On the other hand, ATSIC's mandate comes from the federal government, and it is to establish and develop its services and programs across these and other areas of state-type functions. Its role is to concentrate its efforts on the development of services for Aboriginal people. Despite the current federal government's professed keenness on micro-economic reform, it continues to fund a bureaucracy which duplicates a range of services provided by the Northern Territory government.

I refer again to the issue of dollars on the ground, to which I have referred in this House on previous occasions. I have made the point on a number of occasions that the only body in the Northern Territory administration which can be likened to ATSIC is the Office of Local Government, which has an ability to provide funds for a range of needs in Aboriginal communities through untied and tied grants. I have said before, and I say again, that the OLG spends 90¢ in every dollar of its budget on the ground in Aboriginal communities. That cannot be matched by any federal bureaucracy. When DAA was still operating, its expenditure on the ground was equivalent to 40¢ or 50¢ in the dollar. The bureaucracy chewed up the rest.

Whilst there has been an increase of about 20% to 23% in Commonwealth funding in this area, there is to be a bureaucracy of 800-odd people who will have to be paid for travel, for sitting fees, for food, for accommodation and for a range of other things. That bureaucracy will have to draw on the ATSIC budget for those expenses. Obviously, that means that there will be less money to spend on services on the ground in Aboriginal communities.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: We have another elected government of about 808 people, which is larger than both upper and lower Houses in all state and Territory governments combined, and 3 or 4 times larger than both Houses of the federal parliament. That will be an enormous drain on the resources available for Aboriginal people. Why is it required? Already, we have elected state governments to make decisions, to set priorities and to distribute funds. In the Northern Territory, we do that. We spend 80% more per capita on our Aboriginal population than on the remainder of the community in the Northern Territory. Quite clearly, we are addressing the specific needs of Aboriginal people, which we recognise. Nevertheless, this overriding body will make decisions and try to ...

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Wanguri that the Chair is prepared to tolerate some interjections. However, his constant interjections across the Chamber, some of which are not even related to the matter before the House at present, will not be tolerated.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the impact of ATSIC on the Territory will be a problem for us in the future. In most of the states of Australia, the proportion of Aboriginal population is very low, and the impact of services established by ATSIC on state policies or budgets will be relatively minor. However, in the Territory, 22.4% of our population is Aboriginal. Obviously, ATSIC will have an enormous impact on the way the Northern Territory government sets its policies and projects its

requirements for the future. We are familiar already with the ability of the federal bureaucracy to override the interests of the Territory.

In an address to the Conference of State Local Government Ministers in Adelaide on 20 September 1990, Lois O'Donoghue, the Chairperson of ATSIC, said the organisation's role was to provide for accelerated development. According to Ms O'Donoghue, ATSIC's preferred funding method to address this aim is to sponsor one-off capital improvements rather than becoming tied up in recurrent funding of projects. That has been an enormous problem for the Territory in the past and, obviously, it will become a greater problem.

Ms O'Donoghue's vision of ATSIC's funding role sounds a warning for the government's budget strategists. I refer to such things as educational facilities built on communities without any provision for housing for teachers and without any provision for ongoing support. The Northern Territory government is then expected to redirect funding that is already in place for other needs into supporting those facilities. We can look at schools like Yipirinya in Alice Springs. I am not knocking Yipirinya. However, it is not a Territory government policy and, despite that, the Territory government will be forced to support such facilities over time. A similar situation is arising in Tennant Creek which has a surfeit of educational facilities. Over time, it is likely that we will be forced to support a duplicated system in a town like Tennant Creek because ATSIC has decided that the needs of the Aborigines are such that they should have a separate education system.

We have seen it with health services. We have a magnificent health system and an excellent education system that meet the needs of Aboriginal people and provide specific programs for them. We do not need duplication. The Northern Territory government maintains that it has a responsibility to set direction, to set policy and to distribute funds in the Northern Territory in a way that is best suited to the needs of the entire community and not those of a small portion only. This plays havoc with the way we set our budgets and I believe it will be a growing problem for us.

Those same arguments apply to local government. We have seen the problem of federal bureaucracy overriding local government through the ADC and the land councils. Every effort has been made to override the interests of the wider community in local government. I will cite places such as Elliott and Borroloola where federal policies and legislation have caused enormous problems for the process of seeking to benefit people through the local government system.

ATSIC policy is to fund bodies that are fully Aboriginal. It cannot fund an organisation that is not fully Aboriginal. Under community government, many of our councils in Aboriginal communities are not entirely Aboriginal. They accommodate the needs of the white people in their community also. In fact, it is the only form of Aboriginal local government available. Certainly, nothing similar is available under part III of the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act. It is the only way that Aboriginal people can have control over all people in their communities, black or white. Because there is the capacity for whites to be represented on community government councils, theoretically at least, these cannot be funded by ATSIC. That is an outrageous situation and one that has to be addressed. Why should they be in doubt simply because they have some white representation? We have seen the problems in Elliott and Daguragu. Under its community government scheme, Daguragu recognises a white skin group and, theoretically, it will not be able to receive funds if those funds can be

seen in any way to benefit the white portion of the community. I think that is outrageous and it is something that everybody ought to feel outraged by.

The record of the Northern Territory government in providing services to Aboriginals is excellent. In fact, it cannot be bettered. I reiterate that the greatest effort that the Victorian government could put up as being the highlight of its program for Aboriginals for the year 1990 was that it was developing a 28-acre paddock for them in Victoria whereas we had pages of developmental projects and funds going into Aboriginal education, health, housing and local government. The only thing that Victoria could point to was a 28-acre paddock development for Aboriginals. That development was undertaken in conjunction with the Catholic Church. The government could not do even that on its own.

Since 1980, 15 isolated communities have taken up community government. By taking up community government, those communities also take on the powers and responsibilities that enable them to have more say in how their community develops. The member for Arnhem argued that ATSIC is the only means for people to do this. ATSIC will not give them the power to make laws because that would be to usurp the right of local government. If it is thought for 1 minute that the rights of local government will be usurped by ATSIC, they will have another think coming because, beyond doubt, they will have a fight on their hands. In the Northern Territory, local government is very strong and it is growing stronger by the year. Neither I nor this government will wear the authority of local government being usurped by this body called ATSIC.

In partnership with the Territory government, local councils are becoming involved in essential service contracts, building programs and training. In specific programs for Aboriginals, offered through the Division of Employment and Training in my department, we provide very worthwhile courses that bring Aboriginal people into the 20th century and make available to them the opportunity to raise money internally for their communities. The proportion of Aboriginal employees in the public service in the Northern Territory is higher than in any state. As I said, several training schemes are in place to improve on that.

Recently, several traditionally-oriented Aboriginals have expressed concern that ATSIC could lead to divisiveness among various Aboriginal groups. They have rights and responsibilities to speak for certain groups or areas according to traditional law, but ATSIC requires people to vote in an area in which they reside. Many town camp dwellers feel that they have no right to vote because they live outside that area. Whether that is a genuine concern or not, it is one that is felt and it has been expressed to me.

The Northern Land Council indicated last week that it would not support ATSIC. It changed its mind very quickly when Senator Bob Collins took up the cudgels on behalf of ATSIC. I am not sure what he promised the land council, but I remember that this is the same Senator who said last year of Pat Dodson, when he was given one of the jobs for the boys on the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Inquiry, that 'Pat has taken up that job while he waits for the ATSIC gravy train to come in'. That is the regard that Bob Collins has for ATSIC - it is a gravy train. I have no doubt that it could well be described as that.

The people of Peppimenarti have indicated quite clearly that they will not take part in the ATSIC elections. They refuse to provide any names for ATSIC. At Daly River, I was approached a few weeks ago by senior people who

said they had concerns and that they were considering not voting as well. Yesterday, I received a letter from Palumpa Station indicating that the people there were very concerned about the current actions of the now Regional Director of ATSIC in the Northern Territory. I understand that he is a man from Western Australia who has overridden the desire of the local people in respect of the very effective consultants that they use. He has brought his own consultants from Western Australia without consultation with those people. They too felt that they ought to boycott ATSIC. I am very much aware that pressure was brought to bear on Aboriginal communities to support ATSIC and to propose names. A number of people have spoken to me individually about that and I have no doubt that what they told me is genuine.

The major concern that I have now is that the Prime Minister indicated recently that, over the next 10 years, he would educate Australia to accept the treaty. I believe that ATSIC is his forum for that. We cannot treat with ourselves. A single government cannot treat with itself. However, here we have the makings of a separate sovereign government which can treat with the Australian government. I believe that that is all part of the plan of this present federal government, which has a strange twist. Let there be no doubt that the present government is capable of establishing a separate sovereign government for Aboriginals so that it can treat with the Commonwealth government within the next 10 years and create a treaty for which all Australians will become responsible, and for which all Australians will bear the cost.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will disregard outbursts of redneck paranoia and allegations that one thing signifies another and that all manner of things will happen 20 years down the line. Such comments are the hallmark of raving, redneck ratbags all over the world. This entire debate is quite wearisome. We know what lies behind the Chief Minister's motion. We know what it is about. Everybody saw that it achieved a front-page banner headline in the NT News, 'Perron Slams ATSIC Empire', even though the motion was not circulated to this side of the House until the Chief Minister was on his feet.

The Chief Minister's speech contains some incredible internal inconsistencies. Obviously, the motion was cobbled together at some stage. It contains the usual argy-bargy - considering this, recognising that, noting such and such, recognising so and so - before reaching paragraph 8: 'this Assembly declare unanimously that the people of the Northern Territory desire the Commonwealth to re-establish an equitable basis for the financial treatment of the Territory'. So what? Everybody would agree with that. It is quite noble.

The Chief Minister spent some 50 minutes criticising and slamming ATSIC. The early paragraphs in the motion refer to ATSIC. However, the action statements in the motion say nothing about ATSIC at all. They condemn the possibility of compensation and tell the Chief Minister to take the matter to the special Premiers Conference. The subject matter of this debate was obviously cobbled together at the last moment in order to provide a headline and a television grab so that a few people would say: 'The Chief Minister is getting stuck into ATSIC. He is referring to it in these terms and in those terms'.

The second paragraph of the motion states: 'recognising that the Commonwealth of Australia has imposed a new administrative tier to the bureaucratic framework responsible for the delivery of services to Aboriginal Territorians'. That terminology is quite correct. ATSIC is an

administrative tier. However, throughout his speech, the Chief Minister referred to ATSIC as 'the fourth tier of government'. I would have thought the Chief Minister would have known something about what a government is. We know that he has some failings in that regard, but one would expect him to realise that the essence of a government is legislative ability. Does ATSIC have legislative ability? Absolutely not. If government could be defined simply by the possession of powers, the Power and Water Authority would be another tier of government. It has powers under its legislation.

A member: It has elected representatives.

Mr EDE: I see. It is a matter of having elected representatives. That means that, if the Women's Advisory Council were reconstituted so that the various women's groups in the Northern Territory could elect representatives to the WAC, it would then become a fourth tier of government. What a load of cobblers!

ATSIC has not been charged with the types of responsibilities in the charters of legislative bodies, nor has it been given any legislative powers. Obviously, it is not a legislative body. It is simply an administrative tier which has been set up within the bureaucracy to try to achieve certain needs. Various federal funds are being provided to it. The funds provided formerly to DAA, ADC and Aboriginal Hostels have been provided to ATSIC with the intention that Aboriginal people themselves will start to make some decisions in respect of the distribution of these funds.

The Chief Minister went on at great length to make a series of allegations. I do not know whether they can be substantiated or not. When he delivers a speech at 11 am, without providing any advance notice of its contents, I am not in a position to determine whether specific allegations are right or wrong. However, he should accept that, if bureaucracies are wasting funds, allocating them incorrectly and using them for purposes which do not relate to the real needs of Aboriginal people on the ground, one of the best ways to rectify that would be to get Aboriginal people on the ground into decision-making positions so that they can blow the whistle on the people who are wasting money at the headquarters or at the regional level and demand that it be spent where it is needed. That is how ATSIC can address some of the problems raised by the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister talked at great length about the 9% cut in programs to combat substance abuse. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government spoke about waste, cuts and so on. He is the person who has just cut funding to the Tangentyere Council by 30%, leaving it in a very difficult situation in terms of continuing its programs, and putting at risk the results of millions of dollars worth of funding allocated by this government and by the federal government in the past.

The motion asks us to note that ATSIC 'has circulated a document which specifies that annual funding to ATSIC by the Commonwealth will be inflation adjusted' and goes on to say that the problem is that our funding is not inflation adjusted and that we have borne expenditure cuts. One would have thought that it would have been better to take the opposite tack and to argue that, if ATSIC's funding is inflation adjusted, our funding should also be inflation adjusted. It is not very productive to argue that our funding is not inflation adjusted and, therefore, ATSIC's funding should not be inflation adjusted. That does not make any sense at all.

The motion does not hang together at all. It has been put up in order to grab a headline but its end result will be to discredit the Territory and

to make us irrelevant as far as any real negotiations are concerned on what ATSIC is about. I would have thought that, by this stage, the government would be looking at it in a different way and would be saying: 'All this money will come into the Northern Territory government through these bodies. How can we ensure coordination of the programs that we, as the Northern Territory government, want to run and those that ATSIC is running? How will we set up the lines of liaison and support to ensure that they know what we are doing and we know what they are doing so that we can come to grips with the priorities for projects?' To me that is an essential thing that will have to occur with ATSIC.

There are very real dangers. We have one group howling down one road and another group howling down another road and all sorts of problems could occur. We could end up with worse situations than the one talked about before, where we have school buildings, but no houses. We have to come to grips with those problems, but we will not come to grips with them by motions such as this, jumping up and down, and slamming this ATSIC empire even before the elections have been held to select the people on the ground.

For this government to talk about waste is really the height of cheek. This is the government which claims that it has spent billions of dollars on Aboriginal people, and yet anybody who looks at the situation of Aboriginal people throughout my electorate would have to admit that they have not benefited by the waste, if that is what has occurred. Aboriginal people have not been the beneficiaries. Their living standards and conditions have not improved substantially as a result of the billions of dollars that the Northern Territory government has put into that.

Mr Reed: Nor with nearly a billion dollars a year that was spent by the federal government.

Mr EDE: Not in the Northern Territory. I am not saying that the federal government is not at fault, but I am not a minister. I am an opposition spokesman. I am not a member of the federal government. I am a member of this government.

Mr Coulter: You are not!

Mr EDE: No, that will be after the election. I am sorry. I keep getting confused.

I am a member of this parliament, and this debate is being held in this parliament and therefore I will point out where this government has had its failures. This government has claimed that it has spent billions of dollars on Aboriginal people over the last 12 years, and yet it cannot point to the improvements that one would have thought would be apparent following that expenditure. I get the feeling all the way through this that, basically, the Northern Territory government is saying that we have the type of problems that the Minister for Education spoke about when he described the failures in the delivery of education services to Aboriginal people over 12 years - and there has been 12 years of failure there.

The government wanted to find itself a whipping boy and therefore it decided to knock ATSIC: 'We will not look at our own delivery of services or our own expenditure of money. We will whip ATSIC around the yard a couple of times'. It is a pointless exercise that appears to be designed to create some sort of a self-fulfilling prophesy, to provoke disputes between ATSIC and the Northern Territory government, to ensure that there is no negotiated settlement of the real coordination problems, and to ensure that

that lack of coordination will result in mistakes. These mistakes will then be blamed on ATSIC. It is an attempt to knock ATSIC to the ground so that, once again, Aboriginal people will have no ability to stand up for themselves and indicate where they want the money spent and how they want it spent to meet their priorities. That is the essence of this new proposal. It is to give Aboriginal people an opportunity to decide how and where those dollars should be spent.

As I said before, I do not believe that ATSIC is perfect. I do not believe the structure ...

Mr Perron: Will it duplicate? Tell me that.

Mr EDE: It is replacing DAA, ADC and Aboriginal Hostels. There was duplication. A situation existed where an officer from DAA would be out bush, and some matter would be raised with him and he would say that that would have to be discussed with a person from ADC. When someone came out from ADC, he would say that it was something that Aboriginal Hostels handled. This move has combined those 3 bodies together so that there will be less duplication in the delivery of federal services than there was before. That is what ATSIC is seeking to achieve.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the amendment proposed which provides for the word 'ably' to be omitted from paragraph 6. We have no problem in recognising that the Northern Territory has been governed by its own elected government chosen by the people of the Northern Territory in 4 successive elections. That is fact. I have no doubt that it will be ably governed after the next election. Secondly, it is proposed that paragraph 9 be omitted because, apart from the fact that it bears no relationship whatsoever to anything that went before it, basically it is ridiculous to introduce something on the treaty into a debate that is principally about ATSIC. If we are talking about the treaty and the instrument of ...

Mr Perron: Don't you think the treaty will be negotiated with ATSIC? What other body could the treaty be negotiated with?

Mr EDE: I would be most surprised.

Mr Perron: Oh, really?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the treaty or the instrument of reconciliation has been supported by people from various political parties in the Northern Territory, and it has been supported by just about every conservative political head around Australia. It is only the Chief Minister in the Territory who has decided to grandstand on this.

The amendment proposes that paragraph 9 be omitted and replaced with something which is positive. Rather than referring to instruments of reconciliation or dissent and disharmony, we propose the insertion of: 'This Assembly commits itself to achieving an access to appropriate standards of living for all Territorians by the year 2000'. That is a laudable proposal, and it is one that we hope the government will include because, if we have that commitment to a time frame that we can work within, we can start planning to ensure that it happens.

Thirdly, the proposal condemning any notion that the taxpayers should fund some form of compensation as a consequence of a treaty or an instrument of reconciliation is too restrictive. Therefore, we propose that the following be added at the end of that paragraph: 'that results in payment

to individuals but rather may include funding from the federal government to state and territory governments and Aboriginal organisations to remove the imbalance and inequities that currently exist'. That is a sensible proposition. The real problem that the opposition has is the possibility that individuals will receive some type of hand-out in the form of compensation. However, if the whole process of working out an instrument of reconciliation, a treaty or whatever, is based on the fact that means will be made available so that, by the year 2000, the existing imbalances in our society are redressed and eliminated, obviously that would require funds. To say that no funds would be made available within this process is simply ridiculous. Nothing can be done without money in that regard.

I believe that those amendments will create a much more rational position for us to argue from. That would allow us to be seen to be positively flagging some of the areas that we are complaining about, of wanting to establish or re-establish an equitable basis for the financial future of the Territory, and of wanting to obtain a proposal for the development of standards and setting down some basic ground rules for how we believe that the instrument of reconciliation should be achieved. Those are positive motives. If the Chief Minister takes them to the special Premiers Conference, he will be able to find an area of commonality on which he can negotiate and on which he may possibly obtain some actual results. I hope that he will do that and that he will stop knocking it and recognise that it offers a chance for Aboriginal people to gain some control over the allocation of resources for programs.

If, in 4 years time or whatever, he says: 'I am the opposition leader in the Northern Territory, and I would like to propose a motion that these failures of ATSIC have been established. I have this evidence, and I think that the following changes should be made, then I, as the Deputy Chief Minister, will take them on board. I will listen to him and give him a good hearing as to whether we should look ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart has the audacity to talk about waste in this House. Nothing could match the waste involved in his attempt to defend the indefensible. He spent some time in the last sittings berating the good officers of the Department of Transport and Works for delivering a service at great cost to the Northern Territory taxpayer - not the Australian taxpayer - to his constituents.

Mr Bailey: All taxpayers.

Mr FINCH: They were paid for totally from Territory funds. The member for Wanguri will escape and join his fearless leader. Both of them are happy to chirp away in the background. That absence of the Leader of the Opposition and his total failure to contribute to this important debate on behalf of some 20% of the Territory's population is noted. When we come to talk about waste, the member for Stuart wishes to nitpick about minor matters that have occurred in his own electorate. As I said, these were pertaining to projects totally promoted and funded by the Northern Territory government.

The member for Arnhem had the absolute hide to talk about wanting better services and to state that ATSIC will deliver them. What rubbish! If it manages anywhere near 25% delivery of service, I will be astounded. It will come nowhere near matching the 90% effective delivery on the ground

of Territory funds to Aboriginal people. He lobbied on behalf of his constituents. Because it was on the priorities, we sealed the Milingimbi airstrip. Unfortunately, the cost of that project, which was originally thought to be less than $0.5m, blew out to $0.85m because it cost a great deal to get the aggregate, the bitumen and the sprayers to that community. Work on other airstrips had to be deferred to meet his desire to have a bitumen strip in his community. That was funded 100% by the Territory government. Will he apologise to other Aboriginal communities that have had to wait a little longer because his airstrip cost a bit more? He will not. Will he acknowledge that it was completed totally using Territory funds? He will not do that now. He would have done so at one time. Thanks to the Territory government, his people have a method of evacuation in times of cyclones and for medical and other emergencies during the wet season. What a hide he has to criticise this government for its lack of attention to better services in Aboriginal communities.

The only reason that we have not yet fully achieved our desire to provide appropriate services to every community in the Territory - apart from the fact that it costs a great deal more than it does to provide them in suburbia - is that we do not receive 1¢ of assistance from the federal government. We are preparing a submission pleading for some additional input to try to accelerate that program to meet the $70m-worth of expenditure to upgrade airstrips, barge landings and internal roads, or what the federal government likes to define as 'private roads'. It is true that they are on 'private land', but these are Territory citizens and we treat them equally, unlike the federal Labor government. We are not cringing at all, as the member for Arnhem tried to suggest, in relation to our level of funding. We are quite proud to say that, on a per capita basis, Aboriginal people do much better in terms of the direct delivery of services. That is because it costs much more to put those services in place, to run power stations and to run water supply systems.

All the Chief Minister was doing was quoting from the federal budget papers. We are simply focusing on the real budgetary impact of ATSIC. It is all very nice to have a state-of-the-art bureaucracy. However, before we get there, a much better proposal would have been to channel all funds for the improvement of the lot of Aboriginal people through the Northern Territory government. The dollars would go 3 times as far. They would not be squandered on a massive bureaucracy of 1000 people or whatever it is. Contrary to what the member for Stuart would have us believe, we have a very competent public service which delivers the goods efficiently. What makes me really cranky is that, in the main, this efficient delivery is made on behalf of his constituents. The constituents of Leanyer barely see a government project. Their needs have been met, but a major proportion of the dollars spent over the last decade have gone to the constituents of the member for Stuart's electorate. It is appalling that he fails to recognise that. All he does is bad mouth good officers of the Department of Transport and Works.

It is good enough for him to run around the bush and claim credit by saying that he has secured a drilling rig from the Power and Water Authority or a grader from the Department of Transport and Works. He is a sneaky and mealy-mouthed man. No wonder a bloke becomes cranky when, on the one hand, the honourable member bad mouths him and, on the other hand, he tries to claim credit for what Northern Territory government agencies and departments do for his people. It is shameful.

What will this do to solve the problems in respect of the former ADC? How many projects have we heard about? The ADC made a great decision to

finance Terry Nichols' trucks, for goodness sakes! He is not an Aboriginal. His wife claims some Aboriginal blood, and that is fine; it is her prerogative. But what an appalling business decision! We all know where the man has come from and where he is going. We know the sort of business operator he is. Already, he has funding up to the eyeballs from private lending institutions and they will top it. All they have done is load him over the gunwale. It is ridiculous!

What about ABCON, the Aboriginal construction group from Katherine? The people in that group were top plant operators and top bush workers. Each of those 6 fellows is capable of making money. In the main, they were blocked by the land councils which could not stand the thought that they might pick up a bit of work in Aboriginal communities and elsewhere in the public arena. When it came to obtaining gravel for a couple of Northern Territory government projects which ABCON had tendered for and won, what did the land councils do? After 18 months, the group is still waiting for a decision about access to gravel, a decision which the local traditional owners have approved. There is a proliferation of such examples.

Where are we now? What can ATSIC fund as far as business enterprise is concerned? As we have heard, it can fund only fully Aboriginal groups. Not only that, I understand that it can fund only fully Aboriginal community groups. In other words, if an Aboriginal group decides to structure itself as a private enterprise business, it is ineligible. I am well aware of a group in Darwin, comprising dancers and other arts workers, who try to provide themselves with a living. I will not name them here because that would probably result in ATSIC giving them a rap over the knuckles. Fortunately, that group has been able to come to the Northern Territory government. Although we have not been able to meet all of its needs, at least we have provided it with a small amount to assist in promoting the skills and talents of its members. However, ATSIC turns its back on this group because it does not meet the criteria. The process of helping Aboriginal people will be even more cumbersome than it has been historically and, I dare say, more ineffective.

The member for Stuart made some ineffective and improper suggestions that the Department of Transport and Works fails to deliver and that it wastes funds. During the last sittings, the member for Stuart claimed that Territory inspectors were not up to scratch in respect of some bush work. I reject that suggestion for a start. Those inspectors are highly skilled and they take pride in their work. They will certainly have a think about the member for Stuart and his party, come the next election. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can tell you honestly that I receive more complaints about the meticulous supervision of those inspectors than I do about any lack of it. In fact, offhand I know of no complaints of that nature, apart from those made by the member for Stuart. He claimed that they were short-staffed and unable to inspect contracts before payment was made. Nonsense! All progress claims are assessed prior to certification. There are a couple of exceptions which reflect mainly on period contractors where ongoing works are involved and there is an opportunity to have any defects remedied between progress payments.

The member for Stuart claimed that often inspectors cannot go out to work sites. He says that the contractors are paid 85% of the fee with 15% being retained and that, when the inspectors do go out to inspect work, contractors often decide that it is not worth the effort to complete the balance and therefore scoot off holding the bag. Nonsense! I said that all works are inspected prior to payment but, regardless of that, all contracts are under standard NPWC standard general conditions of contract, whose

procedures require that all claims be assessed on site. Notwithstanding that, payment is not made on acceptance of work done under the conditions of the contract. Acceptance occurs only after the contractor has fulfilled all his obligations under the contract. If he fails or defaults, the contract may be cancelled or taken over and completed at the contractor's expense.

From time to time, we have had some indigestion when a contract has not been completed properly and the department has brought in another contractor to finish the works. Obviously, completing somebody else's job entails a cost penalty. Often, the defaulting contractor ends up having to repay money to the department because the total cost of the project has exceeded the original contract fee. The person who accepts contractual responsibility for that overrun is the original contractor. Once again, the member for Stuart has been promoting a nonsense.

The honourable member quoted some examples, such as the Nyirripi School septic tank, where the inspection holes were supposedly left open for 3 months. The only work at Nyirripi which involved the Department of Transport and Works was the relocation of a caravan for the Department of Education. That work was done, and it was inspected on 5 September 1989. There was no problem whatsoever with the job. However, a women's centre was built at Nyirripi. It was built by the Commonwealth. Whilst it is none of our business, we understand at officer level that there is a continuing dispute between the plumber and the builder. Maybe that is what the member for Stuart was talking about when he falsely accused the Department of Transport and Works of leaving sewage pit inspection lids off. Once again, he failed to get the facts.

The member for Stuart spoke too about some plumbing problems at Alpurrurrulam which occurred in 1987. I wrote to the honourable member and acknowledged that there were some minor problems. We could not get to the bottom of the matter because the work was carried out 2 or 3 years ago and the people who were directly involved have since left the Territory. That was explained to him. The only defect was that an incorrect drain, 50 mm instead of 100 mm, was installed. The irony of that little exercise was that, if the experienced plumber who obviously provided advice to the member for Stuart had notified the department 18 months or so sooner, there would have been no problem. The retention moneys were still being held and we could have had the problem fixed then. But the person concerned sat on his hands, or perhaps the honourable member did not pass the information on. If that was the case, and it is more than likely to have been the case, he has a responsibility to Territory taxpayers to explain the waste of those dollars spent by the Northern Territory government in his electorate.

We know that problems arise in the bush from time to time. They arise because of difficult access, the difficulty involved in obtaining the services of tradesmen in remote places, and the high cost of the works. Generally, however, the quality of the product delivered out in the bush on behalf of Territorians, at the expense of the Territory government rather than the federal government, is of a high standard. If there are problems, the member for Stuart has a responsibility to advise the department so that they can be fixed within the time frame appropriate to the contract. In all his ranting and raving, he has not identified a single problem in terms of administration or contract supervision.

As for waste, there is a clearly demonstrated difference between the performances of the Territory and Commonwealth departments responsible for construction. Those differences can be seen clearly around the town. We are worlds apart. Fortunately for Territorians, whether they be Aboriginal

people looking for improved services or contractors who get better value from the increased productivity of our projects, Territory jobs are streets ahead. We are proud of the work we have done for and on behalf of Aboriginal Territorians and all other Territorians. The Chief Minister's motion has certainly got up the nose of opposition speakers, but only because this side of the House has a more genuine and fundamental understanding of Aboriginal matters. Every time we mention the word 'Aboriginal', the members opposite fall out of their trees. Let them get back in their trees where they belong, open their minds and read what has been put to them. I am sure that, when they do so, they will have to agree that this motion makes sense.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in his speech to the National Press Club on 19 July, the Prime Minister signalled that it was his intention, at the end of October, to hold a major conference on Australia's federal system with a view to making some long overdue changes. I suppose it was too much to expect that the Northern Territory government would react in the considered manner displayed by the Prime Minister in announcing this initiative. Of course, what we have heard today is the normal Northern Territory government shoot-from-the-hip response to serious initiatives proposed elsewhere.

I will comment on the motion a little later. At this stage, I note that it is a bit strange that what I thought to be the most important part of the motion has not been mentioned by any of the speakers, apart from a brief reference by the Chief Minister. I refer to the opportunity that we will have at the conference in Brisbane at the end of October to put forward a case for an equitable basis for the financial treatment of the Territory. That stands out to me as the most important aspect. However, it is a sign of the sophistication and level of this debate that not one of the speakers opposite saw fit to seek opposition support for that section of the motion. Instead, as is their wont, they have been attempting to denigrate 25% of the population of the Northern Territory.

I want to take the opportunity to talk about the Prime Minister's initiative and how exciting it can be if we approach it in a rational, logical and cooperative way. I hope that there will be a detailed document in the Chief Minister's baggage when he goes to Brisbane. Obviously, there will be the rhetoric in this motion except for the paragraph that I have outlined. Hopefully, there will be a serious response from the Northern Territory government to the statement and the accompanying papers from the Prime Minister and others about federalism in Australia towards the beginning of the 21st century and how it is important that we start considering changes.

I want to read some extracts from the Prime Minister's speech. In a clear statement to the National Press Club, he demonstrated exactly what he is trying to do. He said: 'The time has come to form a closer partnership between our 3 levels of government - Commonwealth, state and local. Our first task is to move by sensible, practicable steps to get better cooperation within the framework of the federal Constitution as it stands'. That is where the Prime Minister proposes - I believe appropriately - that everybody should focus their main effort. The second task is 'to apply the spirit of national cooperation in a new approach to reform of the Constitution itself'. Traditionally, that is a very difficult task indeed. The goals for those 2 tasks are 'to improve our national efficiency and international competitiveness and to improve the delivery and quality of the services that governments provide'. Those are admirable goals which I hope that we would all support.

He gave a few graphic examples. The one that strikes me is the Balkanisation of the railway system. He gave an example: 'A cargo container being sent by rail between Sydney and Perth may be subject to 3 non-integrated rail systems, 4 changes of locomotives, 5 different safe working systems, 6 different sizes of loading gauge, 10 different engineering standards of the basic standard gauge rail track, and 12 or more hours at sidings or junctions for crew changes, refuelling and inspections'. I pick out that example because, as the member for Stuart has already indicated, if we can obtain some major improvements in railway efficiency throughout the rest of Australia, that will considerably enhance the prospects of our obtaining our own railway. I would hope that, in Brisbane, the Chief Minister will address practical matters such as the improvement of the railway system throughout Australia.

Other important matters mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech included schools in different states having different minimum starting ages, different patterns of schooling at primary and secondary level, different curricula and different ways of assessing Year 12 students. If we can obtain a common approach across the various education systems, we will be doing better as well.

Lawyers, doctors and other professionals may have qualifications from the best universities in Australia or the world but, to work outside their home state, they need a licence from a state licensing board. It is time that we looked at that. We have also the shrinking of our small manufacturing sector into even smaller markets as a result of particular state arrangements. We force manufacturers to put different labels and different packages on the same products. We have 3 different state definitions for bread. One state demands that margarine be sold only in a package shaped like a cube. Each state has its own separate design requirements for water meters and its own quality standards for chemicals used in agriculture. Two states forbid a certain kind of heavy semi-trailer that is legal everywhere else. Although work is being done on this, there is no uniformity among states on the time truckies can spend behind a wheel. Each state issues its own drivers' licences. There are hundreds of examples of areas where, as a nation, we are selling ourselves short and where - to go back to that important first objective outlined by the Prime Minister - we can take sensible, practical steps to get better cooperation within the framework of the federal Constitution as it stands.

I hope that, beyond the rhetoric that obviously the Chief Minister will take with him for his own political purposes - and that rhetoric is detailed in the motion before us today - there will be a solid basis to the arguments that he will present on behalf of all Territorians, that he will recognise that he is charged on behalf of all Northern Territorians to contribute in a cooperative manner to the important debate that will occur in Brisbane, and that he will be able to report that Premiers, Chief Ministers and the Prime Minister have been able to agree on sensible, practical steps to get rid of some of the unwanted baggage that we have accumulated over almost 100 years of federalism.

That is the important task. We must get rid of the outmoded rail system and put in place uniform systems that will do much more to increase productivity, national efficiency and international competitiveness than any concerns that the Chief Minister might have about ATSIC. When he goes to Brisbane, the Chief Minister has a heavy responsibility on behalf of all Territorians to put the interest of Territorians fairly, seriously and persistently. The Prime Minister has recognised that one of the major tasks of his fourth term of government has to be to make progress in this

important area of federal-state relationships, where we have all recognised for a number of years that there have been major problems and serious duplication which costs the Australian community hundreds of millions of dollars. We waste hundreds of millions of dollars through unnecessary duplication between federal, state and territory systems of government.

No one knows what the proper mix of functions should be between the Commonwealth, the states and the territories. However, I know that we do not have the proper and the appropriate mix at present. I know that, as rational politicians in a mature country that is heading towards its first hundred years of federalism, it is time that we started to approach those issues in a serious and competent manner. As I have said, the Chief Minister is charged to do that on our behalf. I hope that he will take that responsibility seriously. If he has nothing else in his baggage except this simple motion, we will not get anywhere at all. Once again, the interests of the Northern Territory will be treated as a sideshow while the real ball game goes on in another ballpark. The challenge that the Chief Minister has is to present the Northern Territory's arguments in a competent and coherent manner.

To address the motion briefly, it is extremely relevant to raise at the federalism conference the issue of the funding base for the financial treatment of the Northern Territory but also, by extension, the funding base for the financial treatment of the states of Australia and the funding base for the treatment of local government. It is time that the grace-and-favour basis of treatment of local government by federal and state governments was examined very closely and time too that we examined where improvements can be made in that situation.

Mr Perron: Are you going to stop them contracting out work? That is the paternalism that you adopt towards local government.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, as I said, it is time that we had a look at whether there is a more appropriate way, a more formal way, of providing funds to local governments rather than allowing the federal, the state and territory governments to shuffle their funds around on a year-to-year basis. Whether we like it or not, they are the third level of government. If it came to a contest between eliminating the second or the third level of government in a popular referendum, I suspect that the second level of government would lose out.

Mr Perron: You have to be joking.

Mr SMITH: I am not joking at all.

In relation to the ATSIC proposition advanced by the Chief Minister, I thought that the speeches made by my colleagues had demonstrated quite clearly the fallacy of his argument. We have heard the Chief Minister trying to convince the population of the Northern Territory that ATSIC is the fourth arm of government. He might have even used the word 'legislative' - the fourth legislative arm of government. The second paragraph of the motion refers to the imposition of 'a new administrative tier to the bureaucratic framework'. What nonsense! It is not a new administrative tier but a genuine attempt by the federal government to tell Aboriginal people that the money that is being spent on Aboriginal programs should be spent according to their priorities.

One of the main lessons that I have learnt from the alcohol debate that is occurring in the Northern Territory is that we cannot tell Aboriginal

people how to solve their drinking problems. The solution has to come from them. The Chief Minister himself advances that belief in this House whenever the alcohol debate arises, and I agree 100%. There is no point in our legislating in an endeavour to control Aboriginal drinking problems because it will not work. Studies indicate that the successes that have been achieved, particularly in central Australia, have been made by Aboriginal organisations and self-help organisations that share the problem and obtain the answers. In ATSIC, we simply have an extension of that.

We are giving to a considerable group of Australia's population the money that we spent previously on their areas. We will be accepting that we have not done it well and that, 8 or 9 years from the end of the century, we still have a situation where there are people living in poverty, people who do not have a proper water supply, people who have medical standards that belong to the third world and a life expectancy more likely to be found in Bangladesh than should be found in Australia. It is hardly a very successful record of Labor and Liberal governments, state and federal, over the last 100 years. It has not worked. The bureaucratic systems that we have had in place to deliver services to Aboriginal communities simply have not worked. The results are there on the ground for everybody to see. There are people with a life expectancy half that of yours and mine, people who know that their kids will not get past Year 8 or 9 unless they are very lucky. There are people who do not have even a regular and reliable water supply.

That is the background to the federal government's effort to examine another way of delivering services to Aboriginal communities. It has decided that the way to do that is to ask Aboriginal people themselves to identify their own priorities. I ask honourable members opposite what is wrong with that? In the process, the Aboriginal people might be able to get some sort of coordination into the delivery of programs and services into Aboriginal communities, and stop what is a major problem for those communities, and that is representatives of government departments flying in and out at will. I have seen a chart, and I think it was prepared by the office of the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, that shows there are some 30 different government and semi-government organisations that have regular relationships with Aboriginal communities. From memory, 13 or 14 of them are Northern Territory government instrumentalities.

Mr Perron: Do you think ATSIC will help?

Mr SMITH: No, it will not help the way you people deliver services to Aboriginal communities, but certainly it might help the Commonwealth in the way it delivers services to Aboriginal communities.

One of the major problems with the concept of mainstreaming is that that mainstreaming has not been accompanied by any sense of coordination at all. People from Northern Territory government departments, Commonwealth government departments and Aboriginal organisations are tripping over each other in Aboriginal communities, trying to tell those communities what is best for them.

Mr Perron: There should not be any Commonwealth department there.

Mr SMITH: Say that again.

Mr Perron: The Commonwealth should vacate the field to the states because the states can deliver the services better. That is what I am saying.

Mr SMITH: Have you heard of a referendum that we conducted in Australia in 1967, one of the few that was passed?

Mr Coulter: Yes. What has that got to do with it?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am amazed! The Chief Minister is a true democrat and a true believer in the constitutional system that we have in Australia.

Mr Perron: Are you suggesting that we should vacate the field to the Commonwealth?

Mr SMITH: No. I am suggesting that, at the conference that the Prime Minister has proposed, in respect of that area and all other areas involving the delivery of government services at the 3 levels, the Chief Minister will have the opportunity to sit down to treat with others, as serious and mature adults, and to say that we have a problem, that we are wasting huge sums on duplication of services and that the conference presents an opportunity to do something about it. I conclude by calling on the Chief Minister to take that responsibility seriously and to be a serious participant in these far-reaching discussions which could and should change the shape of the way we do business between federal, state and territory governments in Australia.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I do not know what the 1967 referendum had to do with this debate in terms of duplication of services but, of course, the Territory did not have the right to vote in that referendum anyway. Since when did the Commonwealth ever deliver services to the Northern Territory? If honourable members cast their minds back to the days prior to 1978 and reflect on what has happened in terms of the delivery of services since self-government in 1978, one does not have to be a very wise man to see the difference there. Even the Leader of the Opposition would be able to recognise that.

This debate is about duplication. The statistics relating to Aboriginals in Australia are interesting. To become an Aboriginal, you simply answer 'Yes' to question 9 on the census paper which asks whether you are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent. The definition is based on self-perception. That is how it is done. 34 739 people in the Northern Territory answered 'Yes' to question 9. That is 22.2% of our population. For Australia, 227 645 people answered 'Yes' to question 9. That is 1.3% of Australia's population. This 227 645 would be roughly equivalent to perhaps the number of people in 3 House of Representatives electorates. Thus, roughly speaking, 3 members of the House of Representatives would look after that number of people.

However, under the ATSIC proposal, 800 people will be looking after 227 645 people. That is a fact. My arithmetic is not too good this afternoon, but I believe that the total number of members in all Australian parliaments combined would be fewer than 800. About 750 people in governments around Australia look after 16 million people as their elected representatives. That is the type of duplication that is proposed here for a start. The departments should have been abolished, as the Chief Minister said, and either the Territory or the Commonwealth should do it.

In 1901, the Commonwealth government was established to look after defence, foreign affairs and immigration, quarantine, and to run the post office. In the beginning, it was a pretty simple deal. It now has responsibilities for education even though it has no students, and for health even though it has no hospitals or patients. It is absolute nonsense. Whilst I will be accused of being paternalistic, I will state that I feel sorry for the Aboriginal people. They have more bureaucracy to deal with than anyone else, and we have enough. They must be totally confused by it.

From the debacle over the nominations and the Northern Land Council's call for a boycott of the ATSIC elections, we can see the enthusiasm that Aboriginals feel for this new tier of government and bureaucracy. It was only in the last 2 days that they got anybody. The week before, they had 3 nominations for some 100 positions.

Mr Perron: They put the pressure on.

Mr Poole: There were 15 television advertisements.

Mr COULTER: Yes. Mr Speaker, that was the level of enthusiasm that gripped the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory following the wonderful television advertisements - 3 people had nominated within days before the nominations were to close. Then what happened? Along came Senator Collins who sat down with the Northern Land Council. All of a sudden, it changed its mind. There would be no boycott and it would support ATSIC.

That lack of enthusiasm is nothing compared to what the man on the street feels about it. People already resent what they perceive as 2 sets of rules - one for all of us and another for Aboriginals. They do not like different land laws, different legal aid laws, different welfare criteria, and different rules about school attendance. We have all heard it said that Aboriginal children are paid to go to school. The rest of us pay for the privilege. There is now to be a separate government system whose electors are determined solely on the basis of race. It is unheard of. The only other place in the world which still divides voters on the basis of race is South Africa, and that is changing. We are going backwards in this country where we are stipulating racial qualifications for electoral purposes.

Let no one doubt that ATSIC is another tier of government. It has 17 regional councils and, from those councils, others will be elected to the commission. It has all the hallmarks of an elected government. Whatever Mr Tickner or the Leader of the Opposition might tell us, it is an elected government which will have budgetary powers over a host of services - health, education, employment, training, water, power, sewerage, housing, hostels, law, land use and more. ATSIC creates separate and different systems of government and administration. ATSIC drives a clear wedge between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in electoral terms and in administrative terms, and it does it in racial terms. There are 2 people in Australia today who are doing their utmost to promote division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. One is old blue eyes himself, as the Chief Minister referred to him - old blue eyes Mansell - with his provisional Aboriginal government. The other is old silver, Rt Hon Bob Hawke, with his ATSIC. They are the 2 people who are promoting this.

In a little over a month, our Chief Minister must attend a special Premiers Conference the main agenda item of which is an end to government duplication. Isn't it ironical that he will be going down there to talk

about duplication? At the same time, almost to the day, when the Chief Minister is seeking to dismantle the costly and wasteful duplication of services by the Commonwealth government in the Territory in areas such as land rights, national parks, uranium mining, supervision and control of Aboriginal matters, the Commonwealth will be constructing the most costly, wasteful, unwelcome and unwanted - by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians - system ever seen in Australia. It will be the greatest duplication effort ever made in the history of the federation of Australia.

The only people who want to see ATSIC are those in the Aboriginal industry whose invention it is - those who will expand its powers in direct proportion to their own desires and for their own self-promotion. What does the latest report on these people in the Aboriginal industry say about them. I quote the statement appended to the report, 'Our Future, Ourselves', by the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the federal parliament, Duncan Kerr. These are the people who want ATSIC, the only people who really are pushing for ATSIC - the white advisers:

> In theory, community advisers are a means of facilitating self-determination and self-management by providing the expertise lacking in discrete Aboriginal communities. In practice, the system has, in many cases, had an adverse impact on the people it is meant to assist. These employees are recruited in a very ad hoc fashion. They receive absolutely no training, receive little or no support and are difficult to get rid of should they prove to be incompetent. They are not always fully accountable for their actions.

It is my bet that that description of the individuals will soon fit ATSIC itself, just as it fits the land council bureaucracy we have already. In short, it will have an adverse impact on the people it is meant to assist and will be difficult, probably impossible, to get rid of should it prove to be incompetent.

Let us not forget some of the other well-documented issues concerning what this government within a government will do. I will quote from Pat Dodson. This is from the book 'Red Over Black', which some honourable members would have read. It says:

> Father Pat Dodson, a part-Aborigine, has been in conflict with Bishop O'Loughlin of Darwin for supporting Aboriginal religion. Father Dodson made the revealing statement that the Federation of Aboriginal Land Councils would try to show the world that Noonkambah is not just an isolated event, that it is part of an ongoing system of oppression and exploitation of Aboriginal people in Australia. On the day following the Alice Springs meeting, the Melbourne Age reported: 'An organiser of the federation meeting, Father Pat Dodson, said: "There will be no agreement until the federal government comes to terms with the fact that we are a sovereign nation, a nation within a nation"'.

That is what we have. In no other part of the world, other than in South Africa, would you have voting on racial grounds. It is a disgrace.

Let us have a look at the treaty. Once a sovereign nation is established within a sovereign nation, it will not be too hard to have a treaty. We know what the ALP position is on the treaty. The member for Arnhem made that quite clear. I quote from the Centralian Advocate of Friday 4 May 1990:

> 'Labour would go it alone on Black Treaty', says Lanhupuy. The Territory Labor Party would consider signing its own treaty with Territory Aborigines if elected to government.

That was what he said only a few days ago. He has changed his mind.

> Opposition Aboriginal affairs spokesman, Wes Lanhupuy, said the Territory ALP government would commence negotiations immediately if a national treaty was removed from the federal agenda. Mr Lanhupuy was responding to calls from the Chief Minister, Marshall Perron, to make the Labor Party's policy on a treaty public. Mr Perron said the Territory Labor Party's policy was to support a treaty and to support compensation for Aboriginal people, but Mr Lanhupuy scoffed at Mr Perron's claim and said: 'Compensation would go towards improving health and living standards for Aborigines. We are looking at compensation, not only in cash payment. We would look at areas where we can inject funds to raise the standard of living and health services'.

Nobody disagrees with that, and nobody disagrees that it should be done. I supply many of those services, such as clean water, sewerage services and electricity, to those communities. It is very expensive and there is not much return in terms of the user-pays principle. However, that is their position. They will go it alone and sign a treaty themselves.

This is only step 1. A government is to be elected on racial grounds. That would not happen anywhere else in the world. The Aboriginal people did not show much interest in it. The Northern Land Council intended to boycott it. The only people who want this are the white advisers. There are 227 645 Aboriginals in Australia, about the same number of people as there are in 3 federal electorates. They will have 800 representatives. It is a disgrace, Mr Speaker!

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion and to add a few comments to those that have been made. Quite obviously, I will be dealing particularly with matters associated with the health aspects of this debate. Before I do that, I would like to refer to a couple of comments, particularly those made by the Leader of the Opposition.

The contribution of the Leader of the Opposition was quite amazing. He tried to avoid the issues for as long as he could and he managed to do that until the last 10 minutes of his available time when, finally, he had to address the actual subject of the debate. The contents of his speech reflected his way of thinking. What did he say? He talked about the problems of duplication of services in the context of the Prime Minister's new federalism initiatives. In every example he used, he talked about whether certain powers and functions of states need to be coordinated by a central government authority.

No one would argue about the benefits that would accrue from standardisation of railways and a whole range of other issues. It was quite astonishing, however, that the Leader of the Opposition did not refer to some of the really central issues of duplication. As the Deputy Chief Minister said, he missed the fact that the Commonwealth health department spends hundreds of millions of dollars yet does not have a patient. The Commonwealth has a housing department which does not build houses. What a joke! Those are the areas where there is real duplication, amounting to many millions of dollars. As we address the issue of ATSIC, again we find

gross duplication, triplication and quadruplication. It adds to the confusion of intergovernment relations.

The Leader of the Opposition offered no sense of balance between the roles of the Commonwealth and the states. His comments were all about transferring powers from the states to the Commonwealth. Of course, that has been the great concern about this new federalism concept which is being promoted by the Prime Minister. I attended a ministerial conference recently at which certain Labor state ministers said, not for the first time, that if the Commonwealth wants this new federalism to work, it is about time it started putting some things on the table. As far as they were concerned, health and education were at the top of the list. But, so far, we have heard nothing from the Commonwealth. We will certainly have to think about such matters if the Commonwealth wants to pursue this concept.

As Australia becomes more integrated in terms of communications and so on, clearly it is important to have a coordination of policies and practices throughout Australia. That can be achieved whilst retaining the essential benefit of federalism, which is that the delivery of services in different parts of Australia can be targeted specifically to meet the special needs which apply in local circumstances. That is the essence of federalism. It is one of the reasons why Australia is constituted as a federation and not a unitary state. Australia is not the same all over. Nobody can say that circumstances in the Northern Territory resemble those of Victoria or Tasmania in any way. We have to address those differences.

The federal government and the states need to accept that fact and to work together on developing national policies on issues. Increasingly, that is being achieved through ministerial councils, where we work as equal partners on developing national policies. The Commonwealth must also accept its other fundamental role as the principal collector of taxes to provide funds to the various regions of Australia.

Mr Collins: It has never been given that power.

Mr HATTON: It has it. The Commonwealth is the principal source of revenue in Australia because it is the principal tax collection source. If it coordinates policy development and acts as a funding source whilst accepting that the role of the states is one of service delivery, we can start to bring some rationality to federalism in Australia and to improve the delivery of services in the manner which is most appropriate to the communities we serve.

That will see the time when we will begin to overcome some of the duplication and other nonsense which we have to put up with at present. We will not have, for example, a duplicated parks service in the Northern Territory because Canberra power-mongers have decided that they particularly wish to run a national park and a couple of social experiments. That will be when we will no longer have duplication in the administration of health and education services, which can be delivered at state level with the Commonwealth providing valuable funding support. The Commonwealth will be able to provide more funds for service delivery and less for its own bureaucracy or, heaven forbid, it might actually reduce the tax burden on the citizens of Australia.

There are options which are available through a 2-way street, not a 1-way street, and the Leader of the Opposition and all members opposite need to look at that. Of course, that is what is fundamentally wrong with ATSIC. We have heard from the Chief Minister example after example of

waste. In almost every case, that waste is occurring because of the duplication of services which are being delivered by the states and the Northern Territory, as they should be. I agree with the member for Arnhem in one respect and that is that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are Territorians, and our government has a responsibility to deliver services to them.

However, one cannot have one's cake and eat it too. The problem with ATSIC is that it will have an equal or more than equal share of the Northern Territory's money. Since self-government, this government has spent 80% per capita more on Aboriginal people than it has spent on non-Aboriginal people. We do not object to that. That expenditure is needed. However, we find now that ATSIC is to receive an extra $1000m to duplicate and compete on the provision of services. There are too many examples of waste, right across the board.

During the last sittings, I referred to one of many examples of pure ATSIC ideology. It concerned hepatitis B vaccination for Aboriginal children under the age of 6. There are 4500 Aboriginal children under the age of 6 in the Territory. ATSIC made $450 000 available for that project. For that amount of money, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services could have vaccinated every Aboriginal child in the Territory under the age of 6. ATSIC said no. It said that $200 000 had to go to the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, $200 000 to Anyinginyi Congress in Tennant Creek and $50 000 to the Department of Health and Community Services. The result is that only 1500 children will be vaccinated. 2700 will miss out. That is the problem with the ideology which ATSIC promotes.

This is the third time I have raised this matter in the House and it really angers me. The important thing is that the kids be vaccinated against hepatitis B, not the fact that an Aboriginal organisation carries out the vaccinations. That is the sort of problem we are confronting with this nonsense of ATSIC. There is $1000m-worth of waste. If that funding were to be put into the state organisations specifically set up to deliver services, we could start to improve dramatically the delivery of those services. Imagine what we could do with $150m in extra funds - and that is only 15% of ATSIC-controlled funding?

If we had that $150m, which represents what is due to the Northern Territory on the basis that 15% of Australia's population lives here, that money could be spent on making pure water available in communities, building houses in communities and establishing sewerage systems in communities. It could be used to run preventive health programs in communities, to get health centres operating and to increase staffing for primary health care. We could do so much with $150m in the Northern Territory. But what happens instead? A bunch of bureaucrats in Canberra is funded to engage in navel-gazing and develop theories about what should be done. It is a national disgrace, and it is about time people stood up to it. I feel very strongly about this because it is such a waste. Of course, every time we raise these issues, the opposition talks about black-versus-white issues and the prospect of a black-versus-white election. The opposition does not talk about waste in terms of the delivery of services to Aboriginal people. It completely ignores that.

I am really sad today because, for the first time since I have been a member of this parliament, I have to say that the member for Arnhem speaks out of both sides of his mouth. Today, in this House, he said that the Northern Territory Branch of the Labor Party is not interested in a treaty

because it is a federal government problem. However, we have just heard his words quoted from the Centralian Advocate. He says one thing to Aboriginal people in that constituency and something else to the white constituency. I know that, personally, he has concerns about ATSIC. Nevertheless, he stands here as the puppet of his party, mouthing off about how terrible our service delivery is and why the Commonwealth is better. Does he remember our experience under the Commonwealth until 1978? Does he remember the disgraceful circumstances that we inherited?

There were no schools in the communities, no water supply services and no facilities. They did not have anything out there. In 1978, there were 95 outstations in the Northern Territory yet now there are about 600. We have provided health centres, schools and many other facilities, and the statistics speak for themselves. Successive CLP governments have introduced a whole range of initiatives leading to jobs for and the direct involvement of Aboriginal people. The record speaks for itself wherever one looks. We have Aboriginal police aides and health workers, Aboriginal involvement, Aboriginal growth and development, and Aboriginal assertiveness. Every Territorian is able to see what has occurred and it is something we should be proud of. In spite of that, the member for Arnhem says that people want to stick with the Commonwealth, with the people who ignored them for 70 years. It is an outrage to his people. He sits as a member of this parliament and says that his people do not want to be associated with this parliament. It is outrageous.

Mr Ede: No, with your government. That is what he said.

Mr HATTON: It is absolutely terrible.

Mr Ede: It is quite understandable.

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart says that they do not like to work with our government. That is funny. They do not have any trouble at all putting their hands out for jobs, money, support and assistance and, except when there is a conflict like this, they are quite happy to say what a wonderful job the Northern Territory government is doing. It is a matter of how much more we could do on the ground with the money that is being spent on ATSIC bureaucrats?

There should be Aboriginal involvement in decision-making, and it should be done directly with the Northern Territory government, not duplicated with the Commonwealth. We have a crazy situation here. We will have over 800 people elected to represent 225 000 people. In the Northern Territory, I believe that some 70 people are to be elected to various ATSIC subregional, regional and Territory councils. They reckon we are overgoverned with 25 people representing the entire Northern Territory, yet they will have over 70 representatives, and that is not to carry out direct administrative functions. The ATSIC bureaucracy, the old Department of Aboriginal Affairs renamed, is still there in its full glory, and this new structure has been put between it and its minister, and the member for Stuart says they have not created a new structure. I would like to know what they call it.

Mr Ede: New government, I said. Get it right.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, let us look at health and the type of pressure that ATSIC creates. We know now that the Commonwealth government has succeeded in achieving the marginalisation of Aboriginal health at a national level. It has shovelled it into ATSIC. It was interesting to note

the arm-twisting that took place at the Health Ministers Conference in June in Brisbane. A proposal was going forward dealing with the importance of Aboriginal health staying within the health portfolios, and I will refer to a couple of the issues. It said:

> It is essential for the health department to retain control of the Aboriginal health agenda as it does with the health agenda for the community as a whole. ATSIC has every intention of targeting health issues as a major priority, and can be expected to gain considerable support in the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. This activity is likely to result in the Commonwealth responding to political pressure from the commission and the Aboriginal community. The result would be the establishment of priorities, in effect the Commonwealth imposing these priorities on the states. Programs for which funding arrangements are made may result in local priority disruption and may contribute to a shortfall in funding for services considered a higher priority by the states.
>
> Considerable effort is being made by this and other states to achieve community input to local and regional decision-making. There is likely to be conflict built into the system if non-health groups control the health agenda at the national level. If Aboriginal people come to see ATSIC as a major vehicle for commenting on health issues, the health department's efforts in both service delivery and consultation will be compromised.
>
> Given the above, there could be significant moves to establish Aboriginal medical services in towns which have always been considered to have reasonable and acceptable services. Health ministers need to be concerned about the environment in which state services are provided, the potential for duplication, the reduction in state controlled resources and the continuity of services to the community as a whole.

Those are not my words, Mr Speaker, they happen to be from a proposal coming from the Western Australian Labor government, but they are absolutely true. Of course, all the health ministers supported that until the arm-twisting started at the Aboriginal Health Conference, when they just buttoned up. It was a meeting that took 30 minutes, of which 15 were spent congratulating themselves on a wonderful meeting to pass 15 resolutions, and not 1 state uttered a word. That was how they pushed through the Council of Aboriginal Health. ATSIC gained control of the secretariat and became the driving force on Aboriginal health. It was a great move.

Mr Ede: Including you, inside the meeting.

Mr HATTON: I was inside the meeting, and my comments are there. I do not back off from anything.

Mr Ede: You were agreeing inside and disagreeing outside.

Mr HATTON: Not at all. I will read it here, if you like. I will say exactly what I said.

Mr Ede: You must have said it pretty quietly.

Mr HATTON: I said it quietly enough to get it on the agenda:

> The Northern Territory expressed concern at the structure of the proposed council as it will not be regarded as representative by the Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Membership of the council needs to be truly representative of the Aboriginal communities and accurately reflect the views of the Aboriginal people. The Northern Territory minister expressed the opinion that the secretariat function of the Council of Aboriginal Health should be through the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health, and not ATSIC.

That is what I said, and I still say it, Mr Speaker. The only reason ...

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr HATTON: The Aboriginal communities down south were fighting to keep it in health, until they were rolled by the Commonwealth. It should be a health problem, and we should have to face it up front and live with the responsibility of delivering improved health services to Aboriginal communities, not have different services for different people. We have to deliver services to all Territorians, black and white, and we have to work to raise the health status of Aboriginal people and to try to equate the health status of Aboriginal people to that of other Territorians. It is a major challenge and one which we must address.

We cannot do it if we are being hamstrung, and there is competition, duplication and confusion in the field. It is hard enough to deal with the problem without this type of overlay. The money would be far better used in the delivery of direct services to the community, rather than being frittered away in unnecessary competition. The example of the hepatitis B vaccination program is the small tip of the iceberg. I could talk about dental health services and a range of other services. It is an absolute misallocation of money that will result in the really needy people often missing out because they do not have political clout within the Aboriginal industry. That is what has to be addressed. It has to be done properly and professionally. Aboriginal people need a direct and concrete say in their health service delivery, but they need to have it directly with the service deliverer, the state government or, in our case, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, and the same applies equally with other service delivery areas.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the Chief Minister's statement. Central to the discussion are some words that the Chief Minister said right at the start. He said that the heart of the matter was the referendum of 1967 when the right was given to our Aboriginals to vote in local, state and federal elections. I recall the days when they were not able to vote. There would be a few other members in this Assembly who would recall those days, and they were sorry days really. The Aboriginal people of Australia were considered to be second-class citizens, and I think that all changed in 1967.

As a member of this Assembly, I am really very proud of and have spoken often about the fact that 2 Aboriginal men are members of this Assembly. I I think that that is a result of the 1967 referendum in Australia. I am also quite proud of the fact that, when these 2 members get up to speak, particularly on Aboriginal affairs, they command respect from almost all members in this Assembly. They are putting forward the view of Aboriginal people, the people whom they actually represent, and this is the forum in which this should happen.

I represent the community at Amoonguna. The people there are aware that they have Aboriginal people representing them in this Assembly, and they are very proud of that fact. They have often asked me how these honourable members are doing and what issues are being raised. I believe that we have a very good forum in which Aboriginal people are represented. At every sittings of this Assembly that I have attended, representations have been made, particularly from the Labor side, in respect of issues affecting Aboriginal people. I know for a fact that no other parliament in Australia would have as much discussion on Aboriginal issues as this Assembly does. Certainly, the Labor members particularly represent Aboriginal people's points of view, their problems etc.

When you start to think about why ATSIC was born, and why it is in existence, you have really to say that it is an invention of the white man. Predominantly, it came about because of the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gerry Hand. I do not know that there has ever been a consistent or clear signal from Aboriginal people to say what should be done, and that they should have an organisation along the lines of ATSIC. I really think that it is a whitefellow invention and that it does not mean a great deal to Aboriginal people. The people at Amoonguna feel that they will be swamped by people from outside of their area and their country, who know nothing about them, and they are quite concerned that they will be disregarded in the overall scheme of things.

I believe that we are on the road to apartheid with ATSIC, and I think that is a sad state of affairs. Prior to entering into politics, I travelled interstate quite often on business. What always came through loudly and clearly in discussions was that people had a genuine interest in Aboriginal people. In addition, I think that an enormous reservoir of goodwill built up right around Australia in respect of the Aboriginal people. However, I believe that that reservoir of goodwill is starting to shrink. I believe the saddest thing that happened to Aboriginal people in a long time was the bicentennial year and the demonstrations involving Aboriginal people. That could only detract from the goodwill that existed throughout Australia. I believe that, once the Australian people realise what ATSIC is about, and the fact that really it is almost like another parliament, that goodwill will diminish even more, and that cannot be to the benefit of Aboriginal people in Australia. I truly believe that, with ATSIC, we are on the road to racial disaster. Certainly, the Aboriginal people to whom I have spoken have indicated that they do not see any reason for it and they are against it.

In this Assembly, we debate Aboriginal issues constantly and all of us have Aboriginal people in our electorates. Between us, we have a wealth of knowledge and experience in relation to Aboriginal people and their needs and aspirations for the future. I do not think that any forum of leaders in any community throughout Australia would know as much about Aboriginals as this Assembly does, and I believe that we can more than adequately represent the 35 000-odd Aboriginals who comprise 22% of the Northern Territory population. Recently, I read that two-thirds of the Aboriginals in the Territory are rural dwellers and that these people are spread over the one-sixth of Australia that is the Northern Territory. Of them, 80% are tribally oriented. I do not believe that people from interstate can adequately come to grips with what that means or even begin to understand the problems involved. I would like to give you an example, Mr Speaker, to demonstrate what I am saying.

Some 2 years ago, my involvement with a certain organisation resulted in my meeting 2 leading Aboriginals from New South Wales. They came to my

place one evening and it soon became apparent that I probably knew more about tribal and traditional Aboriginals than they did. The point that floored me absolutely was that, of all the Aboriginal people they knew, only 1 old lady was still able to speak any Aboriginal language. That example illustrates what I mean when I say that people from elsewhere have notions about Aboriginal people which are quite different from our notions, and I do not believe that they truly understand the problems of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

I agree with the Chief Minister that ATSIC is really a fourth tier of government. It is like a black parliament, a quasi-parliament that is not as accountable as we are. In addition, it will have enormous powers to claim land and property as well as to expend substantial sums of money. My biggest concern relates to the situation of Northern Territory Aboriginals, particularly the tribal people. I believe that they will be controlled by Aboriginals in Sydney and Melbourne who have learnt the art of whitefellow ways in respect of attending meetings and so on. I believe that tribal Aboriginals will be snowed by this ATSIC deal.

We have debated previously the question of an Aboriginal treaty and we have clearly stated our opposition to it. If Aboriginal people have special needs and require special help, I am sure that everyone in this Assembly would take that into consideration. However, we would not consider a treaty such as that which is currently being opposed. In a nutshell, my view is that there should be one law for all citizens of Australia, irrespective of colour, race or creed. That is the direction in which I think we should be heading, not in the direction of ATSIC. In terms of racial tensions, I believe that ATSIC will be a disaster.

In considering Aboriginal affairs these days, we must continuously address the question of vested interests. Quite a large number of people, probably up to 1000, are paid salaries of $30 000 to $40 000 per year by Aboriginal organisations to represent Aboriginal people. When I attend various functions which relate to Aboriginal matters, I am astounded by the contrast between the small number of Aboriginal faces and the many white faces I see representing Aboriginals. I think we should be ever conscious that these people have a vested interest in driving a wedge between white people and black people in the Territory.

From the parliamentary library, I obtained a pamphlet which describes what ATSIC is. It states that there are 60 regional councils around Australia, and that voting for ATSIC is not compulsory. That leads me again to my biggest concern, which relates to tribal people. My fear is that their wishes will not be heard. I do not think that their social structures allow for an organisation like ATSIC. Often, traditional people do not work according to whitefellow rules and I cannot see that this will be any different. I believe that they are confused. Certainly, the boundaries described in this pamphlet bear no relationship to any Aboriginal boundaries that I am able to find out about. Further, Aboriginal law revolves around the old men. I cannot see that ATSIC will encapsulate the wishes of the old men in any way. I cannot see how it can be anything but a disaster.

I would like to talk briefly of what I know is occurring in Alice Springs in respect of ATSIC. My knowledge is limited, but the people at Amoonguna whom I represent are my source in this regard. I believe that 20-odd people in the Alice Springs area so far have nominated for election as ATSIC councillors. I believe that only a couple of those people really have traditional ties with the Alice Springs area. That is a very important matter to consider. To me, it indicates that ATSIC will not really work

from day 1. My constituents felt too that there had been very little consultation about ATSIC. Apparently, Gerry Hand went to Amoonguna with an interpreter who spoke Luritja. Most of the people there are Aranda speakers and were totally confused about what was being presented and explained to them. They felt that there was a lack of information. That compounds my concern about the fact that very few of the councillors who will be elected in the Alice Springs area will be tribally oriented whereas the bulk of Aborigines whom they will be representing are tribally oriented. I conclude, Mr Speaker, by expressing my support for the motion moved by the Chief Minister. I am not in favour of ATSIC at all.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's motion. One of the fundamental questions that must be asked about ATSIC is whether it is really necessary. I believe that any rational person, who has a good look at what ATSIC consists of and how it says it will go about meeting its charter, must surely answer that not only is ATSIC in that form unnecessary, it is highly undesirable. In this day and age, the value of various tiers of government and their ability to make the best use of taxpayers' money is under scrutiny. There has never been a greater need to ensure that those tiers of government do not tread on each other's toes or duplicate each other's efforts. The logical consequence of this situation must surely be that the government processes in Australia have to be greatly refined, and areas of wastage and duplication identified and removed, to enable the most efficient use of taxpayers' money to deliver services in increasingly difficult economic times.

The spearhead for this movement towards refinement and stringency has been none other than the Prime Minister, the most senior politician in this country. I would have expected him to have led by example by stringently examining areas in which the Commonwealth duplicates state and territory services and bureaucracies. Instead, the Prime Minister has put our money where his mouth is. Rather than reduce government duplication, he has created an entirely new tier of government - ATSIC - which has the potential to waste more of the taxpayers' money than just about any other government authority in Australia's political history. The obvious exceptions, of course, would be the Labor governments of Victoria and Western Australia, although such a comparison would not give much comfort to taxpayers.

Even worse, in a country which prides itself on democracy, egalitarianism and a fair go for all, ATSIC will be paid for by all Australians for the benefit of a few, and it will be directed by people elected by a select minority. With 3 levels of government, Australia is already one of the most overgoverned places in the world. This situation will now be exacerbated by the addition of a fourth tier of government. The situation will be worst in the Northern Territory. With a small population, including the highest percentage of Aboriginal people of any state or territory in Australia, the waste and inequality will be felt more keenly than anywhere else. I would like to give honourable members an example of an area where wasteful duplication between the Territory and Commonwealth governments occurs already which, rather than being removed, will be carried on by ATSIC. That area is Aboriginal housing.

The Territory government has an Aboriginal housing program which is funded mainly through tied grants under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The expenditure on the ground this financial year will be about $17.5m, which will be used to build houses in Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory. In the past, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Corporation ran a separate Aboriginal housing program, also funded by the Commonwealth, to do the same work in the same

communities. This program is now being taken over by ATSIC and will continue at about the same level as the Territory government's program. In other words, we have 2 programs, each with about the same amount of funding and each building about the same number of dwellings over the same period of time in the same communities for the same client group.

The obvious difference between the programs is that one is administered by public servants working for the government elected by the people of the Northern Territory, which is committed and has the expertise to provide housing for all Territorians, whilst the other is administered by public servants employed by the Commonwealth government, which is based in Canberra, to live and work in the Northern Territory. They are employed to do exactly the same job as Northern Territory public servants do. The cost of employing public servants is not confined to salaries. They have to work somewhere, and office accommodation must be provided for them. They have to move around the Territory, which means vehicles or travelling allowances. They will require telephones and, to enable them to record information, office equipment and a whole range of paraphernalia must be provided. It is not difficult to visualise the escalation of costs which occurs when 2 bureaucracies are used to do the same job.

However, the duplication does not end there. The Territory government's Aboriginal housing program must first be approved by the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Housing, which consists of ATSIC and Commonwealth representatives, before it is forwarded to the Commonwealth Minister for Community Services and Health for final approval. The minister then checks that program with his colleague, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, before finally approving it. In other words, public servants from 2 Commonwealth departments carry out exactly the same task in order to report to their respective ministers on the acceptability of the program so that 1 of the ministers can authorise it.

It would not be so bad if both programs were able to work properly on their own. In the case of the ATSIC program, however, that does not happen. For example, let us look at services which are vitally necessary for the building of houses. The Territory government has developed the Service Land Availability Plans Program which is the basis for coordinating housing and land service programs and the development of infrastructure in Aboriginal communities. Despite its acknowledged expertise, the Commonwealth goes on its merry way programming infrastructural works with little or no meaningful consultation with the Territory government. This attitude has a number of unfortunate consequences: the distortion of the allocation of Commonwealth and Territory resources; the need to reassess Territory government planning and priorities at short notice; frustrating or impeding the updating of plans under the SLAP program; fragmenting the already scarce resources the Territory has for planning, design and construction; and the loss of opportunities to achieve economies of scale in this work. Apart from the duplication and waste that that situation creates, it can also be argued that the confusion generated by the dual roles of both the Territory and the Commonwealth leads to misused opportunities to coordinate training and social programs. It also leads to poor management of housing stock in Aboriginal communities.

That matter is being addressed by the Territory government through our new Housing Management Pilot Program which we have put in place after quite a number of years of inaction by the Commonwealth. That is only one area in the Northern Territory where this appalling waste and duplication occurs. It occurs because the Commonwealth insists on interfering in Territory affairs. My colleagues have related similar stories and I am sure that many

more can be related in relation to those types of problems. What it amounts to is a continued failure on the part of the Commonwealth to recognise that the Territory government is capable of governing the Territory for all Territorians, not only for those who do not claim Aboriginal descent. ATSIC will not improve that situation. It will simply make things worse by introducing yet another bloated, centralised bureaucracy to a scene which is already overflowing with unnecessary public servants and free loaders.

ATSIC will not see Australia become a better country in terms of equal treatment for all. In fact, the reverse will occur, with inequality and wasteful duplication of the expenditure of taxpayers' money being more firmly institutionalised than ever before. If the Prime Minister is genuine in his call to refine the roles of the various tiers of government in Australia and to reduce waste and duplication, he can convince Territorians of that only through one simple act - the abolition of this travesty that is known as ATSIC.

We are heading fast down a path which will eventually produce tremendous problems for our children and our grandchildren. Many members cannot see that that is so or are closing their eyes to the fact, but we are moving down a path where we are basing the process of government and the delivery of services on divisions based on race. We have separate rules pertaining to land based on race. We are now moving into the area where we will have a separate elected government. It is only a form of government at this stage, but I do not think anyone in this House believes it will stay like that. History shows that it will not remain static. It will grow. We need guarantees that something will stop it and reverse the process.

We cannot have a community that is separated on the basis of race. That is what has happened in South Africa. If we replaced Aboriginal with European in relation to educational benefits, housing benefits, Aboriginal land ownership, legal aid and health benefits, and if we reversed the races in respect of the various government bureaucracies, we would not be able to take our place in the world. We would not be able to face other countries of the world. We would not be able to face ourselves. Nevertheless, we are going blindly down a path where we are separating services, service delivery, standards and qualifications on the basis of race. We cannot keep doing it. I implore all members of this House, all Territorians and all Australians to take heed of what we are doing. I know the member for MacDonnell will say that I am a scaremonger, that I am crazy and that I am reacting unnecessarily, but we cannot base our structures on race. I support the motion.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, it is with some pleasure that I rise to speak against this motion and in favour of the amendment moved by the opposition. At the outset, I would like to dismiss the concerns of the Attorney-General in respect of the time-honoured quasi-concerns that have been put forward by CLP governments. The Territory electorate no longer accepts them. He spent 10 minutes railing against the provision of any special benefits for Aboriginal people. He ran the '1 country 1 people' line that has a rather dishonourable history.

He referred to South Africa, and that reference needs to be laid to rest immediately. The situation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, as fourth world people and as 1% of the Australian population, is dramatically different from that of black South Africans who form 85% of the population of that country and who have been disempowered for other reasons, and I know that that word upsets the member for Victoria River. Any compassionate government, at either the territory level or the national

level, has no alternative but to investigate programs of various kinds to provide people with a greater level of power and a greater level of control over their lives.

During debate in this Assembly yesterday, the member for Victoria River did far less than cover himself with glory. We were talking about exactly one of those programs. What was so surprising about the Attorney-General's contribution to this debate was that he said the Commonwealth government considers us fit only to govern for non-Aboriginal Territorians. For the benefit of the Attorney-General and his running mate from Victoria River, I would like to point out that the Northern Territory government has responsibility for a vast number of services for Aboriginal people, including schools, hospitals, roads and other services on Aboriginal land. It is about time the member for Victoria River and the Attorney-General realised that one of the sacred trusts of government in the Northern Territory and arguably the major purpose of running a political system for 170 000 people is, by our closer understanding of that diversity, to make a contribution to this country as a whole by developing systems of administration that take that into consideration. As far as I am concerned, when those concerns are transferred to a national perspective, ATSIC has an important contribution to make.

Recently, I had an opportunity to listen to a number of speakers at the National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee celebrations in Alice Springs. A well-known Aboriginal leader in central Australia, Mr Gus Williams, who is one of the interim commissioners with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, spoke at the meeting. He said: 'Unlike those people who are not even prepared to give ATSIC a go, I am confident of its success'. After listening to Gus Williams on that day, I wrote to the Chief Minister. I will table a copy of that letter to the Chief Minister, and I will read it for the benefit of honourable members:

> Dear Chief Minister,
>
> I note your press release of 6 September and your assertion that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is an unfortunate reality. There has been a bipartisan recognition of the need for a national Aboriginal forum for many years. There was, for many years, a Federal Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, FCAATSI, that was a community-based organisation. More recently, there has been a National Aboriginal Conference, the NAC, which had a legislative basis. It is simply absurd to suggest that ATSIC does not have a role to play.
>
> The questions about the shape of the organisation, its role and sources of funding are important issues of concern and are quite properly subjects for public debate. Your comments make no contribution to that debate.
>
> In conclusion, I draw to your attention the comments made by Mr Gus Williams at today's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day meeting in Alice Springs where he said, and I quote: 'Unlike those people who are not even prepared to give ATSIC a go, I am confident of its success'.

I concluded the letter by urging the Chief Minister to give it a go. I can do little better than repeat that in the context of this motion.

For some bizarre reason ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the honourable member intend to table the letter? Please seek leave.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table this letter.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I point out to the Chief Minister that he had 2 choices in this debate. He could have gone down the line chosen by the federal Leader of the Opposition, Dr John Hewson, who was in town yesterday. He could have adopted the bipartisan attitude that has been very sensibly promoted by the federal Labor government and supported by the colleagues of the Country Liberal Party in Canberra. But what do we find here but this continuing, irrelevant, divisive attitude?

I am deeply concerned about the determination of government ministers to speak on an issue like this. Basically, they believe that, if they get a bit of black bashing on the Hansard record and circulate it around the northern suburbs, it will be worth 3% or 5% of votes. Let us not kid ourselves that anything else is going on. Mr Speaker, you heard what the Attorney-General had to say today and it was nothing more than black bashing. I have news for him. The fact is that it will not wash in the northern suburbs any more than it will wash at Port Keats, Hooker Creek, Docker River, Kintore or anywhere else. One of the great challenges for government, at both the federal and Territory level, is to provide mechanisms for coping with the historical disadvantage of Aboriginal people which the Territory government has done precious little to cope with.

A statement was made yesterday by the Minister for Education albeit in a ham-fisted and disorganised fashion. Since this has been a free-ranging debate over programs for Aboriginal people, I point out in this context that I found quite surprising the absurdity of a Minister for Education making a statement that had nothing to do with government policy, when he has told us that he will not be a member of this House after the next election. I believe that that particular statement was as vitiated as the government putting forward this particular motion attacking ATSIC is vitiated.

I have no hesitation in supporting the amendment that has been moved by the member for Arnhem. I believe that he spoke forcefully in support of his amendment to this absurd motion, and I wish to support that. I note that he seeks to remove from paragraph 6 the word 'ably'. I note that the motion urges us to recognise 'that the Northern Territory has been ably governed by its own elected government chosen by the people of the Northern Territory in 4 successive elections'. That will be the end of that succession, and I believe that any suggestion, as far as Aboriginal people are concerned, that that has been done ably is a patent absurdity. For that reason, I support that aspect of the amendment put forward by my colleague.

I believe that a commitment should be made to provide appropriate standards of living for all Territorians by the year 2000, and opposition spokesmen have referred to problems of education, health, simple water supplies and a variety of services that other Australians and many other Territorians take for granted. The fact of the matter is that it will be a Territory Labor government that will be in a position to put forward progressive policies in that regard.

The third part of the amendment put forward by my colleague was to add at the end of paragraph 10 of this motion, which says that this Assembly condemns any notion that taxpayers should fund some form of compensation as

a consequence of a treaty or an instrument of reconciliation, the words 'that results in payments to individuals but rather may include funding from the federal government, to state and territory governments and Aboriginal organisations to remove the imbalance and inequities that currently exist'. And that is the problem with the comments made by the Attorney-General! He does nothing and he says nothing about exactly the imbalance and inequities that Aboriginal people have been suffering under this government, and have been suffering historically in this country for a considerable length of time.

This is the sort of schizophrenia that we get from the CLP. Every now and then, they come up with something progressive, something intelligent, something thoughtful and you think, hang on ...

Mr Ede: It is an accident!

Mr BELL: I note the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that it is an accident and, certainly, when we look at the comments made over the last 10 years, I have to say that they appear to have been more accidental than thoughtful.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member for MacDonnell of standing order 59, which relates to allusion to earlier debate and I remind him that that statement is item No 12 on the Notice Paper. Would the honourable member care to look at his Notice Paper where he will see what I am talking about.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I have absolutely no intention of ...

Mr SPEAKER: It has been pretty far-ranging. I do not mind. It has been quite enjoyable but, more importantly, I believe that the honourable member has had a fair shake of it and I would like the honourable member to come back to the motion before the Chair.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am dealing with the amendment put forward by the opposition, and I believe that I am constructively representing the views of the people who voted for me to be a member of this Assembly in respect of ...

Mr SPEAKER: Are you dissenting from my ruling?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I intend to restrict my comments to the question of the imbalance and inequities that the opposition amendment refers to.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no need to refer to the motion moved in respect of a statement by the Minister for Education which relates to 'Talking is Not Enough'.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I undertake not to refer to that particular statement in any shape or form, whatever my feelings about the Minister for Education may be.

As I say, every now and then, we have a glimmer that the Country Liberal Party wants to come to terms with exactly those imbalances and inequities that opposition members of this Assembly have been grappling with for years. It is never easy for governments to restore the balance, to whatever degree, to remove inequities or, at least, to alleviate the effects

of them. I believe that we have to work at 2 levels. We have to work at a government level and we have to work at a personal level. Many Territorians are in a position to work at a personal level in their associations with Aboriginal people, and are able to demonstrate their concerns personally. Equally, I believe that it is incumbent on governments not to behave in the way the Attorney-General is suggesting that they should behave, not simply to demand of Aboriginal people that they assimilate themselves with the standards of white Australia. That is not acceptable, but that is precisely the proposal that the Attorney-General is putting forward, and it does him no credit whatsoever.

I have said in debates in this House - and I do not believe that this is on the Notice Paper, Mr Speaker - with respect to liquor policy, that I was very heartened by the interest that the government had taken in the plight of alcohol abuse in the Aboriginal community. I have said that the problem has to be addressed by government, by Aboriginal organisations and by Aboriginal people as individuals, as families and as communities. I was heartened when I saw the Territory government taking an interest in that debate. However, whilst it was doing so, it decided that it would have a shot at the community-based Aboriginal organisations, particularly in Alice Springs. But, whilst disagreeing with that side of what it was doing, I agreed with it raising the public debate on that. However, as I have said earlier in these sittings, the Chief Minister and this government demonstrate a schizophrenic attitude because, on one hand, they seek to address those problems and, on the other hand, they put forward motions like this, that suggest that the Commonwealth government has no contribution to make in respect of Aboriginal people. More specifically, with respect to liquor policy, as I said yesterday, the Tangentyere Liquor Committee has put forward a proposal to build a social club. The Territory government has given it some land for that purpose, and then has turned around and opposed the licence. If that is not a contradictory attitude, I do not know what is.

In conclusion, I wish to commend the amendment moved by the member for Arnhem and to condemn the divisive attitude taken by the government in putting forward this proposal. We heard the Attorney-General suggest that this would create problems for our grandchildren and our great grandchildren, and that is patently absurd. The problems that our children and our grandchildren may suffer pale into insignificance in comparison with the problems that Aboriginal people, their children, grandchildren or whoever are suffering today, and I have placed that on record in this Assembly often enough. I commend the amendment. I believe that, without that amendment, the motion cannot be supported.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the member for MacDonnell is running true to form today. I have heard the same sort rhetoric come from him on many occasions in the past, and nothing has changed. It has just been - dare I say it - recycled once again.

Mr Bell: Give it to them in the wilds of Jingili, Rick.

Mr SETTER: Don't you worry. You just hang about there and you will hear it, and I hope that you will stay in the Chamber to listen to it. It is very interesting, Mr Speaker, that now that representatives from the Teachers Federation are present in the gallery, these members of the opposition have decided suddenly to reappear in the Chamber. We have been debating this motion all afternoon.

Mr Ede: We are listening to you, Rick. This is for you.

Mr SETTER: That is probably true too, and you might learn something.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would remind visitors in the gallery that you are guests within the parliamentary precincts, and I ask you to remain silent during the debate.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I have a great concern for Aboriginal people, which I have expressed here on a number of occasions before, and I am talking about traditional Aboriginal people ...

Mr Finch: There they go.

Mr SETTER: Hello! All the members of the opposition are leaving, are they? They have been in here for 5 minutes, Mr Speaker, and that is about all we have seen of them this afternoon. They are on their way again. Well, well, well!

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Jingili will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Maybe we have been a bit too rough with them, Mr Speaker.

As I said a moment ago, I have a deep concern for traditional Aboriginal Territorians because they are being taken advantage of, and I am talking about people like the member for Arnhem. They are being taken for a ride by all the trendy, radical, mixed-blood people from the south who have taken control of the Aboriginal agenda in this country. The member for Arnhem should mark my words. His people, who make up 22.4% of the Northern Territory's population, will rue the day that they ever supported ATSIC. The reality is that it will be dominated by the trendy radicals down south. He knows that is true and that his traditional brothers and sisters will miss out.

The member for MacDonnell talked about the way in which the federal opposition adopts this wonderful bipartisanship when it comes to Aboriginal matters. From what I have heard Mr Hawke and his colleagues say in years past, bipartisanship is fine provided you go along with what they want. We had it in relation to immigration matters 12 or 18 months ago. However, as soon as you disagree, all bets are off. The member for MacDonnell has left the Chamber. However, I would like him to know that I heard the federal Leader of the Opposition, Dr Hewson, speak on 2 occasions yesterday and I did not hear him refer once to this so-called bipartisanship that the member for MacDonnell spoke about.

Australia is a multicultural society. There is no doubt about that. Our population consists of people from a multitude of races from all around this world, including Aboriginal Australians. As far as Aboriginal people are concerned, the bottom line is that they are Australians. I am an Australian and you are an Australian, Mr Speaker. To the best of my knowledge, all honourable members of this House are Australians. Aboriginal people are no different and they should be proud of it. From my personal experience in talking to many hundreds, if not thousands, of them over the years, from the length and breadth of the Northern Territory, the vast majority of them are very proud of that fact. I heard the Chief Minister say earlier today that the CLP government regards Aboriginal people as Territorians. I know that those traditional Aboriginal people also regard themselves as Territorians and as Australians.

The sad part about it is that the Northern Territory government's position on these matters is continually misrepresented by members of the opposition and by the trendy radicals in the land councils and other organisations all around this country. That is most unfortunate because the reality is that it is the Northern Territory CLP government that talks common sense when we discuss and debate Aboriginal issues. Nevertheless, time and time again, we are branded as racists.

We heard the member for MacDonnell in his typical condescending and arrogant form accuse us once again of 'black bashing'. I thought that was absolutely disgusting. It was the pits to accuse us of 'black bashing'. This government is very concerned about the welfare of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I know that to be a fact because I have moved around the Northern Territory on many occasions. I talk to Aboriginal people. I know the concern that my colleagues have for Aboriginal people and for the supply of services to Aboriginal communities. Nevertheless, time and time again, we are accused of 'black bashing'. It disgusts me.

Mr Speaker, I refer you to an issue of Land Rights News from a couple of months ago:

> Racism - conservatives think it is a vote winner. The federal coalition of Liberal and National Parties has openly committed itself to using racism as a vote winner. As well as mounting attacks against individual Aboriginals and organisations, it has released a policy document which is undisguised in its hostility towards Aboriginal self-determination. Conservative groups throughout Australia are clearly afraid of the changes proposed under the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, ATSIC. They recognise that these changes will mean the beginnings of national Aboriginal self-determination.

I have heard it so many times that it makes me sick. Every time that people on this side of politics criticise what Aboriginal organisations are doing or what the federal government is doing, they are accused of racism. We have heard it here this afternoon. It is the first ploy that they use. There is no discussion of the issues. They hide behind the charge of racism immediately. I noted an item in The Australian of 15 September 1988, our bicentennial year, under a heading of 'Aborigines Seek All Black Staff on New Commission':

> Aboriginal bureaucrats are pushing for an all black staff in the government's new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The Aboriginal Staff Association and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs are believed to have urged that the placement of Aborigines instead of whites in administrative commission jobs be a top priority.

To my mind, that is racism and discrimination. It is an infringement of my human rights and of the human rights of all other Australians. Once again, I despise that approach because I am an Australian. Aboriginal people are Australians, and they and I should have the same opportunities in this country as every other person. That is the way it should be. Under a conservative government in Canberra, that is the way it will be in the future. That is the way it is in the Territory and that is the way it will remain after the next election in the Northern Territory.

We have all heard of a prominent academic, Professor Colin Howard, who is Professor of Law at the University of Melbourne. He wrote in the IPA

Review of December/February 1988-89, under the heading of 'Australia's Proposed Race Law':

> A bill currently before the federal parliament would establish a separate system of political representation for blacks. The Australian Constitution includes a power for the Australian parliament to make laws on the subject of people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.

I will not read the whole text. In relation to the ATSIC bill, he said:

> According to the government, this is a good thing because it represents the first major attempt in our history to provide a formal framework through which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders can influence government decisions which affect them and their interests. The bill has for the time being been sidelined by the uproar about the Aboriginal Development Commission and the dismissal of Mr Charles Perkins.

And the closing paragraph says:

> It is a fundamental cause for unease that, contrary to our professed political ideology, the ATSIC bill, if it becomes law, will have revealed us as being as racist as anyone else. We should not be in the business of deliberately creating a sub-nation with a sub-parliament with enormous powers to claim land and other property of its own whatever the motives. This is a recipe for racial disaster.

How right he is, Mr Speaker!

The Chief Minister spoke about the fourth tier of government and the duplication of the resources of this country in financial and practical terms. He pointed out the way in which the priorities of this new ATSIC were totally off beam, and that they were spending money on setting up all sorts of niceties for themselves and ignoring the important things such as substance abuse, health issues etc. I will not repeat that.

Let us refer to one of the most prominent Aboriginal leaders this country has ever known - Charles Perkins. We all know about Charles Perkins. Minister Gerry Hand gave him the sack a couple of years ago. Mr Perkins was addressing the Roseworthy Agricultural College in South Australia earlier this year. It was reported in the NT News of 15 April.

> The sacked former head of Aboriginal Affairs warned that there was a monster nurtured for more than 30 years that needed to be tamed. It was a monster he knew all too well. 'We have, consciously or otherwise, institutionalised Aboriginal affairs', he said. 'The mechanisms of that system have become an end to themselves. The tragedy is they cannot and will not respond to change. Too often the amount of money, and not how Aborigines respond to it, has become the measure of institutional success', Mr Perkins said. 'A whole network of institutionalisation has surrounded Aboriginal development. We have, without realising it, created a monster'.

He went on to say that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission was too late and was shaping up to become the biggest monster of them all. That is what Mr Charles Perkins said earlier this year. It is a monster.

The member for Arnhem told us that a treaty was not the responsibility of the Northern Territory government but the responsibility of the federal government. He said that we should pull our heads in and keep out of it. It is not our responsibility, in a direct sense, but we are caught up in it because 22.4% of the population of the Northern Territory is Aboriginal people. It does not affect only them. It affects all of us. He went on to tell us that he supports the treaty, but that he does not support compensation. I will quote from the Centralian Advocate of 4 May:

> We are looking at compensation not only in cash payment. We are looking at other areas where we can inject funds to raise the standard of living and health services. Mr Lanhupuy's comments follow Labor colleague Stan Tipiloura's statement that talk of a national treaty was just words. The Labor member for Arafura, Mr Tipiloura, forecast the treaty would not go ahead. In debate in the Legislative Assembly, he criticised the federal government for delaying implementation of the treaty.

It can be seen that a rift has developed between those 2 Aboriginal members.

Let us have a look at the policy of the Northern Territory Branch of the Labor Party, and I quote selectively from the material under the heading of 'Aboriginal Affairs'. The policy says:

> The Australian government has yet to come to terms with the prior rights of Aboriginal people as indigenous owners of Australia.

It goes on to say:

> The Northern Territory Labor Party recognises the need for the Australian government to provide appropriate compensation for Aboriginal people who have had their land stolen, who have been alienated from their culture and heritage. The Northern Territory Labor Party, acknowledging the absence of any treaty or agreement with Aboriginal people over compensation or dispossession, supports the call for federal legislation to address the question of compensation.

It is there in black and white: the Labor Party in the Territory supports the treaty. It supports compensation. It is fascinating stuff. A headline in the NT News of 6 October 1987 stated: 'Blacks Want $20 000m a Year in Compensation'. Of course, they have Buckley's. It really saddens me, and I genuinely mean that. I have said to the member for Arafura and the member for Arnhem in the past that whilst, in the Northern Territory, traditional Aboriginal people might represent 22.4% of the population, in terms of the last census, they represent 1.4% of the nation's population. If the mood of Australia ever changes on this particular issue, it will be to the enormous disadvantage of their cause. Headlines like that can do untold damage to the genuine cause of traditional people.

I am not talking about the people who claim that they have some Aboriginal blood, the people of mixed blood from Redfern and other places - the Mansells of this world, who want to jump on the band wagon because they have a cause to push and who constantly seek publicity in order to satisfy their need to be involved in such matters. Those are the people who will sidetrack and derail ATSIC. Their involvement in Aboriginal issues is to the great detriment of the people who really have a need, the traditional Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

I have visited remote Aboriginal communities and I have seen the need. My heart goes out to those people. It saddens me deeply when I read the Chief Minister's speech and learn how ATSIC will spend vast sums establishing counselling services for staff and purchasing ergonomic furniture. We have seen this sort of thing time and time again. Huge bureaucracies are established and these siphon off funding so that it never reaches to the grassroots where it is really needed. What should happen is that the responsibility should be devolved to state and territory governments like the Northern Territory government. The infrastructure is in place here. We can do the job at a very low cost. The Commonwealth should give us the funds and let us get on with the job.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this debate has gone on for a long time and I will not add greatly to that time. However, I would like to reflect on one of the most successful Aboriginal organisations I have seen in the Northern Territory, certainly in the Top End. This particular organisation is based at Yirrkala, one of the 3 Aboriginal communities in my electorate, and it is called the Lanhupuy Homelands Association Incorporated. I am sure that the Minister for Health and Community Services, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government are aware of the organisation and the success it enjoys. I can assure all members of the House that the reason for that success is self-determination. The people involved with that organisation are sick to death of having their lives organised by persons who are remote from their experience and their knowledge. Indeed, those people have become sick and tired of the paternalism and the 'all care and no responsibility' approach that too many people throughout Australia inflict on various groups of people, including Aboriginal people. They have really taken matters into their own hands. They hire and fire. They organise their own lives and a range of projects as they see fit.

In my opinion, if ATSIC achieves nothing other than to return to people the responsibility for decisions affecting their own lives, it will have achieved a great deal indeed. For the last 2 centuries, migrants who have come to this country from various parts of the world have sought to inflict their views on the Aboriginal people, telling them how best to organise their lives. That has been patently unsuccessful and Aboriginal people have suffered the consequences of that direction. At least this one small organisation in Arnhem Land has recognised that. It has said: 'To hell with the lot of you. We are going to start running our own lives'. If ATSIC does nothing else but allow Aboriginal people a voice in organising their own lives, it will be a great success.

Much is made of the services which are provided to Aboriginal communities. I freely admit that the government has some reason to be proud of its record of attempts to improve Aboriginal education, health and other services. I am sure that the statistics bear that out. However, in case the member for Nightcliff or any other honourable member should ever forget, I will remind the House that the first action the government took in my constituency after I was elected was to close the only worthwhile educational facility in Arnhem Land, Dhupuma College. Believe you me, Mr Speaker, it has not all been roses. People throughout Arnhem Land - not only in Nhulunbuy, Galiwinku or Gapuwiyak - remember that institution and how valuable it was. Those people are becoming heartily sick and tired of this government.

I will tell honourable members what will happen within the next 2 years if they do not get off their butts and do something about post-primary education for Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. They will set up their own

private school and to hell with the government. They have become heartily sick and tired of this government, and they will determine their own fate because they understand that that is the only option that will give them any chance of progressing their lives.

Mr Speaker, I do not have much to add except to say that, if the Lanhupuy Homelands Association has taught me anything, it is the value of people being responsible for their own actions and their own lives. If ATSIC delivers that responsibility to Aboriginal people, for my money it will be an outstanding success.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I have followed this debate today and, in fact, over the last 6 months, with great interest. Whilst it has polarised some people in various parts of the community, it has made a few other people look around to see whether there may be another way of doing things. My own view of ATSIC is that it is a creation of Canberra and, in terms of social advancement, probably it will provide as much benefit to Aboriginal people as did the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. In the course of time, I believe that it will be a disaster for them. However, Aboriginal people are going through a phase in which they want to have a go themselves, and that is very understandable. After all, as Territorians, we have felt those passionate feelings ourselves and they drove us in our quest for self-government.

ATSIC is simply a political combination of DAA and the National Aboriginal Advisory Council. People in the south wanted to change DAA because it was giving them a bit of a headache. They wanted to wind up the National Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the Aboriginal Development Foundation. Having tired of those Aboriginal bodies, they decided to create a new entity called ATSIC. The Torres Strait Islanders were included as a result of the aggravation which occurred there some time ago, resulting in a visit by the Prime Minister and an offer of a part in the scheme of things. Maybe that is good and maybe it is not. The bottom line is that ATSIC will probably not be a sensible organisation for the Northern Territory because it has been designed by people in another place to satisfy the needs of people in other places.

At the end of the day, small in number as we are, Territorians will have to live with what everybody else is trying to do. The interesting thing about this is that Aboriginals, certainly Territory Aboriginals, understand that as well as anybody else does. When one talks to them, their position is pretty clear. They say: 'You white fellows have been giving us the goods from Canberra for 40 years now. The bottom line for us is that we need the money, the services and the assistance. What you call it and how you send it to us does not really matter much. On this occasion, the federal government has dreamt up this body called ATSIC. It will have the dough and it will give it to us. We do not have a choice about it. We cannot change it and we cannot stop it. If we stay out of it, we go without money. What choice do we have?'

Any member of this House who has talked to Territory Aboriginals about who is running for ATSIC will know that they are quite beside themselves. They know that they do not have enough candidates. They know that they do not have the quality they would like to have and they know that they cannot fill the areas they would like to fill. They wonder what it is all about but they know that, if they do not get in and do something, they will not receive any dough. They are caught between a rock and a hard place. It is all very well for us to spend our time kicking ATSIC, but we ought to bear in mind that there are a great many Aboriginal people who would like to kick

it too, but they cannot do so. During the last few weeks, we have seen the discontent start to ferment in the local Aboriginal community. The NLC has shown its colours and various organisations are quietly saying: 'We are worried about ATSIC and we are not sure that we want it to proceed in this way'. However, the fact that some white people, including governments and politicians, are perceived to be beating the hell out of ATSIC is tending to cause Aboriginal people to gravitate together and defend it even though they know that it does not really provide their best option.

I do not believe that there is any doubt that ATSIC will founder and cause problems for the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory. It is not designed to help the people of the Northern Territory. It is designed to satisfy the political aspirations of Aboriginals elsewhere. The sad part about it is that, whilst the people who need services have not changed and the people working to provide the organisations have not changed, the services themselves will probably decline quite considerably. The member for Jingili made a good point when he said that Territory Aboriginals will rue the day ATSIC came into being because the trendy radicals will take over and the funding will be siphoned off by the bureaucracy. That is not new. All we are talking about is the degree to which resources are siphoned off and where they will go. I believe that that concern is pretty reasonable and that Aboriginals in the Territory will see more of their funds drained off by bureaucracy than will Aboriginals elsewhere. The impact will be worse in the Territory than elsewhere because the funds are so much more important here.

In his speech, the Chief Minister referred to the difficulties caused by the ongoing dispute between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in relation to funding. That is not a reason to argue that Aboriginals should not get money or that they should get it in another way. What is reasonable is that we argue that, on a comparative basis, Aboriginals receive the level of funding that they need, and no more and no less. It has been suggested today that this is simply another way of providing compensation for Aboriginals. It has been described by some speakers as a form of treaty or makarrata. We had a debate in this Chamber a few months ago about the treaty and the makarrata, or whatever one would like to call it. Whilst that debate got off to a fiery start, a great deal of good came out of it by the end of the day. As a result, a great deal of common ground was gained in that Aboriginals were acknowledged to be a group of people who needed special assistance and who wanted to be recognised. It was agreed that it was not unreasonable that they have a firm statement of how that recognition would occur. Whether that is called a makarrata or a treaty is really another matter, but I think it is drawing a pretty long bow to say that ATSIC is a substitute for a treaty and that it will see a separate state in the Northern Territory.

I can remember a time when the Aboriginal communities in the Territory were run by Native Affairs, which was a branch of the Territories Department. Later, they became a part of the Northern Territory Administration and, later again, they became a part of a department of Aboriginals, environment and something else, that was headed by Billy Wentworth. Later, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was set up and we saw a fair movement of Commonwealth funds and support into Aboriginal organisations, directly from the Commonwealth, as distinct from through the department that was there to give them assistance. Thus, the means of providing assistance to Aboriginals has changed tremendously over the years, and now we are to have another go. I think it is fair to say that this will be pretty traumatic for the people concerned.

I find it very hard to see this issue in terms of its being all good or all bad for the black or the white community or for the federal government, which is trying to solve its own problems. The member for Nhulunbuy raised a point that struck a chord with me because I see what he was talking about quite often when I am travelling through the bush, and that is that many Aboriginals are now prepared to have a go and want to do some things by themselves. We have been doing it for a long time and they do not think we made much of a job of it, however hard we tried. They feel that it is time they had a go, and they see ATSIC as a means to express themselves, make decisions, make mistakes and learn from them.

In a few years time, we will look back on ATSIC and say what an expensive mistake and learning curve it was for the Australian people and for the Aboriginals themselves, but I think it will also be possible to look back and say that many Aboriginals themselves learnt a considerable amount about the problems of providing services and resources to Aboriginal communities in remote areas, things that they do not understand now, and that will not be a bad lesson for them to learn. ATSIC is with us. We can complain about it, but the Commonwealth government will not change it. The problem we now face is how to make it work because, if we do not make it work, the losers will be Aboriginal Territorians.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in closing the debate, I will not take very much of the House's time, but there are a few comments I would like to make. Firstly, opposition members seem to think that they have some sort of monopoly on what Aboriginals think, what their aspirations are and what some of the answers are to the vexed problems that face us in coping with the Aboriginal need. Of course, they are very wrong in assuming that monopoly to themselves. Aboriginals are not united in their views on many things. They are no more united than other sections of a community, be they ethnic or employment groups or however you want to group society. There will always be differences of opinion, differences of attitude, differences in philosophy, and so it is too with the Aboriginals in the Northern Territory. Of course, that is not surprising. Their needs are very different and, in many cases, so too are their aspirations.

Honourable members opposite have been fairly critical today of the attitude of my government, although there were a couple of mentions of praise for the odd Aboriginal program that we have done. Indeed, we have done very many which we are very proud of, and we lead the states in many respects. However, I can assure honourable members opposite that there are many Aboriginals in the Territory who see the Northern Territory government as their government, and that is not because it is a CLP government. I believe that they would feel the same if, God forbid, Labor were in government in the Northern Territory, though that is pretty unlikely. They see the Northern Territory government as their government because they see themselves as Territorians.

By and large, I am speaking of the more traditional Aborigines with whom, increasingly, I come in contact as Chief Minister, and I find that an interesting side of my job. Many of them are very observant about things occurring about them and, whilst they do not receive all of the information available in the media that I guess most of us do, because they do not get the newspapers, certainly television has made a very significant difference. The advent of Imparja Television in the remote areas of the Territory has heightened their interest in many respects and certainly it has increased their knowledge of what is happening around them. They can see programs from around the world that are broadcast by Imparja. It screens very many interesting programs, and I think many Aborigines now have

a different perspective after having access to commercial television over a couple of years. I think that many of them, though not all, see that they are Territorians like the rest of us because we all live in the Territory. They are well aware of the fact that non-Aboriginals are not going to go away, and that we too have needs and aspirations. They themselves are not going away either and they have recognised among themselves that we have to live together. They do not necessarily see a government in distant Canberra as best serving their needs, and it has been expressed to me in those terms by a few Aboriginal people. They do not want a government as far away as Canberra. As do the rest of us, they seem to regard Canberra as being a long way away and they believe that the Northern Territory government is their government.

Many of them have expressed opposition to ATSIC. I suspect that some of that opposition may derive from the fact that they find ATSIC very confusing. They are told that it will deliver all sorts of programs to them, in health, education and substance abuse, yet they see other agencies doing that now and they are not quite sure which way to turn in some respects. We print great directories of government services, by and large for the urban communities, to try to assist educated people to understand myriad government agencies and arms so that they can decide for themselves as citizens in which direction or to whom they should turn for assistance to meet their particular needs. We have federal representatives in parliament, of course, and we have federal departments. We have state or territory representatives for our electorates and we have local government representatives. In addition, the Aboriginals have land council representatives, community government representatives and, in some cases, housing association representatives.

It must be very confusing for many Aborigines to determine what area of government or to which individual they should turn to articulate their wishes if they have a problem. As we well know, many of them have expressed concerns that the large land councils, the Northern and Central Land Councils, are not responding to their wishes, and they have said that they believe that they should have their own land councils. They see the 2 main councils largely as big bureaucracies which obviously cost a great deal of money to run, and they feel that much of that money should be flowing down to their level rather than being consumed by these visitors who wheel through Aboriginal settlements in new Toyotas on a regular basis.

Many feel frustration at the procrastination of the federal minister, who has on his desk a number of recommendations on land claims made by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner and which have been there for many years. The minister is hampered, to some degree, by having to consider matters of detriment in settling land claim boundaries etc, and this has caused considerable frustration for them in dealing with the federal minister, because that federal minister is pretty unresponsive, as Territorians found out before self-government. I have taken it on myself to help a couple of communities where they have turned to me to lobby the federal minister to take some action under the Land Rights Act or to attempt to obtain an amendment to the Land Rights Act to suit their wishes. That is an example of Aboriginal organisations saying that they cannot get anywhere with the federal government, that it is unresponsive to them, and of their asking the Territory government to exert some influence on their behalf. I am happy to do that when I can.

Aboriginals may have difficulty in obtaining parliamentary representation in the states, where they comprise less than 3% of the population. However, that is not the situation in the Northern Territory.

They comprise 22.4% of our population and are an integral part our parliamentary system. In this parliament, there are now 2 members of the Aboriginal race - if that is the right description - and there may well be several more following a Territory election, depending on the endorsements of the various parties. Certainly, the CLP will be attempting to have Aboriginal candidates win seats. However, it seems to me that part of the genesis of ATSIC was a view that Aboriginals were not having their needs responded to by governments and that they were somehow regarded as an irrelevant group to which no one was paying enough attention.

In Western Australia and Queensland, Aborigines comprise 2.7% and 2.4% of the population respectively. Even though, in numerical terms, there may be more Aborigines in those states than there are in the Territory, no doubt they feel that it is difficult to have their views reflected through the parliamentary system. Perhaps that was part of the thinking behind ATSIC and its 800 councillors, who will represent the wishes of their constituents and decide on priorities for them. However, that situation simply does not apply in the Northern Territory and I regard ATSIC as an insult to honourable members in this parliament who have been elected on the Aboriginal vote. That is basically to say that they are unresponsive and that they cannot respond on behalf of their constituents in a meaningful way and that, as a result, we have targeted large sums of taxpayers' dollars at Aboriginal affairs and are electing these councillors around the country to determine the priorities. I think that is most unfortunate. Certainly, it is very unnecessary in an area which has Aborigines as one-fifth of its population.

I would like to indicate that the Northern Territory government will cooperate with ATSIC as long as it is there with a view to trying to maximise the value of the dollar for Aboriginals on the ground. However, I reserve the right to continue to criticise the organisation as long as I believe that it is unnecessary and that it will be a bureaucratic mess. On the subject of organisations being a bureaucratic mess, certainly DAA and ADC got into considerable trouble over the years. No doubt, they were trying hard to do their best but they were in a constant mess with the Auditor-General about their loose arrangements with money and organisations.

Basically, what we have with ATSIC is the same people in a reorganised structure. The worst aspect is that 800 councillors will be superimposed on that bureaucracy. Consider the decision-making difficulties if those councillors are to determine all the budgetary priorities in terms of bids and expenditure. The 800 councillors will have to be serviced and paid daily sitting fees. Despite considerable effort, I was unable to find out what the daily sitting fee will be. They will have to be transported to and from meetings and accommodated. There will have to be agendas, phones, faxes etc. It will be a nightmare not only to run ATSIC's bureaucracy, but also to run its councillor system. I really think that this body will end up as a mess. The principles on which it is based are all wrong.

We oppose the opposition's amendment to this motion. It is an important motion. I would like very much to go to the Premiers Conference in a few weeks time saying that I have the united views of elected representatives of Territorians, black and white, on these important matters. The Premiers Conference is about the duplication of services and the division of powers between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. How can I help but raise ATSIC at such a forum? I would be abrogating my responsibilities if I sat at the table with the Premiers and indicated that we should sort out national drivers' licences and a few of the other matters which the Prime Minister has highlighted. Such obvious

matters require addressing, but how could I help but refer to this new structure which will spend $1000m of Australian taxpayers' funds, largely in duplicating services of my government in the Northern Territory? Health, education, substance abuse and domestic violence are matters which are the responsibility of my government under the Self-Government Act and the responsibility of my government to Aboriginal Territorians.

Honourable members opposite may say that we are not doing it well enough or that we are not doing enough. We can do only what we can with the resources that we have. If we had the deal that ATSIC has - inflation adjusted funding - we could do much more for Aboriginals than we are doing today. If we had had inflation adjusted funding for the last 6 years, I think probably we would be $400m or more better off today. Perhaps we can do things a little better and we shall continue to try to refine our services to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginals generally. We will continue to do that, but the answer is not the ATSIC structure. I want to go to the Premiers Conference with as much support from Territorians as I can muster, saying that these are the views of the Northern Territory which we are respectfully submitting to that very important forum.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
Mr Bailey	Mr Collins
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Finch
Mr Leo	Mr Firmin
Mr Smith	Mr Floreani
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to request that you refer a matter of privilege to the Privileges Committee. Today, I received this letter from Cridlands. It has a heading: 'The Honourable D.W. Manzie'. I seek leave to table the letter.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I should explain to honourable members why I wish the letter to be referred to the Privileges Committee. Yesterday morning,

in question time, honourable members will recall that I asked the Chief Minister a question about the propriety or otherwise of the Attorney-General standing aside while matters relating to the relationship between himself and one Officer Woods were the subject of police investigations. Yesterday evening, I sent by fax a copy of a letter that was delivered subsequently, by courier, to the office of the Chief Minister and that canvassed exactly those issues. In that letter, I said substantially what I had said in the question I asked the Chief Minister.

I point out for the benefit of honourable members that the letter that I faxed to the Chief Minister - which was delivered by courier - was sent only in those ways, and to him alone. I do not intend to table a copy of that letter because ...

Mr Coulter: I wonder why? Surprise, surprise.

Mr BELL: I hear the interjection from the Leader of Government Business. I am quite happy to table a copy of that letter. I seek leave to table a copy of the letter which was sent by facsimile machine to the Chief Minister last night.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I received by hand from the Leader of the Opposition a copy of the Chief Minister's reply. It rejected the suggestion that the Attorney-General should stand aside. In referring this matter to the Privileges Committee, I am quite happy to debate the propriety or otherwise of the Attorney-General standing aside under these circumstances. I do not intend to do so now but, if the Chief Minister cares to bring on a debate in those terms, I am more than happy to do so.

At the end of that letter, the Chief Minister advised the Leader of the Opposition in these terms: 'The Attorney-General has advised me he considers that he has been defamed. I understand he is in the process of commencing proceedings against Mr Bell'. Subsequently, I received a copy of this letter from Cridlands who are presumably acting for the Attorney-General. That letter makes a number of statements about the public issues that have been debated in recent days about the relationship between the Attorney-General and Officer Woods. It makes certain assertions about the relationship and the identifications and so on. The letter goes on to insist that I apologise in certain terms. The final paragraph says:

> In the event that we do not receive your undertaking that you will comply with these requirements before 12 noon on Thursday 4 October 1990, we will seek instructions to issue proceedings for defamation claiming damages commensurate with the gravity of the allegations.

Mr Speaker, all honourable members of this Assembly have a responsibility to canvass a wide variety of public issues. I believe that, in the 10 years that I have been a member of this Assembly, I have done so without fear or favour, and I will continue to do so. I regard that letter as a cowardly attempt to prevent me from canvassing public issues that are of a great deal of importance to Territorians. Therefore, I request that you refer that letter to the Privileges Committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable member, I have listened to the matter of privilege which you have raised. I will give the matter consideration and advise honourable members of my decision tomorrow.

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 298)

Continued from 22 August 1990.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, this bill will enable Conservation Commission officers to impose on-the-spot fines for people bringing animals into Northern Territory parks. Members on this side of the House have no objections to the amendment. We see on-the-spot fines as an appropriate way to penalise people who bring animals into parks, in preference to the drawn-out process of initiating legal action against people. People have the right not to pay a fine if they wish to dispute the issue in court, but on-the-spot fines can address breaches of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws.

The minister's second-reading speech contained a reference to temporary by-laws. I am not sure what that means. Are we to have permanent by-laws in the near future? Are the by-laws temporary for any particular reason?

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: I see. It is a typographical error which has not been corrected. It should read Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws rather than 'temporary' Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws. Perhaps Hansard will correct it at some time.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by reiterating the opposition's support for this amendment.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks on this amendment to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act will be brief. I support the amendment, both as the owner of many dogs over the years and also as the owner of much wildlife. There is a time and a place for everything and that certainly applies to taking dogs into areas where they could possibly kill defenceless fauna. Unfortunately, many people in the community think that their dogs need to accompany them when they go on holidays. Some people look after their dogs but, unfortunately, many do not. I happen to live near a caravan park which allows dogs. The dogs may behave themselves in the caravan park but they do not do much for the health of my goats. In fact, they have killed a number of them over the years. I believe that there is also an increasing problem with cats.

Mr Coulter: You have more dogs than a tribe of Eskimos at your place.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: But I look after mine.

Mr Speaker, the time will come when stricter regulations will have to apply to cats. Feral cats do a great deal of damage in the bush although, because of the way they operate, it is not always immediately visible.

I have no objection at all to the introduction of these amendments which will restrict the ability of park patrons to take animals into certain parks at certain times. In their wisdom, Conservation Commission officers may decide that pets may be taken into certain parks but not into others. No doubt, they would take into account the species of fauna in the park, the number of visitations and the fragility of the park's environment. A number of years ago, tame agile wallabies abounded at the Howard Springs Reserve. People would take their pets with them when they visited the reserve during

weekends and, of course, the friendly little wallabies were chased away by the dogs. Many of the owners would laugh and make asinine remarks, such as little Towser 'is having his fun' or that he 'is getting his exercise', without having any regard for the welfare of the wallabies.

In respect of section 71(2), I would like to ask the minister whether legislation has been enacted in relation to the use of traps to catch crocodiles in parks. I appreciate that the minister may not have the information at his fingertips but my advice is that there is no such provision at present. I doubt that anyone would dispute the necessity to catch problem crocodiles in parks, whether they be the salt-water or freshwater variety. However, I would like to be assured that the use of traps is covered by legislation. I support the bill.

Mr BELL: (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, although it does not relate to any of my shadow portfolios, I would like to comment on this bill. My electorate includes a large number of important national parks in the Territory context. Earlier today, I noticed that Bernie Kilgariff, the former Senator for the Northern Territory, was present in the gallery. He has attained the state of grace of being one of my constituents, although his views concerning that status may differ from mine, and I commend his initiatives in respect of the control of feral animals.

I appreciate that this bill seeks to make by-laws to provide for the imposition of on-the-spot-fines for the taking of animals into parks and reserves in the Territory, but the broad issue of feral animal control is also important. Recently, I had the opportunity to pay an all too brief visit to Erldunda Station. I intend returning to Erldunda to examine the rabbit control programs which are being carried out there. I believe that it is important to adopt a broad land management approach to the problem because the question of feral animal control is just as important on pastoral land as it is in national park areas.

Therefore, I trust that honourable members will appreciate my placing on record the work of the Central Australian Land Management Association. The question of land degradation and the effect of feral animals are very pertinent in that context and I believe that a responsible broad approach is necessary. I do not intend to speak at length on the issue this evening but I want to stress my interest and concern in a broad land management strategy that will address the problem of feral animals.

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of this legislation. It is good to see a bill proceeding so quickly and I assume that it will also pass the remaining stages quickly. I want to comment briefly on a couple of matters which have been raised.

I note the comments of the member for MacDonnell in respect of land care management. Land care management is a very important part of our overall conservation and environmental management strategy in the Northern Territory. Certainly, Mr Kilgariff's work on rabbit control at Erldunda is a striking example of what can be achieved. A number of innovative developments are under way and it is pleasing to see that the rabbit control program in central Australia is one of them.

Dogs in parks have become quite a problem and this legislation will give our rangers the capacity to manage the parks properly. Schedules are now being completed and there are some places where it will be appropriate for people to take dogs into our parks and reserves. However, they will be required to be under some control, probably in the form of a leash so that

they do not create a nuisance for other people or for wildlife in the park or reserve. It should be noted that these by-laws will apply to places such as the Casuarina Coastal Reserve and smaller reserves such as Berry Springs and Howard Springs, as well as the large parks such as Litchfield, Mary River, West MacDonnells, Watarrka and so on. By avoiding the necessity to take these matters to court, the whole process will become much more streamlined.

The member for Koolpinyah raised a question in respect of catching crocodiles in our national parks. As I understand the situation, there would be nothing to prevent the commission capturing crocodiles in the course of managing parks. Of course, such activity could be incorporated in plans of management where they exist. In the absence of such plans, the matter can be dealt with under the general management regime of the Conservation Commission.

Whilst we have the capacity to do that, our Problem Crocodile Management Program is geared for areas outside parks and reserves. Such areas particularly include places people utilise for recreation, such as Darwin Harbour and Buffalo Creek. Obvious exceptions will be places such as Berry Springs, which I am sure the honourable member would be particularly concerned about. None of us wants to see either freshwater or salt-water crocodiles swimming around in the Berry Springs Nature Park. Commission rangers control the approaches to Berry Creek very closely, particularly from the harbour side, and I have accompanied patrols in that area. Traps are set to prevent crocodiles entering the reserve area because, obviously, it is an area set aside for people and not for crocodiles. The program will continue to operate in those areas. With those few brief comments, Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MINE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 288)

Continued from 16 August 1990.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, broadly speaking, the opposition accepts the Mine Management Amendment Bill. No doubt, honourable members will be somewhat surprised to see an amendment come before the House to a bill that was passed so recently and they may recall the vociferous debate that took place in the committee stage of the Mine Management Bill in respect of the involvement of worker representatives at various stages of the mine management proposal. Honourable members will recall that the Mine Management Bill replaced the Mines Safety Control Act. During the committee stage, I made lengthy reference to legislation enacted by the conservative government in Queensland, the then National Party government, which provided comprehensively for the involvement of trade union representatives in the mines safety regime in that state. It is with some pleasure that we see that the Minister for Mines and Energy has been learning the words of the 'Internationale', and has been heard singing tunefully from the top of NT House 'The worker's flag is deepest red', much to chagrin of many of his fellow Cabinet members, but to the utter joy of the Secretary and members of the Trades and Labor Council. I appreciate his concession in that regard.

This amendment raises an issue of principle that deserves some debate in this Assembly which is whether or not workers who are involved in the inspection of mines should be deemed to be at work or not. If they are deemed to be at work, they should be paid. I can imagine that this is a management/worker issue of some concern. Some sections of the management of mining companies would say that, if workers want to be safe, they can be safe in their own time or there may be a slightly more gentle approach from mine management to the effect that, if workers want to be involved in the safety regime, they can be involved in their own time. It is my belief that the involvement of workers and management in a coherent safety regime is of vital importance. Very often, those working people, who deal day by day and very immediately with the places and machinery that are the subject of concern as far as worker safety is concerned, have very valuable points of view. In 10 years as a Labor Party politician, I have often had the opportunity to speak to trade unionists and other workers about immediate safety issues, as well as other issues of immediate concern, and it is unfailingly illuminating to hear what they say about their immediate experience of things that they believe are adequate and things that they believe are inadequate.

It is important to maintain positive management/worker relations in order to maximise industrial safety and, if that is true broadly, it is even more true on mines which arguably are among the most hazardous working environments in this country. I refer to one example in that regard, and to a current issue which will be one that the Minister for Mines and Energy is aware of. I refer to the drilling rig, the Sedco Forex 708, that has been the subject of representations by the Australian Workers Union in respect of the presence of asbestos. I am aware that serious concerns are held by members of the Australian Workers Union in relation to the presence of asbestos and other chemicals on that rig. To date, there has been no resolution of that issue, and I believe that needs to be addressed by this Assembly.

In a debate on a Mine Management Amendment Bill such as this, I do not necessarily expect the minister to have all the issues at his fingertips and, obviously, it is not appropriate to discuss the nitty-gritty of that issue in this context. However, I point out to the minister that I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss that. The term 'nitty-gritty' is perhaps an apposite one to apply when one comes to talk about asbestos. I had the opportunity recently to be briefed by officers of the Australian Workers Union in respect of materials that have been taken from that rig, and it is a matter of serious concern to me. I know that officers of the Work Health Authority have expressed the view that stable asbestos in sheet form is not a risk to health but, when that sheeting or other forms of asbestos become crumbly and can be inhaled, those asbestos fibres can invade human cells and may be a cause of cancer. I remind honourable members, if they need any reminding, of the tragedy of the death of the New South Wales Governor recently. He was a very brave man indeed. It was suggested that he contracted cancer as a result of asbestos head covers that were worn by gunnery officers such as himself.

One issue in that regard relates to exactly the subject matter of this bill, and I refer to the presence of trade union members on rigs. I have not had the opportunity to discuss this with the management of Sedco Forex, but I believe that the company has not been enthusiastic about allowing the opportunity for officers of the Australian Workers Union to visit the rig to consult with members in order to get to the bottom of this matter. I understand that a contribution in the vicinity of $4000 or $5000 is required of the union before officials are able to visit the rig.

Obviously, where we are talking about mines that are able to be visited by road, there is not a problem for trade union officials in visiting mine sites. Clearly, where those mine sites are rigs out in the middle of the Timor Sea, the only possible means of getting there is by helicopter and, under those circumstances, I believe that there is a need for cooperation between companies and trade unions to ensure that an appropriate safety regime is put in place.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL: I note the approbation of the Minister for Mines and Energy, and I will look forward to a fulsome statement in respect of Sedco Forex 708 and the question of the presence of debilitating asbestos on that rig.

The second issue that is raised by this bill relates to worker representation on the Mining Board. This is an amendment that was proposed by the opposition when the bill was put forward originally. I understand that Mr Col Brodie of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union is likely to be a member of the Mining Board to fit in with this amendment and the position on the Mining Board so created. Mr Brodie is a trade unionist with wide experience in the Territory ...

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear! Col Brodie is a top man.

Mr BELL: Once again, I note the approbation of the Minister for Mines and Energy in respect of Mr Brodie's presence on the Mining Board. This renewed understanding of the importance of trade unionism can only serve the mining industry in the Territory well in the future.

Those are the positive comments, but I have one further comment. I note that a question is raised about the extent to which worker representatives of mines may or may not be allowed to be appointed when they disrupt the work of the mine. There is a requirement that the election of worker representatives, to be involved in this safety process, not disrupt the mine. I have some reservations about that, and I will continue to monitor the way in which that provision operates on the ground. I will look forward to hearing from people involved in the mining industry with respect to that proposal. With those comments, I indicate that the opposition is broadly in support of the amendment and therefore we commend it.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I have considered the bill and consider it to be fair and reasonable, and I trust that it will be useful for mine safety.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. This is a very important bill. Mine management and mine safety is paramount to me, as the minister. We have had many deaths in mining operations in the Northern Territory in past years. Mining is a very dangerous occupation and, in some cases, miners risk their lives daily. I will do everything that I can do, as a minister, to prevent any similar deaths.

The member for MacDonnell is quite correct. I have, in fact, written to the Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council and, for the benefit of honourable members, I will read that letter:

> I refer to our ongoing discussions concerning representations by the Trades and Labor Council on the Mining Board. You can be assured that I have no difficulty with the TLC being represented

provided, of course, that the person meets the criteria under the legislation and performs the functions, as outlined, to my satisfaction as the responsible minister.

As you are aware, the board is constituted pursuant to the Mines Safety Control Act 1982. You would also be aware that, in February of this year, I introduced into the Legislative Assembly the Mine Management Bill which was subsequently passed in May, and what now remains is the completion of the accompanying regulations which will bring the act and regulations into effect. I anticipate that this will occur towards the end of the year.

The current board, as constituted under the Mines Safety Control Act, has no vacancies and, with a new regime to come into effect later this year, I have decided that it is more appropriate to alter the composition of the board at that time. You may, therefore, care to forward, at your convenience, the name or names of your nominee or nominees, for my consideration, as a member of the board pursuant to the Mine Management Act 1990.

I have attached a copy of the legislation for your reference. The contribution your nominee or your nominees would make to the board, in your council's view, would assist in my deliberations.

Of course, I have heard that Mr Brodie is a name that is being put forward. I look forward to that because it is important.

I will touch briefly only on the Sedco rig question because, whilst it is not covered here, it is related. It is rather complicated because of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act and the fact that, on behalf of the federal government, we monitor the rigs operating in the Timor Sea. From time to time, I have put a proposal to them, similar to the Mine Management Act, to operate within the oil industry. Those are ongoing discussions that I am having with the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government. We are talking about the issues and the avoidance of duplication. It will be no secret to members in this Chamber and, indeed, to my colleagues, that I am particularly sensitive to who actually trapezes in and out of mine sites around the Territory, and who does what. I ensure that those people who are visiting mine sites ...

Mr Bell: What about drinking waste water?

Mr COULTER: I do that myself. I do not delegate that.

There is a problem with duplication and people moving in and out of mine sites. We will do everything possible to rectify that, particularly in respect of the offshore area.

The matter of asbestos being present on the rig has been referred to the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, and his inspectors are dealing with that issue, but I do take the honourable member's point. I think there is room for 1 piece of legislation which covers all of that. I pay particular tribute to some of the operators, their safety meetings and the way in which they ensure that their industry is as safe as possible. It is another of the more dangerous industries. I am not sure if any honourable member has been on an oil rig and seen a derrick man working at the top of the huge drill columns on the open sea. He sits at the top of the rig itself, loading up for drilling purposes. It is particularly dangerous. There is 30 ft of drill core flopping around in

the air like a piece of spaghetti and he tries to get it down the hole. It is a credit to the way some operators go about their business.

I would like to say no more than that, other than that I am aware of the circumstances the honourable member was talking about and, as he said, it is related to this in a way. I told the honourable member that I was not all that happy with mines inspections being done in the workers' representative's own time, but one can understand the vulnerability that the miners feel in relation to possible abuse of the safety inspection regime. There is the fear that they would select somebody from within the mine who could not be away from his work for any 5 minutes of the day ...

Mr Bell: For safety reasons.

Mr COULTER: ... and pull him away from that, for safety reasons, and the plant would have to shut down. That is their concern, and I will be monitoring that very closely.

I do not think that there is much more that I can say other than that I appreciate my connections with the union movement. There was a time when I spoke ...

Mr Bell: Which one were you a member of, Barry? Come on!

Mr COULTER: I have never been a member of a union. I have worked on contract all my life. If somebody did not like me or I did not like them, we parted company. Nobody has ever represented Barry Coulter other than Barry Coulter.

Mr Bell: But you took the pay rises, didn't you? You took the pay rises. Scab.

Mr Ede: You took the goods and the services.

Mr COULTER: Here we go!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: I thought that the unions spoke a different language, Mr Speaker. However, I can say that we are getting on very well together at the moment. Even the power problems that we have been facing at Alice Springs, which would be of interest to honourable members opposite, may have been resolved because of the ability of a trade union member to telephone me. In fact, I rang him ...

Mr Bell: Power supplies and also wage relativities.

Mr COULTER: I said this morning that we would pay it, and I said we would backdate it to May. That is not a problem. It is not an issue.

Mr Smith: Why didn't you do it 2 weeks ago?

Mr COULTER: It had to be done through the Arbitration Commission. That is all.

There is room for negotiation on most of these issues, and I look forward to the contribution of the trade union movement in an industry which is becoming vital, not only to the Northern Territory, but to Australia. It is an industry that now produces $2000m-worth of wealth annually in the

Northern Territory. For this year, we are projecting $1000m in minerals and $1000m in hydrocarbons and therefore it is very important that our legislation, particularly in respect of mine management and safety, is in place and working.

With those comments, I will close. I am aware of the problem with the rigs operating in the Timor Sea. I am having discussions with the operators and also with the Work Health Authority on that issue, and I think it is a debate for another time. Of course, it will become more complicated when we go into zone A in the Timor Gap area, where rigs from all around the world will be operating. It is not that we do not have them now, but the concentration and the crewing of those rigs etc will make it necessary for the technical directorate, which will be based in Darwin, to address many of these issues. I can foresee considerable discussion on this subject at a later time. However, I would like to inform the member for MacDonnell that I am aware of the issues, and that we are trying to resolve them.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 302)

Continued from 22 August 1990.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I note that this amendment to the Supreme Court Act will enable the position of Master of the Supreme Court to become a statutory office because of changes in the functions, which include the exercise of judicial functions and an expected increase in those functions. I notice also that it will enable the appointment of an Acting Master to cover the Master's absences. It will provide for resignation, retirement and removal from office and for the existing position of Deputy Master to be titled Registrar so that this more closely accords with the duties of the position. I indicate that the opposition supports the bill and trusts that it will assist in the smooth running of the Supreme Court and therefore the administration of justice in the Territory.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, these are matters with which I am not particularly au fait even though I have read the minister's second-reading speech carefully. I note that the taxpayer will be paying a few extra quid because of this amendment. One would hope that the saving grace will be that the availability of a person to take over the extra duties will free the justices to do the more exacting jobs which they are required to do. I doubt that any member of this Assembly would ever be in a position really to know whether that will happen and, in that sense, we are somewhat in the dark. Let us hope that, in return for the expenditure of additional taxpayers' dollars, the system will function more smoothly, thereby benefiting the community.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUPREME COURT (JUDGES LONG LEAVE PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 289)

Continued from 22 August 1990.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the Supreme Court (Judges Long Leave Payments) Amendment Bill brings Supreme Court long leave payments in the Territory into line with those under the Commonwealth Act. It also removes some of the sexist language from the act so that it will reflect the possibility that judges may be women. Whilst we have not had a woman judge in the Territory in recent years, if ever, it is certainly to be hoped that that eventuality is not too far away.

I note that there is some concern that the long service requirements for judges are to change in a manner which may not be accepted in all corners. In view of the difficulties which we have sometimes encountered in recruiting judges to the Territory, it is important for us to maintain conditions which are at least equivalent to those elsewhere in the country. I am sure that the Attorney-General will agree with me that there have been such difficulties at times.

In my view, it is important that we recruit, from the ranks of able and very well-paid jurists, able judges for the Territory. The fact is that many judges who take up positions in the Territory are in a position of receiving less money than in their former employ, usually as solicitors, barristers or QCs in other jurisdictions if not within the Territory. Therefore, it is difficult to see how a proposal like this cannot be supported. I indicate the opposition's support for the bill in those terms.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would like to endorse the comments made by the member for MacDonnell. Indeed, it is very important that we have judges in the Territory who are the best available.

Mr Hatton: The best judges money can buy.

Mr MANZIE: I do not agree entirely with that. Obviously, when people become judges, their salaries often drop considerably. In some cases, this can involve amounts in excess of $500 000 per year. When one considers such massive reductions in income, it is obvious that service to the community is a very important part of the role.

At the same time, it is important to provide some support in terms of retirement and leave provisions. Accordingly, we need to provide salaries which, although they may appear excessive to many people, are in fact very low in comparison with the salaries and benefits which are available to such people before they become judges. With those few words, I thank the honourable member for his support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, last night I was asked to attend a meeting, at the invitation of the prostitute Rhonda, to hear her version of a meeting which she had had with the Attorney-General. I accepted the invitation and, as a result, I made a minute of the meeting. I would like to read into Hansard the contents of the minute which I took. I would like to say that the notes which I am about to read are regarded by the parties at the meeting as a fair and reasonable record of the conversations that took place.

Last night, in the presence of other people whom I will name later in my remarks, I met with the prostitute, Rhonda. Whilst I am aware of her proper name, it would be inappropriate for it to be mentioned in this context. During the course of the interview, Rhonda made certain allegations which contradict statements made previously in this House by the Attorney-General, and certain other allegations which are so serious in their nature that, in my view, the only way of testing their veracity is by way of a Royal Commission.

The honourable Attorney-General has claimed in the House on several occasions that he has never met the prostitute Rhonda and does not know her. Rhonda has advised, in the presence of others, that she received a telephone call from Peter Woods asking her to meet him at Myilly Point, which she did. Peter Woods advised her that he had set up a meeting with herself and the Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, to take place in the Palmerston Room of the Parap Hotel at 3.30 that afternoon.

Mr Manzie: What afternoon?

Mr TUXWORTH: Rhonda claims that she presented herself at the arranged time and had a 20-minute meeting with the Attorney-General. During the course of the meeting, the Attorney-General advised Rhonda that he was aware that she had a close personal relationship with Woods but that the time had come when that situation had come to an end and it was important that she should leave town.

Mr Manzie: When was this supposed to have happened?

Mr TUXWORTH: Rhonda maintains that the Attorney-General stressed that his friendship with Woods was of extreme importance and that he was keen to see the difficulties that had arisen as a result of their liaison settled quickly and quietly with her departure from town.

Mr Manzie: It is a filthy lie.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Barkly accusing the honourable Attorney-General of misleading this House deliberately?

Mr TUXWORTH: Not at this stage, Sir.

Mr SPEAKER: Would you please clarify that?

Mr TUXWORTH: I am not making an accusation, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: You are not accusing the Attorney-General of misleading this House deliberately?

Mr TUXWORTH: No. I am not making any allegations.

Mr SPEAKER: Carry on. If you intend to make any allegations, please do so by means of a substantive motion under standing order 62.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am not making an allegation. I am placing on the record allegations which have been made to me with other people present.

Mr Manzie: Give us some times and dates.

Mr McCarthy: What about the first time you met Rhonda?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not permit any interruption from members on either side of the House on this important question relating to a standing order.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am not making an allegation about the propriety of the honourable minister.

Mr SPEAKER: You cannot repeat in the Chamber an allegation which somebody has made to you. If you are saying that you are repeating an allegation made to you by somebody outside the parliament, and are now transmitting that thought to this parliament, you must do it by substantive motion under standing order 62.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am not making an allegation against the Attorney-General at all. The report that I am putting into the Hansard record at this moment relates to a minute of a meeting that occurred last night. It is not an allegation by me. It is a statement, made by someone else, that they have met the Attorney-General. There is no reference by me in this matter.

Mr SPEAKER: My learned Clerk tells me that, in transmitting the report, you are accusing the Attorney-General of misleading this House.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am trying to follow your line of reasoning because I am reporting to you the circumstances of a meeting at which certain information was conveyed to people who were present.

Mr SPEAKER: That is just not on. In case you are not familiar with it, I will read out standing order 62(3):

> The provisions of this standing order relating to unbecoming conduct shall not apply where a substantive motion on notice brings a charge of misconduct against a member.

Whilst you say that you are not doing that, standing order 62(1) says:

> No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words against the Assembly or any member of the Assembly or against any House or member of another Australian parliament or against any member of the judiciary, or against any Northern Territory statute unless for the purpose of moving for its repeal, nor shall a member attribute directly or by innuendo to another member unbecoming conduct or motives; and all offensive references to a member's

private affairs and all personal reflections on members shall be deemed to be highly disorderly.

The member for Barkly cannot proceed with this matter except by way of a substantive motion under the terms of standing order 62(3).

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to move a substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot accept leave because of the motion before the Chair.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving a substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot accept that either.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I give notice that, tomorrow morning, in line with the terms of your ruling, I will move a substantive motion that will enable this debate to continue.

Mr BAILEY: (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of the House a concern that I have had for some time and I believe that it still has not been resolved. I refer to the matter of Indo-Pacific Marine. For some time, it has been operating under a cloud regarding its future. The history of Indo-Pacific Marine dates back to before Cyclone Tracy when the proprietors were trying to establish a salt-water aquarium display in Fannie Bay. This was destroyed by Cyclone Tracy. They rebuilt their operation in Phillips Street in Fannie Bay. When I was a biology teacher at Darwin High School, it was quite common for us to take students to that display. At that stage, I had quite a bit to do with Helene Pretty, who was the person mainly involved with the project.

The significance of the displays was that their creators were using a technique which they had developed for maintaining an ecosystem for salt-water fish and other salt-water creatures. As a result of zoning problems and problems with the size of the house from which they were operating, they moved to the Myilly Point university complex. The display has been there for some time. It first won the Northern Territory Tourist Commission Brolga Award in 1985 and has won awards each year since 1987. It is one of a handful of significant tourist attractions close to the inner Darwin area. Probably it is on a par with attractions such as the Chief Minister's fish feeding area and the museum. It would be hard to find many other major attractions within the central Darwin area.

Some months ago, the university sought to have Indo-Pacific Marine removed from its premises because it wanted to use the space it occupies. For a number of months, Helene Pretty and Jon Ostara, the other person involved with Indo-Pacific Marine, have been trying to locate other suitable premises. It is my understanding that they are still having difficulty in locating appropriate accommodation. If the exhibition were to close, it would be a great loss to the Northern Territory and to the tourist industry. The displays at Indo-Pacific Marine are of world standard. Many visitors from around the world have commented on that. As far as I am aware, there is no comparable marine display anywhere in Australia.

For some time, Indo-Pacific Marine has wanted to develop one of the old tanks in front of the Esplanade. It has actually undertaken a feasibility study. The problem is the type of operation that it runs. The Minister for

Conservation would be aware that it is very hard to run scientific, musuem-type establishments at a profit. In fact, it is almost impossible. I suspect that the Territory Wildlife Park may never operate at a profit. The operating costs of such facilities are high. It may be possible to arrange the books so that it appears that it may make a profit. However, with establishment costs and interest, it would be unlikely that a project like the Territory Wildlife Park could be set up from scratch as a commercial operation. The problem for Indo-Pacific Marine is that it would never be able to raise sufficient capital from its operation to be able to set up in one of those tanks. That is a pity. At present, the major difficulty for Indo-Pacific Marine is to find somewhere appropriate where it can move in the short term.

One area that I have been involved with on a number of occasions and have brought to the attention of this House is the old Methodist manse and church which is on the National Heritage list and which is considered to be one of the most significant heritage sites in the Darwin area. One of the matters discussed when debating heritage issues is what to do with old buildings such as the Methodist church and manse. I put it to this Assembly that a facility such as Indo-Pacific Marine could be ideally located within those existing premises. It is the type of tourist operation that is ideally suited to the central Darwin area and it would add greatly to the tourist attractions there. It would create a very appropriate development for that site. At this time, the owners of that site want to sell it. My understanding is that the price is about $1.25m or $1.5m, a figure that is totally beyond the resources of Indo-Pacific Marine.

We have heard from the government that it is interested in protecting heritage sites. I put it to this Assembly that heritage sites would be protected much more effectively if the buildings were left in their current location. I suggest that it would be of value for this government to examine the possibility of that site being protected by some form of effective use such as Indo-Pacific Marine. The government should consider beginning negotiations with the Uniting Church, which owns the block, and possibly opening channels of negotiation with Indo-Pacific Marine.

Mr Hatton: They have no control over the site. They gave a 99-year lease away 10 years ago.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, the church still owns the land. My understanding is that the person who owns the lease would be very happy to get rid of it as it is costing $60 000 to $80 000 a year to own it. Actually, it is $100 000 of which they receive about $40 000. Whoever owns the lease would be quite happy to come to some arrangement to part with it. It would be a great opportunity for this government to demonstrate its seriousness about protecting heritage. As we are aware, the minister has tabled a set of draft legislation for heritage protection and I believe he will be introducing the next draft ...

Mr Hatton: Tomorrow.

Mr BAILEY: Tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, it would be a great shame for Darwin and the Northern Territory if Indo-Pacific Marine were to be lost, and there is not much time left before some form of decision has to be made to keep it here. On many occasions, we have heard this government talk about the way it has invested money - although we may not always agree with it - on the grounds of supporting developments that bring people to the Northern Territory and

provide services. It is very important that this House should try to support the maintenance of Indo-Pacific Marine in the Darwin area, and I would doubt that anyone here would argue against that. We have only a very short time left to do something about it if the current eviction notice is carried through.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I want to speak on 2 subjects tonight, the first of which is New Age thinking. It is a little disappointing that the member for Barkly has left the Chamber. It is a little disappointing also that the member for Wanguri is going, because he may have some knowledge of New Age thinking and its merits and demerits. For those who do not remember, it was one of those voodoo, snake-oil cults that was introduced to the Northern Territory by the member for Barkly himself, through his brother, who was the Australian agent holding the franchise on this New Age thinking. He thought that he might be able to make a dollar or two out of it. In simple terms, the selling point with New Age thinking is that it has to do with self-esteem and promotion of one's self-confidence. However, the reality is that it is all about overcoming reality. The whole scheme was extremely dangerous, as has been demonstrated very clearly by the member for Barkly in recent times. Regardless of the facts that are presented to one, regardless of life itself, one is able to convince oneself by means of reading a set of little cards that one carries in one's wallet. You repeat to yourself how good you are, how wonderful you are, how glorious you are, how intelligent you are and, sooner or later, of course, those with weak minds ...

Mr Hatton: Self-delusion.

Mr FINCH: ... delude themselves into believing that untruths are reality. Of course we are well aware that an attempt was made by the honourable member's brother to introduce New Age thinking into the Northern Territory for financial gain. I think that a number of members of this House attended one of the courses.

Mr Bell: All you blokes were supporting it at one stage. I would sit down if I were you.

Mr FINCH: Quite a number of members on this side of the House were far from supportive.

Mr Bell: Not a peep. You had to be pulled into gear by the party wing. You are a weak man.

Mr FINCH: That is not true at all.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINCH: It is no wonder that the member for MacDonnell is making so much noise. Obviously, he has had some experience. Of course, the member for MacDonnell must have done the course himself. He must have done the course at the time when he did his theatrical course at Disneyland so that he could match the efforts of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy. But, let me get back to New Age thinking.

I certainly was one of those who was approached to do the course, and I told him where he could bite himself because, quite frankly, I was not in the least bit interested in such a voodoo-cult mentality.

Mr Coulter: How long was it before you became a minister after that?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, let me tell you how long it took me to become a minister because that well and truly demonstrated the arrogance of the man at that time. He asked me to use my influence at Casuarina Secondary College. He thought all the senior students would be able to benefit from this New Age thinking. Once again, there was no way in the world that I would have any of my constituents' young people indoctrinated into this snake- or gorilla-like cult.

It pays to reflect on the type of reputation that the honourable member had at that time. Despite some 18 months of hard work by a number of members on this side of the House to reason with the honourable member, to his peril, he chose to ignore us. His reputation for arrogance had developed in the northern suburbs to the extent where 89% of conservative voters there said at the time that he had to go, and go he did.

Mr Collins: I remember you grovelling in a party meeting.

Mr FINCH: I did not grovel at all. If the member for Sadadeen would like to recall the events accurately, there was no grovelling. It took me an hour-and-a-half of demonstrating the back-room deals. Maybe the member for Sadadeen had the proposal put to him that he would become the next Speaker, if he would shut his mouth and back off.

Mr Collins: No deals were offered to me at all.

Mr FINCH: Of course, it is all right for him to start swinging stuff around, but you have to be careful when you get close to the bone.

Let me come back to deals because an attempt was made to put a deal to me as well. He said: 'Don't tell me that I should get out in the northern suburbs and prove that I have some humanity and humility, that I am not as arrogant as they make out. Fred, if you are a good, quiet boy for 3 months, you can be the ninth minister'. I said: 'I am afraid that I have news for you. I do not want to be your ninth minister'. Lo and behold, when I went down the corridor and spoke to other members, 2 of them had been approached with the same proposition. Back-room deals! No wonder he went, and that he went in disgrace.

Mr Bell: The night of the long knives! Tell us about it, Fred.

Mr FINCH: That is worthy of a book one day.

Mr Speaker, let me tell you about some of the by-products of this New Age thinking. I do not know if it is a fact that it makes one miserable and mean, I can only say that the miserableness and meanness of the member for Barkly is unparalleled in modern times. All honourable members would be well aware not only of the travelling allowance matters, but of other things. I will table a copy of Hansard - not that that should be necessary - for 22 February 1990 where I am reported reflecting on the very poor performance of the honourable member in his own electorate of Barkly. He had turned his back on the people of Barkly and was living in Darwin. Of course, that was for family reasons and that was fine, but it certainly did not serve the people of Barkly very well.

In a somewhat heated adjournment debate one night, I mentioned that, in the next election campaign, the member for Barkly would run for a seat in Darwin. We were not sure for which seat, but the member for Barkly suggested that I put my money up. It is on the public record that I bet 1 carton of beer. I did not specify but intimidated that green cans in the

members' lounge would be fine. I bet that the member for Barkly would run for a Darwin seat because certainly that was the feeling in Tennant Creek.

Mr Collins: You were both wrong.

Mr FINCH: No, Goyder is ...

Mr Smith: It is not in Darwin.

Mr FINCH: To demonstrate a point, Mr Speaker, Goyder is the closest seat to Darwin for which the sitting member will still be entitled to a parliamentary car. Obviously, that is the logic and the reason behind ...

Mr Collins: That is baloney.

Mr FINCH: For goodness sakes, Mr Speaker, to use a parliamentary car to do your weekly shopping in Darwin hardly serves the people of Barkly. I would suggest that the logic there is either to save a carton of beer or to ensure that - not that he would ever win - if he were to win, he would be entitled to a parliamentary car at the taxpayer's expense.

Mr Hatton: You cannot get one in Goyder.

Mr FINCH: That is beside the point.

Of course I would not be surprised if the carton of beer does not turn up. Welshing is probably the way the honourable member is likely to go. He reneged after that marathon party meeting. So that the member for Sadadeen does not become too excited about it, if he puts his mind to it, he will recall that, in return for a last chance to demonstrate a degree of humility, the member for Barkly was to walk out of that meeting and demonstrate, by eating some humble pie, that he was given a chance to ...

Mr Collins: He was given a 100% supportive vote and I have the cards. You were one of them. You grovelled.

Mr FINCH: And that is exactly true, on the basis that he ate humble pie. However, what did he do?

Mr Collins: It was not on that basis at all, and you came out a disgrace to the party.

Mr FINCH: Of course it was, and the honourable member may have a fuzzy mind in this regard.

Mr Speaker, I can tell you that, not only did he let his colleagues down, but he arranged to get himself a little advertisement in the newspaper the following day. I have absolutely no doubt at all that we are seeing here a vindictive man who, very sadly, is so bitter and twisted that he has lost contact with realty even further. I suggest that he has taken a refresher course in New Age thinking. However, enough of that. Let me move to a more productive topic.

Mr Speaker, I have been given a copy of the 1951 Northern Territory telephone directory.

Mr Ede: Do you want to read it into Hansard?

Mr FINCH: I do not want to read it into Hansard at all. In fact, I do not want to reflect on it at any great length. It was given to me by a mate of mine who was here at the time.

Mr Bailey: What is it?

Mr FINCH: It is a 1951 Northern Territory telephone directory. I suggest that the original be passed to the museum which may have some use for it. It does make interesting reading and therefore I will table this copy for the benefit of honourable members who may wish to flick through it and see names like Harris, Kilgariff and Tambling and several other previous members, and titles of businesses and government departments. The entire book comprises very few pages. One interesting aspect is the entries for the town of Tennant Creek. In those days, it had far more entries than did Katherine. Of course, that was in the boom gold mining days. Mr Speaker, I would like to present one copy to the museum and I table one for the information of honourable members.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise in the adjournment debate tonight to address what I call freedom of speech and the silent majority. Last week in this Chamber, in answer to a question, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries was forced to admit that the Northern Territory government had sought to deny a pastoralist his freedom of speech. One simple, but central, question remains unanswered. Why? Why did this government, which claims to be all about free enterprise, see the need to silence Bob and Rob Dunbar and their families? What did it have to fear from these pastoralists? Why do the names Nutwood Downs and Dunbar strike fear into the hearts of those opposite?

I believe the answer can be found in a debate in this Chamber that took place exactly 2 years ago. It was on a matter of public importance raised by members on this side of the House on Thursday 6 October 1988. In it, the Leader of the Opposition referred to a report made by Mr Ted Easton in 1985, and it must be remembered that the Dunbars bought the property in 1984. It is interesting also that, when the Leader of the Opposition attempted to read from this report, the Attorney-General attempted to prevent him tabling it. The report went into detail about the management of the property under Vesteys, its previous owners, the extent to which there had not been clean musters and the fact that the fencing had deteriorated quite substantially. It went on to state that it became apparent that the lessees, the Dunbars, had had their work cut out trying to get the place in order, let alone trying to organise and run a stock camp. It went on:

> Mr Dunbar has purchased this block with its inherent problems at a time when great pressure has been brought to bear on most northern region properties for total destocking and final shoot-out where a disease problem is still prevalent. This is a totally unsatisfactory solution for lessees of the like of the Dunbars who have fully committed themselves to the Northern Territory.

I interpose there, Mr Speaker, that the Dunbars had already successfully undertaken the BTEC campaign in Queensland. Mr Easton went on to say: 'It is a case of "Welcome to the Territory, and now we are going to send you broke"'.

That report was tabled in the parliament on 6 October 1988. The Dunbars had to cope with the experts of 1 government department saying that the program that another government department had laid down for them would not work. Is it any wonder that they were in for a rough trot? Since that

time, the Dunbars have outsmarted this government. They went along with the BTEC program to the point where they are now well ahead of their neighbours. Their property is totally destocked. Had they not been so smart, they might have signed away their chance to criticise this government and the action that it has taken to try to silence its critics.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental tenet of democracy. In his final report to the Queensland government, Tony Fitzgerald QC stated: 'Good government is more likely to result if opposition, criticism and rational debate are allowed to take place, appropriate checks and balances are placed on the use of power and the administration is open to new ideas, opposing points of view and public scrutiny'. Two ministers in this government stand condemned by their own admissions in this House that they sought to deny the Dunbars their freedom of speech. And what of the silent backbenchers who sit opposite? What did they do in response to these admissions? As usual, they sat in silence. For that, they stand condemned also. This government can kid itself as much as it likes but, out in the bush, where people value their freedom, the name of Dunbar will haunt this government to its political grave. Honourable members may laugh, but will they laugh after the next election when they are coming to us for a job?

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, the first matter I wish to raise is of particular interest not only to my electorate but also to the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition. It is a project that I have been working on now for some 18 months for what I call the Nightcliff community which includes the suburbs of Nightcliff, Rapid Creek, Coconut Grove and Millner, areas that comprise people who would identify themselves as living in the Nightcliff area. Many of us are involved in a wide range of community activities, whether it be Tidy Towns, tree-planting projects, school fetes or helping out with the parks in our electorates. Many of us organise groups for working bees. From time to time, situations arise in our electorates whereby people may need a little help. For example, there may be a child who has the opportunity to go on a trip but the parents do not have the money. We ring Rotary or Lions to see if they can help with such matters. A local member may run a pancake stall for a school or whatever to try to raise some money. It can be a very frustrating process.

I believe that it could be of value for a community to have a mechanism whereby it could pool some funds so that those funds could be used for community purposes such as purchasing paint to brighten up the swings in the local playground or obtaining trees for planting. It is important that such funds should not be controlled by any vested interest group but open for a variety of purposes in the community. To this end, I have been working for the last year or so on an idea which has become known as the Nightcliff community chest. Members will have an idea of the concept of a community chest from the game of Monopoly. I know that the City of Geelong runs its own community chest and now we have put together such a structure in Nightcliff. I am pleased to say that is has come to fruition this week after a long and strenuous period.

The community chest will receive public donations and allocate money for minor community projects such as tree planting and area beautification. It has been registered as a public company, controlled by representatives of the Nightcliff service clubs of Lions, Apex and Rotary. A representative of Kiwanis is expected to be added shortly. The aim will be to gain funds for the sort of projects that I have mentioned. I hope that this can be expanded to support any worthwhile community purpose or needy individuals. Any individual or organisation in the Nightcliff community will be able to apply to the community chest for assistance and applications will be

assessed jointly by the community chest managers, who will be appointed by the service clubs. It is most important to ensure the integrity of any organisations collecting and distributing moneys and, by involving the service clubs directly, I believe we have achieved that.

During last year's 41st party for Nightcliff, some funds were raised by the community groups involved. They have been holding some part of those funds to go into the community chest. In addition, the Nightcliff Lions Club is donating its share of the profits from this year's Beer Can Regatta. That is in the order of some $3000 and it will form some of the base funding in the community chest. I hope that, in the near future, we will be able to organise a door knock in those 4 suburbs in order to build up the base funding for this project and that it will become a genuine community self-help project.

I am very proud of this project, and I am very proud of the enthusiasm being shown by the Nightcliff community. It is another step in the development of a sense of community that we are building gradually in the Nightcliff area through this and other projects. I feel particularly lucky in my electorate and the area in which I live because it has a clear sense of community and identification with the name of Nightcliff. We will continue to build on this, as we have built on schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch, Safety House programs, Tidy Towns projects and other community activities.

There is another project that I have been working on for a couple of years, which will come to fruition this year. On 22 October 1948, the Nomenclature Committee formally named the township of Nightcliff. We now celebrate that day with Nightcliff's birthday party every year. That started in 1988 with a very extensive birthday party being held over several days in Nightcliff. Last year, we held a low key operation. It is the Birthday Party Committee's view that, every second year, we should raise the tempo. This year, we have an exciting array of programs throughout that week, culminating on Sunday 28 October with arts in the park being presented by various community arts organisations at the Nightcliff oval. This project has been worked on for some 6 or 9 months now.

Mr Collins: I hope the election does not upset it.

Mr HATTON: I certainly hope the election does not upset it too, because it is a very important community project and one which is bringing the community together.

At the birthday party this year, we will be introducing citizenship awards to provide some recognition for people who live in the Nightcliff area. I refer to people who have put in many years of service with community organisations, school councils, scouting groups etc, the type of people whom you never hear about but they are always there. It is important for a community to recognise those who give selflessly of their time. We have developed an award as part of the development of this sense of community in Nightcliff. I urge honourable members to take the opportunity to come along and enjoy the birthday party and to learn a bit about the history and interesting aspects of our part of town. The history covers the naming of the area by Stokes in 1939, the establishment of the Freshwater/Rapid Creek Jesuit Mission in 1882 and a range of other events including the sinking of the Angela in the 1890s. Nightcliff has an interesting and colourful history, which continues right through the Second World War ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What is the origin of its name?

Mr HATTON: Stokes' diary records that, in 1839, some sailors went ashore in the evening and scaled the cliffs on the headland. Stokes was not a particularly imaginative person and he named them the Night Cliffs. I outlined that episode in my maiden speech in the Assembly. It is an interesting matter which has been the subject of some confusion.

In conjunction with Nightcliff's 40th birthday celebrations, history competitions were held in local schools. The kids made some extraordinary efforts in unearthing the history of the area and we have been collecting a treasure trove of information in the community meeting room at my electorate office. A great deal of historical material is on display, including aerial photographs from as far back as 1941. People come in and wander around, absorbing the history of the area and its background. I think that that is an important part of developing a community's understanding of its roots.

Mr Speaker, I would like to address another matter this evening. I may not be able to complete my remarks within my allotted time and, if that is the case, I will seek leave to have the balance of my speech incorporated in Hansard. I want to give credit to a man who has been instrumental in advancing the cause of genuine conservation in the Northern Territory over the past 11 years. He is a man best known to the Australian and American public for his award-winning television series 'In The Wild'. He began his career as an environmental consultant working in the field collecting and surveying fauna for the American Museum of Natural History, the British Museum of Natural History, the Western Australian Museum, the Western Australian Forests Department and the Western Australian Department of Fisheries and Fauna. As a member of the Board of the Conservation Commission and the Territory Rural Land Use Advisory Council and many interstate bodies, Mr Harry Butler CBE plays an active role in the protection and environmentally sound development of the Northern Territory.

Mr Butler was first appointed to the Conservation Commission Board at its inception by the then Director of the Conservation Commission, Dr Goff Letts. Goff Letts was convinced that the Territory needed to have expert, balanced input on matters of conservation significance and he convinced the Northern Territory government that Mr Butler was the person to provide it. Harry brought with him a broad knowledge of science, wildlife and habitats, environmental protection and rehabilitation. He believed then - somewhat ahead of his time, I might add - that rehabilitation should be part of the planning process. If included at an early stage, not only did it ensure that all environmental standards would be met and the uniqueness of the area preserved, but also developers would save themselves money.

A prime example of this is the work carried out over more than 20 years at Barrow Island off the Western Australian coast. Harry Butler has been an environmental consultant on the project from the outset. As a productive oilfield and a nature conservatory, Barrow Island exemplified the concept of sustainable development before ever it became an issue, particularly in the minds of people in the green movement. Barrow Island is the home of a number of rare species found only on that island and a handful of other islands in the area. Safe from the predations of foxes and cats and the competition from other feral animals which occurs on the mainland, these unique animals, including a western hare wallaby not unlike our endangered Mala, have suffered no adverse effects from the commercial development of the island. In fact, prior to the commencement of any work on the oilfield, surveys were undertaken and seeds collected from the island's vegetation to

propagate for planting as part of the rehabilitation work. I repeat that not one species has become extinct, and the island stands as an ideal example of nature and development coexisting.

Mr Butler is Australia's, if not the world's, leading environmental consultant on pipeline construction. He was involved, not only from the commission board perspective but also as the consultant, in drawing up guidelines for and overseeing the ongoing monitoring of the construction of the Northern Territory's gas pipeline. His job was to ensure that it was done properly. The success of his work is demonstrated by the fact that, when driving from Darwin to Alice Springs, one has considerable difficulty in identifying the path of the pipeline.

In appointing Harry Butler to the commission, the Treasurer was not getting a rubber stamp. Harry Butler's role on the commission certainly has not been one of rubber-stamping proposals. He applies his expertise to the full range of issues considered by the board, using his vast knowledge of the Australian wilderness, its geology, flora and fauna, as well as his understanding of the workings of similar organisations throughout Australia and the legislation which guides them. He draws attention to the sensitivity of issues and long-term impacts on the environment. There is more than one person in the Conservation Commission who considers him to be a troubleshooter.

More than that, in taking his role seriously, Harry has a high level of informal input with park rangers and commission scientists. He has been very willing to pass on his knowledge and to assist them in many ways. He believes strongly in environmental education and conveys the importance of conservation and environmentally sensitive planning to all Australians. At every board meeting, he makes a point of visiting the local school to talk with the students about the world of nature. The last meeting was held in McArthur River, where he took the local school children on their own 'In The Wild' field trip around the station. At the previous meeting, he did the same with the kids at Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula.

Most of us grew up on 'In The Wild' with Harry Butler, and it would not surprise you to learn that his name brings $500 000 for a film. What might surprise you is that, this year alone, he has scripted, directed and starred in 2 films: 'Australia's Living Desert' which is about the Yulara and Kings Canyon area and 'Secrets in Stone' which is about the Katherine region. He is about to star in a third Territory Wildlife Park film as a courtesy to help the Conservation Commission to market conservation. For the record, I might add that, in all cases, the film contracts for these projects were awarded to Northern Territory companies.

This year, Mr Butler has given 2 major addresses for the commission. The first was at the Environment 90 Conference in Darwin. He filled the conference venue and captured national media coverage with his address, entitled 'Extinction is Forever'. The second, again delivered to a packed house, occurred when he chaired a session during a feral animals seminar in Alice Springs. The issue of feral animals is close to his heart and he has been very vocal about it in an attempt to save our native species.

Harry Butler is as close as a man can come to being a Territorian without actually being one. He is a great ambassador for the Territory and for the Conservation Commission. He constantly informs people around Australia that the Territory is a great asset to the country and tells them about our innovative and progressive conservation activities. As we seek to renew his membership of the board, I ask that the House commend

Mr Harry Butler for his contribution, not only to the Conservation Commission, but to the Northern Territory as a whole.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, one could be very tempted to raise a few issues tonight after the outburst from the Minister for Transport and Works. I will attempt to hold my tongue on matters which he revived. His remarks served only to lower the stocks of his side, rather than to raise them. If he thought that he was raising them, he has a very strange way of doing things.

In tonight's adjournment debate, I wish to discuss an aspect of the federal budget which absolutely appals me. It is the action of the federal Treasurer in treating the investments of pensioners as if they are earning 10% in interest, whether they are doing so or not. I imagine that many old-age pensioners continue to have their money in savings bank accounts, which used to pay interest at about 3.75%. The Treasurer is an able-bodied and smart man but, obviously, he does not have much sympathy or understanding of how people feel, particularly as they get old, about investing money in different ways. They have learnt to keep their money in bank accounts. They learnt that in the days when the value of money was stable, when we had a gold standard, and when we did not have the damnable inflation which we have today. Inflation results from the actions of governments. They print the money. If you or I did that, Mr Speaker, we would end up in jail for forgery. However, if the government cannot pay its bills, it just turns the handles and prints the darn stuff.

Mr Bell: That is absurd, Denis.

Mr COLLINS: It is exactly what they do and it is the cause of inflation. They rob people. A great number of people would not need to be on the pension today if their money had not been devalued by inflation which is controlled by the government. It does not matter which colour the government is. Governments turn the printing presses and, if the results do not match the wealth of the country, all money is devalued. In that process, people who have saved for their old age are robbed. Many people who would have loved to have saved for their old age so that they could look after themselves without depending on the public purse cannot do so today simply because governments pay their bills by turning the printing presses. The people who really pay are those who try to save.

Mr Vale interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Maybe if you kept gold under the bed, you might have something. But if all you have are lumps of paper, they certainly will not be worth anything.

Mr Hatton: Not with the way gold prices are fluctuating.

Mr COLLINS: That is a bit of a problem too, but a gold standard certainly has a great deal to recommend it.

As far as I am concerned, it is immoral to tell old-age pensioners with money invested at 3.75% that they will be tested as if their funds are invested at 10%. That is about the lowest thing that I have heard for a long time. A government assumes that people invest money at a certain rate simply because the Treasurer thinks that they should be investing their money at such a rate. That is about as low as it is possible to go.

To turn to the next matter that I wish to address, Mr Speaker, you may well recall that, early in September, there was a great deal of media coverage of an incident in which a prison officer was stabbed with a hypodermic syringe containing AIDS-infected blood taken from a prisoner. I believe that this act was tantamount to murder and that it should be dealt with in a most severe fashion. An editorial in The Australian on 3 September stressed the dangers of running jails loosely. I dare say that the editorial was based on some pretty reliable information. It suggested that the officer would not have been stabbed if other officers had not been taking hypodermic syringes into the prison in the first place. I hope that Territory prisons are not run so loosely that hypodermic needles are taken into them creating a potential danger for our officers. Obviously, it is very likely that a fellow officer may have taken in the instrument with which the officer was jabbed and, of course, he is at high risk of contracting AIDS. If he does contract AIDS, and it is almost certain that he will, his life will be ...

Mr Hatton: He is HIV positive.

Mr COLLINS: The minister says that he is HIV positive. At the age of 21, he finds himself in a position where, no doubt, his life will be far shorter than ever it ought to have been. It is a very sad state of affairs. I believe that we should enact legislation to ensure that, if anybody tries tricks like that in the Territory, they will be dealt with very severely. It is something that I find horrifying and mind-boggling.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, several weeks ago, in Alice Springs, I had the pleasure of hosting a reception at Sadadeen Secondary College for a small group of pupils and their parents. Its purpose was to pay tribute to the accomplishments of those pupils who had just competed in a computer course. If my memory is right, it was called Computer Pals. They had returned from Cairns.

As I said at the reception, and I say it again tonight, far too often we praise our more public achievers in the sports world and forget the academic achievers. In this case, these young school students in central Australia performed most creditably at this conference, and I think what they achieved should be recorded in the Parliamentary Record. That is why I rise to pay tribute to them.

For the past 3 years, a special computer line-up has taken place both in Australia and overseas. The inaugural Computer Pals Conference, involving participation by schools around the world, was held in Alice Springs. The second was held in Canada and, this year, Cairns was the host city. Only 1 school in the world was asked to present a paper at this year's conference, and that was the Sadadeen Secondary College of Alice Springs. At the 3-day conference, the students presented their paper on data communications and the use of Campus 2000, which is an educational computer network. The project starts in term 3 of each year with a new team taking over from the retiring team. The students themselves select the new team from those who have volunteered. In fact, and this is unique to Sadadeen, the students have total control of the program, including total responsibility for the use of the system and for its security within the Sadadeen Secondary College.

Among other uses, the program incorporates a 7-day-a-week electronic mailing system which entails students coming in, even on weekends, to log in on the computer and to ask whether there is anything for Sadadeen? Queries and mail come from far afield. For instance, questions from Japan for

specific information will be followed up by students approaching a teacher from the appropriate faculty for the information and sending this information back to the inquirer. The information exchange is a 2-way street for our students. The program can be used also for other purposes, as was demonstrated at the recent Annual Secondary Schools Mathematics Quiz Night which was held at Sadadeen, and which also involved participating teams from the Fukona High School in Japan.

The brilliant success of Sadadeen's computer students at the last conference can be underscored by the complimentary letter written to Sadadeen's Principal, Roy Harvey, by a Mr Gordon Jones, Head of Campus 2000 and primary adviser to the British government on education, and the chief executive at Times Network Systems, based in London. Mr Jones said he could not have envisaged himself giving a presentation at the age of 17 in front of a critical audience of international educationalists. In fact, he said that he would have been terrified by the prospect. He said the students did themselves and Sadadeen proud. He further commented on the uniqueness of vesting total use and security in the hands of the students, and said that their successes should be written up. The teachers at the Alice Springs Sadadeen Secondary College had given the students total access to and use of all the facilities at the Sadadeen College to conduct this course and, as I said before, they did this during weekends and on public holidays.

Such acclamation from a respected educationalist like Mr Jones highlights the accomplishments of the Sadadeen team which included the following students: Daniel O'Brien, Stuart Graham, Ai Nguyen, Alvenia Gillett, Donna Lloyd and Hamish Ludwig - that is interesting because he has a Scottish Christian name and a German surname. He is a young lad who started off at Tappa Hill Preschool many years ago.

The 1991 Conference will take place in Germany. The German organisers are keen to involve Sadadeen students and have suggested a possibility of a satellite link-up to ensure their participation. I have spoken to the Chairman of the Tourist Commission and, at my request, he has agreed to talk to Qantas to see whether there is any possibility of 1 or 2 of the pupils from Sadadeen being able to travel to Germany to participate in that conference in 1991. Conferences like Computer Pals are polished, professional performances and the work of students such as those at the Sadadeen Secondary College keep us in the forefront of world knowledge. Such conferences are especially important in remote areas like central Australia. We have the technology, and the untapped potential is enormous. The Northern Territory can be justly proud of Roy Harvey, the Principal of Sadadeen Secondary College, and his teachers and last, but certainly not least, the pupils who participated in this course. They have done the Territory proud.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak in the adjournment debate today, I must say at the outset that I am not very pleased by the information that I must draw to members' attention. It must be raised in the interests of justice. The information that I have been given relates a man and his wife who have told me that they believe most sincerely that they have been harassed by Conservation Commission rangers. I know the people involved, but I do not believe that this is the time or the place to mention names or places.

I was rather upset to hear charges stated by the couple about harassment by rangers of the Conservation Commission because, as I have said many times before, my personal experience of officers of the Conservation Commission, and the rangers in particular, is that they have been very

sensible and amicable over all the years that I have had dealings with them. Nevertheless, if there is perceived harassment, I believe it must be investigated and investigated openly. The allegations are very serious and, on the part of the Conservation Commission rangers, they display a perceived ineptitude and ignorance. I believe this perceived, continuing harassment has to stop.

I have to say that I have heard the story from only one side. I have heard it from the couple only. I am not saying that I doubt their word, nor am I saying that I believe the rangers are at fault or are not at fault. I am merely stating the case as it has been put to me. If it is true, it displays a serious lack of professionalism on the part of the 2 rangers mentioned which would cast a slur on other rangers in the Conservation Commission. However, I do have a high regard for the sensible and knowledgeable way in which the vast majority of Conservation Commission rangers relate to the community. If this allegation of harassment is correct, and if there is any illegality, I believe that the harassment must cease. I might say that this matter relates to the keeping of birds, and it has persisted over 8 years. If I were in the place of this couple, and if I had any thoughts of acting illegally - and I am not saying that they have - this type of harassment would only encourage such thoughts.

I will be very brief, Mr Speaker, but I must rely on notes because I must mention dates. I may not have an opportunity to present all the matters put to me. The couple believe they have been harassed for 8 years, starting from about September or October in 1984. It relates to the possibility of their providing incorrect information as to bird numbers. The rangers have been trying to determine the correct numbers of birds they have kept. I think we are talking about only 40 birds in the couple's possession. The rangers have not found any irregularities over all that time.

In the course of this harassment, their 6-year-old daughter was interrogated. That sounds highly irregular to me. I stress again that I have heard only one side of the story. I have all this written down. The couple provided it to me in writing and they have also told me verbally that a battery of snide remarks have been directed at them and to their friends over this period of 8 years by these rangers.

To give an instance of the harassment, in 1987, 4 visits were made in 10 days. One visit was made when nobody was home. The purpose was to count some 40 birds. The rangers said, and it is true, that they can make inspections under section 96 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act, which gives them wide-ranging powers. However, if what the couple tell me is true, I believe that the rangers have displayed a lack of concern for the civil liberties and the privacy of these people and I do not believe they have implemented section 96 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act as it was intended to be implemented.

I have been told that one ranger has stated that he has kept records on this family from 1984. The gentleman was married to his first wife in 1984 and she was interviewed and asked for particulars about her marital status and other related information. This same ranger checked on the man's second wife in 1990, again asking her personal questions relating to her marital status and other personal matters. Continual visits were made to the couple's property over those 8 years in order to count the birds.

Recently, the man received anonymously a copy of a magazine cover the subject of which was the smuggling of Major Mitchell cockatoos. On

16 November 1989, 2 rangers came to count 4 extra princess parrots which had been counted in March 1989 but had been left off the permit. On 16 November 1989, the rangers counted 2 red-tailed black cockatoos plus all the other birds. On 13 March 1990, the other ranger counted the birds again. On 6 April 1990, with 2 South Australian rangers, they came and counted the birds again. This was when nobody was at home. On 3 May 1990, the birds were counted again. There were still 4 princess parrots which had been brought up from Victoria where no permits are needed to import or export these birds interstate. These 4 princess parrots, which had been counted on all those occasions, were still not put on the permit to keep wildlife. Other birds were put on the permit.

The annual inspection was done of this couple's property on 13 March 1990 and 4 baby hooded parrots were noted on the tally sheet. The ranger who did the count could not recall this on 11 May 1990. On 14 March 1990, the couple were called into the Conservation Commission office and were threatened with prosecution over the 4 princess parrots which came from Victoria where no import or export permits are needed. They were not put on the permit, but they were counted on 16 November 1989. Finally, the 4 princess parrots were put on the permit. The conversation in the Conservation Commission office was tape-recorded. One ranger could not remember seeing all the hooded parrots when he went out to count them. At the time he went out to count them, he was told that they were breeding in ant mounds. He agreed that that could have been true because it was that time of the year. He agreed to put them on the permit. Allegations were made too about purple crowned lorikeets. The other ranger counted them, but they were not on the permit. However, they were on the previous year's permit. The ranger agreed to put them on the current year's permit. Everybody then thought everything was okay. This all took place at the Conservation Commission office.

On 23 April 1990, it was promised that the annual permit would be written out and the gentleman could collect it. He did that on 24 April 1990. His annual permit to keep these birds was made out from 13 March 1990 to 31 December 1990. However, when he collected this permit, despite what had been said at this very extensive meeting in the Conservation Commission office, the 6 little lorikeets, the 2 hooded parrots and the 4 princess parrots from Victoria were not on the permit. As I said, on 3 May 1990, there was a visit from one Conservation Commission ranger and 2 South Australian rangers when all the birds were again counted. At that time, the owner signed the tally sheet, without checking its contents.

Because of letters written to the Director of Conservation, I believe the previous minister was contacted regarding what this gentleman considered to be harassment. The 2 South Australian rangers were there as impartial observers and I believe a report is to be made on this matter. On 10 May 1990, a visit was paid by the rangers to this gentleman's place to check on 6 baby hooded parrots which his wife at that time had taken to Darwin because they were juveniles which were being hand reared. You do not need to be an Einstein to know that, when you are rearing very dependent juvenile wildlife, you take them with you, irrespective of whether they are hooded parrots, possums or wallabies.

The ranger who came out on 10 May 1990 again made threatening and rude remarks which were very embarrassing considering the presence of the 2 South Australian rangers. He said that, by taking these 6 juvenile hooded parrots to Darwin, the lady risked prosecution. He said that she should not have taken them to Darwin, but I would stress that no transaction was intended and no transaction was made. She took them to look after them, as I have

done myself and I know other people have done with juvenile wildlife when travelling from place to place around the Territory.

The person who rang me is somewhat of an authority on the breeding and rearing of native birds. He has been contacted by quite a few experts for information. If what is contained in 65 pages of faxed sheets and what has been narrated over the telephone in 3 conversations is correct, I believe there has been a gross invasion of privacy and a gross transgression of the civil liberties of this couple. If this claim of harassment is true, it puts a black mark not only against the 2 Conservation Commission rangers concerned but against other Conservation Commission rangers. I will be kind to all the people involved in these incidents and say that there could have been a clash of personalities. If you cannot catch out an alleged illegal trader of birds in 8 years, I believe it is time you stopped trying and did something else.

I believe that somebody, either the minister or the Director of the Conservation Commission, has to make a Solomon-like decision. Perhaps they could examine the possibility of transferring the rangers concerned to another place and sending a new ranger to do business with this man and his wife. I do not believe a transfer such as this need necessarily put a bad mark against the 2 rangers concerned. The situation may have resulted merely from a clash of personalities. I have heard about the complaints verbally and I have read them. If they are correct, I believe that this gentleman and his wife are quite within their rights to lay a police complaint or to go to the Ombudsman and, if they still feel that they have been seriously deprived of normal privacy, they are free to do what many people do these days and seek media coverage and investigation. I hope that these matters can be dealt with between senior officers of the Conservation Commission and these people because I will be following this situation with a great deal of interest.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, yesterday morning, I addressed a question to the Chief Minister in respect of government policy about frontbenchers standing down while they were the subject of investigation by the police. In that circumstance, I referred to the relationship ...

Mr SPEAKER: I think that the member for MacDonnell is travelling on slightly dangerous ground in view of the fact that he has asked me to consider referring a matter to the Privileges Committee.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, with respect, may I speak to the point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: It is not a point of order.

Mr BELL: I am quite happy to discuss that. What I have referred to the Privileges Committee is the letter which I have received. I have no intention of raising the matter of that letter or, indeed, of any of the antecedent correspondence leading up to it.

Mr SPEAKER: I have no objection to that. All I am saying is that you may prejudice the petition in terms of a decision after I have read the transcript tomorrow. That is all I am saying. If you want the matter to be referred to the Privileges Committee, I would not be trying to muddy the waters now, if you know what I mean.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I have no intention of raising the effect of the letter or your deliberations in that regard. What I had intended to canvass in the ajournment debate was the question of the propriety or otherwise of

ministers standing aside while they are the subject of an investigation. I intended also to consider an article which appeared in this evening's newspaper suggesting that there was no investigation involving the Attorney-General. To my mind, those issues are quite separate from the question of the threat of legal action against me for defamation.

Yesterday morning, I raised 2 questions. One concerned the propriety of a minister, who is a subject of investigation, standing aside whilst those investigations, or the considerations which are part of the investigations, proceed. In my preamble to the question, I drew a comparison with circumstance involving the former Premier of New South Wales, Hon Neville Wran, who stood aside in respect of charges laid against one Mr Humphries. Mr Humphries was involved with Rugby League football in New South Wales and had come before the Magistrates Court in respect of his dealings in the Balmain Leagues Club. Subsequently, it was alleged on the ABC television program Four Corners that Premier Wran had intervened in the prosecution of this man through the agency of Murray Farquhar, the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate of the day, who had in turn allegedly encouraged one of his colleagues to make a particular finding in respect of Humphries.

The Parliamentary Library has very kindly provided me with a copy of the report of the Royal Commission which the New South Wales government initiated at that time. It is the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Certain Committal Proceedings against K.E. Humphries, better known as the Street Royal Commission. I have had the opportunity also to read a number of newspaper clippings in respect of that issue and I believe it is important to bring before the Assembly the strong parallels between the circumstances in which Premier Neville Wran found himself and the circumstances in which the Attorney-General of this parliament finds himself today.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would ask for your ruling in this case. Of course, the matter which the member for MacDonnell is addressing is at the very heart of the letter which he sent to the Chief Minister regarding the Attorney-General. In fact, in his letter, which he has now tabled, he used the phrase 'similar allegations'. There are no similarities at all in this case. However, the member's comments address the very heart of the issue which he has referred to you seeking a reference to the Privileges Committee.

Mr BELL: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, as I said at the outset of these comments, what I have asked you to refer to the Privileges Committee is purely and simply a letter which I received from the Attorney-General's private solicitors. I have not sought to have referred to the Privileges Committee the letter which I wrote to the Chief Minister last night.

Mr Coulter: It was tabled at the same time.

Mr BELL: I tabled it by way of explanation, but I have not asked that it be referred to the Privileges Committee. I believe that the question of the impact of that matter on my capacity to espouse particular issues within this Assembly is an entirely different issue to that of the propriety of ministers standing aside when they are subject to investigation. It is entirely separate from the parallels between the circumstances of Premier Wran and those of the Attorney-General. It is entirely separate from the question of whether or not investigations are in progress in respect of the relationship between the Attorney-General and Officer Woods.

Mr SPEAKER: I refer the member for MacDonnell to standing order 62 which says, among other things: '... nor shall a member attribute directly or by innuendo to another member unbecoming conduct or motives; and all offensive references to a member's private affairs and all personal reflections on members shall be deemed to be highly disorderly'. As I understand it, the member for MacDonnell has asked the Chief Minister whether he would require the Attorney-General to stand down because of the possibility of an investigation of any connection with the woman known as Rhonda. More importantly, I find that the member for MacDonnell is sailing very close to the wind in respect of standing order 62. I ask him to consider his remarks very carefully in that context, otherwise I will ask him to resume his seat.

Mr BELL: That is understood, Mr Speaker. To reassure both yourself and the Leader of Government Business, and for the benefit of all honourable members, I point out that the outcome of the Street Royal Commission was that Premier Wran was exonerated. However, he stood aside while those investigations were under way. If I had been allowed to explain that, I believe that that point would have come forward.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not find that is so because I am aware, as most members of this parliament are aware, that the Attorney-General is not under investigation.

Mr Coulter: And you were told that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is in contrast to the statement you are making in regard to Premier Wran.

Mr Coulter: He is not under investigation. That is what the Leader of the Opposition has been told.

Mr SPEAKER: In other words, we are getting pretty close to the same position as we were in with the member for Barkly. If you want to take it further, you will have to wait until tomorrow and move a substantive motion.

Mr Manzie: Why don't you go outside and say it on the steps, Neil?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I do not believe that, because a person is the subject of police investigation, I am in breach of outstanding order 62.

Mr Hatton: You are making a false accusation to start with.

Mr Palmer: You are telling lies, Neil.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if I were to say that a person was guilty of something ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The member for MacDonnell is casting aspersions on the minister's character by inferring that he is under police investigation. The honourable minister is not under any police investigation. Therefore, the member for MacDonnell's comments in regard to the Street Royal Commission really have nothing to do with the statement that he is making now in this adjournment debate. I know the honourable member has referred a letter for my consideration in relation

to referral to the Privileges Committee. As I said earlier, I will consider his request and report to the Assembly tomorrow. In continuing his remarks, I direct him not to speak about an investigation or an honourable member standing aside at the request of the Chief Minister.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will make no further comment in deference to your and government members' sensitivity in this regard.

Mr Coulter: Come on. It is standing orders.

Mr BELL: I will make no further comment about those issues. Mr Speaker, I note your assertion that no investigation is occurring. I simply say that the matter will come up for debate at a later time.

Mr Coulter: Right. And so it should, if that is what you want to do.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, yesterday the member for MacDonnell raised as a matter of privilege a letter sent to him by the firm of barristers and solicitors Cridlands requesting that I refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges. I have given the matter consideration and, pursuant to standing order 84, I will refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, as I foreshadowed last night, I give notice that, on the next sitting day, I shall move that this Assembly censure the Attorney-General for deliberately misleading the Assembly by denying that he had ever met with the prostitute 'Rhonda' when, by her own admission to me, she maintains that she met him in the Palmerston Bar at the Parap Hotel and spoke with him for about 20 minutes concerning their common acquaintance Peter Woods.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I ask that the broadcasting of proceedings be ceased. The government accepts the motion of censure. A motion of censure is one of the most serious motions that can be introduced in this House, particularly a censure motion such as this. I ask that all questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

MOTION
Censure of the Attorney-General

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Attorney-General for deliberately misleading the Assembly by denying that he had ever met with the prostitute 'Rhonda' when, by her own admission to me, she maintains that she met him in the Palmerston Bar at the Parap Hotel and spoke with him for about 20 minutes concerning their common acquaintance, Peter Woods.

This debate today has been brought on by virtue of the fact that I was unable to complete my remarks last night. I believe it is important to outline from the start that the honourable minister has been categoric for some time now in his denial that he ever met with or had any knowledge or understanding of the prostitute, Rhonda. In relation to all the other allegations that have been raised, particularly the dates surrounding the minister's admissions in the last 4 days, no defence at all has been offered. All the defence we have had so far is: 'Poor bugger me. Look at what they are doing to me. Look at Tuxworth. What a rat he is!' That is the substance of the defence. The allegations are far too serious for such a defence to remain unchallenged. The government is in deep trouble with this. It has made a rod for its own back. It has failed to disclose important facts surrounding the Mulholland inquiry. In fact, it has hidden certain facts. In my view, it has manipulated the Mulholland inquiry, and its propensity in the last couple of days to make contradictory statements about issues that are central to Mulholland's inquiry is simply unacceptable.

I want to set the record straight for the Attorney-General. The allegations that I put on the record are the allegations of other people. They are not my allegations, but I put them on the public record because it is absolutely essential that they be recorded and dealt with because they strike at the very heart of our government system.

It was alleged on the 7.30 Report that police were offering the services of the Attorney-General or a 'friend in government' to use the phrase that was used at the time. The issue is not about bent coppers; it is about the separation of powers. If you would like to cast your mind back to the situation in Queensland a year or so ago, Mr Speaker, you will recall that the whole essence of the Fitzgerald Report was the breakdown of the separation of powers. It was that very issue which led to the collapse of the system in that state. We have the beginnings of the same problem here, and it is being treated as if it does not exist or as if it will go away if we ignore it.

In our system, politicians in this House do not have the right to receive favours from the police and police do not have the right to walk around the community offering the services of members of this House. That is the bottom line. When police deal with informants, suspects or law-breakers and do deals with them, they do those deals in terms of the orders they have and the laws of the land. They do not do deals with them on the basis that they have friends in this House who can give them a hand with their problems.

When the allegation was made on the 7.30 Report, it should have rung alarm bells with the Chief Minister, and I will bet that it did. You could bet London to a brick that he understood the significance of it. Not only that, but each member of the government should have taken the time to say: 'That allegation is serious, but it does not refer to me'. They could not do that because they all knew that, if they did so, sooner or later they would isolate the politician concerned and cause embarrassment.

Setting aside any other issue, the Chief Minister should have contacted his colleagues and said: 'That is a serious allegation. Does it refer to you in any way at all? If it does, would you give me a statement as to how it might affect you?' In any event, the Attorney-General should have said immediately: 'It is important that everybody understands that I am not that person. Whomever else the matter applies to, it is essential that that type of allegation does not apply to the first law officer'. The very least that he could have done was to say: 'I believe that allegation refers to me. It does not have any relationship to me at all. If those police officers were using my name, they did it without my consent. I have referred this matter to Mr Mulholland for his special consideration and report'.

None of those things happened. That immediately created an atmosphere in which people asked what was going on and whether we have a different system here. Is this Queensland revisited? There was considerable prodding in the community by myself and others to have the person identify himself or to have the Chief Minister say that it did not apply to any government member, that the government knew nothing about it and that Mr Mulholland had been asked to look into it. The moment that silence became apparent, the integrity of the Attorney-General's office was placed in doubt. The integrity of the office of the minister responsible for the police was placed in doubt also because he was involved in the inquiry too.

The issue is who knew and when they knew. The media knew, because it reported the matter. You knew, Mr Speaker, and I knew because we discussed it a couple of days after the 7.30 Report broadcast, and you would remember that well. The police knew because, 5 or 6 days after that 7.30 Report program, people in the community who had been interviewed told them who the person was. The Commissioner of Police would have had to have known. There is no doubt about that, and to pretend that the Commissioner of Police at no time informed the Chief Minister that one of his ministers was involved is

too unbelievably outrageous to assume. Crown Law knew because it was working with the police on the matter.

It is too much for the Chief Minister to ask us to believe that he did not know. He might not have cared and he might not have wanted to know, but he must have known. There was no other way out of it. The Chief Minister did not want to know because he understood that, if he did, he would have to stand the Attorney-General down and that move would have been a major embarrassment to the government given that the Mulholland inquiry was just beginning. It would have been no problem at all if honourable members opposite had indicated that they thought the allegation was aimed at the Attorney-General and that the matter should be referred to Mr Mulholland.

Further information is coming in by the hour and the need for a public inquiry will gain momentum. At the meeting with myself, the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Conran, Mr Mulholland made it clear that he was not holding an inquiry, that he would not interview witnesses and that he would not refer to the specific allegations that had been made in various parts of the media. In my view, the fact that he will not deal with that allegation is unacceptable. However, it was certainly acceptable to the Chief Minister. He thought it was a fair thing.

The last 4 days of contradiction, clarification and convenient memory loss has convinced everybody in the Territory that the minister responsible for police, the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police, the Senior Crown Prosecutor and the head of the Department of Law do not talk to each other or they make up stories as they go along or they are all trying to hide something.

Mr Perron: Are you saying that they are all corrupt? Is that your allegation?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, to pick up the Chief Minister's interjection, I am not making allegations about them at all. I am saying that the perception that is created in the community is that these people are not talking to one another and that, collectively, they do not know what is going on in the government. The whole community knows that.

I would like to read into Hansard today a statutory declaration by the prostitute Rhonda. It is comprehensive.

Mr Perron: Are you going to table it?

Mr TUXWORTH: I will table it after I have read it out.

Mr Perron: Does it have any blanked out portions in it?

Mr TUXWORTH: No.

Mr Coulter: Good. Not her name or anything like that?

Mr TUXWORTH: Her name is Rhonda.

Mr Perron: It has no standing without a name in it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the name Rhonda ...

Mr Coulter: Signatures?

Mr Perron: It has no standing whatsoever.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the name Rhonda is on the statutory declaration. I put it to you that she is a police informant and she is entitled to have her name suppressed. The minister responsible for the police and the Attorney-General would know her real name because they know her to be a police informant and they know who she is.

Mr Perron: I do not know if she signed it unless her name is on it. It is either a statutory declaration or it is not. Just make up your mind what you are tabling.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, this document is provided to me by Rhonda's barrister as a statutory declaration.

Mr Perron: It is not a statutory declaration unless it has her true name and signature and is witnessed appropriately.

Mr TUXWORTH: I will leave the Chief Minister to canvass that issue when he makes his remarks. What is important, Mr Speaker, is what is in it. I will read the declaration:

> I am the person known publicly as Rhonda for the purposes of the Mulholland inquiry into official corruption. I am an escort by occupation. For a period of approximately 2 months, commencing roughly late January 1990, I operated as a police informant in a police drug operation known as Operation Amethyst. The senior operations officer for Operation Amethyst was Detective Peter Woods of the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Northern Territory Police. I became an informant at Detective Woods request and operated at all times throughout Operation Amethyst under his direction and supervision. For some months prior to the commencement of Operation Amethyst and throughout its duration, I was involved in an intimate personal relationship with Detective Woods.
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> From in or around December 1989, I was aware that Detective Woods was a close personal friend of Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie. I was also aware that Detective Woods' wife, Sandra, was a member of Daryl Manzie's personal staff although I do not believe that Detective Woods was aware that I knew this. In or around late March, when Operation Amethyst was just winding up, I rang Detective Woods at Police Headquarters. I was required to phone him every morning. He asked me to meet him outside Wanguri Supermarket at 9 am. After some delay, Detective Woods arrived there, asked me to get into his car and drove to Buffalo Creek. He appeared agitated and nervous.
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> He said to me words to the effect: 'I have a feeling that Sean O'Sullivan, another detective, is surveillancing me or you or both of us. We will have to be more careful. I still want to see you on a personal level, but it is best if you get out of town for a while'. I said words to the effect: 'No way. I have just started my own business and I certainly cannot leave it now. What is wrong, Peter? What is going on? There is something you are not telling me'. He did not tell me but continued to press the point that I should leave town. He was becoming increasingly

nervous, agitated and eventually angry. I eventually said: 'Look, no way, Peter. Get f ...'. The conversation then ended and he drove me back and dropped me close to where I then lived.

The next morning I rang Detective Woods as usual before 9 am at Police Headquarters. He asked me to meet him at Myilly Point as soon as possible. I went to Myilly Point and Detective Woods arrived there alone in an unmarked police vehicle. He said to me words to the effect: 'I would like you today to talk to a very good friend of mine, Daryl Manzie'. I was astonished. I said words to the effect: 'Why should I talk to him? What is going on, Peter? There is something you are not telling me'. He said: 'For my sake, I want you to go and see him. It is important to me'. I said: 'Okay, Peter I am not really happy about it, but just tell me where and what time. Will you be with us?' He said: 'You ring me at BCI at 1 o'clock on the dot on my personal number. Look, everything is going to be okay. I am asking you a personal favour'. I phoned Detective Woods at 1 pm roughly as he had requested.

'Okay, I got a time as close to 3.30 pm as you can get it in the Palmerston Bar at the Parap Hotel. Have you got that?' I said: 'Are you going to be there? What is the procedure here?' He said: 'No, I won't be. I want you to trust everything that Daryl says and keep it totally to yourself. Don't tell anybody'. There was further conversation and I then said: 'What do I do? Should I walk up to him?' He said: 'If he is not there when you arrive, just wait. If you feel you have got to talk to me after the meeting, I should be here until 4.15 pm. If not, I definitely want you to ring me in the morning early'.

I went to the Parap Hotel Palmerston Bar at approximately 3.25 pm. I looked around the bar. There were only a few people there and Daryl Manzie was not among them. I had never met Daryl Manzie, but I knew what he looked like from seeing him on TV and the newspapers. I bought a drink at the bar and sat at a table on my own. I had just sat down and suddenly noticed that Daryl Manzie was standing right next to me. I had not seen him approach. He sat down next to me and did not introduce himself. He immediately began speaking to me very quietly throughout. He said words to the effect: 'I am aware of your close personal relationship with Peter. It is improper in his position. It could endanger his marriage to Sandra and Peter is my mate. I have known him for many years and I would do anything to save his arse. Did you know that Peter has political ambitions in the CLP?' I said: 'I am aware of some aspirations of Peter's but not to that extent'. Manzie then said: 'I am well aware of your prior drug connections and your former employment in escort work'. I sensed the seriousness in his tone. I said: 'I am not working as an escort at this time, just doing strip shows, and for your information I have not done escort work for several months. I have been Peter's informant for some time and I have just finished something really big for him'. At that stage, I was unaware that the operation was called 'Operation Amethyst'.

Manzie then said: 'I personally think it is best for you to leave town as soon as possible'. I did not respond, partly because I was stunned at the extent of Manzie's knowledge of my life and background. As I felt that I had just been told to get out of

town by the Attorney-General, there was not much I could say. Manzie then said: 'If you speak to anybody whatsoever about this conversation, I will deny that this meeting ever took place'. He then left the property and I left soon after.

I phoned Detective Woods the following morning and he said: 'Did you talk with him all right?' I said: 'Yeah. He seemed to know a lot about me, Peter'. He said: 'You must not breathe a word about this to anyone'. I promised that I would not. He said: 'Have you got the point? Do you understand what we are dealing with here?' I said: 'Yeah. But what is it all for?' He said: 'Never you mind. You just do as he says and everything will be rosy'.

Recently, after hearing on radio and television a lot of stuff about me and my indemnity, I rang my lawyer's office and said I wanted a copy of it. My lawyer Geoff Barbaro was away in Tasmania. But they said: 'How about coming in at 4.30 for an appointment?' When I arrived at the office, Chief Crown Prosecutor Ray Minahan was there, together with another man whom I assumed was a lawyer from the office. I was really angry and worried. When I saw Minahan, I lost my temper. I was swearing and demanded a copy of my indemnity. Minahan and the other man were trying to calm me down. They said they were concerned about my welfare. They also asked me about my grievances.

Minahan said that he would be speaking with Commissioner Palmer after this meeting and would report any grievances I had to him. He also asked me: 'What do you want? Do you want police protection?' I said that what I wanted was a copy of my indemnity. Minahan said that I could not have it; it was not in my interests. I continued demanding to see it and they refused. Minahan continually tried to calm me down.

Eventually, they did let me see the indemnity. I had never seen it before but when I turned the page over I noticed that I was not entitled to a copy of things about the investigation. I got even more angry and was really frightened that I may not be protected. I felt very threatened by Minahan being there and the fact that a person I thought was one of my lawyers was not standing up for me and there was no confidentiality because they told Minahan that I had rung up asking for a copy of my indemnity. During the meeting, Minahan assured me several times that the indemnity was airtight.

I then told them that my other grievance was that I did not want to talk to Charlwood ever again because he hated me because I was a prostitute and I hated him. Minahan looked uneasy but said: 'Fine, okay. I will inform the commissioner'. He also said that this could be a failure to cooperate in the investigation and my indemnity could be at risk. I said: 'I've given 27 hours of interviews already and you are telling me that I am not cooperating'. He also suggested to me that my registration could be at risk. I thought he meant being able to work as an escort. I got angry and asked him how come he was signing all these things anyway, meaning the indemnity. He said that I must understand that the Attorney-General cannot be linked with these sorts of instances. I said: 'What do you mean by instances?' He said: 'Because you get this kind of thing happening'.

I asked again for a photocopy of the indemnity to take with me and he said: 'No. We can't take the risk of it getting into the hands of someone at this time'. I said: 'What do you mean? Dennis Driver'? He said: 'Of course'. He also said something about politicians as well. He said: 'If you do that, your indemnity will be at risk'.

Mr Speaker, there is a series of very serious allegations there.

Mr Perron: What is the date of the meeting?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister would be the last person in this room to want to talk about dates of meetings. When did he tell you? Last week? Or was it a bit before? Was it really on the 25th or was it back in April?

Mr Perron: She can remember the time of day but she cannot remember the date!

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, talk about the dates. We are talking about whether they ever met.

Mr McCarthy: You are a twisted man, Tuxworth.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members on the government side will remain silent for the remainder of the member for Barkly's contribution.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, there are 2 very important issues which arise from this. After listening to what I have read, you would have to be in cloud-cuckoo-land if you did not believe that there was a meeting.

Mr Coulter: You will remember that one for a long time.

Mr TUXWORTH: There was a meeting. There is no doubt about that.

Mr Speaker, the other important issue is the immunity and the trouble which the lady had in relation to it.

A member: The word is indemnity.

Mr TUXWORTH: Let us use both words because they have both been canvassed for a couple of days, and there is still some doubt about which one means what. I will refer to the matter briefly.

The letter which is regarded as the indemnity is considered by the legal profession in Darwin to be a worthless piece of paper. It was organised by some bureaucrats around the table when they found that they had been caught with their daks down. It has no value, Mr Speaker. For some days, I have been trying to get from the Attorney-General the basis on which it was written.

Mr Manzie: It is a legal undertaking.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the law provides for the Attorney-General to give indemnities. It provides for other people to give indemnities. It does not provide for the Crown Prosecutor to give them in that way. The interesting thing is that, if the Crown Prosecutor were involved in the

discussion as outlined in that report, he could hardly have been an impartial person who might be working to or with Mulholland in his inquiries.

Mr Perron: I am glad he said 'if' he were involved in the discussion.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is right.

Mr Speaker, the validity of that letter is now becoming crucial. The role which the Attorney-General played in the meeting with Rhonda is also becoming of critical importance. There has been a breakdown in the separation of powers. There has been a meeting. There is absolutely no doubt about that, and the government has failed to address the matter from day 1. It has told people that there was no meeting.

Mr Perron: On what grounds do you say that there was a meeting?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I will pick up the interjection. Rhonda made that statement because she is terrified for her life. If the Chief Minister wants to tell the public that that statement made by the prostitute Rhonda, which includes an account of her meeting with the Attorney-General, was concocted or made up, no one will believe that. Mr Speaker, you could not get anybody to fall for a line like that.

Mr Perron: Could she be lying?

Mr TUXWORTH: The Chief Minister just asked if she could be lying. Mr Speaker, I will just say that, last night, very shortly after I arrived home, I received 2 telephone calls. One of the calls was from a policeman who said: 'I want you to know that the police knew about the meeting with Rhonda right back when it happened and that the Attorney-General was there'. The other call was from a friend of Rhonda's family, who identified herself and said: 'I can tell you that that meeting was discussed in their house in front of me months and months ago'. There does not seem to be much doubt about whether or not there was a meeting. What we need to know is why it was ever denied. Why was it ever raised at all?

I would just like to address a few other points.

Mr Setter: Are you going to table the document?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, let us look at the events. There was early knowledge of the Attorney-General's involvement in the allegations made on the 7.30 Report, which claimed that a politician's name was being advanced by police officers when they were doing deals with suspects or people they were dealing with in the course of their investigations. That is just not on. It is not acceptable under any circumstances. There is no inquiry occurring. Mr Mulholland is not inquiring into anything. He is not interviewing anybody and he is not reporting on the specific allegations which are of most importance to us. In fact, Mr Mulholland is being fed information from Darwin. He sits in Brisbane and reads it and sends it back. We now find ourselves in the position where Mr Mulholland, with some of the people he is dealing with, cannot be sure of any part of the information that he is getting, particularly if the Crown Prosecutor is involved.

Mr Coulter: The whole world is corrupt, eh?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am not saying the whole world is corrupt. I am arguing that there is sufficient, adequate and damning information to warrant the opening of the Mulholland inquiry into a public inquiry.

Mr Vale: From you and a whore!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I will pick up the interjection from the minister. I will take him back in history. It was the words of a whore that brought down Profumo. The reality of it was that 80% of the community believed in the whore and the minister did not get a canter. Do not believe for one minute that, because a whore said it, it does not have any value in the community. It probably has more, and that is to be pitied.

There will be no report on the specific allegations and that is not acceptable. We must have from Mr Mulholland a very comprehensive report on the involvement of the Attorney-General. When I say 'the involvement', I mean the fact that the Attorney-General's name was used by police officers in the course of their duties. No effort has been made by the Chief Minister or the government to clarify who the government person was. We have had 4 days of unbelievable confusion and contradiction. One could have thought that, last Friday morning, they would all get together in a room and at least agree on the same story. That was the very least that they could have done, but that did not happen either. The fact that the Attorney-General, the Chief Minister and the Commissioner of Police could not get their story straight has been very damaging and has only convinced more people that we need an inquiry.

This statement by Rhonda is critical. She has written it as a result of being terrified, desperate and wanting protection. We now have a situation where the Crown Prosecutor is threatening to pull the rug. None of these things can be left.

Mr Perron: Pull the rug on what?

Mr TUXWORTH: On Rhonda. None of these things can be left hanging. They have to be dealt with in their entirety. They need to be dealt with openly. Mr Speaker, it just has to happen. I will be very interested to hear what other members have to say, but there is no doubt in my mind that the motion to censure the Attorney-General is deserved. He deserves to be censured.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I think that what we have heard today is really the culmination of the member for Barkly's vile attempts to try to destroy the government and myself as a last act before he disappears from the political scene in the Territory. I am just trying to work out where I should start with this. I think it would be appropriate to start where the member for Barkly started. He said that, in relation to his charges of late, no defence has been offered and that that was dreadful. It is very clear that, when anyone makes any charge about any individual, they have an obligation to provide some sort of evidence to back it up. Let us go back to what the member for Barkly said. First, he said that I had worked the beat with Woods. He has never produced any evidence to back up that allegation. Secondly, he said that Woods' wife was working for me when Woods was under investigation. He has never produced any evidence to back that up. Thirdly, he said that I conspired with Woods to provide an indemnity to the prostitute known as Rhonda. He has never provided any evidence of that.

Not only that, but it has been made very plain that I never worked on the beat with Woods. It has been made very plain that Woods' wife has not worked with me for 15 months. Therefore, how could she have been working for me when he was under investigation? Thirdly, I think that it has been made very clear that I have never signed an indemnity for the prostitute named Rhonda. Not only was there no defence offered, but it was made very plain that the unfounded accusations were wrong. He has never produced anything to substantiate them because he knows he cannot. He has never walked outside the House and made those accusations because he is gutless. There is an example of what the so-called defences were. Not only did he not substantiate what he said, but it was shown that what he alleged was wrong.

I will leave the comments he made about the manipulation of the Mulholland report to the Chief Minister. However, I think that that is an absolutely vile charge. I think that, in time, the honourable member will regret that he cast innuendo on Mulholland and other people investigating.

Let us get down to the allegation of the use of my name. The allegation is that my name is bandied around by police to offer assistance to any member of the public who has a problem. I do not know if people are doing that. If they are, they are doing it without my knowledge or my permission. Nobody has ever come to me and said: 'I gave the nod to someone and said you would help them. This is their problem'. It has never happened. It is just ridiculous. I have given no one permission to use my name. I wonder if the member for Barkly has given anyone permission to use his name or whether any other member of parliament has. If they have, let them stand up. If they have not and someone is using their name, what relationship or responsibility does it have to them if they know nothing about it? It is absolutely ridiculous, yet he is trying to use that to show that, somehow or other, I was involved.

What was the allegation on the 7.30 Report? I think the words used by the prostitute Rhonda were that 'he offered the assistance of members of government'. I think they were the words that were used.

Mr Tuxworth: 'A member'.

Mr MANZIE: Not 'a member'. I think the transcript said 'members'. But, Mr Speaker, if no one ever told that person that they were the one, they would never know. It is ridiculous to suggest that, in any way, I told people to use my name or that I was aware that people were using my name if, in fact, that is true.

Something that has to be put to bed too is the claim by the member for Barkly that I was involved in something. He said that I was involved and that the Chief Minister should have been informed. I have been informed that the police and the Department of Law have informed the Chief Minister that I am not involved and that I am not under any investigation. I think that should be made extremely clear. This continued innuendo that somehow I am involved and that I am under investigation is wrong. It has no basis. In fact, the contrary applies. However, the member for Barkly will not go outside of this coward's castle and say, 'The minister is involved; he is under investigation', because he knows what would happen to him. He has no guts. The evidence has shown that he is wrong again, and I would certainly believe whatever the Commissioner of Police or the Secretary of the Department of Law says with regard to that against what the member for Barkly is insinuating.

He went on to say that there is something wrong because there is evidence that ministers, the Commissioner of Police and the Department of Law do not talk to one another. The man had just referred to the separation of powers. What is he trying to suggest? Is he suggesting that I should telephone the Secretary of the Department of Law or the Commissioner of Police or the Chief Minister and say: 'How is the investigation going? Have you done this? Who said what about which?' That is what he is trying to suggest. This probably shows that, in fact, there is no collusion. There is no discussion by ministers and senior law officers about the carriage of investigations, how things are going or what is happening. If any attempt were made by myself or the Chief Minister to try to interfere with the roles of the Commissioner of Police or the Secretary of the Department of Law, those people would make that public immediately. They are men of integrity.

Mr Perron: Or resign.

Mr MANZIE: Yes, probably they would resign if such an attempt were made. I do not need to go into it any further, except to say that possibly this is an indication of how the member for Barkly considers it appropriate for a minister responsible for police or an Attorney-General to act, and maybe that is the way he used to conduct business when he was involved in government. If he did, some problems might emerge in the future about it. However, I can assure members that under no circumstances will I become involved in the day-to-day business of the operations of any investigation.

Let us turn to the so-called statutory declaration. Here we have a declaration without any name. The name has been whited out. There is no signature. This has the value of a piece of toilet paper. However, I will tell you, Mr Speaker, what is significant about this. A person wilfully making a false statement in a statutory declaration is liable to a penalty of $1000 or imprisonment for 6 months. If a statutory declaration were tabled, with the allegations read out by the member for Barkly, I think we know very well what would happen to the person who made that statement because I know that that statutory declaration is wrong. I know that. It is ridiculous. Why would I deny ever going to the Palmerston Bar at the Parap Hotel?

Mr Perron: Someone had to take you there.

Mr MANZIE: That is right. How did I get there? We know the time - 3.30 pm, but on what day? Do we have a date, or a couple of days either way? The member for Barkly will not give us a date because he knows I will go straight to my diary which will indicate what I was doing on that day. He has no guts. I will try to maintain my cool, but I do find it infuriating that this man can make these grubby insinuations without giving any dates, not even a date within a week.

Mr Vale: 3.30, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: We have a time. He knows exactly what was said and how many people were in the room.

What about the other little matter that he came up with? He had a phone call from one of his mates who said that the police knew about the meeting. If they knew about it, what was the date? Someone must know, or are you telling another big fib?

Mr Tuxworth: Not as big as the fib you told.

Mr MANZIE: Someone must know that date and, if one of his mates rang up and said that the police knew the date of this supposed meeting, then let us have it.

Mr Tuxworth: And it was not a fib either.

Mr MANZIE: Let us have it. I cannot go any further to prove I was not there if I do not know the date. However, I can assure honourable members that I have never been to the Palmerston Bar of the Parap Hotel, and I cannot be any more firm than that. I have never been there and I repeat that, to my knowledge, I have never met the prostitute named Rhonda. That should be pretty plain and pretty clear. If this declaration had a name and signature on it, it would be a false declaration, and proceedings would commence. It has the value of toilet paper in this condition - the same value as the muddy accusations this man opposite has been casting against me.

Mr Coulter: Do you personally have a signed copy in your possession?

Mr Tuxworth: The barrister has.

Mr MANZIE: Do you have a signed copy?

Mr Tuxworth: There is a signed copy. You can be sure of that.

Mr Bell: There is a signed copy.

Mr MANZIE: There is a signed copy, fully filled out with her correct name on it?

Mr Tuxworth: Yes.

Mr MANZIE: With her correct name on it?

Mr Tuxworth: Yes.

Mr MANZIE: Right. I think it is incumbent on you to produce that because you are making extremely serious allegations against me. I think it has to be tabled in this House. The time has come for ...

Mr Smith: You will put a life in jeopardy then.

Mr MANZIE: I am sorry. What about my life? What about my family? Come on! She cannot hide behind pseudonyms any longer. The crunch has come. She must be identified now because of the seriousness of what she has said. There can be no doubt about that. It is time for her to stand up. It is time for her to start having to answer some questions in respect of the grubby things which are being said. At least the member for Barkly had the decency only to accuse me of trying to save a marriage. At least that was one thing he did not rave on about or cast any more foul accusations at me over.

The matter has to be understood. Why should I deny a meeting like that? Why would I deny ever going to the Palmerston Bar at the Parap Hotel? I am pretty well known. Actually, I have been to the Parap Hotel this year. I went to Jessie's Bar on Mother's Day. I took my wife, my family and my mother out for tea. It is the only time that I have been to the Parap Hotel.

I thought that we would get something today and that the member for Barkly would finally give a date and some concrete information so that I can start to produce some solid evidence to rebut the filthy innuendo. However, the member for Barkly has not done that. He has to do it. This document has to be produced as a correct statutory declaration. The time has come for that. I totally and utterly reject any suggestion that I met this woman in the Palmerston Bar of the Parap Hotel. I do not know what has been going on. I do not know who has been meeting who under what circumstances, or whether any meetings took place with anyone. However, I can assure all honourable members of the House and the whole community that I have not, to my knowledge, met the woman, and I have never been to the Palmerston Bar. There must be many people in the community who can say that they have never seen me in the Palmerston Bar. It is just a crazy suggestion. It is really the lie that has gone over the top. I have never been there.

I have been in the Territory for 22 years, and I have been involved in law enforcement for all of that time, either enforcing legislation as a member of the police force or enacting legislation in this House. During that whole time, my integrity has never been brought into question. I have gained a reputation for honesty, for being straightforward, for behaving properly and for observing proprieties. Never once has anyone ever pointed a finger at me. They have never even claimed that I have put the acid on anyone to get 10% off for a set of tyres. It has never been done because I have always conducted myself properly. To have this sort of filth cast on me - and the member for Barkly does not have the the decency to provide anything concrete which enables me to finally refute it - is sickening. If we get some real statutory declarations, there will be some problems for people because it is an offence to make a false statement.

I reject totally the filthy innuendoes and the accusations which have been made during the week. I challenge the member for Barkly to go outside, and not only to repeat his allegations but to produce something concrete in support of them. His attempts to denigrate me have been disgusting. Mr Speaker, I can say no more.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have received representations from various people in respect of this matter and I have listened intently to the comments made by the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister over the last week. I have to say at the outset that I have no hesitation in supporting the terms of this motion. The contradictions in the comments of the Attorney-General in respect of this matter lead me to be prepared to accept the statement made by this woman known as Rhonda, ahead of the comments made by the Attorney-General. If I had any doubts about that, they were cast aside by the outburst of the Attorney-General in this Assembly when it adjourned last night. I think you will recall, Mr Speaker, that he screamed across this Chamber the words: 'You grub! You filthy grub!'

Mr McCarthy: And you are.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I would ask that the Leader of Government Business withdraw that interjection.

Mr SPEAKER: It was not the Leader of Government Business. I would ask the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to withdraw the remark.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I believe it is appropriate that I put my general construction on this issue. I will tell you what I believe happened from the point of view of the Attorney-General and then I will tell you what I believe happened from the point of view of the prostitute known as Rhonda.

I believe that the Attorney-General had a close personal and social relationship with Officer Woods and his wife, that at one stage he employed Officer Woods' wife and that he felt some considerable personal loyalty to Officer Woods. In the course of his duties, Officer Woods developed this liaison with the prostitute known as Rhonda. Perhaps through the best of motives, the Attorney-General decided that he would attend this meeting and intercede on behalf of his friend. I believe that, inappropriately, he suggested to the woman known as Rhonda, in the terms which have been outlined in the declaration laid before the Assembly, that she should leave town. I am prepared to accept that there were good reasons for it. Unfortunately, the Attorney-General came unstuck when he let the issue run. He was not prepared to tell the truth when it could have saved his skin and he is not prepared to tell the truth now. Those are the constructions which I honestly and genuinely believe.

As for the prostitute known as Rhonda, I believe that she was and continues to be, and with considerable justification, in fear of her life.

Mr Manzie: Well, she tells lies.

Mr BELL: The honourable Attorney-General interjects that that is lies. Mr Speaker, and I would ask you to ask him to withdraw that.

The prostitute known as Rhonda has made a desperate effort to protect herself, to protect her life and limb, because they had been endangered by her associations with competing police officers. The police officer identified as X in the 7.30 Report and the police officer subsequently identified as Officer Woods were in competition within the force. Police officer X has been alleged to have revealed her identity to drug industry sources. That put her in fear of her life. She felt no longer that she could rely on the protection of the police force. She believed that she had to speak to somebody else. In that context, she went to an ABC reporter, Mr Dennis Driver, and explained her situation to him. We have received representations in that regard as well and I have to say that, regardless of her status as a common prostitute, she is still deserving of protection of life and limb. The choice between life and limb and reputation is a very difficult one for this Assembly but, on the balance of the information that is available to me ...

Mr Poole: Have you spoken to her?

Mr BELL ... I am inclined to believe the prostitute known as Rhonda, for the reasons that I have outlined.

To pick up the interjection from the member for Araluen, I have had the opportunity to receive representations directly from the prostitute known as Rhonda.

Mr Poole: And she told you that she met Daryl? Rubbish!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will pick up that interjection as well. I spoke with and questioned the prostitute known as Rhonda at considerable length. I know that she has been spoken to at length on a large number of occasions by Mr Dennis Driver of the ABC, and I find it difficult to believe

that she is not telling the truth. I find it more difficult to believe that she has not been telling the truth than I find in the case of the Attorney-General. The terms of this motion demand that I make a choice and I have made my choice.

Mr Speaker, let me turn to the contradictions. The Attorney-General's and the Chief Minister's comments in respect of this matter have been full of contradictions over the last week and I propose to outline a few of them. On a few occasions, the Attorney-General has been asked when he knew of Rhonda. On Monday of this week, in the 7.30 Report, he said: 'Oh, I found out about it the other day'. This morning, on the Clare Martin show and on Tuesday, the day after that particular edition of the 7.30 Report, he remembered when he was questioned by the police. That is the first contradiction. We have not been able to get a straight answer from the Attorney-General about the time sequence of who said what when, and what he found out when. Presumably, as a minister of the Crown, he has an appointments secretary. I would have thought that it was a little easier for him to keep track of these comments.

Mr Coulter: Give him the date that he was alleged to have met her.

Mr Hatton: She knows the time and place but not the date.

Mr BELL: I will come to the question of the date in a minute.

Mr Speaker, it was likewise with the question of the police interview with the Attorney-General. In his press conference on Monday, he said that it was in April/May. On Tuesday, in parliament, he told us that it was 25 June. The next question is whether the Chief Minister knew about this. In the press conference, the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General led us to believe that the Chief Minister knew nothing about it until last week. However, in an answer to a question in this House on Tuesday of this week, we learnt that the Attorney-General told the Chief Minister apparently on the day it happened, and the Chief Minister had a fit of the cursed amnesia and could not remember it.

Fourthly, the Attorney-General has not been patent about his relationship as far as Officer Woods is concerned. He has not been patent about whether he was the person involved. He still claims that he does not know whether or not he is the person involved in this alleged relationship with Officer Woods. However, in spite of these doubts, in spite of the fact that he is very much at arm's length, he told the 7.30 Report last Friday that, when Officer Woods rang him up, he would not speak to him because he had to keep his distance. If that does not speak of a guilty mind, in the same way as his shouting and screaming comments did last night, I have no idea what does.

Finally, in relation to contradictions, I want to know when the employment of Mrs Sandra Woods by the Attorney-General actually finished. I remind him of his read statement to this House last Thursday, and I quote directly from that statement: 'From the period of 13 February 1984 to 23 January 1989 - that is, 15 months ago - Mrs Sandy Woods was my secretary'. I ask honourable members to calculate from January 1989 until the date of this statement to this Legislative Assembly on 27 September, last Thursday. I am sure that they will be satisfied that that is much longer than 15 months.

There are further questions in that regard. The Attorney-General has given the clear ...

Mr Coulter: Now there is some evidence for you.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I think I have given 5 clear examples of the sort of contradictions and ...

Mr Reed interjecting.

Mr BELL: ... difficulties in explaining exactly what has happened over the last week.

The implication of that, for the benefit of the member for Katherine, is that I do not believe the Attorney-General is telling the truth and that is why I am supporting this motion. The Attorney-General has attempted to tell us that this statutory declaration is not worth the paper that it is written on. He has attempted to tell us that he is not prepared to accept it unless the identify of the prostitute known as Rhonda is revealed. I would have thought that, as a former police officer, the Attorney-General would be aware of the importance of not revealing the identity of police informants.

Mr Manzie: In the normal course of events.

Mr BELL: That is one point. The second point is that, if the Attorney-General does not know, I am telling him now that, if he believes this statement is false, he is able to charge the prostitute known as Rhonda under the Oaths Act.

Mr Perron: Provided that he knows that she did do it.

Mr BELL: It is an absolute red herring to say that we do not have the original before the Assembly. The Attorney-General should know that that course of action is available to him. The reason why he will not do that is, of course, that it will provide a protected public environment for these allegations to be tested. They cannot be tested in a parliament. We are not here to test issues.

Mr Manzie: Go outside and say it. Right now.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, in answer to the taunts of the Attorney-General, if he wants to set out the particular statements that he is concerned about that I have made here ...

Mr Manzie: Try me out.

Mr BELL: ... at any time, I am prepared to go out on the steps of the parliament.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: You just tell me which ones they are. I have never hidden behind parliamentary privilege in that regard.

Mr Speaker, I am not going to debate the comments about the status of the Attorney-General and his position in the current investigations. I am quite happy to do that. However, that is not germane to this motion. What is germane to this motion is the statutory declaration that has been tabled. I think I have explained exactly why I find force in that statutory declaration and not in the public comments of the Attorney-General over the last week.

To be constructive in this matter, let me point out that, until recently, the opposition had been of the view that, provided an independent conduit to Mr Mulholland were provided, the internal police investigation was adequate. It is clear to me that concerns have been raised in respect of the involvement of the Attorney-General and in respect of the status of the indemnity. Concern has been expressed by the prostitute known as Rhonda that in some way she was prevented from making public comment because she was led to believe, rightly or wrongly, that if she did so the indemnity provided to her might not be available. That caused her considerable concern. As a result of these recent developments, the opposition has shifted to the position of believing that this must be an open inquiry and that some process, such as an inquiry under the Inquiries Act, is now necessary. I do not believe that any of these issues will be resolved adequately by the current process that is in train.

Mr Speaker, in order to apprise him of those issues, I have written to Mr Mulholland in these terms and I propose to table that letter. These are the terms of the letter:

Mr Bob Mulholland, Brisbane.

Dear Sir,

I am writing in respect of your brief to supervise internal police investigations into police misconduct. I have recently received representations from a prostitute known as Rhonda. At least 3 of the matters raised cause me considerable concern.

Firstly, Rhonda alleges that a threat was made by a senior officer of the Department of Law that indemnities against prosecution may be removed if she were to make statements that were embarrassing to the government. Secondly, Rhonda alleges that a police officer, aware of her status as a police informant, revealed that status to a drug supplier in such a way as to put her life at risk.

Thirdly, Rhonda alleges that, contrary to his claims in the parliament, she met with the Attorney-General. This of course is a matter for the parliament's concern but I believe it is important that it be considered in the overall context of the inquiry because of the relationship between the Attorney-General and one of the police officers under investigation.

I believe that these issues can only be resolved by an open public inquiry, but I am submitting these issues for your consideration or for consideration rather by the currently constituted inquiry.

Yours faithfully,
Neil Bell.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table that letter.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: I point out to honourable members that I am sending a copy of that letter to the Secretary of the Department of Law and also to the investigating officer in the police force. I believe that that is the appropriate course. The police have contacted me in the past, as they have contacted other people who have come into possession of information as a result of representations made to them.

In this regard, I might just pick up the Attorney-General. There is a fundamental difference between his position and that of other members of this Assembly who have been questioned by police. The actions in respect of people who may possibly be accused in the future has never come under question. He is the only member of this Assembly who has been questioned in respect of his personal relationship with one of the people being investigated. That is not the situation with Mr Bruyn of Channel 8 or Mr Driver of the ABC or myself or anybody else, to my knowledge, apart from the people whose identities were either revealed or hinted at by media reports. That is a crucial difference. The Attorney-General is in a fundamentally different position. In my view, the Attorney-General must be censured in these terms and the Chief Minister must ask him to stand aside while these investigations proceed.

Mr Speaker, I think that I have indicated clearly the opposition's position in that regard. I point out that, beyond today's debate, there are further issues of concern that will be raised and that will be dealt with by this Assembly. I believe they refer to the provision of authorisations by any members of the police force that the current Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act allows. I believe there are also questions about the registration of prostitutes.

Let me close, Mr Speaker, by ...

Mr Coulter: What was the date? Before you sit down. You were going to tell us the date of the meeting.

Mr BELL: ... urging the Chief Minister to take responsible action in this regard. I conclude by drawing to his attention ...

Mr Coulter: The date? You told us you would tell us the date. What was the date? You said you would tell us what the date was.

Mr BELL: ... the closing comments of Mr Fitzgerald in the Fitzgerald Inquiry. He said: 'One thing which is plain is that there would have been no prospect of any prosecutions occurring if this inquiry had not been open, for the simple reason that the misconduct would not have been discovered, and it is clearly better to expose the problems than to leave them hidden'.

Mr Coulter: What was the date? Before you sit down. What was the date?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, it must be an open inquiry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the motion before the House today is indeed the most serious that can be moved against the minister. In effect, if it were carried, it would mean that the Attorney-General has misled this House and the penalty for that would be not only that he would lose his ministry but, I suspect, could go so far as to lead to his vacating the House itself, depending on the degree of seriousness with which the particular misleading statement was regarded.

Let us look for a minute at the grounds on which members opposite seek to establish that the Attorney-General of the Northern Territory for some years is unfit for the job. We are asked to believe a document that has been tabled in this House which, on any examination, cannot have any standing on the floor of this Assembly other than as a piece of paper that

was picked up somewhere, and scribbled on without verification. There is no verification whatsoever of this document being what it is purported to be by the member for Barkly. It will be a strange day, Mr Speaker, when it comes about that we can table papers that look like statutory declarations or other documents that might be tabled in parliament, but that are actually photocopies of photocopies, with bits blanked out of them here and there and, for the protection of persons putting them forward, names missing and signatures missing. That is exactly the state of this document.

If honourable members opposite genuinely want this House to view this matter with the gravity with which it would be regarded if this were a statutory declaration, then they must table the statutory declaration. It is a charade to put forward a document like this and say: 'Do not worry about all the gaps. I tell you that it is the real thing'. We have heard 2 honourable members opposite today tell us that they reckon that it is the real thing. As far as I am concerned, that document is a tissue of lies. Even if we touched briefly on a couple of items within it and applied a measure of common sense in relation to them, we would have to be very suspicious. An Attorney-General who does his job properly is a very careful person. It is a very important position in government. An Attorney-General has significant powers over people's lives in relation to prosecutions etc. Attorneys-General are responsible for the appointment of Supreme Court judges for life. One of the key positions in any government is that of Attorney-General. We are asked to believe that the Attorney-General threw caution to the winds and attended what was intended to be a clandestine meeting with a prostitute to give her the message that she had to leave town.

Mr Speaker, would you do that in a place as public as a bar in Darwin? Would you do it at 3.30 in the afternoon? You would think there would be plenty of options. In this hypothetical situation, quite clearly, he would not want to be seen. Why wouldn't he arrange to meet her where there were no possible witnesses? There are many places where that could be done. Why would he choose a public place? In support of his argument that this person had to leave town, why would he say that his friend 'has political ambitions in the CLP'? How stupid would he be? The man is not stupid, Mr Speaker. Really, he is not. He is a man of very considerable standing and integrity in this community. He is a man who has my 100% support. I hang my political career and reputation, my political life, on his belt. I do that today - absolutely.

The document has absolutely no standing. That is my first point.

Mr Bell: That is nonsense.

Mr PERRON: Members cannot put up documents with information whited out of them and ask us to accept them because they say we should.

Mr Bell: Why don't you charge her? Or charge Ken Parish.

Mr PERRON: Let me finish.

Mr Coulter: Give us the document.

Mr Bell: You have it. You have his name on it. Charge him.

Mr Coulter: Give us the one where she signed.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, this document has only the credibility given to it by the 2 members who have stood on their feet in this House this morning and said that they purport that this is a statutory declaration. It has no better standing than that.

Mr Bell: Read the Oaths Act, Marshall.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PERRON: It is not a statutory declaration that has been tabled in this House. If they want to table one, if they want to launch debate on a statutory declaration, let them table a statutory declaration. Don't be nonsensical about it.

Mr Bell: It is a statutory declaration.

Mr Smith: It is a statutory declaration.

Mr Ede: It would sign her death warrant.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, if this document represents a document held somewhere in a drawer that is a statutory declaration, that has been signed by the person that it has been alleged has signed it, then she has demonstrated herself to be a liar because she says in this document that she has met the Attorney-General. This woman has been interviewed extensively during the police investigations - in her words, there were over 27 hours of interviews - and she told the police that she had never met Daryl Manzie in her life.

Mr Smith: How do you know?

Mr PERRON: Because I am told it.

Mr Smith: Told by whom?

Mr PERRON: By the Secretary of the Department of Law, who has access to all the transcripts, as does Mr Mulholland, as does the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Smith: And you are the man who does not interfere with police inquiries?

Mr PERRON: It is my word to this Assembly. It has no greater standing than my word to this Assembly that, if this woman, who is purported to have signed this document, has indeed signed it then she has demonstrated herself to be a liar, either now or then. If this document, on the basis of which this debate has been launched, is genuine, then she is a liar.

We are being asked to take the word of an alleged prostitute and self-confessed drug user, whose word is relayed in this House through the 2 honourable members opposite, against words spoken in the first person. We have seen the Attorney-General stand here this morning and on other occasions, with his hand on his heart, and say: 'It is a lie. I have never met her'. If we are to make this place into a Star Chamber - and that seems to be what it has turned out to be; talk about the separation of powers - perhaps we need to make judgments as to who is telling the truth.

Do we listen to the statements in the first person or do we listen to alleged conversations that are related here third, fourth or fifth hand?

The opposition is working very closely with the Territory Nationals on this matter. They have been working in concert for some days on developing the material for this debate. They want to turn this place into a Star Chamber. They want to be investigators. They do not want to leave the detective work to detectives. They want to be the investigators and they are making a pretty amateur job of it. They want to be the judge and they want to be the jury. They want it all on the floor of this Chamber. I understand that the separation of powers exists to avoid that very situation coming to pass. We ought to leave the investigatory role and the prosecution role to the appropriate arms of government, and we ought to leave to the court the role of judging whether a person is guilty or otherwise.

I will touch briefly on the question of immunity. I will not say very much about it. The immunity which Rhonda has is limited, of course, to her work with the police. It enabled her to have possession of things that would be illegal under the law. That is what her immunity is all about. As long as she cooperates with police in respect of these things, she will not be prosecuted. There is nothing unusual about that. It happens all over Australia all the time. However, it does not extend to any other breaking of the law. Clearly, it would not be appropriate to give an indemnity to a person to allow them to do whatever they liked and be immune from the law. I can assure honourable members that it is my view that, if the document tabled by the member for Barkly is a copy of a statutory declaration which was signed and which contains false information, Rhonda is very much liable to pursuit by the law. It is illegal to sign a statutory declaration if its contents are not truthful.

Mr Smith: I am sure that she is very well aware of that.

Mr PERRON: I am very pleased to hear it. Her immunity does not extend that far. I hope she thinks pretty carefully before she signs any more. One is enough to put a person in jail.

The member for MacDonnell said that, if the Commissioner of Police had been doing his job, he would have, or should have, told me that the Attorney-General was the politician referred to in the 7.30 Report program. The implication is that either the Commissioner of Police told me but that I said he did not, or that he did not tell me and therefore should be sacked for not doing his job. The Commissioner of Police did not come to me after the 7.30 Report program and say anything, nor should he have done so. I have said many times in this House that I leave the police to do their work. If, as minister responsible for police, I picked up the phone every time I became aware of a reference to someone with whom I was associated - be it a member of government, a friend of mine or a member of my family - and wanted to know what was going on and required to be informed before any action was taken, we would have a situation similar to that which existed in Queensland. That will not happen in the Northern Territory as long as I am in this position.

If the Commissioner of Police ever has a shred of evidence, revealed through the 7.30 Report or by any other means, which he believes I should know about - and I trust his judgment - because it may imply that a person in a ministerial job, with the important powers that go with that, may not be a fit and proper person or may be involved in criminal activity, he will come to me forthwith and inform me. I have had this understanding with him

ever since I took the job as Chief Minister. I have absolute confidence that he would come to me and say: 'Chief Minister, this is what we have found out. You can take whatever action you wish to take'. Obviously, I would.

However, it is nonsense to suggest that the police sit around watching 7.30 Report amateur hours and then file a whole range of documents in the office of the minister responsible for police the following morning, and seek personal appointments to discuss them all. We have more to do with our day than that. The system provides that, where there is trouble, it surfaces. According to members opposite, any allegation which supposedly leads to the Attorney-General means that he needs to be investigated. If someone alleges that someone else claimed to have a friend who could provide some help to the person making the allegation, that does not imply anything in respect of the person whose name was mentioned as being such a friend. It does not mean that he knows about the claim. It does not mean that the claim is true. It does not mean even that the alleged conversation took place. It is all allegedly this and allegedly that. That is what the police are investigating. There have been 27 hours of interviews with one of the parties.

Mr Smith: This is another change in the story since yesterday. They were not investigating it then. They are investigating it now.

Mr PERRON: They have inquired into all sorts of matters.

Mr Smith: Are they investigating it or not? Give us a clear statement.

Mr PERRON: They would follow every lead that they could. I repeat again in this Chamber, Mr Speaker, something I said yesterday which is very important. I reject the view that a minister of the Crown ought to be stood aside from his job because the police have talked to him and perhaps asked him to assist in their inquiries and provide some information. The very fact that a person is interviewed by the police to provide some information does not even imply guilt, let alone mean that the person is guilty.

For example, a friend of mine might commit a crime such as murder or rape. The police could say to me: 'You know this fellow. How well do you know him? What sort of bloke is he? When was your last contact with him?' I might say: 'I knew him well. We played golf and we played cards. He was around to dinner 3 weeks ago and he is a nice enough fellow. He drinks a bit too much but apart from that he seems okay'. The police would note all that down. Some of it might be used in a court case in respect of the man's character. However, that would not imply that I was involved in his crime or was under investigation in any way.

For goodness sake, let us keep this matter on the rails. We know what it is about. It is not a joke. Honourable members opposite are keeping the media - radio, television, newspapers - full of this matter day after day, and I must confess that they are making a reasonable job of it. Given the state of the nation, the treatment of the Territory and the special Premiers Conference just around the corner, I find it disappointing that we should be spending hours in this Assembly debating this type of drivel, this tissue of lies which is before us today. Unfortunately, that is what we are doing.

We have the question of Rhonda's fear for her life. At one stage, the police assisted this prostitute to leave the Territory. I think that is on the public record because I believe that the Commissioner of Police mentioned it in a media interview. I believe that she was assisted with a

fare, at taxpayers' expense, because she expressed concern to the police about her safety. She was a police informant. The Commissioner of Police used his powers, which I am sure are all audited, to approve a fare. I understand, although I cannot remember how many days were involved, that she returned to Darwin of her own volition a few days later and has been here ever since.

If this woman is living in fear for her life, why is she in a very public profession? If a person wants a stripper or a moll, it is just a matter of ringing up. It is a pretty public profession. Presumably, her advertisement is one of those in the newspaper. I would not know. She has to let people know somehow that she is available. She has to earn a quid. If she is in fear of people in Darwin because she was involved as a police informant, why the heck is she here? Why does she continue to maximise her opportunities for publicity? Might I suggest, Mr Speaker, and it is just a suggestion, that she might be enjoying some of the publicity? I will simply leave that suggestion in the minds of honourable members.

Mr Bell: She is in Darwin because her mum and dad are here.

Mr PERRON: Oh, I see. That is a good reason, is it, if you fear for your life?

Mr Bell: She grew up here; the same as you, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: Oh, I see. I can tell you that, if I were in fear for my life, I would not be hanging around anywhere, whether it was my home town or not.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister's time has expired.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Chief Minister from completing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I will not keep the House very much longer, but I would like to say this about the lack of information in respect of the date. We all know that, probably, this matter could be settled very quickly by finding out where the Attorney-General was at the time this alleged 3.30 pm meeting took place in the Palmerston Room at the Parap Hotel. That may not be too hard to prove, but that will not be known until the day is known. Unfortunately, a minister cannot do very much without being accompanied and without people knowing where he or she is almost all the time. Perhaps, in the dead of night, after you have gone home, you could sneak out for a while and no one would know where you were. However, we are talking about 3.30 in the afternoon. We do not know whether it was on a Saturday or a Sunday or during a weekday. That would be interesting to know because it is only on rare occasions that ministers drive. Government drivers take them to places and they are picked up later. Times are made for their collection. Phone calls are made to summon drivers to collect them at certain times. A minister's staff know where he is virtually all the time, at least his secretary does and probably his ministerial staff as well. If he is not with a staff member or with a driver, usually he is in his office with another person or perhaps he is in his office by himself. This man probably has an alibi which could settle this in a click of the fingers and we could determine whether this paper is a tissue of lies or if this man is telling us lies. However, they do not

know the day. They know the time of the day, and a great deal of detail about what was said, but they do not know the day, and that is very convenient. Obviously, this is the most crucial piece of information. Its absence is probably very deliberate.

Mr Speaker, I would like to close by saying simply that what also demonstrates that this whole charade is simply a publicity seeking exercise for the opposition, in concert with the Nationals, is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, who I trust will rise to explain his position, has refused for some months to do his public duty. As a man of high office, he could accept a briefing by the Commissioner of Police which does not bind him to keep his mouth shut at any time in the future. He can accept a briefing by the Commissioner of Police on all or any particular aspect of the 3 investigations that Mr Mulholland is supervising. He could make such a briefing very specific to the prostitute and what she said, and what people around her said. Indeed, he could even make it specific to what the Attorney-General said to the police.

Why doesn't he accept that briefing and then make a statement as Leader of the Opposition. He could say then that he is convinced that everyone from the Attorney-General and Commissioner of Police down is corrupt and that a full and open inquiry is necessary. On the other hand, he might just find - and I suspect the reason why he has never accepted the briefing is because it does not suit him politically to do so - that the pieces all fit into place, that the work is being done very thoroughly, that much of the innuendo in this Chamber and in the media is lies and that Mr Mulholland is across all these matters. In due course, those people who have breached the law will be prosecuted and those who are innocent of wrongdoing can go about their affairs.

Why won't he take that briefing? It will not cost him any money. It might cost him a couple of hours, depending on how extensive a briefing he wants. But no, he wants to stand in this Chamber and say: 'I do not want any more information than the general public has because I do not deserve any more'. He does deserve more. He ought to accept his position for what it is. It is a position wherein he can uphold the institutions of this parliament, the police system and the judicial system, or he can criticise them in this Chamber under privilege. He has those options. However, he has a responsibility to act as an informed man, not as an ignorant one. Let him rise in this Chamber and state exactly what his position is in relation to whether the Attorney-General has lied to this parliament and deserves to be removed from office.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I foreshadow that, during the course of these sittings, I will move a motion to the effect that, if Mr Mulholland reports when the Assembly is not sitting or between sittings, that report will be delivered forthwith to the Speaker and will be deemed to be tabled. I shall do that to remove any suggestion whatsoever that we will do whatever we can to ensure that Mr Mulholland does not cause anybody any embarrassment.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister delivered a couple of challenges to me which I will come to a little later.

Mr Coulter: Do you rise to support the honourable member?

Mr Perron: Are you supporting the member for Barkly?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, actually, I listened to the Chief Minister in silence and would appreciate a similar courtesy.

In his comments, the Chief Minister referred to this Chamber being used as a Star Chamber, and I guess I have to say that, better than most, I know how this Chamber can be used as a Star Chamber and how it hurts the person concerned, how it hurts their families, and how it hurts people who are connected with them in any way. I refer, of course, to allegations made, not of my having a meeting in the Palmerston Bar, but of my being involved in a conspiracy against the laws of Australia. Those allegations were lodged against me earlier this year by the Deputy Chief Minister who was protected, of course, by the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General. All of them were involved in that up to their eyeballs, and they did not have a shred of evidence. They did not have even 1 statutory declaration. Not 1 document supporting their allegations was presented to this parliament by any of those 3 persons. Dates changed continually. Despite that, and in a case where there is a statutory declaration, they have the hide to talk about the opposition ...

Mr Perron: There is not.

Mr SMITH: ... using this place as a Star Chamber. I want to say that that attitude by members opposite is contemptible. Perhaps they might start looking in their own backyard when they talk about using this place as a Star Chamber. As a victim, I learned an important lesson from that experience, and that was to be very careful about using this place in relation to serious matters involving individual members. I have always been very careful in that regard and I will continue to be so. I know the pain that people experience when these matters are raised in this parliament.

Since this particular matter was raised in the 7.30 Report, I have refused to put questions that would name the Attorney-General because I believed that the appropriate place for that to be investigated was through the police inquiry. I am on public record as saying, as recently as last Friday, that I thought that the actions of the member for Barkly were inappropriate and that I would not have done what he did. However, what has happened since that time is that the Attorney-General, through his own efforts, has hanged himself. He has been backing and filling all over the place, changing his story and having the Chief Minister half-heartedly defend him on important points. Mr Speaker, can you think of anything more half-hearted than this: 'Well, I cannot actually remember Daryl telling me about this particular matter, but I am prepared to believe him'? I cannot. Mr Speaker, in another place, you would say that was a lie. Members are not permitted to say that in here but, clearly, right through this exercise, the Chief Minister has had very severe doubts about the reputation and the credibility of the Attorney-General on this matter since last Friday. I too have severe doubts about the credibility of the Attorney-General in relation to this matter. Let me get this straight. It is a specific matter: it is the actions of the Attorney-General since Friday in explaining his position on a number of issues since the matter became public.

Nobody in this House is accusing the Attorney-General of being involved in a crime. I am saying that, if he is not involved in the investigation, from what we know now, he should be. Certainly, I am not saying that he is involved in any crime or any criminal activity. However, over the last 4 days, he has been involved in a very deliberate attempt to confuse people in this House and outside this House. By means of some careful use of words, he has delivered impressions that have not been true. Let us go through some of those confusions. Take a simple one: the employment of Sandy Woods. His first statement last week was that her employment with him ceased in January. His second statement on Monday was that her employment ceased in July. That is just a simple example.

Take a second one. When did the meeting with the police take place? April or May was his comment.

Mr Manzie: I said that I could not remember.

Mr SMITH: April or May was his comment at a press conference.

Mr Manzie: Get it right!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, this week, he said it was 25 June.

We then had the situation of the Chief Minister supporting, in a half-hearted fashion, the actions of the Attorney-General by saying: 'If Daryl says he told me, it must be true, but I cannot remember it'.

Mr Perron: What is the relevance of this?

Mr SMITH: The relevance is the credibility of your Attorney-General.

Mr Speaker, that is the position that we have. Since this matter became public, the Attorney-General has adopted a number of different positions on some very vital questions that need to be addressed. He could have answered those questions to my satisfaction if he had been prepared to be open and honest and if he had briefed himself fully. Of course, he did not.

Mr Manzie: It is a bit hard to brief yourself on lies.

Mr SMITH: Since last Friday, the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister have been involved in damage control. We have reached a very clear situation where there have to be very severe doubts about what the Attorney-General has said. Those doubts need to be tested in an open and judicial environment. I make the point again that I am not accusing the honourable minister of any crime. However, I am accusing him of misleading this House and that is the charge that we have before us. Every indication that we have is that the Attorney-General has been less than honest with the people of the Northern Territory throughout this matter.

Mr Manzie: That is totally incorrect.

Mr SMITH: The Chief Minister asks where this allegation comes from. It comes from the woman called Rhonda.

Mr Perron: According to whom? According to the member for Barkly.

Mr SMITH: This allegation comes from the woman called Rhonda. She has signed and had properly witnessed a statutory declaration to that effect. She would have been very well aware of and would have been told about the implications of signing a false statutory declaration. There is no doubt about that. After those warnings, she persisted in going ahead with the signing of a statutory declaration and with allowing it to be put before this parliament.

Mr Perron: It has not been put before this parliament. That is the point.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that is the situation we have, and the question is: what is in it for Rhonda? She is in a pretty parlous position anyway. Already, she has been identified as a police informant. She has been doing

that work. She is well known as a key witness in relation to matters which resulted in a number of investigations that led Mr Mulholland to be involved in these matters. She has gone further now and put her head right on the line. What is in it for her? As I understand it, she was not approached and asked to sign a statutory declaration. She came forward and spoke to people like the member for Barkly. She said that she had serious concerns about what had been happening since last Thursday and wanted to provide some information. That information will go to Mr Bob Mulholland.

However, we have another problem now with Mr Bob Mulholland's inquiry. If I was not convinced before this debate that we needed an open and independent inquiry, I was certainly convinced after hearing the Chief Minister's comments. The Chief Minister commented this morning that the police had advised him that, in the course of the inquiries that they were conducting on the 3 files that Mr Mulholland was oversighting, in fact Rhonda had denied ever meeting the Attorney-General.

Mr Perron: So she is lying if she signed a statutory declaration then or now.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, my question is simply this: how can the Chief Minister expect anybody with evidence that might be relevant to this inquiry to come forward after he has made it very clear that, if it gets a bit close to the bone, he will go to Crown Law or the police, ask them for specific pieces of information and use them publicly.

Mr Perron: I guess you would rather that we did not have that information because it does not suit your purpose today.

Mr SMITH: I want to know how one can expect that people who might have evidence that they want to present to Mr Mulholland can have any confidence in that inquiry. People like the Chief Minister have said that it was a confidential inquiry and that the government was not interfering. He has made a big point that, since the Mulholland inquiry was put in place, it was hands off. He has said that it is independent and that he does not interfere: the police do their work and Mr Mulholland checks it and satisfies himself. However, when there is a bit of heat on today, we have the Chief Minister interfering in the course of the inquiry by seeking particular information and making it public.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that that will make it even more difficult to persuade reluctant witnesses - and there are reluctant witnesses - to come forward. In fact, it will make it almost impossible for them to come forward now that they know the Chief Minister thinks that it is in his power to be able to approach the police or Crown Law for particular information and use it publicly. That will not give them any confidence at all in what is going on.

I intend to extract from Hansard that comment by the Chief Minister and to forward it to Mr Bob Mulholland so that he knows precisely the circumstances under which he is operating. He is operating in a situation in which the Chief Minister, the minister responsible for police, the most senior politician in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Perron: I will remain so too.

Mr SMITH: ... intends to dip into that inquiry at will, picking out bits of information which suit his political purposes and using them in a public place. The Chief Minister deserves the condemnation of everybody in

this House for doing that. Of course, Mr Speaker, the separation of powers is all words to him. He has never fully understood his responsibilities in this House. The clearest possible illustration that I have seen of that fact is that he can dip into what is supposedly a confidential inquiry at will, pick out a supposed piece of information, and then broadcast it in this Chamber.

Mr Perron: As a result of the drivel that you people put forward in public.

Mr SMITH: That is a disgraceful abuse of your powers and you ought to be absolutely ashamed of yourself.

Mr Perron: Will you take a briefing?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, in relation to the briefing, the answer is no. I will tell you why, and I have told people this on a number of occasions.

Mr Perron: You don't know want to know the truth.

Mr SMITH: I do not want to know, Mr Speaker. I do not want to know the specific allegations. I want to be satisfied that the proper processes are being followed, as does everybody else in the Northern Territory. I do not believe that I have a right to have information that is not available to other members. What I do know right now is that, as a result of the actions of the Chief Minister and the comments made over the last 3 or 4 days by the Attorney-General, the inquiry that is being conducted by Mr Mulholland is in some considerable trouble. We have the Chief Minister saying that he will dip in and out at will. We have the Attorney-General backfilling all over the place, changing key times and dates and casting considerable doubts on his own credibility. That is a problem that the Northern Territory government has to face in this matter.

Mr Speaker, I repeat that I have changed my mind about an open inquiry since last week. It is all due to the Attorney-General and his failure to come to grips in any sense with the questions that have been asked of him over the last few days. I would have thought it was in his own interests to get these matters out into the open and have them assessed independently as quickly as possible.

Mr Reed: Give us the dates!

Mr SMITH: For some reason, Mr Speaker, that does not seem to be possible.

Mr Reed: The date will get you out of the gutter.

Mr SMITH: You have never left it.

Through his performance in this House today, the Chief Minister has made things even more difficult for the Northern Territory government in relation to this matter. That has rapidly become the major problem that we are confronting in terms of the so-called independence of this police inquiry and the confidence that we should have in it. On this particular matter, the Chief Minister has sold us short in a very severe and damaging manner. Of course, the Attorney-General has led him into this position because he has not bothered to keep the Chief Minister informed. He did not take his interviews with the police seriously. He did not bother to report

key matters concerning this whole investigation, and that is why I am supporting this censure motion.

The Attorney-General has sold himself and his office short. Throughout this exercise, he has misled the people of the Northern Territory in a very severe manner. He has done so in a way which has hurt his own reputation and credibility, as well as that of the government and, most importantly, he has hurt his position. Mr Speaker, he deserves to be censured.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker I also wish to speak to this censure motion today. It is bewildering and perplexing that we have before us a substantive motion moved by a member of the crossbenches against a member of the government in relation to a matter of propriety on the part of the Attorney-General. I would like to address a couple of matters. I have listened to the debate with a great deal of interest. The situation on the crossbenches today is that we are being asked to weigh against the balance of probability the evidence produced by the member for Barkly and supported by the member for MacDonnell to determine whether it is so weighty that anything that the Attorney-General might say in his own defence should be turned aside. We are being asked to support a motion to censure the Attorney-General for deliberately misleading the Assembly.

Like several other members in this Chamber, I am a justice of the peace and have been for a considerable number of years. I have had to witness many statutory declarations, as I am sure the member for Barkly has. One of the first things that one hears when handling statutory declarations is the identify of the person, which must be established, and their occupation and address which must be produced on the statutory declaration. The declarant must swear that he or she is solemnly and sincerely declaring that the facts contained in the declaration are in fact true and correct. The declarant must sign an undertaking that the facts are true and correct and must swear to that fact. The declaration is then witnessed by the justice of the peace or an officer of the court who is entitled to do so.

The member for Barkly has tabled what he considers to be a statutory declaration on the basis that the words 'statutory declaration' are printed at the top of the page in official-looking writing. What has actually been tabled is a photocopy of what is purported to be a statutory declaration. At law, it has no standing as a statutory declaration. In fact, one does not even know whether this piece of paper was ever signed by anybody or is in fact actually attributable to any individual person.

That aside, we are being asked to accept many other things today. We are being asked to accept that a person who is purported to have made a statutory declaration of which the document tabled in this House is a photocopy, has made such a declaration willingly, honestly and openly. It contains 6 pages of supposed facts. It details at some considerable length meetings which allegedly took place between certain people, places where these meetings took place, times of the meetings and, in respect of some parts of the document, verbatim quotes of what was said at the alleged meetings. However, as has been mentioned by other honourable members, it is very convenient that, with all of the honest, open truth that is supposed to be in this purported statutory declaration, at no stage has the time and the date of the alleged meeting been given.

A member: It gives the time.

Mr FIRMIN: Sorry. At no stage does she give the date of the alleged meeting. We know where it was. We know what time it took place, but we do

not know when it took place. We have everything else, including the names of all the people and what they are purported to have said. She made this honest, open declaration, believing all this to be true but, for some reason or another, she cannot remember the date that this meeting was supposed to have taken place.

The member for Barkly is also a justice of the peace. He has been in this game for a long time and one would think that perhaps he would understand the law reasonably well. Even a cadet or rookie cop on the beat would not submit a declaration like this because his station sergeant would throw him out the door and tell him to do it again because it has no veracity. It does not make sense. This could not possibly be produced in a court or in any other forum for that matter with the expectation that it would be believed. There is nothing that anyone has to prove. It simply does not stand up.

Mr Hatton: Or disprove.

Mr FIRMIN: Or disprove, because he does not have the dates.

This supposed trial by innuendo has been dragging on for weeks now. It would have been simple to bring the matter to a head if we were to believe that there was evidence of wrongdoing. It would have been very simple for the person concerned in this discussion that is supposed to have taken place between several members of this Chamber and the prostitute Rhonda during this last week to have established the date of this supposed meeting and put that date forward today when asked. That would have allowed the Attorney-General to refute it. He could have checked his diaries and, if he had an answer to where he was and that was a reasonable alibi, so be it. He could have indicated that. It would be very easy to check. As the Chief Minister said, it is very difficult to keep a low profile as a minister in the government. Everybody knows where you are nearly all the time. Somebody is keeping track of you. It would be very easy to check the veracity of the answer. If he cannot provide the correct answer, he is in trouble and he knows it. That would have proved the point.

At the moment, the honourable members are not proving their point to me. I am being asked today to decide on the evidence that they are producing against the response from the Attorney-General. I do not believe that any shred of evidence that they have produced today would lead me to believe that I should support this motion. Apart from the fact that this document carries no weight with me, I am firmly convinced - as are many others in this Chamber, and the public is becoming aware of it - that this is not really a matter of whether or not the Attorney-General did or did not have a meeting with a person. It is all to do with headlines. It is all to do with an attempt to destabilise the political situation at the moment because there is an election coming up. I do not support the censure motion against the Attorney-General.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, the government members seem to place great store by the fact that the document that we tabled is not a true blue statutory declaration. For members' information, my colleague rang Ken Parish, the solicitor of the lady in question. He said that he would be happy to show the original signed statutory declaration to any member of the Assembly. I am sure that her name would be treated in confidence by any member who avails himself or herself of that opportunity.

I do not intend to cover the ground that most other speakers have covered today because the matter is quite simple. Members have to make up

their minds whether there is validity to the document and whether the contents of the document are valid. Then, they must decide whether to believe the Attorney-General or the lady who signed the statutory declaration. I will not say anything more on that.

However, I would like to comment in more depth on what I would call the drug scene in the Northern Territory. Over the last few months, there has been mention of large sums of money being involved. I think the figure mentioned was $30 000 per week. I have had some knowledge of the drug scene in Adelaide and ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We have a very serious and very precise motion of censure before the Chair, and I would suggest that the member for Flynn is wandering miles away from the point of that motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr FLOREANI: Mr Speaker, I believe we are debating a much wider issue here today, although the censure motion is very serious as well.

I would like to look at the historical record of what has actually happened and what has led us to take the actions that we have taken. I believe the matter first came to light with comments made by a Sergeant Andy Wrenn. He was charged with drug offences and, subsequently, with assault. I understand that many of those charges were dropped and he was stood down for a time on full pay. His comments are worth noting. At one time, he said: 'I think they are getting filtered information and, quite possibly, it is tainted information as a result of hearsay and rumours purposely manufactured to discredit myself'. I believe that statement first gave rise to concerns. By itself, it does not mean a great deal but, in the sequence of events, it does have a bearing.

The next thing that occurred was the infamous 7.30 Report program in which the prostitute identified as Rhonda said she had been interviewed by 2 senior police officers. There were allegations of a police officer with an illicit liaison with the prostitute and the offer of assistance from a friend in government if difficulties should arise. It went on to say that there was a tape-recording by another police officer of the police officer and the prostitute on the occasion of their illicit liaison. Subsequently, the police wanted her out of town and were prepared to pay the fare.

What then happened was that the Chief Minister - and I believe his actions were correct because of the public perception - decided to call in Robert Mulholland QC in relation to investigations involving the police. The interesting point is that the announcement was made just before the 7.30 Report went to air and became public. We all believed that the Mulholland inquiry would take the sting out of all the arguments and would pacify the public. We believed that there was to be a full, open and independent inquiry. To illustrate that, I will quote a Channel 8 report:

> A high level investigation into alleged police corruption in the Northern Territory has been ordered by the Chief Minister, Marshall Perron. He has appointed former senior Fitzgerald Inquiry Counsellor, Bob Mulholland QC, to head the probe. Already 3 separate police files have been handed over for his scrutiny.
>
> The man given the sweeping mandate to investigate the 3 police cases is no stranger to police corruption and organised crime. Bob Mulholland QC already had an impeccable reputation when he

took on the daunting job of senior counsel to Queensland corruption investigator, Tony Fitzgerald QC.

It was interesting that all government ministers allowed the public perception to develop that there was a full and open inquiry. I reiterate that I believe the appointment came about only because of public concern about the allegations of police corruption that were surfacing in the media. Immediately before the commencement of the August sittings, the Chief Minister was quoted on the 7.30 Report as saying that there was no inquiry at all. 'There is a police inquiry into a police inquiry. Mulholland cannot received evidence direct and, if he does, he is obliged to send it straight to the government or to the police'. Mr Speaker, I believe that is a farcical situation.

During the August sittings, the member for MacDonnell asked that standing orders be suspended to allow him to move a motion to appoint an independent solicitor to accept information from police and the public. Of course, leave was denied. He had to wait until General Business Day to move his motion. When it came to the vote on whether an independent solicitor would be appointed, the motion was lost. Some comments made by the member for MacDonnell at that time injected some heat into the whole issue. He said he had a statutory declaration from a serving member of the Northern Territory Police Force who said that he was aware of police corruption within the force. When asked to table that document, he did not. He stated also that several other police officers had confided in him about instances of police corruption. Even at that point, I do not think that my colleague and myself contemplated doing what we actually did today.

During his contribution to the debate on that General Business Day, the member for MacDonnell tabled a letter from Elston & Gilchrist, Barristers and Solicitors. The letter was written to Neil Bell, care of the Legislative Assembly, and signed by Geoff Barbaro. In the letter, Mr Barbaro indicated that a client had information for Mr Mulholland. As one would expect a cautious person to do, the client approached the solicitor and told him that he had certain information. Subsequently, the client actually gave the information to the police. The solicitor wrote to the member for MacDonnell expressing his concerns about the whole issue. I would like to quote from that letter. The paragraph which I am about to quote is what really convinced us that something was going on. It says: 'However, our client was at this time nervous and terrified'. I think that the key word is 'terrified'. 'The depths of our client's problems may be recognised by the fact that police protection had to be and was provided to our client'.

We do not know who that client was. He had information to give and he went to his solicitor as a form of protection. Incidentally, the solicitor made a point of saying: 'We wish to make it clear that the police officers who conducted the investigation, to the best of our knowledge, acted with courtesy, efficiency and integrity. The investigation in relation to our client, when it did proceed, proceeded properly. We have no complaint about that'. Mr Speaker, why would any person be terrified and why would any person need to have police protection? To my mind, that question remains unanswered.

Following the tabling of that letter, I believe that my colleague foreshadowed that we would be seeking an open inquiry, or at least further information, if the government did not give serious and open consideration to a full and open inquiry into the alleged police corruption. The moving of the motion in the August sittings applied enough pressure to the Chief

Minister to cause the him to organise a briefing involving Mr Mulholland, the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Barkly and Mr Conran from the Department of Law.

It has been reported that, at that briefing or discussion, Mr Mulholland said quite clearly that there was no inquiry and that the ethics of his profession required him to receive instructions from a solicitor. In this case, that means that any communication with Mr Mulholland has to be through Mr Conran. When one considers our position, which differed from that of the government, we were bricked in at that stage. Even Mr Mulholland's hands were tied. All the information had to be sifted by the police or the Department of Law. Anyone who had any information had to go through Conran, as the lawyer who gave Mr Mulholland his brief. We had nowhere to go. The only place left to us was the public arena.

The member for Barkly presented his statement last Thursday night naming the people, including the Attorney-General. I believe the government did not believe my colleague would do anything as he had nothing to gain personally and, indeed, could look forward only to the sort of personal abuse which he well and truly received. The weak attempts at character assassination made by the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Minister were the start of it in this House. The Chief Minister said that it was a gutless way to do things. There was a savage attack by the CLP President, Gary Nairn, who described it as a 'cowardly performance in parliament, trying to destroy the CLP'. Even Senator Bob Collins joined the fray and said the action that we took was 'entirely inappropriate'. To cap it all off, there was the Leader of the Opposition. We talk about political opportunism quite often in here. What about him? 'Politics of hate - the Territory deserves better than this'. What a weak position that was when, in reality, his own shadow attorney-general had initiated the matter! I would say that the government did not count on my colleague's courage and sense of responsibility to the people of the Northern Territory. As events unfold, Mr Speaker, you will find that he has been totally justified in the actions that he has taken.

Mr Hatton: Give us the date.

Mr FLOREANI: The date is irrelevant if you have nothing to worry about.

Since last Thursday, the member for Barkly has received a number of representations. He has had 3 interviews with people with information so far and has the names of 6 other people who have information to offer. The sequence of events that I have outlined and the information that is coming forward indicate to me that we have an enormous drug problem in the Northern Territory and that, at the moment, we are simply scratching the surface of the problem. In conclusion, I fully support the actions of the member for Barkly. I join with him in calling for a Royal Commission into the drug scene in the Northern Territory. I fully support the motion of censure.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, to my mind, there is nothing more certain than that we will all be much happier when Mr Mulholland brings down his report. I know the Chief Minister cannot direct Mr Mulholland, nor can the police. However, during the August sittings, I was led to believe that, hopefully within a fortnight of the end of that sittings, we would have had the report before us. We do not have it yet and that is leading to all sorts of speculation and rumours. It is not helping the police force and it is not helping the confidence of the community in the police force. The people want to know. I hope that Mr Mulholland might be prevailed on to

bring down his findings so that we can debate them and perhaps ask further questions to clarify the situation. I know the police themselves are very keen for this to happen. I understand that some 10 police officers, and good officers at that - and I was told this at lunchtime by a police officer of some standing who is a personal friend of mine - have resigned from the force because of the innuendo and the like that is circulating in the community. He said that members of the police force themselves are wondering where on earth the truth lies and who among their colleagues is trustworthy and who is not. A further point is that the Drug Squad has been virtually neutered at this time in operational terms.

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I will talk to the Chief Minister about that, if he would like me to. Certainly, it exists, but its functional role is being constrained. I am sure he will be quite capable of going to the person, whom I hold in high regard, and having a chat about that matter. As a citizen, it concerns me that the pressure that should be on drug traders is not up to the level which it should be.

The motion that is before the House is an important and serious one. It is a motion to censure the Attorney-General. It is claimed that he has had a meeting with Rhonda, and he claims that he has not. As a member on the crossbenches, I have a responsibility to try to weigh up the situation as I see it. On the one hand, we have a document that purports to be a statutory declaration. However, because it unsigned, it has absolutely no force at all in law. Even if it were signed, there is no criminal charge. Any citizen who denied having a meeting with Rhonda would be under no threat whatsoever. No criminal charges can be laid.

However, the claim is that the Attorney-General has misled the House deliberately, and that is a very serious matter in our parliamentary system. We have the document that has been tabled and an offer has been made to me personally to sight the original document which has the name on it. I do not doubt that it exists. I cannot believe that honourable colleagues would tell me that I can sight it if it is a fabrication. We all have the opportunity to look at it. I do not believe that it should be tabled in this House. I was told at lunchtime that I must be about the only person in Darwin who does not know the real identity of Rhonda.

Mr Hatton: I don't know.

Mr Firmin: I don't know either.

Mr COLLINS: Well, there are a few of us. Frankly, I do not particularly want to know.

If protection is needed for the woman, certainly I do not believe the document should be tabled in this House. There are no criminal charges that could be laid on the basis of this document. It is a matter of great importance only to this House. This situation has not been created by Rhonda herself. It has come about because I understand that 2 members of the Assembly, together with Dennis Driver, have had a talk with this woman. They have come away with certain viewpoints. On the other hand, we have the Attorney-General saying that, to his knowledge, he has not met Rhonda. I am in the position where I have to try to make a decision between those, and I have no evidence. Claims have been made by Dennis Driver that there are witnesses to these things. One could say that perhaps those witnesses should be produced, but where should they be produced? They cannot talk in

this House and, as there are no criminal charges, it is up in the air. It is all a bit nonsensical.

If I am wrong about something, I am happy to have it sorted out. I have known the Attorney-General for a fair number of years now and, in a sense, Darwin and the Territory are small places. If there were blemishes on the record of the Attorney-General, I am sure the word would have spread around. I can say quite honestly that I have never heard any suggestion of scandal being associated with him. In fact, the Attorney-General has been likened very much to his colleague, Honest Tom, and that says something in itself. There is no evidence to satisfy me that the Attorney-General has misled the House. I do not believe anybody can say that we have that evidence. Some people may believe that Rhonda is telling the truth. If that can be demonstrated, let it be demonstrated but, at this stage, the Attorney-General has to be given the benefit of the doubt and, as I see it, there is very little doubt involved.

I cannot support the notion. If there is any substance to it, then let the people who have the statutory declaration use it and demonstrate its veracity beyond all reasonable doubt. We might then have to reconsider the matter but, until that is done, I do not believe that any one of us is in a position to censure the Attorney-General. The claim that he has misled the House deliberately has not been substantiated.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this debate has been generated by events that occurred in the past. However, the focal point of the debate seems to have become whether or not a statutory declaration actually exists. I appreciate that a copy of a statutory declaration was tabled in this House, and that that copy was inaccurate in so far as the name of the person making that statutory declaration had been whited out. However, I believe that such a statutory declaration does actually exist and I would doubt that any member of this House does not believe that such a statutory declaration does exist.

The words and terms of that statutory declaration are now public property. We have all heard the claims made in that statutory declaration by a citizen of the Northern Territory. We can do 1 of 2 things. We can deny that we actually believe that such a declaration exists or we can claim that the person making that declaration is telling lies. The penalty for telling lies in a statutory declaration are known. They are published on every form. Because that declaration has been witnessed by a barrister, I cannot but believe that the person making that declaration was aware of the full penalty which the law provides for telling lies in a statutory declaration. Thus, I must assume that the person making that statutory declaration did so with the full knowledge of the penalties prescribed for telling lies in such a statutory declaration.

Without making judgments on who is guilty of what and who is not guilty of what, I do not think that there can be any doubt that the process of law and judicial meaning has been seriously questioned this morning in the House. Honourable members can lay blame on whomever they like. They can lay blame on the member for Barkly, on the person providing the statutory declaration or on the Attorney-General. The blame does not matter. They can lay the blame wherever they like. The problem is that the fundamentals of what we call an organised society have been seriously questioned.

As a result of the debate this morning, the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General have had the lunch break to tell the people of the Northern Territory that they hold those values far more important than they hold the

ambition or position of the Attorney-General. The Chief Minister could have made a simple statement to the effect that, because these fundamentals within our society have been so seriously questioned, he has asked the Attorney-General to stand aside until there is a full open and public inquiry into the matter. That has not happened.

Mr Perron: Where is the justice in that for the Attorney-General, who has done nothing wrong? What sort of justice is that?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's interjection is a clear indication of the problem. Has he been there so long, has he become so arrogant that he cannot even recognise the fundamentals that have been challenged in this House this morning? Has he become so poor of intellect, has he become so ignorant of spirit that he does not understand what has happened in this House this morning?

Mr Perron: No. I just do not torpedo individuals for fun.

Mr LEO: The problem is that the statutory declaration does exist.

Mr Finch: Should it be challengeable?

Mr LEO: We cannot ...

Mr Finch: Should it be challengeable?

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, the rabid flea can go on for as long as he wants to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister is repetitive in his interjections. He will cease interjecting.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, we can deny its existence and we can try to turn this Assembly into a Star Chamber. It has been done before, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out this morning. He has been the subject of a vicious attack in this House. I think it is sad that it happened. As members of this Assembly, we expect standards. I accept that accusations have been made in a statutory declaration, a legal document. The complaint can be made that what was presented in the parliament this morning did not have the signature of the person who made the declaration. However, I have no personal doubt that such a declaration exists. I am sure the Chief Minister has no doubt that such a declaration exists.

Mr Perron: Does it contain the truth?

Mr LEO: That is not for me to decide and it is not for this parliament to decide. It is ridiculous for us to turn ourselves into a judge, jury and executioner. Given that the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General have had 2 hours over lunch ...

Mr Perron: You want him sentenced. That is what you are saying.

Mr LEO: Nobody would have even contemplated guilt or innocence if the Attorney-General had simply said during lunchtime that, in the interests of the Northern Territory as opposed to his personal interest, he would stand aside as Attorney-General until this matter is resolved. That is all that it would have required. There is no acceptance of guilt involved in that. It is a simple realisation that the Northern Territory, this fledgling state, is so much more important than any single individual. We have seen

no expression of a basic humility of office. All we have seen in this debate is the arrogance of people who have accepted the power that they hold, not with any grace, but as a right simply because they happen to hold certain positions.

Mr Perron: A man has a right to justice.

Mr LEO: Everybody has a right to justice. However, as every minister of any government knows, they have obligations. Either you accept those obligations and the power that you inherit with your position with humility, or you accept it with arrogance. What has happened today is that members opposite have demonstrated their arrogance. Once again, they have demonstrated to the public of the Northern Territory that they do not recognise their simple obligations. Certain things have been said justly or unjustly, or truthfully or untruthfully, but none of that matters.

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: None of that matters particularly. A legal document exists which contains certain claims. They can sweep that under the carpet. They can use the power of their positions to determine that that document does not exist and the person making those claims is of whatever character that they want to nominate. On the other hand, with some degree of recognition for the very fragile state that we are in, the Attorney-General could simply have stood aside and said that there would be a full inquiry into this matter. There would have been no need to resign. He could have simply stood aside. The Chief Minister could have asked him to stand aside because, as he said in this House this morning, he is sure that his colleague will be exonerated. The members opposite could have done those things but they have not. All they have done is to inflict on this House and the people of the Northern Territory a demonstration of the sheer arrogance of their position.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, in a nutshell, this censure motion is a question of whether we believe the Attorney-General or the member for Barkly. The contents of the so-called statutory declaration revolve around a plain statement made by a prostitute: that she has met Daryl Manzie. The question of whether the document is signed or not signed is probably irrelevant because it is a technical question as to whether or not the document is a statutory declaration. From a political point of view, I suppose that it depends on what the population believes.

I am a relative newcomer to the parliament and I was quite staggered to hear what members opposite had to say. In summing up the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, I would have to say that I believe they were not particularly sincere. Despite what he said, I do not really believe that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the Attorney-General is lying. I believe that he is simply playing the politics of the situation. The member for MacDonnell is probably a different kettle of fish. Because of the political nature of the man, probably he does believe that the Attorney-General is lying. In some respects, the member for MacDonnell is a very profound politician and, on many occasions, says what he believes in this House. In the case of the member for Flynn, I believe that he is totally misled and misguided. That has been evident since the first day he came into this Legislative Assembly. His contribution today was really abysmal.

I regret having to say what I am about to say in respect of the member for Barkly because I recall the time when, as Chief Minister, he accompanied

me in my doorknocking during the by-election for the seat of Araluen which led to my becoming a member of this Assembly. At that time, I was a very keen supporter of the member for Barkly. However, I believe that he has deliberately betrayed the trust which many people, including myself, placed in him at that time. Despite the fact that he decided to move out of the position of Chief Minister of the Northern Territory government at that time, I think that really he has betrayed the trust of the people who supported him. Today and last night, we saw him indulging in the politics of hate, feeding on his passionate desire to bring down the CLP government. He has taken a path now which puts him in a public position of attempting to mislead people in the Northern Territory. I am sorry to say it, and I speak from the heart, but if it comes to a matter of choosing between what I have heard from the Attorney-General and what I have heard from the member for Barkly, it is clear to me that the censure motion has no basis whatsoever.

I know that the Attorney-General is not lying. The member for Barkly can talk about the technicalities as much as he likes, and he can descend into the gutter. There are many of us who, if we so desired, could get down into the gutter with the member for Barkly. Probably, we could rehash a few old memories, but some of us choose not to do so. I certainly do not choose to do so. I deeply regret this day, a day on which the member for Barkly has repeated malicious lies about a very honourable man whose integrity has never been questioned by anybody in the Northern Territory. Even the opposition, which has said many harsh things about the Attorney-General and has tried to censure him on previous occasions, has never implied that he has deliberately misled the House or told lies, particularly about something as nasty as having an illicit meeting with a prostitute.

I cannot believe that the member for Barkly would degrade himself so much or that the member for Flynn could let himself become a party to his colleague's personal hatred, which is driving him to take this path. The member for Barkly is acting for political motives. He believes that, at the end of the day, he will emerge as the white knight and possibly cement a position in this parliament. I suggest to the 2 honourable members that, whenever the Chief Minister decides to call an election, thankfully the Northern Territory electorate will get rid of both of them.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to oppose the motion and to support the Attorney-General. In so doing, I would like to say that I believe that the outcome of this debate and the defeat of the censure motion are critical to continuing good government under the Westminster system in the Northern Territory. This issue is really a matter of who is responsible for enforcing the law in the Northern Territory. Will it be the police and the Department of Law, the bodies which are responsible for such functions everywhere else in Australia? Or, will we allow the media and some politicians to dictate the standard of law in the Northern Territory? In the interests of good government, we must uphold the law and the authority of this parliament and, subject to this parliament, the authority of the Department of Law and the police, the organisations which are truly responsible for such matters.

This whole matter is about politics, not justice. Justice has nothing to do with it. I believe that the game plan of the member for Barkly and some of the people on the opposition benches is to create as much political damage as they possibly can to this government and to the Attorney-General in the lead-up to the election, whenever that might be. It is common knowledge that the political career of the member for Barkly is in its death throes. He has indicated that he will not stand for the seat of Barkly in

the next election and that he will transfer to the seat of Goyder. He has as much chance of winning Barkly or Goyder as I have of flying to the moon.

He is attempting to destroy the Attorney-General politically in the hope that he will lose his seat in Sanderson. He will never get a National Party person elected there, but he is probably hoping that a Labor Party member will be elected to represent that electorate. He hopes that that will contribute towards this government losing government at the next election. I have news for the member for Barkly because neither of those things will occur. The member for Sanderson will win his seat. I have been moving around this community over the last week or so and I can tell the member for Barkly that this business has served only to enhance the member for Sanderson's chances of winning the seat and it has totally destroyed the chances of the member for Barkly. Whatever credibility he had in the community, he has now lost. Hundreds of people have offered support to the Attorney-General as the member for Sanderson.

Today, they have called for a Royal Commission. Both the member for Barkly and the Leader of the Opposition have had the opportunity to discuss the issue with Mr Mulholland QC, in company with the Chief Minister and the Secretary of the Department of Law. Perhaps that did not answer all of their questions or satisfy all of their desires. However, I was disappointed to learn that a briefing by the Commissioner of Police that has been offered to the Leader of the Opposition has not been taken up. As the Chief Minister rightly pointed out, he has refused that because he might learn what the facts are, and the facts do not suit his political agenda.

What they want to see is Fitzgerald revisited. They want a situation where unsubstantiated evidence can be brought before the Royal Commission that they are trying to have set up. We saw how, in Queensland, unsubstantiated evidence was reported on a daily basis ad nauseam. People's reputations were destroyed overnight by others who chose to appear before that inquiry to make claims, many of which were proved later to be false. They want that situation here because they believe that, if it ever occurred, it would destabilise the political situation here. That is their agenda, in the vain hope that the ALP might win government at the next election with the help of the so-called conservative Territory Nationals.

We have had investigative journalism. We see it all around us today and it is all post-Watergate. Before Watergate, the media tended to report the facts and present a balanced view. After Watergate, everybody wanted to be an investigative journalist. That is their right and I do not deny them that. However, we have now seen a new phase of this exercise. We have investigative politics. We now have politicians setting up meetings with prostitutes and trying to glean additional information which they can use to destroy the reputation of an honest and honourable man, the Attorney-General. It is absolutely disgusting and, as somebody said earlier, it is the pits in politics.

We have heard various accusations made in this place and elsewhere over the last week or so. What really riles me is that these people, who have this so-called information said to be critical to the good government of the Northern Territory, will not make it available to the police. Why don't they take it to Crown Law? Those are the people who are responsible to this parliament for upholding the law in the Northern Territory. However, that is too easy and they would not get the headlines. They would not gain the political exposure that they hope will give them some political advantage in the months ahead. It would be too easy to approach the police or Crown Law and provide them with the information that has come to their attention so

that the law officers can do their job. They will not do that. They withhold that information in the hope of gaining some political advantage.

A few days ago, the Attorney-General was accused by the member for Barkly of being the person who was referred to in the 7.30 Report. There was hype and media frenzy over that for a couple of days. By the time the weekend came, it had faded out. That issue had been pretty well put to bed by the weekend. However, in Saturday's paper, the big question was who signed the indemnity and whether it was merely an immunity. That was the buzz for the next couple of days. The latest revelation is this alleged meeting with this person Rhonda at the Parap Hotel.

Today, this statutory declaration has been introduced which, as many members have pointed out, just does not stand up. If the declaration were properly signed with no white-outs, it would have some credibility. However, this is a photostat copy of something that reads like a novel. From its punctuation and the wording, it is almost as if it were taken straight out of 'True Confessions'. It is not the terminology that would be used normally by such a person sitting down and writing the story. It has been done quite differently. It has been done quite professionally. I have a real question mark in my mind as to whether Rhonda ever wrote that.

Let us come back to Rhonda. We have this person called Rhonda who, apparently, has been running around in the community making accusations and claiming indemnity or immunity or whatever it is. I have great difficulty in accepting that this person appears to be hell-bent on destroying the reputation of the Attorney-General and yet thinks that she can retain immunity or indemnity. Personally, I believe that that issue has to be brought into question. Whilst indemnity or immunity may have been appropriate for the undercover work that she was doing for the police, it is an entirely different matter when, away from those areas of responsibility, she makes accusations against the first law officer of the Northern Territory. Why should that person retain or receive immunity? Why should she not have to justify in the public arena the accusations that she is making here? The Attorney-General has had to answer them here. It is appalling that she has made them. Apparently, they conflict with previous statements she had made to the effect that she had never met the Attorney-General. Secondly, it is appalling that the member for Barkly and members of the opposition have chosen to try to exploit this to suit their own political ends. I for one will be voting against the motion.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, if we take a cold, hard look at the facts, it does not take a great deal of analysis to work out that none of this stacks up. I am sure that honourable members on all sides of the House do not believe for a minute that the Attorney-General met with the prostitute, whatever her name was, at the Parap Hotel or anywhere else, but particularly not at the most illogical place - the Parap Hotel. I will explain why I say that it does not stack up.

Why do people make statutory declarations in the first place? It is to provide under oath evidence or information that can be used. In this case, it is to be used against the Attorney-General. We assume that, of her own free will, the lady has signed a statutory declaration outlining what she believes to be fact. Whilst honourable members may speculate on whether she signed it or not, we would not have a clue whether she did or not, or whether somebody else signed it. One would assume that somebody signed it because it is witnessed by a lawyer. However, it demonstrates a fair amount of contradiction in itself. It contradicts what she had told the police and that indicates that she has lied in one instance or the other. Either she

lied in the statutory declaration or she lied to the police. She cannot have it both ways. Some might say that she was under enormous pressure from the police and, as a result of some form of persuasion, she was lying to the police and that the statutory declaration is correct. However, did she also lie to Dennis Driver of the 7.30 Report? This contradicts his story, his puppet theatre. Did she lie to Dennis Driver or is she lying in the statutory declaration? She cannot have it both ways.

Honourable members opposite will say that we should have a public inquiry so this can be cleared up or that it should not be too hard for the Attorney-General to establish whether the statutory declaration is right or not. Of course, a statutory declaration without a signature is rather like an IOU without a signature.

Mr Perron: Without a signature and without a date.

Mr FINCH: And without a date. Certainly, it has gaps in it. Nonetheless, it is like receiving an IOU without a signature. How can the Attorney-General, or anyone else for that matter, challenge a piece of paper that purports to be a statutory declaration and yet has no signature? How can that be challenged? The lady would say: 'I did not sign it. It has been found to be incorrect, but I did not sign it'. A proper statutory declaration, made under oath and signed, is needed before it can be challenged. You cannot redeem an IOU that has not been signed. How can the Attorney-General defend himself in this instance. He is only too willing to demonstrate that the statutory declaration is a lie, but he cannot demonstrate that because the declaration does not make logical sense to anyone, and nobody here believes for a minute that it is correct anyway. Nevertheless, how can he challenge it until it is in front of him?

If they are worried about a name being revealed in the newspaper, let them take it along to the police or to the Solicitor-General and have them see if it contains any fact. It must be drawn up like any other statutory declaration for the purposes of providing evidence. Let it stand and be challenged and not be invalidated by having parts whited-out. We have the coalition in opposition. We ought to take those white-out bottles away from them. Isaacs got into a great deal of strife with white-out. Now we have another politician who will be in over his head as a result of his use of white-out. We ought to confiscate the white-out.

Let me move now to the circumstances under which this statutory declaration was drawn up. I do not really care at all about this lady's profession. I am not interested. What is relevant in respect of whether the statutory declaration is fact or fiction is that the lady is a self-confessed drug addict. I am no expert on drugs and their effects on the body or mind. However, my limited knowledge leads me to believe that, when people are under the primary or secondary influence of drugs and are put under pressure by others, their statements can be far from reliable. Was the lady under the influence of drugs when she wrote the statutory declaration? Was the honourable member present when she wrote the statutory declaration? If she was under the influence of drugs at the time, who supplied the drugs and why? I do not know if it was herself or others. I do not know what the circumstances were. However, if it was done purely for the purpose of providing a partially whited-out document in the Assembly - a document that is meaningless in a legal sense and incapable of being challenged by the Attorney-General - for devious reasons, that is a great shame.

As I said earlier, on what basis would an inquiry be held? On the basis of a document that is like an IOU without a signature? It is a nonsense. I hope that the member for Wanguri will contribute to this debate because, with his professional background and training, he may be able to enlighten us as to the reliability of a drug addict in giving damning evidence in relation to a fine upstanding man who has no blemish on his entire political or working career. Would the psychologist advise us on the reliability of evidence given by a drug addict? Maybe he can tell from the writing and the language used whether this is a rational, meaningful document, anonymous as it may be. He will have his chance to talk and we will await his remarks with bated breath.

I will not enter, as I did last night, into the heat of the politics of this matter - as much as I would really like to - because it does not stack up anyway. It simply does not hold water. We know why the member for Barkly is standing for Goyder and it is not to win the seat. He knew he could not win Barkly. We told him 18 months ago that he would not win Barkly, that he would turn his back on it, and I assume that a carton of green cans will appear in the members' lounge sooner or later. Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, we will not talk about welshing and that type of behaviour. I expect that it will turn up there, or do you think that I will be wasting my time?

Members interjecting.

Mr FINCH: You think that I am being a bit too hopeful?

The member for Barkly is not standing for Goyder in order to win the seat. He aims to stay around throughout an election campaign, whenever it is, so that he can continue to tip his vitriol, his spite and his hate on the CLP for as long as possible. In accordance with his long-standing tradition now, he has stated in the media his allegiance to and alliance with the Labor Party - coalition in opposition. He says that he would rather see the Labor Party win than the CLP. I understand the hurt and anxiety there. However, quite simply, he will fail in this attempt, and the sooner he fails, the better.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I do not like this sort of muckraking. I would prefer to stay out of this debate because it is not my style at all. To be perfectly honest, if we are talking about muck, I would rather be mucking out the goat shed. However, my conscience demands that I speak. I had occasion to speak to some people at lunchtime who knew what was occurring here. They are not constituents of my electorate. I have met them only recently. They wanted to know about the progress of this debate. They told me that the public views this as a big waste of time. They told me that politicians receive good salaries, which I did not deny, and that people expect them to govern and not to indulge in muckraking.

I speak in this debate more as an interested spectator rather than someone intimately connected with it. A couple of points have struck me as very strange. I am a believing person in some ways, but I can also be rather cynical. I am pretty cynical about what has been put forward. When it is all taken together, I become even more cynical. We were not told that that piece of paper was a copy of a statutory declaration. I believe we were told that it was a statutory declaration. If that is a statutory declaration, I have been doing the wrong thing for 25 years or so. I am a justice of the peace and, when I say a statutory declaration is a statutory declaration, it has the name and address of the person as demanded and the

signature of the person. It is not something like this, with spaces. I do not believe that it can be claimed that this is a statutory declaration.

When I was in my early teens, I was an avid reader. I used to read anything that came my way. I was an only child and did not have much companionship with other children. I mixed with adults a great deal but I found their company boring. I would read anything and everything, and I was just beginning to realise that there were boys in the world too. I would read stories that were called 'True Confessions', and 'True Love' and 'True Stories'. That declaration reminded me very much of what I read all those years ago.

I am a purist when it comes to certain things in the English language and I am still old-fashioned enough to write as I was taught. I was taught English very well by the nuns. We were taught to attend to all the details of grammar and the art of writing. I am assuming that the person who wrote this was educated. Commas appear where they are needed. That is very unusual. It is easy enough to put full stops in, but to put in commas shows an attention to detail which I would not have expected. Inverted commas have been used where needed, and that indicates real attention to detail. When we juxtapose that attention to detail with the peculiar lapse of memory about the actual day that this meeting between the lady and the Attorney-General was supposed to have taken place, I find that very interesting. I cannot equate it with common sense.

There are 2 questions that I would like to ask. If the police helped the lady with the fare to enable her to leave the Territory because her life was in danger, why did she return? She must have rocks in her head if she thought it was unsafe for her to stay here and then came back. Surely there must be a record of the police doing that. It seems to me to be a pretty amateurish production. If I were writing a statutory declaration with the same aim as this one, I would do a better job. To be perfectly frank, I do not think the Attorney-General is a great brain. He is no Einstein, but I do credit him with some intelligence. I remember too that he was a policeman, and he was quite a bright policeman.

Even if we credit him with the minimum of intelligence, he kept his nose clean when he was a policeman, and he would be wary if somebody approached him to provide an indemnity or approached him for a meeting in the Parap Hotel. It is my understanding that the Parap Hotel is not exactly a 5-star establishment, but that it is okay as far as pubs of that sort go. However, the Attorney-General would have to be out of his mind to arrange a meeting in the bar of the Parap Hotel at 3 pm. If you wanted to meet the person, you would go to the bush somewhere in the rural area or you would ring them. It does not make sense to me.

I must be honest again, and I am independent enough to say what I think. I know that it is easy to be wise with hindsight. We can call it an 'inquiry', an oversighting or whatever, but I do not believe the Mulholland business has been treated as it should have been. Perhaps the terms of reference could be slightly different from what they are. If they were different, perhaps this would not have happened. However, it is all water under the bridge now and we cannot bring back the past. If you are aware of shady dealings, it is your duty as a MLA to inform the relevant authorities.

If it is a police matter, you inform the police. I have done this from time to time, but I always say that I have heard it only from 1 person and that it may not be true and it may or may not be connected with crime. My view is that, if shady dealings are thought to be occurring, one should

refer the matter to the police. If one does not do that, it indicates that one does not have faith in the police force. Some policemen are better than others but, if one refuses to give them information, one implies a certain perception that there is dishonesty in the senior ranks of the police force. I do not think the police are dishonest. The best indications of the performance of people in authority are obtained not from their peers or superiors, but from their subordinates. I know a few policemen and, although I do not go around asking about the performance of senior police officers all the time, I am sure that information about dishonesty would filter down through the ranks and would be raised in conversation. That has never occurred, at least not within my hearing. If anything shonky was occurring, I cannot see why it was not brought to the attention of senior members of the police force.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak frankly again. There is a particular member on the government benches who, I believe, would be considered by every member in this House to be 101% honest. He is the Minister for Education. He is known to be a thoroughly honest person and I believe that I could extend that compliment to the Attorney-General as well. I will be frank again. I believe the honourable minister's wife is in the public gallery. If the rumours about the Attorney-General had as much substance as some would have us believe, I do not think his wife would have countenanced it. I think he would have been thumped long before we got hold of him in the House. Some of my compliments might be left-handed, Mr Speaker, but I am speaking from a commonsense point of view. Probably you will have gathered from my remarks that I will not be voting in support of the censure motion.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, this censure motion comes down to a very simple question that I tried to put to the member for Nhulunbuy. Does he believe the Attorney-General or not? I tried to put it to the Leader of the Opposition. Does he believe the Attorney-General or not? Do we believe the Attorney-General or not? Do we think he is lying? Do we think he met with Rhonda in the Palmerston Room of the Parap Hotel or not? That is a simple question, and we will vote on it soon. It will be interesting to see which people think the Attorney-General is lying and which people believe in him. It is pretty simple. He has told us that he did not meet Rhonda and I believe him.

In evidence given to the police, Rhonda said that she had never met the Attorney-General. The Chief Minister was informed by the Secretary of the Department of Law that that was the case on the basis of the evidence provided to the police. She said that she had never met the Attorney-General. In a statutory declaration, she says now that she met him in the Palmerston Room at the Parap Hotel. Therefore, she is lying either in the statutory declaration or in information given to the police during their investigations. That is pretty simple. It is either one or the other. The Attorney-General is not known as a liar and the member for Koolpinyah has just reinforced that. Lying is not something he has been noted for in his political life. Lying is not on the agenda when it comes to Daryl Manzie, the Attorney-General of the Northern Territory. Who are we to believe - Rhonda or Manzie? It is as simple as that.

The member for Barkly seems to have a fascination with escort agencies, drug trafficking and so on. As far back as 18 May 1986, he made headlines about ordering special probes into escort agencies, drugs and so on. It is nothing new to him. He has had a fixation about it for years - police probes, links with New South Wales, drugs being brought into the Territory etc.

Mr Collins: Let us have a vote on it.

Mr COULTER: I will be brief because it is really a simple matter that we will decide here today. Do we believe the Attorney-General or not? I believe him, Mr Speaker.

I went back through a few old newspaper articles relating to the member for Barkly. Some of the headlines are interesting and they reinforce what I now think. His days are numbered. They really are. He has Buckley's hope in Goyder. He said that he was going to the people of Barkly to see what they wanted him to do. They told him to get lost. They did not want him and that is why he nominated for Goyder. Once before, 89% of people said that he had to go and, this time, after 16 years as a member of this House, he will be going for good. It is all for nothing. He went to a prostitute and he believed her over and above the Attorney-General. He knows better than that. He knows that the Attorney-General is not a liar. That is more than he can say for himself when he does a bit of self-analysis.

It is interesting to see how the Leader of the Opposition has changed his tune in recent hours. On 29 September, the NT News contained the following: 'Smith bemoans politics of hate. "Territory Nationals Leader, Ian Tuxworth, used the politics of hate against a senior minister", Opposition Leader Terry Smith said yesterday. "Territorians deserve better than this"'. Today, however, the Leader of the Opposition joined ranks with the member for Barkly and was the third speaker on his side of this debate. He has aligned himself so closely with the member for Barkly that, instead of exercising his option of asking the first question in this House today, he sat down to enable the member for Barkly to address the House. They are both involved in this matter up to their necks. The NT News article to which I have referred contained a paragraph on the Leader of the Opposition and the Commissioner of Police together. That is about as close as they have ever been, face to face, on this issue. If he so desired, the Leader of the Opposition could have a briefing within an hour. He could receive information in respect of some of the allegations made against the Attorney-General and it would all be over.

I am grateful for the opportunity to vote on this issue of whether or not the Attorney-General is lying. It will be interesting to see how this parliament divides, because it should not be on party lines. Everybody in this Chamber will have the opportunity to record their estimation of the Attorney-General and their opinion of what sort of a man he is and whether he has ever lied or done anything at all which can in any way be construed as corrupt or bent. How does the reputation and the career path of the member for Barkly compare? In comparison with the Attorney-General, he is about as straight as a fish hook.

The Chief Minister's letter answered most of the questions which the Leader of the Opposition asked in this Assembly. I will read it again:

> I have received the attached letter from the member for MacDonnell, calling for me to stand aside the Attorney-General. Given the import of the letter, I assume it has been written with your authority. In any event, mere protocol would suggest that I reply to you and not the member for MacDonnell.
>
> I have considered Mr Bell's letter. I have consulted with the Secretary of the Department of Law, who is instructing Mr Mulholland QC and Miss Atkinson, and who has access to all materials relating to the oversighted investigation. I am advised

that there is no allegation of misconduct or impropriety by the Attorney-General which is being investigated or which warrants investigation. Accordingly, there is no basis upon which I should stand aside the Attorney-General.

That is pretty simple stuff. It comes from people with a great deal of authority in this particular case. Instead of that, we have had rubbish and nonsense, and talk about the separation of powers and a whole range of other issues. I come back to the point on which we will be voting in a moment. Did the Attorney-General lie? Did he meet Rhonda in the Palmerston Bar of the Parap Hotel or not? That is what we will be voting on - nothing more, nothing less.

Just for a moment, let us forgive Rhonda for not being able to remember the date. We have all been guilty of not being able to remember dates from time to time and my press officer will probably be underneath his desk at the moment. However, we can usually remember the day on which something happened. Was it a Friday or a Saturday? During the interview which the member for Barkly had with Rhonda, did he ask her when the alleged meeting took place? Was it about late March? Is that all he asked or all that she volunteered? Didn't she name the day of the week? This matter could be cleared up in seconds, as the Chief Minister said. We all know, and the Chief Minister made it very clear, that the diaries of ministers are kept immaculately and, Mr Speaker, you would agree with me that where he was on a particular day would be well documented.

I believe that, with the exception of perhaps 2 persons, everyone in this Chamber believes that the Attorney-General is innocent. If we were to have a conscience vote on this, despite the pathetic attempts of the member for Flynn, there would be only 2 people who, and for different reasons, would think there is an ounce of truth in this, and they are the member for MacDonnell and the member for Barkly. Nobody else believes it. I was going to say that maybe even the member for Barkly does not believe it and that he is doing it only for some gain. He will not be here for much longer. Whenever the Chief Minister decides to call an election, the member for Barkly will have left this parliament within a month after that. The people whom the member for Koolpinyah represents are pretty honest. They would have asked themselves whether the Attorney-General had lied. We are saying that he did not, and that is what they will say. They will not have a bar of this. We know the Attorney-General is telling the truth and they know he is telling the truth. The honourable member has not provided one bit of evidence that the Attorney-General has asked for. I end simply where I started. Who is telling the truth? Is it Rhonda or is it the Attorney-General? That is all that this censure motion is about. Which one is telling the truth? I know which side I will vote on.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I will follow immediately on the words of the Minister for Mines and Energy, because that is what this is about. Do you believe the Attorney-General is telling the truth or that the person who wrote this document, which is described as a statutory declaration, is telling the truth? I must admit that I have been on the periphery of much of this. I will put on the public record that I still do not know the identity of this prostitute who is known as Rhonda. As far as I can work out, the name was given to this prostitute by the 7.30 Report. Perhaps we ought to change the code name because all the Rhondas in the Northern Territory at the moment are feeling very aggrieved. We should change the name of this prostitute to, say, Bronwyn. That would be a good name. Let us call her 'Code Named Bronwyn'.

Mr Collins: Why?

Mr HATTON: Why not? It is about as relevant.

Last Thursday, in the adjournment debate, the member for Barkly started a series of events that have led to this censure motion today. I think that would be a fair comment. Certainly, there have been 7.30 Reports and they were referred to last Thursday. I will quote from page 137 of the Daily Hansard of Thursday 27 September. The member for Barkly said:

> The 7.30 Report went to air and, during a series of programs, alleged that a police officer, who is now known to be Officer Peter Woods had (a) maintained an illicit liaison with a prostitute, and (b) offered the assistance of a friend in government to help her should any difficulties arise.

That was the start of it. He went on to state that Officer Hart took a tape-recording of a conversation between Peter Woods and the prostitute on the occasion of an illicit liaison. He said:

> The 7.30 Report further alleged that the prostitute known as Rhonda was interviewed at the Berrimah Police Station by an officer who, I am advised, is Commander Tom Baker and, during the course of the interview of the prostitute, it was claimed that Commander Baker told her that they wanted her out of town, that they would provide her with her fare and that, if she did not appreciate their concern, they would get their friend in the government to speak to her.

That was the basis of the allegations. He went on:

> It is alleged that Officer Woods, who had the liaison with the prostitute and who offered the support of this friend in the government, was in fact offering the support of none other than the Attorney-General. It is further alleged that the Attorney-General and Officer Woods were close friends and partners on the beat when the Attorney-General was in the force and that, because of their previous association, the Attorney-General was employing in his office, Officer Woods' wife during the period that he was acting in an unprofessional manner. It is possible that, at this time, Officer Woods could have been the subject of an investigation by the law authorities of the Territory, and it may have been totally inappropriate for his wife to be the Attorney-General's employee.
>
> It is claimed also that the government was providing indemnity against prosecution of the prostitute Rhonda, and this indemnity would have to have been approved by the Attorney-General. The request for such an indemnity, if it came from Officer Woods, is a matter of great concern.

That summarises the initial burst.

There have been many emotional outbursts and certainly we witnessed one that evening by the Attorney-General in refuting those allegations. Let us examine the points to determine whether there is any consistency or truth in them. I do not think there is any dispute that apparently Officer Peter Woods had maintained an illicit liaison with a prostitute. Nobody seems to be disputing that, though I do not know whether it is true or not. Because

nobody has disputed it, I assume that it might be true. Certainly, in this photocopy of a photocopy of a document, this person known as Rhonda claimed to be having an affair with Officer Woods: 'During a period some months prior to the commencement of Operation Amethyst and throughout its duration, I was involved in an intimate personal relationship with Detective Woods'. That is not in dispute.

The second point is that he had offered the assistance of a friend in government to help her should any difficulties arise. There has never been any evidence provided of that, not even today. The document that was read out today does not say that the Attorney-General was offering her assistance. It implies that he heavied her to leave town. That is the first inconsistency. In his statement last Thursday, the member for Barkly claimed that, during the course of the interview, the prostitute 'claimed that Commander Baker told her that they wanted her out of town'. In the statement today, for the first time, she is confronted with the request through Officer Woods and it is alleged that he had the Attorney-General reinforce the message. There is no mention of Commander Baker doing that.

It is alleged that Officer Woods, who had the liaison with the prostitute and who offered the support of a friend in government, 'was offering the support of the Attorney-General'. It is further alleged 'the Attorney-General and Officer Woods were close friends and partners on the beat when the Attorney-General was in the force'. It would be a matter of the official record whether they were close friends and certainly whether they were on the beat together. However, we find in his only considered statement - with apologies to my colleague - as distinct from his emotional outburst of outrage at being so desperately defamed in this House, that the Attorney-General indicated on Tuesday that he had never worked with him on the beat. He said: 'I was certainly a friend of Woods, and I also employed his wife for a considerable period. I have already placed those facts on record. However, those are the only aspects of the member for Barkly's allegations which are remotely correct. I can conclude only that he pursued this tenuous link as the sole basis for the tissue of lies he put into the House'. He said: 'The first thing I should point out is that Woods and I never had a close relationship, as claimed by the member for Barkly. We certainly never worked on the beat together. Indeed, to my knowledge, we never worked in the same building. The member's allegations are untrue'. That can be easily verified. It would be a matter of official record whether they worked on the beat together. The Attorney-General said they never did. He says that probably he trained Officer Woods, as a recruit, because he was a training instructor on recruit courses. That is probably the extent to which they actually worked together. No evidence has been presented in this House at any time to support the allegation that they had a close friendship and that they had worked on the beat together - nothing. It has been refuted, and that refutation has gone absolutely unchallenged.

It is alleged that, during the time that this illicit affair was occurring, the wife of Officer Woods was working for the Attorney-General. That can be checked easily, and I checked it today. Sandra Woods worked for the Attorney-General over 3 separate contract periods. As honourable members would all be aware, every employee of ours is employed on a contractual period. That employment covered 3 contract terms from 13 February 1984, and the last period concluded on 23 July 1989. The next inconsistency was that she was not working for the Attorney-General at the relevant time. In this statement, Rhonda or Bronwyn or whatever we want to call her says, in paragraph 4: 'From in or around December 1989, I was aware that Detective Woods was a close personal friend of Attorney-General Daryl Manzie. I was also aware the Detective Wood's wife, Sandra, was a

member of Daryl Manzie's personal staff although I do not believe Detective Woods was aware I knew this'. She is wrong. Sandra Woods was not working for the Attorney-General at that time. That is the first error of fact in this alleged statutory declaration.

In relation to the matter of indemnities or immunities, I am not a lawyer and I do not understand what indemnities and immunities are. All week, we saw the member for Barkly jumping up and heard him demanding to know what authority there was for this or that or something else. Last Thursday, he claimed that it was alleged that this indemnity was approved by the Attorney-General. It was claimed also that the government 'was providing indemnity against prosecution for the prostitute Rhonda, and this indemnity would have been approved by the Attorney-General'. The honourable member went on to say: 'The request for such an indemnity, if it came from Officer Woods, is a matter of great concern'. On Tuesday, in his first little explanation, the Attorney-General dealt with the issue of the protection provided to this prostitute. I will read from page 2 of the Daily Hansard for 2 October:

> The Attorney-General's formal role only arises when a specific form of document for presentation in court is required. This has not been required in this case, although it may yet be a consequence of the investigations now under way. For the present, the prostitute known as Rhonda has a written authorisation from a senior police officer under section 76 of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act which authorises her to possess cannabis in order to help police gain information about people involved in producing and trafficking this drug. I table a copy of that authorisation.

He even tabled it in the House.

> She has also been given a guarantee, reinforced by a letter from her lawyer, from the then Senior Crown Prosecutor, Mr Ray Minahan, that she will not be prosecuted for offences she commits which are instigated by the police during her work as an informant. I table a copy of that letter.

He went on to explain the justification for the procedure to be adopted and the propriety of that procedure so that the Attorney-General is not directly involved in the matter of indemnities. That is the very issue the member for MacDonnell has been carrying on about yet, in his personal explanation on Tuesday, it was spelt out by the Attorney-General why he did not give an indemnity, and the propriety of his not giving an indemnity. He said:

> Mr Speaker, the question of an indemnity for a police informant involved in a police operation to penetrate a drug ring in the Territory was canvassed with me early this year, in general terms, by Mr Minahan. I say 'in general terms' because, in fact, the approach from Assistant Commissioner Grant to Mr Minahan was so cautious that Mr Minahan believed the informant was a man, and he conveyed the information to me in those terms. This approach is usual for 2 reasons. Firstly, that members of the ministry should not be involved in day-to-day operational activities and, secondly, to protect the identity of informants to the greatest extent possible. I agree strongly with both of these principles as would any rational member of this Assembly.

And as certainly would a ex-policeman, and that is exactly what he did. He kept himself away from the identity of the informant, but he did give an undertaking. He said:

> In the event, with the advice of the Senior Crown Prosecutor, I agreed that, if the circumstances as described by Mr Minahan were presented to me, along with recommendations from the Crown Prosecutor and the Solicitor-General, I would be prepared to offer an indemnity to the informant. This position was conveyed to Assistant Commissioner Grant by Mr Minahan in a letter on 2 March 1990, and I table a copy of that letter.

Very clearly, the Attorney-General was keeping himself appropriately distanced from the events, but with the understanding that, provided the circumstances they had outlined to him were presented to him, in the future he would offer the necessary indemnities, and they proceeded to give the assurance on that basis.

As we go through this document, I am still trying to work out what all the fuss has been about this week. We have had not a shred of evidence of anything improper. What have we had? We have been told some story that is riddled with holes, and full of inconsistencies and provable facts which have not been proven, and we come down to this. We know already that it contains one error of fact. We know that Sandra Woods was not working for Daryl Manzie, the Attorney-General, at the relevant time. That was not right. It could have been checked in 5 seconds by any honest person. It does not take long to find out how long somebody has worked as a member of a minister's staff. However, that might spoiled the web of lies. That is what this document is - a web of lies.

I say that the Attorney-General has been hung on this hook. We have this nonsense that has been described as something from 'True Confessions'. I would call it 'Days of Our Lives'. I think the lady has had one too many shots of some drug and she wants to be a scriptwriter for 'Days of Our Lives'. As a matter of interest, I wonder who is paying her bills. Who is paying her legal fees?

We have had a whole week of allegations, and when was this document produced? It is dated 4 October 1990. It has not been lying around waiting to be produced urgently before the House because members were being gagged. It was cobbled together this morning in order to beat up a story. That is what happened. Even then, the honourable member got it wrong. He could not even get the date. It says: 'Okay, Peter, I am not really happy about it, but just tell me where and at what time. Will you be there with us'. The time of her arrival is given - approximately 3.25 pm. She knew to the minute when she arrived, knew the table she sat at and knew there were only a few people at the bar. She looked around, could not see Daryl Manzie and then - suddenly, magically, he was beside her! I do not believe this. It is outrageous.

She tells the story of this incredible meeting. The closest she comes to giving a date is when she says: 'In or around late March, when Operation Amethyst was just winding up, I rang Detective Woods at police headquarters. I was required to phone him every morning. He asked me to meet him outside Wanguri Supermarket at 9 am'. She is very vague in relation to the time of year when all this happened, yet she claims to know to the minute the time of her alleged meeting with the Attorney-General.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable minister's time be extended to enable him to complete his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I think this is an important point in terms of credibility. I have already noted one lie in the document. We know that Sandra Woods was not working for the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General has refuted the allegation about his having had a close friendship with Officer Woods and the allegation that he had worked with him on the beat. His refutation has not been challenged. Nevertheless, Rhonda says that she knew about this alleged relationship between Daryl Manzie and Peter Woods, but that she did not think that Woods knew that she knew. What significance is supposed to attach to this? It is incredible.

I return to the question of the time. Rhonda mentions 9 am, 3.25 pm and 3.30 pm. She gives quotations purporting to be exactly what was said, complete with expletives. Nevertheless, she does not even know which day of the week it was. It would be very easy for the Attorney-General to disprove Rhonda's account. I ask the member for Barkly to enable him to do so by giving the date on which the meeting was supposed to have occurred. I will sit down. I will seek the leave of the House to allow the honourable member to give that information. That is my invitation. Does he want to give us the date or does he not have it? Is he playing games with this Assembly? He initiated this debate. He came forward with these allegations. He knows that the hole in his case is a mile wide. Why won't he give us the date? Doesn't he know it? Or did the meeting not happen?

It did not happen. That is why we have not been given a date. If we had one, the Attorney-General would be able to defend himself and prove where he was. We have been through his diaries and we are quite confident that he could defend himself. The member for Barkly is trying to leave him in a hole, with no date nominated and vague allegations, distortions and inconsistencies. The Attorney-General has no chance to defend himself. The member for Barkly's alleged informant knows the words that were spoken, the exact minute when she arrived at places and the trips she took. She can probably describe the colour of the sky at the time. Despite that, she does not know what day of the week it was when she supposedly met the Attorney-General. It is unbelievable. We are expected to believe this nonsense. I cannot comprehend it.

We have a situation in which a story has changed over the course of a week, with different people alleged to have said different things at different times. What issues are involved? Did the Attorney-General attend a meeting with a prostitute who was involved in a police investigation? Except for the unsubstantiated, vague, inconsistent nonsense presented in this document, there is no evidence that such a meeting ever occurred. The document is not worth the paper it is written on. I have found 1 lie in it. Give me a bit longer and I will find many more. I would love to have some time to go through the details of exactly what occurred at the meeting with the Crown Law officers and to obtain their version of it. That would be interesting. I will guarantee that it does not equate with what is in the document, which reminds me of 'Days of Our Lives', the lunchtime soap opera. Who allegedly told Rhonda to leave town? Was it Commander Baker? Was it Detective Woods? Was it the Attorney-General, who does not even know her and who thought that the person making allegations was a bloke? The member for Barkly expects us to believe this. It is New Age thinking gone crazy. It is outrageous.

What we do know is that the Attorney-General knew Officer Woods generally, as he knows many policemen. He used to be a policeman for many years. He did not have a close relationship with Woods. He knew his wife; she used to work for him. The member for MacDonnell can carry on about dates. Certainly, in the heat of the moment last Thursday night, when he was outraged, the Attorney-General said January instead of July. The facts indicate that she was not working for him at any relevant period, which appears to be from November or December 1989 through to the end of March 1990. She was not working for him then. As far as I can work out, she had a secretarial job in the Department of Law. So what?

It seems to me that, if anything in this document is to be believed, it is that a prostitute was having an affair with a policeman. He sensed that he was being followed, figured that he was in trouble, panicked and said: 'I would like to keep seeing you, but not just at the moment because people are tracking us and I could get into trouble. Can you disappear for a while so that my missus does not find out and so that I will not get into strife with the police force?' That is the closest I can come to anything which rings true in the document. It contains nothing to substantiate the allegation that the Attorney-General met with Rhonda.

Deep in their hearts, every person in this Chamber - including those in the public gallery and the press gallery - know that this is a lie. They know that there is not a shred of truth in this. I believe that even the member for Barkly knows that it is not true. What this is about is an upcoming election. What this is about is a bitter old man who will do anything and stoop to any depth to try to cast aspersions on members of the Country Liberal Party. The member for Barkly is so bitter that he would sacrifice himself to hurt people on this side of the House. We know that and the public knows that. It will take a long time for this parliament to recover from the damage that he has done to it during the last week, but recover it will. It will regain some of its dignity when the member for Barkly is no longer a member, after he is thrown out of office in disgrace. He has turned his back on everybody who ever stood up for him and he has done the dirty on them. He is a bitter, twisted, vindictive old man. That is what this is about.

Nobody believes that the Attorney-General is involved in any wrongdoing. There is no evidence to justify it. This document is not worth the paper it is written on. The sooner the member for Barkly is out of here, the sooner the parliament can recover its dignity. The member for MacDonnell likes to link himself with the member for Barkly on this matter. I have been watching them colluding on this for the last week, tick-tacking and swapping notes. The Attorney-General is not under investigation. The member for MacDonnell's allegations and demands are a waste of breath because they are based on a false premise.

The Leader of the Opposition is totally desperate. I call him Mr 10%. The name used to refer to someone who charged 10% on loans, but now it signifies the popularity rating of the Leader of the Opposition. He will do anything to save his own skin. He will jump on the band wagon but he is smart enough not to do the dirty work. He knows that he can always rely on the member for Barkly to do that. He plays the honest broker who wants to defend the dignity of the parliament, while he sits there and grovels around, scraping up the crumbs and hoping that a bit of mud will fly this way as the member for Barkly throws it at the fan. I have had a gutful of this, Mr Speaker. We should get it over and done with, and the member for Barkly will walk out of here in disgrace.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, this morning, the Chief Minister stood in this House and laid his future career and his reputation on the line for the Attorney-General. I stand here this afternoon to do exactly the same thing. I would stake my reputation, which is sound, and I would stake my future, which I believe is reasonably sound, on the honesty and integrity of the Attorney-General. I have worked with this man for 7 years and I know him to be straight. He leaves no doubt in my mind that he is straight in all of his dealings. The dealings between us have been many, as the dealings between him and each of his colleagues have been many. We see him on a daily basis. We work with him on a daily basis and we know his integrity. I would stake my future on his integrity. I know there are others on this side of the House who would do the same and stake their careers on the honesty of the Attorney-General.

What I will say next I will say with some trepidation. That is because I know the levels to which the member for Barkly will stoop in order to destroy people with whom he disagrees. I have seen the capacity of this man to destroy a range of people, in the public service and in politics, when it has suited his own purpose. Everybody in this Chamber knows that, at the next election, the member for Barkly will oppose me for the seat of Goyder. I could be likened to a person who, before going to meet somebody and placing himself in danger, puts the facts down on paper in order that they may be recognised later for what they are. This is pointing the finger at the perpetrator of a deed. I say these things now in order to highlight that I would almost expect the member for Barkly to use the type of tactics that he has used in this last week, the type of tactics he has used against public servants in the past and the type of tactics that he has used against other politicians in the past in an effort to win the seat of Goyder.

Only a few years ago, the member for Barkly attempted to seize control of the public service and to wrest it from the hands of the Public Service Commissioner against the wishes of his colleagues. This morning, he stood in this House and talked about the separation of powers. The man does not understand the difference between the political role of a Chief Minister and the role of the Public Service Commissioner and, I suspect, the role of the Commissioner of Police. In fact, he believes that the Chief Minister is responsible for all and can control all.

It is not necessary to go very far back in time in order to recall the horror the people of the Northern Territory felt, certainly the public servants, at what he attempted to do in order to be able to get rid of those people to whom he objected. It is not necessary to go back very far to recall the hundreds of letters that were written to and printed in the newspapers by residents of the Northern Territory in an effort to force this man from office as Chief Minister. That was done because the people of the Northern Territory recognised him for what he is - a man who will stoop to any depth to have his own way.

Those letters all related to this man, who stood here today with an almost holier-than-thou attitude and attempted to denigrate a man for whom we all have the deepest respect. If he expects the people of the Northern Territory, certainly those people who were here before 1986-87, to believe him in opposition to the rest of this House, people of high standing, people of integrity, I think he has another think coming. Read the letters of the time when this man had his hand in the till and when he used his position for his own gain. I am aware that, at that time, even people in the National Party wrote some of those letters because of the horror they felt. I know that others have left the National Party since that time because of the disrespect that they have developed for him in recent times. I am

appalled that the media has taken an opportunity, as it has in the last few days, to misrepresent the facts in this matter and to publicise only those aspects that provide headlines for the front pages. Some segments of the media highlight those areas which provide the best headlines. I think that is disgraceful.

It is a shame that we have to tolerate people like the member for Barkly in this House. I can say only that I will contest the election fairly, but that I do not expect the same from the honourable member opposite. I hesitate to use the word 'honourable' because it does not roll easily off my tongue in relation to this man. I will fight an election campaign against this man on a fair basis, but I have no doubt at all that there will be plenty of people who will recall his history and who will recall his present behaviour. I have no doubt at all that I will sit in this House as the member for Goyder after the next election, and I will continue to work closely with the Attorney-General, whose name will have been cleared. There is nothing for him to answer except the word of a prostitute and that of a discredited man. I will be here and, thankfully, the present member for Barkly will be gone from this House.

I strongly support the Attorney-General. I trust him and I believe him, as I know that most people in this Assembly do. I denounce strongly the motion moved by the member for Barkly this morning.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I want to contribute to this important debate and to indicate my very strong support for the Attorney-General, officers of the Department of Law and the police, who I believe will come out of this somewhat more cleanly than will the member for Barkly. In the adjournment debate last night, the member for Barkly stated that, in the presence of other people, he took some notes at the meeting from which he intended to read last night and which I assume now are the subject of this so-called statutory declaration. When he closes this debate, perhaps the member for Barkly might tell us who those other people were. Did they help the member for Barkly or the so-called Rhonda with the preparation of this statutory declaration? Did they influence her in any way? Indeed, I understand that the word in the corridors at the moment is that the member for Barkly may have some more supportive information in relation to the declaration which he tabled this morning. It might be worth while if the member were to produce that at the earliest opportunity, particularly if it relates to a date. As other members have said today, the provision of a date will resolve the whole issue. The Attorney-General will be able to answer the dreadful allegations to the satisfaction of the people of the Northern Territory and the members of this House.

The member for Flynn raised a number of points that I want to touch on briefly. He commented that he became aware of the terms of reference for Mr Mulholland's role only by means of a program on Channel 8. I found it rather surprising that, as a member of this House, the member for Flynn had to find out through the media what those terms of reference were and what was debated in this House. However after consulting the Parliamentary Record, I did not find it so surprising. If one looks at the Parliamentary Record for Wednesday 22 August, when the motion in relation to the appointment of the solicitor in respect of the Mulholland brief was debated in this House, one finds that neither did the member for Flynn take part in the debate nor was he present in the House when a division was called in relation to the motion. If the constituents of the electorate of Flynn have the good grace to provide the money for the member for Flynn to attend this House, as do the other taxpayers of the Northern Territory, he might well

spend rather more time here so that he knows what is going on and can report back to his electorate without relying on the media in order to find out what is going on. He has an obligation to do that. Certainly, he has an obligation to be a little more responsible than the member for Barkly in relation to the debate that has occurred today.

In another disgraceful set of circumstances, the Leader of the Opposition will not avail himself of information that could be provided to him by the Commissioner of Police in relation to these matters. It is a reprehensible set of circumstances where, on the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition feels free to criticise the government and the Attorney-General, officers of the Department of Law and the police yet, on the other hand, he will not take the opportunity to avail himself of information which would resolve most of his concerns. I find the dragging of this House into the gutter by the members opposite to be totally reprehensible. It is a very sad day for the Northern Territory when we find ourselves in a position where we have members of this House who could be likened to rabid dogs which bite everybody and inflict as much damage as possible without any concern for the well-being of this House, the way it is viewed by Territorians and the impact that it might have on the future government of the Northern Territory. I think we are dealing here today with 2 types of prostitute - the traditional prostitute and the political prostitute. It is a very sad day for the Northern Territory. It is not the first time that the member for Barkly has sold himself out. I think that, in the truest sense of such a term, he is a political prostitute, and he should be absolutely ashamed of himself.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last remark.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, I am happy to withdraw.

The Attorney-General has my confidence. I have worked with him for 3½ years and he has proven himself to be a very honourable man and a very honest minister, one in whom I would place my trust. Certainly, I would place my trust in the Attorney-General over and above the contents of this so-called statutory declaration which has not even been signed. No name appears on it. The member for Barkly referred to it last night in notes that he took. This morning, we saw the presentation of a statutory declaration that has no legal validity. I strongly support the Attorney-General, the officers of the Department of Law and the police officers. I condemn the motion moved by the member for Barkly.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, it is with some disappointment that I rise in this debate. In the fairly short time that I have been in this Assembly, I have tried to avoid becoming involved in this type of issue. However, in view of the issues that have been raised within this House and outside over the last few weeks and, in particular, the debate that has occurred today, I have no choice but to enter into this debate and put forward my views. It is unfortunate that we have a censure motion with the present wording. Possibly a more appropriate motion might have been to censure the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister for failing to carry out their responsibilities. For some time, we have listened to a series of allegations, concerns and questions from many sources relating to people in the drug trade and prostitution, in the police force, in the Department of Law and in the government. We have been told repeatedly that these matters will not be dealt with in an open and/or a public inquiry of any kind.

Dating back to my days at university, I recall people making allegations about a government in Queensland over many years. For the best part of 20 years, that government adopted the attitude that, unless its critics could prove the allegations through its political and law enforcement system, they would get nowhere. Only in recent years was that government prepared to have a public and open inquiry. It was interesting that many of the allegations made 15 to 20 years previously proved to be true. The reason that government fell apart finally was that the level of suspicion became so huge that it could no longer hide behind its immunity.

I do not know whether or not there is any truth in any of the allegations that have been made inside and outside this House in relation to any of the issues about which people have been calling for a public inquiry. The Attorney-General says that he has never met the prostitute Rhonda and we have the statement in this document that Rhonda has met the Attorney-General. However, we do have one legal statutory declaration ...

Mr Finch: It is not legal. You might not have studied law with your psychology studies, but did you study any logic?

Mr Perron: There is no statutory declaration in this Assembly.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, it is my understanding that a statutory declaration does exist.

Mr Finch: Does it?

Mr Coulter: Does it? Have you seen it?

Mr BAILEY: No. Mr Speaker ...

Mr Vale: Have you met Rhonda?

Mr Coulter: You are a big help for that side of the House.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, do I have the protection of the Chair to proceed without continual interruptions from the other side? I sat in silence ...

Mr SPEAKER: If the honourable member for Wanguri cannot continue this debate, I would ask him to resume his chair. As is the case with every member, you do have the protection of the Chair. I heard no comments or interjections during the course of this debate that would cause me to exercise that protection.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have spoken to people who have seen the statutory declaration. We have a situation whereby the Attorney-General has made one statement and a legal document, called a statutory declaration, exists in which a person has said ...

Mr Finch: It does not exist until it is presented to somebody.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, it is my understanding that the statutory declaration exists, and I will leave it at that. The issue that we are trying to debate is the fundamental principle that the government must accept responsibility for its actions. The Minister for Transport and Works is not prepared to listen to debate. He is doing now what he always does.

If he does not like it, he interjects. He attacks the person speaking and he shows himself to be the little guttersnipe that he really is. He has done it over and over again.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I believe that the words used by the honourable member are unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Wanguri to withdraw the word 'guttersnipe'.

Mr BAILEY: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The reason I rose to speak was to indicate my concern about the debate over the last few weeks and to state that the government must take responsibility for what has been occurring. We have heard accusations that have now included not only a member of parliament, but the police and the Department of Law etc. It has gone on for too long. The people of the Northern Territory believe that the only way to resolve this issue is for an open inquiry to be held.

Mr Vale: Do you know the date? Give us a clue? Do you know the date?

Mr BAILEY: You are thick.

Mr Speaker, we were asked for a psychological assessment. The ramblings and ravings of the honourable minister opposite are more indicative of alcoholic dementia than anything else. That is a professional opinion.

Mr SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable member to withdraw his professional opinion.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works will not provoke the member for Wanguri who is attempting to make a contribution to this debate.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, as I said, I do not take any satisfaction from participating in this debate which has hovered largely around the gutter for the last week or so. As the Leader of the Opposition said last week, it is preferable that allegations of this kind are not debated in this Assembly. There is an appropriate mechanism for the examination of allegations of this kind and that is by means of some form of legally-constituted or judicial inquiry. Unfortunately, the government has not been prepared to initiate that type of inquiry. Consequently, people have to keep trying to bring forward the evidence that will push this government into setting up a legally-constituted inquiry because people are concerned.

It is true that the prostitute Rhonda has lied if the evidence that the Chief Minister says that he has obtained from transcripts of her interviews is correct, and I do not have any reason to believe that it is not correct. We have a statutory declaration which I believe has as much legal standing as Rhonda's initial statement. Therefore, we have a situation where she has lied. The question then is why she has lied. Has she lied in the statutory declaration or did she lie to the police in the interviews? That alone

should be enough for the Chief Minister to call for an inquiry into why she lied either then or now.

The implications are quite significant. If she is lying now, the political implications are quite outstanding. If she was lying before, the implications for the inquiry are quite outstanding because that raises the question of why she could not tell the truth then. It has been suggested that she feared for her life. There have been suggestions that there are crooked police. There are suggestions about crooked politicians. There are suggestions about people within the Department of Law. While those allegations and suggestions are being made in the public domain, they will not be resolved by a closed, restricted inquiry. The only way this issue will ever be resolved is by a full inquiry.

We are not lawyers. We are not here to assess the legal status of this document. That should be done by people who have legal qualifications. We should never have reached this present situation, but we have done so because members opposite were not prepared to take on their responsibility, as leaders in our society, to sort this issue out once and for all. The Attorney-General's name will never be cleared until this is sorted out in a ...

Mr Reed: Give us a date and we will soon clear him.

Mr Perron: Do you know the date?

Mr BAILEY: I will respond on the date, Mr Speaker. That is an interesting one. I do not know the date. However, even if a date were given and the Attorney-General asserted that he were somewhere else, that would resolve nothing. The whole basis for this motion is that the Attorney-General has said that he has never met the woman and, on the other hand, she has said that she has met him. If she says that it happened on a certain day and he says that he was elsewhere, that would not get us any further forward. If the Attorney-General has lied, which is the implication of this motion, to give a date would achieve nothing because, if it is within his power, he will have ensured that the date coincides with some entry in his diary.

I am not trying to debate the legal implications of this statement in one way or the other. I do not believe that this is a court of law, but that is what people here have tried to make it. Because the Minister for Health and Community Services has found one aspect of the document that appears to be inaccurate, he says that the document is worthless. How often have speakers on both sides of the House made errors? At one time, the Leader of Government Business said: 'There was a conspiracy on this day. No, it was on that day. No, I apologise, it did not happen at all'.

This is not a court of law. We are not here to resolve the legal implications. The only way that that will ever be done is by the Chief Minister accepting that the review of some police reports is not enough and that an open inquiry is needed into all the allegations that have been made over the last 6 months. This matter will not go away as a result of our dividing on party lines. The dirt is sticking to this Assembly, not to individuals. We are lowering the standard of politics within the Northern Territory. The only way that the matter will ever be resolved is by the Chief Minister accepting his responsibility to have it dealt with in an open forum. If that does not occur, we will continue to operate under a cloud, as Queensland did for years.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I will speak briefly in this debate. Initially, I did not intend to speak. My view was similar to that of the member for Koolpinyah. I have been a member of this Assembly for a long time and I do not think that I have ever listened to a debate which has really brought us into question in this Assembly. I say that because, quite frankly, the way in which the member for Barkly has criticised the actions of the Attorney-General is really despicable. I have known the member for Barkly ever since I have been in politics and I believe that I get on reasonably well with him. I can understand how he has felt bitter about the treatment that he received in the past. I can understand him carrying his torch and I can understand his wanting to bury the CLP. However, for goodness sake, he should not come into this Assembly and present information, which he cannot substantiate and which is not factual, in an effort to denigrate a member of this Assembly who, I believe, has the respect of almost every honourable member. It is despicable that this matter has been raised here in such a way.

We have processes in place in the Northern Territory which enable actions of government to be questioned and examined. At the present time, Mr Mulholland is examining certain matters and we should allow him to do his job. The member for Barkly may perhaps have been trying to help but all he has done is to put at risk a process which will enable us to get to the bottom of these problems. After Mr Mulholland has handed down his report, if the member for Barkly is not happy with it, let him get stuck into the issues by all means. I really cannot understand why members of this Assembly act as investigators when we know that these mattes are being examined responsibly. If members have problems with the report that is handed down, by all means they should comment, investigate and inquire. However, until that stage is reached, actions such as a member tabling an alleged statutory declaration, which has parts whited-out and makes unsubstantiated claims, should not occur.

The Minister for Health and Community Services dealt with several aspects of that statement which appear to be incorrect, and I think that Rhonda may have a problem. There are other questions which might be asked. If the Attorney-General had never met Rhonda previously, why didn't he ask her if that was who she was when allegedly he met her at the Parap Hotel? Surely that would be one of the first things he would do? I do not intend to go into the detail of the document. The Deputy Chief Minister hit the nail on the head when he said that this matter comes down to a question of whether we believe the Attorney-General or whether we believe Rhonda. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I have a great deal of respect for the Attorney-General. I believe that he is an honest man. I have worked with him for a number of years and I have never questioned that aspect of his character. It is despicable that this matter has been raised in such a way. Anyone who has listened to the debate today would have to agree that there is no basis on which to censure the Attorney-General. That is really quite clear.

I feel sorry for the member for Barkly. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated publicly, he has an element of hate in his system, which he is trying to get out. It is a pity that he is doing it in this way, because I do not want to be part of a parliament which operates in such a fashion, using innuendo and unsubstantiated allegations to smear the reputations of my colleagues. In terms of considering matters responsibly, the actions of the member for Barkly have simply created further problems.

The Chief Minister is dealing with these matters responsibly. The Attorney-General is doing his job well. I believe that we should allow

Mr Mulholland to do his job. At the appropriate time, if any honourable member is not satisfied, by all means let us look at the matter again and decide whether we need to go further. To claim at this stage that we are like Queensland does nothing but cloud the issue. I have been a member of the government since 1977 and I have been a minister since 1983. I know that there are occasions when we wonder what the public is thinking. I can appreciate the feelings in the community about corruption, drugs and abuse of the system and, if those matters need to be looked at, they will be looked at responsibly.

I believe that we should allow Mr Mulholland to do his job. Once his report is handed down, let us work from there. But please, don't let us drag the Assembly down to a level where members raise further allegations. I understand from my colleague that the member for Barkly intends to place further information before the House. It is all nonsense. I really wish that the member for Barkly would reconsider what he is doing. The processes are in place and we should respect them. I express my total support for the Attorney-General. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that he has carried out his job in a responsible manner. If the Attorney-General says that he has not met with Rhonda, I believe him.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I will be fairly brief. Like the Deputy Chief Minister, I believe that this matter comes down to a simple question. Does one believe a prostitute, almost a mock politician or the Attorney-General? I have been around in politics longer than anyone else in this House. I grew up in the bush in Melbourne and, in my time, I have seen them all - Arthur Calwell, Robert Menzies, and a number of people who, as a result of their involvement in politics, became quite bitter. That, of course, included people involved in the Labor split which occurred in Melbourne in the mid-1950s and led to the creation of the Democratic Labor Party. However, I have never seen anyone become as bitter and twisted as the member for Barkly. I knew the member for Barkly long before anyone else here did, including his little mate the member for Flynn, who follows him around like a shadow.

I suppose one positive aspect of today's sittings is that the taxpayers of Barkly and Flynn have finally got some value. For the first time ever, their 2 representatives have sat in the House for almost the entire day whereas, in the past, they have been conspicuous by their absence almost from question time onwards. They come and go whenever they feel like it and they treat the House with contempt.

Rumour has it that the member for Barkly has another statutory declaration to table at the conclusion of this debate this afternoon. If it is like the first statutory declaration he tabled, without a date and without signatures, he can table statutory declarations till the cows come home. Until such time as they contain dates and signatures, they are as useless as tits on a bull. He has no credibility whatsoever in this House, out on the street or in the press gallery. He has shot himself in both feet. He is not limping; he is lame. The way he is going, he will be wheeled out of here on a stretcher. This statutory declaration is not worth the paper it is written on, Mr Speaker. You know it, I know it and the public knows it.

It has become quite obvious that, in his dying days, the member for Barkly is out to hurt, not only politically but personally, as many members of the CLP and anyone else in close proximity as deeply as he possibly can. I seldom breach confidences in this House but I will say that I was in Alice Springs in 1986 when the member for Barkly advised the CLP Central Council

that he was stepping down as Chief Minister. I was attending a large working bee at MacDonnell Siding, which involved about 40 people from a broad cross-section of the community. At 2 pm or 3 pm, I came across to the shelter. Smoko was on and ABC radio was broadcasting from Gardens Oval in Darwin. It interrupted the broadcast for a special news flash. The commentator then said that Mr Tuxworth had advised the CLP Central Council that he was going to step down as Chief Minister on the Monday. At the conclusion of that comment, there was a deathly silence. Then everyone under that bough shelter, and I mean everyone - truck drivers, engineers, housewives, typists, gardeners, people of all political colours - quite spontaneously started to cheer. I have never seen such relief. That night I called the then Chief Minister. I said I was a little sorry about what had happened. While we had never been particularly close in the past, I offered my sympathies to him. His words to me were: 'We will be right, Valey. We will get our pension'. He was though I was not pensioned by then, but that is another question. He then said: 'But the party is ...', and he used a fairly strong verb. I hung up. The words that he used made me think that he intended to set out quite deliberately to damage the CLP. From that day on, he was driven by hate.

That hate was epitomised by this morning's censure motion against the Attorney-General. Not only has he attempted to damage him politically, but also personally. The Attorney-General has 3 young children. His mother lives here. His wife, of course, lives and works in the town. Without any consideration, the member for Barkly has walked in here and slapped down an undated statutory declaration in an attempt to king-hit someone. The member for Barkly should not wait until the Chief Minister calls the election. He should get up when the lights go out in this House later tonight and slink out of here in shame. He stands condemned not only by the constituents in Barkly whom he has deserted but by all Northern Territory people.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, there is not much to add to this debate. However, there are a few points that I would like to make. Firstly, unfounded allegations are not new to the member for Barkly. As the Minister for Tourism would well know, some time in 1984, when it was proposed that the Channel Island Power Station should be coal-fired, the Minister for Tourism was a proponent of a gas-fired power station. Not satisfied with simply dispelling any suggestion of a gas-fired power station, the member for Barkly accused the then member for Braitling of having interests in the gas fields.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not mean to be offensive to the honourable member for Karama, but he is digressing from the subject of the censure motion. The member for Barkly is not the subject of the censure motion; the Attorney-General is. I ask the honourable member to confine his remarks to the censure motion. I appreciate that the debate has been broad and wide-ranging, but the member for Braitling's interest in the gas-fired power station really has nothing to do with this debate.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I was giving a bit of background.

Mr SPEAKER: We do not need the background.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I will turn to this so-called statutory declaration which the member for Barkly has tabled as some instrument of fact. In the statement, Rhonda stated:

> I went to the Parap Hotel, Palmerston Bar, at approximately 3.25 pm. I looked around the bar. There were only a few people

there. Daryl Manzie was not among them. I had never met Daryl Manzie, but I knew what he looked like from seeing him on TV and in the newspapers. I bought a drink at the bar and sat at a table on my own. I had just sat down and suddenly noticed that Daryl Manzie was standing right next to me. I had not seen him approach. He sat down next to me and did not introduce himself. He immediately began speaking to me very quietly throughout.

On her own admission, she had never met Daryl Manzie and he had never met her. Somehow the Attorney-General appears mysteriously in a bar, like the Archangel Gabriel, and finds the person whom he wants to speak to. He does not even check her identity. He does not even ask her whether she is Rhonda. He sits down and spills his guts to a stranger. The member for Barkly thinks we should believe this. It is nothing more than a total fabrication and a litany of lies. What this Assembly should understand is that it is fabricated and that the member for Barkly has indulged himself in a conspiracy of the basest kind. It may be only one year for making false statements, but it is 7 years in jail for conspiracy.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Having been the subject of a conspiracy allegation in this House, I believe the honourable member has 2 choices: either to withdraw or to move a substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: That is correct.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

I will conclude by touching on a few points in relation to corruption. If anybody in this House has ever been touched by corruption, surely it is the Territory Nationals. Where did they get the brown paper bags full of money to mount their campaigns? Direct from Hector Hapeta perhaps? Direct from Joh's top drawer perhaps? If there is anybody in this House who would know about dealing in corrupt moneys, it is surely the Joh-founded and Joh-funded Territory Nationals.

This is nothing but a litany of lies. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition knows it to be nothing but a litany of lies. I believe all the members of the press and every other person here know it to be nothing but a litany of lies. The only poor fool in the whole place who thinks it carries any semblance of truth is the member for Flynn. He is the only person in the House who actually believes the rubbish.

There is no question at all in my mind as to the veracity of the Attorney-General's statement that he has never met the prostitute Rhonda. I have no reason to disbelieve him. In fact, for 7 years, I have been inviting the Attorney-General along to pubs to have a drink and still I have not got him through the door. I cannot believe that Peter Woods would ring and say, 'Daryl, let's go down to the Parap and talk to a moll', and that Daryl would leave his office and go straight down there! For 7 years, I have been trying to get my mate to come to a pub for a drink. He will not go. Maureen has him on a fishing line and reels him in. As I said, this is ratbaggery of the worst kind. It did not deserve even 10 minutes of debate, let alone 6 hours.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, this would have to be one of the most passionate debates I have heard in this House for a long time.

Mr Vale: It will be the last you hear too.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is an interesting comment.

Honourable members have had a chance to have a cut at me and they are most welcome to it because it goes straight off my back. They are entitled to their feelings. Their support for their colleague is perfectly understandable and so they should have supported him. What else could they do? They did it with fervour and passion, and I respect that. However, that is not the issue. The Leader of Government Business pinpointed the issue. What is the truth? Did he lie, or did he not lie? Was there a meeting or was there not a meeting.

The Attorney-General says that he never knew or met Rhonda. That being the case, this whole debate could have been avoided on 25 or 26 April by the Attorney-General saying that the comments referred to on the 7.30 Report had nothing to do with him and that, if the man said anything like that, he did not have his permission to say it. Alternatively, the Chief Minister could have made a rebuttal on behalf of the whole party. That option was not taken up, nor were the subsequent follow-up requests about the matter by people in the media and others. If the Attorney-General feels sad and bitter, and he does, he could have put the matter to bed some time ago himself.

I think it is fair to say that Rhonda is a terrified woman who works in a world about which I know nothing. She is a woman who wants protection for her life because she believes that she has been done in the eye and that her life is at risk. She is scrambling to rescue what she can of it. Rhonda presented a very detailed account of what she believed was a meeting with the Attorney-General.

I agree with most of the speakers that this is not the place to be testing the Attorney-General or Rhonda's views on what did or did not happen. That should be done in a proper forum. The proper forum in this case is an open and public inquiry. It should be considering a whole range of matters as well as this one. The failure to be able to test these things in that forum has resulted in this debate and in the damage that has been caused in the eyes of the Attorney-General.

One honourable member suggested that Rhonda was a drug addict and that she was probably tripping out. Another member accused her of other unfortunate circumstances. Whatever the circumstances, it is pretty hard to imagine that some or all of Rhonda's statement was simply concocted and that it just fell out of the sky. Whatever explanation anyone might want to put on it, there is enough information in the statement to cause grave doubt. Having met the woman personally, it is obvious to me that she is not a fool. She may be a prostitute and she may have had drugs, but she is not an absolute fool.

The member for Karama suggested that the whole thing is a fabrication. Perhaps some of it is fabricated, but the whole thing is not a fabrication.

Mr Coulter: Which parts are a fabrication?

Mr TUXWORTH: I make the point that, if there is any part of it that is untrue or if there is any part of the Attorney-General's claim that is untrue, that ought to be tested because that is the essence of the whole argument. That has been lost in the rhetoric of this afternoon. Honourable members sit there and accuse me of being bitter and twisted. If those honourable members could come over here, sit down, listen and see what we see, they would have a very different perspective on who is bitter and

twisted in this world. Mr Speaker, you can ask the other honourable members on this side for their views yourself.

As I said earlier, this matter could have been cleared by a rebuttal by the Chief Minister very early in the piece, or by a statement made by the Attorney-General. That abrogation of responsibility cannot be explained away and it cannot be laid at my feet by saying that I am just a ratbag and that I am bitter and twisted. That is so simplistic and naive that the public will not wear it.

The absolute essence in all of this argument is still establishing the truth and the facts of the matter. We have talked for 6 hours yet we have not done that. If we talk for another 27 hours, we will not do that because this is not the forum for the facts of the matter to be established and guilt or otherwise to be apportioned. So far, no one has apportioned guilt. I have not accused the Attorney-General at any stage of some of the things which members opposite have said that I have accused him of. I have accused him of misleading the House. I have put my argument on the Table and it has been debated. All afternoon and earlier in press releases, references have been made suggesting that I accused the Attorney-General of being a crook or a whole range of other things. That is simply not true. I have not accused him of being a crook. I have not suggested that he should stand aside. However, I argue that the facts of the matter need to be established in a proper forum and this forum will not do that. The facts will never be established until they are tested in a proper and open forum.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8	Noes 16
Mr Bailey	Mr Collins
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Floreani	Mr Finch
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Firmin
Mr Leo	Mr Harris
Mr Smith	Mr Hatton
Mr Tuxworth	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER
Ombudsman of the Northern Territory
Twelfth Report

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the twelfth report of the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory and I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Control of Land Rights Act

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker I move that:

considering that this Assembly is the parliament of the Northern Territory and the voice of the Northern Territory people;

recognising that the Commonwealth of Australia in its grant of self-government to the Territory retained certain state-like powers within the control of its own administration;

noting that since the grant of self-government in 1978 the Northern Territory has been ably and responsibly governed by its own elected government chosen by the people in successive elections;

recognising that one of the fundamental prerogatives of state governments is their responsibility for land administration within their borders and that this prerogative is denied to the people of the Northern Territory over large tracts of Northern Territory land covering approximately 46% of the Territory;

considering moreover that many Aboriginal Territorians have a growing disaffection with Commonwealth administration of the Land Rights Act and have a desire for tribally-based land titles and a land council system more in keeping with their aspirations;

this Assembly declares that the people of the Northern Territory are well able to administer the responsibility for land rights;

accordingly this Assembly asserts unanimously that the Commonwealth should now transfer administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, now administered by the Commonwealth, to the control of this Assembly; and

this Assembly directs that this clear will of the elected representatives of all the people of the Northern Territory be conveyed by the Chief Minister to the special Premiers Conference on October 30 and 31.

Mr Speaker, as honourable members will be aware, the Commonwealth retained certain powers when it granted self-government to the Territory 12 years ago - a length of time, I might add, which is more than double that which elapsed between the grant of self-government by the Commonwealth to Papua New Guinea, and subsequent sovereign independence to that country. By any measure, and certainly by comparison with the mismanagement evident in the Labor states of Victoria and Western Australia, the Northern Territory has been ably governed, competently financially administered and progressively led in the creation of a less public sector dependent economy.

The basic precept on which self-government was based, which was accepted in the Commonwealth parliament, was that Territorians had sufficient social, political and economic maturity to take charge of most of their own affairs in 1978. In the intervening period, that trust has been honoured and the record of achievement is sufficient justification, in our view, for the major area of land rights control to be transferred now to the Territory. Territorians have proven that they can govern themselves.

The Northern Territory government administers an annual budget approaching $200m. It employs some 15 000 people and, since 1978, we have seen the Territory's gross domestic product increase 105%, our population rise by 42% and the numbers of people employed throughout the Territory have grown by 54%. These indicators show that Territorians are well able to govern themselves, and my government contends that Territorians have earned the right now to assume executive powers over Aboriginal land administration.

In September 1977, the MHR for Kingsford-Smith, Mr Lionel Bowen, stated in the federal parliament, in a debate on the then proposals for Territory self-government, his firm view supporting local control of Territory affairs: 'By all means allow for the devolution of responsibility in a proper, orderly fashion. We (the Labor Party) have always encouraged that'. Mr Bowen was then in opposition and, subsequently, he went on to become Deputy Prime Minister in the Hawke Labor government. In the 7½ years of that government, the sentiment expressed by Mr Bowen, about the 'devolution of responsibility in a proper and orderly fashion', has remained on the backburner. The Hawke Labor government has shown no will or desire to sit down with the Territory to discuss the process for the transfer of those functions retained by the Commonwealth in 1978, including land rights, the management of Kakadu and Uluru National Parks, and Territory control over the royalties earned from the mining of uranium on Territory soil.

In June 1978, another Labor MHR, Dr Everingham, the member for Capricornia, speaking in the federal parliament, was openly critical of the Canberra bureaucracy, saying: 'The image of Canberra's bureaucracy in the north and the centre of Australia is even worse than it is in the states and the Australian Capital Territory, if that is possible'. He went on to say that the people of the Territory knew a vast amount more about their problems, their needs and the possible solutions to those problems, than did the bureaucrats and politicians in Canberra. Dr Everingham made this very pertinent observation:

> It is not possible to package and compartment the people of the Northern Territory into Aborigines and non-Aborigines and to say that these are the health, education, welfare, transport and other services for Aboriginal people, and those are the services for the non-Aboriginals. Many of these services must be provided for the whole of the population. There is an increasing need, urgent and obvious need, to delineate responsibility in all areas of administration so that the people in the Territory know where they are going and where they stand.

That was a Labor Party view about the Northern Territory in 1978. My government endorses those sentiments 100%. It is regrettable that, having secured office in 1983, the ALP has conveniently shelved what it once believed about the Territory. Not only is the administration of almost half of the total area of the Territory beyond the control of the government which Territorians elect to govern them, but also we have the situation where ATSIC, a new tier of government created by Canberra, is actively competing against the Territory government in the delivery of services to almost one-quarter of our citizens, and competing against us for funding in Canberra.

The Territory government has a proven responsible approach to Aboriginal affairs. Our record of achievement in every aspect of Aboriginal advancement is second to none in Australia. We have led the way in Australia with initiative and innovation. The states seek our advice in those areas of government activity which relate to Aboriginal development.

Repeatedly, national committees of inquiry hold up the Northern Territory as the model for other jurisdictions to follow. Let me give a few examples for honourable members to illustrate these points.

The Community Government Scheme for remote communities, under the Local Government Act, has enabled Aboriginal communities to enter the mainstream of third-tier government in Australia in a meaningful way. This legislation was the platform for Aboriginal communities to participate as of right in local government funding distribution. The success and appropriateness of community government has been acknowledged in a number of forums, including the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs when it was chaired by none other than the member for the Northern Territory, Mr Warren Snowdon. Mr Don Dunstan, in his report to the South Australian government on local government for Aboriginal communities in that state, recommended the Northern Territory legislation as the best available model.

The Northern Territory has developed community-based health care, where decision-making and control is vested as far as possible in the community itself. There is a heavy reliance on trained Aboriginal Health Workers as primary care givers. That service is based on a properly designed career path structure with formal training that has gained accreditation at an associate diploma course level.

The Report on the National Committee on Violence singled out the Northern Territory Police Force as the role model for the states in dealing with policing of Aboriginal communities. The report commended the Territory system of Aboriginal recruits and police aides. Similarly, the Muirhead Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody turned to the Territory for the basis of many of its recommendations on legal, apprehension, custodial and custodial alternative procedures. The Northern Territory was well in advance of recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission Report on the Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws. Again, situations already pertaining in the Territory on recognition for legal purposes, such as inheritance and adoption, were used as a basis of recommendations in this report.

Education, in particular, is an area where the rest of Australia has been sitting up and taking notice of what is happening in the Territory. The record of achievement in bilingual education and that of institutions such as Batchelor College is well known. The Remote Area Teacher Education or RATE model of education delivery has now been copied by South Australia and Western Australia and is under examination by other state education authorities. A more recent innovation is the Modular Integrated Training Scheme for delivery of apprenticeship trade training. It was developed primarily with the needs of Aboriginal trade trainees in mind, but has general application. The scheme has gained national recognition and is now being trialed in other areas, particularly Queensland.

In the negotiations that led to the introduction of the subject of this motion - the Land Rights Act - the Northern Territory agreed to enact complementary legislation, including sacred sites legislation and legislation for control of entry to Aboriginal land. The record shows that the Territory government has gone outside the scope of the Land Rights Act to satisfy land needs. Where claims based on traditional attachment have not been possible, we have shown our readiness to provide land. In this regard, the 2 principal areas are those of land for town camping purposes and land for Aboriginal community living areas in the pastoral regions of the Territory, and I hope that the member for Arnhem will take particular note of this section of this speech.

Territory title has been registered in respect of 28 community living areas, providing land for some 2800 people. Another 400 people have been assisted through the acquisition of land under the new community living areas legislation. 40 town camp areas throughout the Territory provide living space for a further 2600 people. In total, that is 5800 people, or 16% of the Territory's Aboriginal population, who have been helped outside the Land Rights Act. We have also negotiated Territory title arising from claims on Cobourg Peninsula, the Sir Edward Pellew Group of islands and the Wombaya and Wakaya/Alyawarra claims. The total land area involved in all of these land matters which fall outside the Land Rights Act is approximately 1.5 million hectares or 1% of the Territory's land area.

In relation to community living areas for Aboriginal groups in the pastoral regions, our efforts have often been thwarted by other parties, including the Commonwealth and the Aboriginal land councils. In 1985, we tried to accelerate a process of excision of such areas from pastoral properties by negotiation. More recently, protracted negotiations resulted in an agreement signed by the Prime Minister and myself, involving legislative action. Despite the agreement at head of government level, the Central Land Council in particular is doing its best to obstruct the agreement and, therefore, the aspirations of the very people it is supposed to represent. However, I am pleased to be able to say that progress is at last being made on this front, and areas of land are being processed under the provisions of the agreement.

Territory models for Aboriginal participation in national park and conservation areas are the most advanced in Australia. Our ability to negotiate joint management agreements with Aboriginals for national parks, like that at Cobourg, is acknowledged by the rest of Australia. We have achieved different agreements for different circumstances to the mutual benefit of the relevant Aboriginals and the rest of the community. At the last Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council meeting, the Commonwealth commended the Northern Territory's ability to put in place management agreements to suit differing circumstances and called on the states to follow our example.

I turn now to the national picture in respect of Aboriginal land tenure. Throughout Australia, the common thread in comment about Aboriginal people is that they are frequently ignored because they are a tiny minority - less than 1.5% of the national population. While this may be the case elsewhere, it is not the case in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal Territorians make up 22% of our population. Their number, some 35 000, is greater than the combined Aboriginal populations of Victoria and South Australia, which total some 27 000. They are not a forgotten minority here, as might be said in the states. After the Territory, Western Australia has the next highest Aboriginal population percentage at 2.7%. Queensland has 2.4% and, in New South Wales and South Australia, Aboriginal people comprise just over 1% of the population. In Victoria, it is less than 0.5%.

The recent last report of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs, now absorbed into ATSIC, provided those figures and some illustrative statistics on Aboriginal land tenure. That report stated that, on a nationwide basis, Australian Aboriginals control about 1 000 000 km of land. Half of that area lies within the borders of the Northern Territory. The Territory's Aboriginal population represents only about 15% of the national Aboriginal population, yet they own 50% of the land that Aboriginals own. The argument cannot be sustained that Territory Aboriginals are under-represented in land ownership. Clearly, if there is a

need for the Commonwealth to be involved in Aboriginal land administration, such a need might exist in the states but not in the Territory.

Territorians who take an active interest in politics are keenly aware that Aboriginal Territorians play an important role in determining the composition of our parliament through their numeric influence in at least 8 electorates. No other parliament in Australia has this sort of direct Aboriginal influence. Our parliament has 2 Aboriginal members, the members for Arafura and Arnhem. While they belong to the opposition Labor Party, my own party has already announced that it has endorsed 1 Aboriginal candidate and that it will endorse at least 2 other Aboriginal candidates tomorrow. Aboriginal influence on Territory politics is far greater than in the federal parliament. However, disenchanted Aboriginal Territorians cannot turn to their own parliament and their own Territory government for effective assistance in meeting their land needs because the central control power over land lies elsewhere - in Canberra.

My government's position on the Commonwealth-administered Land Rights Act is that it seeks the transfer of its administration to the Territory. Our position is driven by 2 basic democratic notions. The first is that all state governments have full responsibility for administering land within their borders. Regrettably, the people of the Northern Territory, through their elected representatives, have a 54% responsibility. The second is that, irrespective of race, colour or creed, Territory citizens should have the right to demand accountability from locally-elected representatives on a matter as significantly local as land administration.

I will now address the problems which we have with Commonwealth control. Obviously, it is a fallacy to suggest that Commonwealth control has been free of problems. The fact is that Commonwealth administration of the Land Rights Act has outlived its usefulness. The time has arrived when a change in that administrative power to local control would provide real benefits to Aboriginal Territorians. The act is inflexible and in need of revision. It is the cause of frustration and delay. It is unacceptable for a federal minister to be making day-to-day decisions on Territory land matters when he is not accountable to Territorians.

When I wrote to the Prime Minister on 6 September 1990 proposing the patriation of the Land Rights Act to the Northern Territory, I said this:

> It is illogical that a federal minister can make decisions involving complex issues of fundamental importance to Northern Territory government responsibilities, often without proper consultation, and then leave the Northern Territory to accommodate the results of those decisions. It is also particularly unreasonable when the federal minister is exercising state-type responsibilities.

I appended to that letter an itemisation of a number of areas of the act which are deficient, and which represent provisions which should not rightly be imposed by one parliamentary institution and government on the jurisdiction of another. It is frustrating that many of those deficiencies have been agreed to be such by successive federal Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs. The dilemma has been that, by the time a federal minister is convinced that it is necessary to amend the legislation and voices an intention to do something about it, it is time for him to leave the portfolio for one reason or another. That, of course, would not be the case were this Assembly to be the legislative body to effect necessary amendments.

Problems caused by this inflexibility in Commonwealth administration include the following matters. Titles issued under the Land Rights Act do not relate to tribal boundaries, causing dissatisfaction among Aboriginal people. There is continuing uncertainty regarding the application of Territory laws to Aboriginal land, and much of this uncertainty is left to the resolution of the courts. Pastoral properties can still be purchased and converted under land claim to Aboriginal land. The Territory cannot acquire interests in Aboriginal land for public purposes. Repeat land claims following an unsuccessful claim can seemingly be lodged ad infinitum. The Territory cannot deal with land which is the subject of a repeat claim which effectively locks up that land. Aboriginal people who desire public services and local economic development cannot negotiate with my government of their own accord, but must go through the land councils. Because of this, community needs of today, many of them urgent, become bogged down in a system which has outlived its day.

The rate of private sector investment in joint ventures and royalty-based agreements with Aboriginal people is also held back by the system. Specifically, there are 2 areas, tourism and mining, in which a less restrictive and less complex system would encourage more companies to involve themselves in development projects on Aboriginal land, thereby creating localised jobs and infrastructure improvements. Mr Justice Toohey, in his 1983 review of the Land Rights Act, suggested that the system requiring discussion between the land councils and mining companies, for example, led to a position where 'the incentive to pursue negotiations is actively weakened'. He referred to prospective miners who direct their attention away from the Territory because of unacceptable costs, delays and, perhaps most importantly, uncertainty surrounding the negotiations. As things stand, many companies look at the land councils and the time delays and take their investment dollars elsewhere. The losers are Aboriginal Territorians, and the war on Aboriginal social service dependency loses another battle.

I have to say that, in 1983, Mr Justice Toohey observed that one of the detrimental impacts of new mining communities on Aboriginal land was the distribution of income and the alcohol abuse which followed. In my experience, alcohol abuse occurs irrespective of economic development because we have a social welfare system which feeds that situation irrespective of any mining project. I believe that Aboriginal people today are better equipped to handle inflows of capital from productive ventures on their land, and better equipped to make realistic decisions as to how those funds can be spent for the welfare of their communities. To deny them that chance is wrong and paternalistic. Even in 1983, Mr Justice Toohey listed community benefits arising from payments from mining ventures, including improved housing, health and transport facilities. Surely this is a goal that every member of this Assembly should strive for. Surely we should endeavour to help Aboriginal people to have this chance, if it is their desire.

Mr Justice Toohey made numerous recommendations, 3 of the key ones relating to: a more practicable scheme for exploration and mining on Aboriginal land; adequate machinery within the Land Rights Act to make Aboriginal land available for public purposes; and decentralisation of the land councils at the decision-making level. The title of his 1983 report was 'Seven Years On'. Another 7 years have passed and the system has changed little for the better. How many more 7-year time periods must elapse before we have a workable system which serves both the Aboriginal and the wider Territory interests?

Territory control will deliver improvements. In saying that, I wish to make it absolutely clear that it is not the intention of my government to have control transferred from Canberra and then to embark on a legislative exercise to gut the Land Rights Act. We would be happy to leave a reserve assent power with the Commonwealth over any Territory amendments to the act, thereby providing a guarantee to those with residual concerns about Territory control. I foreshadow now that, prior to any transfer from the Commonwealth, my government, which has already held numerous positive discussions with some Aboriginal leaders on this matter, will consult at length with Aboriginal people and assure them that our intention is to preserve the existing federal legislation in large measure, and to add improvements designed for their economic and social benefit.

At the very heart of this issue are the interests of Aboriginal citizens of the Territory who recognise increasingly that the Commonwealth version of land rights is only a partial solution to their needs. Under our proposals, the Aboriginal Land Commissioner and the claim process would be preserved and the responsible minister would be locally accountable. We would redefine the principal role of the major land councils, relating it to completion of the land claim process so that, when a land grant is made, administration is assumed by smaller land councils more directly representative of the people involved. We would assist the creation of smaller land councils based on tribal groupings and vest Aboriginal land in the traditional Aboriginal owners, with boundaries based on tribal ownership.

We would write into the law: an ability for the Territory government to acquire an interest less than freehold for essential services; provision that land which has been reserved for a public purpose under the act for the Territory will not be available for claim; confirmation that all Territory laws apply to Aboriginal land; a tightening up of provisions relating to repeat claims; provisions relating to the ability to claim pastoral leases; and clear identification of Territory public roads.

Our political opponents have always resisted Territory control by pointing to my government's record of testing most land claims. This is not a valid criticism because the purpose of the Territory government's appearance at land claims hearings is, simply put, to test the basis of the claim to all reasonable limits. After all, the land in question, if granted, is granted in perpetuity and any government which ignored the potential rights of other citizens would be most recalcitrant in its duty. We do not question land claims because of a desire to be obstructionist. We have no responsible alternative. Once granted, land vanishes forever from the public domain.

Increasing numbers of Aboriginals are turning to the Territory government for advice amid growing frustration with the land councils - I should add, Mr Speaker, with the exception of the Tiwi Land Council. The best known of these groups that are turning to the government are those of south-east Arnhem Land, the Piltardi group from the Petermann Ranges, the Amatjere (Ti Tree) group and the traditional owners in the Lake Amadeus/Haasts Bluff area. Like my government, they want the system to change.

In the past, the call for change has spilled into the wider political arena with the Central and Northern Land Councils and Labor politicians leading the opposition to Territory control. So far as the land councils are concerned, my deep belief, shared by many Aboriginal people, is that the 2 dominant councils have become distant structures to many of those they were established to serve and, like many organisations, their priorities

appear to be driven more by their own bureaucratic needs than by the needs of their customers. In my view, smaller land councils, directly accountable to the people they serve, such as the Tiwi Land Council, are the desirable model.

However, this issue has developed into a struggle by the Northern and Central Land Councils to retain their entrenched political and financial power while the wishes and desires of those Aboriginals who rightly seek their own representative bodies are being pilloried in the process. Regrettably, debate on this issue usually ends with strident claims that the Country Liberal Party is advocating an anti-Aboriginal position. Those Aboriginals supportive of local control must surely ponder the justice and equity of it all, as indeed must all Territorians. Instead of recognising that the Country Liberal government is espousing the democratic cause of Aboriginal groups aggrieved with the land council system and an unresponsive minister in Canberra, opponents of the breakaway land council movement engage in abuse, accusing my government of seeking to downgrade the legitimate rights of Aboriginal people. The politics of this sort of situation are recognisable, as are the regrettable consequences of heightened racial tension.

In conclusion, with this motion, all honourable members have the opportunity to reflect on this most vital of issues and to put the interests of Territorians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, above those of party politics. Each of us has the opportunity to put the Territory first. Our duty is to serve all Territorians and, in this matter, my government is of the view that the best interests of our Aboriginal citizens are no longer served by Canberra's continued control of the Land Rights Act. The Territory is unique in this regard and the time has come for this Assembly to signal its united opinion in support of Territory interests. Territorians of all colours and racial origins are as capable of running their own affairs and resolving their own differences as are any other Australians.

Increasingly, Aboriginal Territorians are recognising that, while land rights have brought some benefits, land rights Canberra-style have also brought impediments to social and economic progress. The early bitterness, common in our society in the 1970s when land rights were new to Territorians, has subsided. Non-Aboriginal Territorians have adjusted to the situation as it now exists and Aboriginal groups who have used their land in a manner to assist their social and economic advancement have earned respect for their endeavours. Regrettably, these groups are few in number.

I am of the strong belief that most non-Aboriginal Territorians would agree with the view that our Aboriginal citizens should now add health, happiness and a productive life to the land gains that they have made. Without those things, land is a sterile prison - a prison where Aboriginal people sit without the need to secure food or to work because they receive a welfare cheque, and without a hope to develop that land because they have no capital and few risk-takers are prepared to navigate the time-consuming processes to assist that development. And those who leave the sterile prisons, Mr Speaker? Many of them are engaged in the slow suicide of alcohol abuse in our towns, breaking down their traditions and causing the elders to shake their heads at the disrepute they are bringing to the Aboriginal race.

My government is in the invidious position of having limits set on its authority, but we are frequently the target for those who have high and unrealistic expectations about our authority in Aboriginal land matters.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that our Aboriginal citizens must become key partners in our resolve to develop this part of Australia for the benefit of all. Territory control over land rights law is an essential part of that.

I will be asking the Prime Minister to take a decision in principle, and to agree to a 12-month target for when the actual transfer takes place. It is a road on which we should take the first step and I call on the opposition to support this motion, to have the courage to stand up for Territorians and not to seek refuge in their standard apologetic defence of their Canberra masters. This journey must be completed so we can govern a united Territory - not 2 sets of people with 2 sets of laws. I commend the motion.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I move that all words after paragraph 2 be omitted and the following inserted in their stead:

(1) notes that successive Country Liberal Party governments have maintained a consistent opposition to land claims lodged on behalf of Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory;

(2) recognises that this and other actions of the Country Liberal Party government have created a high degree of distrust in the minds of Aboriginal people towards the Northern Territory CLP government;

(3) notes that the issue of land rights created a high degree of division in the Northern Territory community in the years following passage of the act by the federal government;

(4) recognises that in recent years there has been an emerging consensus in the Northern Territory surrounding issues such as land rights and Aboriginal aspirations generally;

(5) notes that the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Constitutional Development is currently receiving submissions on the degree to which the principles of Aboriginal rights in regard to land and culture can be incorporated in a Northern Territory constitution for a new state;

(6) notes that these issues will be put to the people of the Northern Territory in a referendum for their judgment and a constitution accepted in that manner will become the supreme government legislation for the Northern Territory and asserts the belief of this Assembly that this process will provide the safeguards Aboriginal people require underpinned by a broad community consensus support and create the right environment for statehood; and

(7) this Assembly declares that administration of the Land Rights Act should at that time be passed to this Assembly or its successors.

Mr Speaker, in speaking to the statement by the Chief Minister, I am convinced now that there is an election in the air.

Mr McCarthy: You said that yesterday and nothing happened.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, once again, the Chief Minister has brought to the Assembly a matter of concern to himself. However, I believe that the

main thrust of his motion is premature. There is no question that Aboriginal land rights has been a divisive issue in the Northern Territory since its inception. People in the Aboriginal community have experienced it greatly. I appreciate that the Chief Minister has said that in his speech. He said that it has caused heartaches and divisions. It has caused more heartaches in my community, especially for those Aboriginal people who live on pastoral properties and for whom the Land Rights Act 1976 did not provide any land whatsoever. Those people living on pastoral properties had to claim the land that, in their minds, they had always thought belonged to them. The Chief Minister is quite right in saying that it has caused distress and it has caused emotional feelings to run high in the land rights debate.

Much of the scaremongering of the late 1970s and early 1980s is now seen as exactly that. The Rights for Whites movement, which talked about people losing their backyards, has been stopped and has passed into history. However, over the last few years, there has been an emerging consensus in the community on this issue. No longer do political parties see the issue as a proper one to use to create division and to polarise support in the community. However, I must admit that the actions of the Chief Minister over the last 2 days have done just that, by introducing the statement in regard to ATSIC and now this statement on land rights.

Territorians in general realise now that neither Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal people will leave and that we must learn to live together. I remember the former Chief Minister, the now Minister for Health and Community Services saying that he had no intention of leaving the Northern Territory, that he had his home in Nightcliff and intended to stay there. I hope that that is the type of attitude that we will have from people if we sit down and consult on matters of importance to them, and I believe he has the right attitude towards developing the Territory. I hope many other members of this government have that attitude, and that they are not Johnny-come-latelies who express their views here and then buy land interstate or overseas and fly away. As for my views, honourable members would be aware of the fact that, quite honestly, I have nowhere to go except probably from Darwin into Arnhem Land, and I will stay there forever. Most of my people do not have the opportunities that honourable members in this House have.

This motion will set the process back. If it is carried, it will set back our moves towards constitutional equality. The Land Rights Act is one of the most contentious pièces of legislation to be transferred with statehood, and we have stressed that quite often to the honourable members on the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development. Up to now, I had thought it had been generally agreed that there was only one way that that could be brought about successfully, and that was by consensus. The Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development has been following that path for some time, and I commend the honourable members on that committee, the member for Jingili and the Minister for Health and Community Services, for the time that they have spent travelling to communities and talking to people about a matter on which I thought that we had started to educate at least some members of the CLP government. I commend those members of the committee for attempting to convince Aboriginal people that there are no hidden agendas that will hurt them. I am sure that the Minister for Health and Community Services will rise in this debate and argue with me in relation to what he believes, because he has no option but to agree with the Chief Minister's statement in respect to this.

This motion tells that committee to stop consulting on a very important matter, the essential element of Aboriginal people's belief - the land. That is exactly what this motion will do. We have cautioned the Minister for Health and Community Services on many occasions saying: 'If you guys do this, there are many people out there who are not, at the moment, happy about the Territory government's attitude towards them'. I keep saying in this House that it has not been very long since Aboriginal people have had the right, under the white man's law, to have a piece of paper saying that the land belongs to them. In an even shorter time, we have seen the Chief Minister move a motion that basically says: 'We want you fellows to do this, that and the other. We would like to consult with you on important matters'. However, there is to be no consensus, and that is pretty hard for some people, particularly old people, to come to grips with.

The decision will have been made and, if this motion is passed, it will have the opposite effect to what is intended. It will mean that Aboriginal people will lose trust in the process of consultation, and let us be realistic about this. No federal government, no matter what its political persuasion, will transfer the legislation if there is no general agreement from all Territorians. We keep hearing from this side of the House that 25% of the Territory's population ...

Mr McCarthy: 22.4%.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, that is a fair proportion. If they want consensus and if they want statehood, they have a great deal to do by way of going out and convincing people. I thought that the sessional committee was doing a darn good job on behalf of this parliament and then, all of a sudden, a motion of this kind is brought before us. As I said earlier, a great many people will be very concerned about this motion that the Chief Minister has moved. I noted that the federal Opposition Leader was in town recently and that the Chief Minister obtained from him only a commitment to talk about the transfer. It needs a great deal of discussion.

For whatever reason, the Chief Minister has moved this motion at this time. I really hope that it has nothing to do with the imminent election which has been on the Chief Minister's mind and which I think he will now put on the back-burner for a while as a result of the hammering that he has received in this House over the last couple of days. That could set us back a long way. Whatever the reason for this, I ask the Chief Minister to reconsider and to accept our amendment which I believe recognises our recent history and which has a common goal.

I would like to put clearly on the record Labor's views on the patriation of land rights legislation. We are very aware of the fact that Aboriginal people have expressed their concern to us, and I have often stood in this House to explain that the traditional Aboriginal people have become accustomed to having matters relating to them handled by the federal government. They have come to grips with that and have come to trust the federal government and, for some time, they have been expressing that view to us. I accept the fact that the Northern Territory government does have some very good policies in relation to services in the outback. I recognise that, but I believe also there is an attitude within the Country Liberal Party which should be changed. When the minister sums up at the conclusion of this debate, I hope that he will be able to tell me that the Northern Territory government will be adopting a different approach to consultation on land matters affecting Aboriginal people.

The Labor Party wants to move towards a level of protection for land rights in a Northern Territory constitution that is acceptable to all groups in our society, and I thought that at least the Northern Territory parliament was on the right track by giving that responsibility to the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development. This will mean eventual patriation of the Land Rights Act, but not by riding roughshod over people who hold firm views on land and matters relating to land, whether that land is under claim, was transferred during the days when there were reserves or is land that they have purchased.

Aboriginal people have bought some areas of land. The areas that have been granted to Aboriginal people under section 71 of the Land Rights Act were given by a government which understood our affiliation with land and our cultural existence on such land. The Chief Minister's says: 'Let us make these lands productive to help the economy of the Northern Territory and to create employment for Aboriginal people'. We hear that. There are now moves in the Northern Territory where we see Aboriginal people participating in joint ventures. The other day, the member for Nhulunbuy spoke about the YBE, a very successful organisation employing Aboriginal people on Aboriginal land, working side by side with Nabalco, a giant Swiss alumina plant at Nhulunbuy.

Mr Speaker, we talk about a slow process towards understanding your people's ways of operation. That is what Aboriginal people want. I often hear the old saying that Rome was not built in a day. It is a white man's saying. I am sure Arnhem Land will not be built into a massive city by this government within the next 20 years. In Arnhem Land, in my electorate, there are some old people who say that they do not want any development whatsoever on their land. However, there are young people coming through the education system who are more attuned to the values of this lifestyle, who appreciate the value of money and who want to help the economy of the Northern Territory and to develop the land. That has been one of my hobbyhorses that I have pushed within my electorate especially. Certainly, I have discussed those matters far and wide within my electorate.

In our discussions with the Central and the Northern Land Councils, they have made it clear that they do not accept our position. However, we will not ride roughshod, produce a statement and bring about the type of argument that will provoke people's hostility towards our policies. We believe in sitting down and discussing those matters with them. That is one of the reasons why so many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are joining the Labor Party. Our party holds a very high percentage of the Aboriginal vote. In my view, that is the result of a lack of trust that has built up between the Aboriginal people and the CLP government.

I hope that a Labor government in the Northern Territory would overcome the fear which people have of being ridden over roughshod by the Territory government. We would ensure that we would sit down and discuss important matters such as easements, roads which might run from Nhulunbuy to Katherine and so on. We will discuss such matters with traditional landowners to ensure that their interests are protected as much as the interests of everyone else in the Northern Territory are protected. We intend to continue discussing matters with people even if we may have disagreements with the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council, the new breakaway land council or the Tiwi Land Council.

Passing motions in this parliament will not do the Northern Territory any good. Certain people will read about what we have done in this House and, if honourable members do not support my amendment and the Chief

Minister conveys the motion to the special Premiers Conference, he will be laughed out of the place. The Aboriginal 22% or 23% of the Territory's population has not agreed with the terms of this motion and we have told the Chief Minister that. One would think that, after being in parliament for so long, the Chief Minister would have at least some understanding of the importance of consulting with Aboriginal people.

I would like to take up some aspects of the Chief Minister's comments relating to smaller land councils. He has told this Assembly that he believes that the creation of ATSIC will result in mind-boggling administrative difficulties in delivering services to Aboriginal people. In the speech which he has just made, he suggested that his government would assist small land councils, whether they be constituted on the basis of tribal area boundaries or language groups. Mr Speaker, can you imagine it? There are 13 clans in the Milingimbi area alone. This government would have 13 land councils representing that area.

Mr McCarthy: It is not what we are proposing, Wes.

Mr LANHUPUY: That is exactly what the minister said in his speech. How many land councils does he want for the Central Land Council area? The Chief Minister denigrated the Central and Northern Land Councils. I have said many times in this House that those land councils were appropriate at the time when Aboriginal people had just started to come to grips with the type of development that was taking place in the Territory as a whole. I must say that, when the Chief Minister suggests that he would support small land councils, I do not believe him.

The Chief Minister spoke about the sterile precedents which are being created because land has been transferred to Aboriginal people. I gave an example earlier in my speech of how people at Yirrkala have come to grips with operating a very successful business under the leadership of Gatjil Djerrkura. I commend him and that company for their efforts which have supported Aboriginal people in fulfilling their needs and aspirations for a long time. I would like to stress once again that there are people who never thought that land rights would become a reality for them. It is understandable that they want to hold on to the piece of paper for a little longer so that they can be quite sure that they own the land in question. Even I find it hard to convince such people that they could use some of their land for development and the creation of jobs.

It is pretty hard for me to convince some of the old people. While waiting for land claims to be settled, people have died. The Kenbi Land Claim is a classic example. About 10 people have died waiting for their claim to be successful. They have been affected by the strain and the pressures being placed on them. They have had to expose certain sites, something they never would have done otherwise in the process of bringing up their children. They had to do that because the law of the land said so. We in the Labor Party will be seeking to strike a consensus with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

I believe that honourable members should support the amendment which I have moved so that there is an ongoing process of consultation with Aboriginal people ensuring that the reputation of the government will not be damaged in the context of the work of the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development. Mr Speaker, I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, it disappoints me that the member for Arnhem has so little confidence in the House in which he sits to represent his constituents. I am very disappointed that he cannot see that a government in the Northern Territory has the capacity to manage the affairs of all of its citizens. I am very disappointed in him and in his reaction to the very balanced proposal put forward by the Chief Minister. I will not be agreeing to the member for Arnhem's amendment, which I have only just received. I listened whilst he read it out and I believe I understood the gist of what he was saying. It reflects very poorly on him that he has so little confidence in the government elected by the people of the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister described very clearly the positive role which the Northern Territory government has played in Aboriginal affairs over the years. I have been very close to that situation and I am very much aware of the very high regard in which this government's approach to land rights is held by the bureaucracies in the states and, even though they are not as prepared to acknowledge it openly, by politicians. For example, one of Warren Snowdon's greatest regrets is that he went on the public record stating that the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party government handled Aboriginal affairs better than any other government in the country. I am sure that he regrets saying that publicly because his words have often been fed back to him. However, even he believes that.

In referring to positive achievements in the Northern Territory, the Chief Minister spoke about community government. As we all know, community government is designed not only for Aboriginal people but for small communities generally. It is so flexible that it gives every individual community the ability to design its own scheme. No 2 schemes are alike. Aboriginals can design their own local governments to suit themselves. They do that, and they do it effectively. I have enormous confidence in the ability of Aboriginal people to know what they want for themselves. They are able to do that through community government and they have done it in the past. The thrust comes from the community, not from this government. The general guidelines are laid down by this government so that they fit the laws of the Territory but communities have the ability to make their own laws and design their own schemes to fit their own needs. No state has done that.

The Northern Territory government has supported Aboriginal people in their business ventures such as Bima Wear on Bathurst Island, arts and cultural centres in various communities and tourism and pastoral ventures. We continue to support people who are involved in industry on their land and it is something of which we can be extremely proud. I remind members that the big deal in Aboriginal affairs for the Victorian government in 1990 was that it was developing a 20-acre paddock for Aboriginal purposes, in conjunction with the Catholic Church. That was all it had to boast about and most of the other states are in much the same situation.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr McCARTHY: You do not have the chance to attend Aboriginal affairs councils and I am sure you never will.

Mr Ede: I can imagine what your contribution would be like.

Mr McCARTHY: When we attend meetings of ministerial councils, we are continually dismayed by the attitude of Labor government ministers. They have no concept of what it is to assist Aboriginal people. In fact, they

believe that it is a federal responsibility. They abrogate their own responsibility, and I think that is shameful.

In respect of Aboriginal deaths in custody, we have been shown in the best of lights. That cannot be denied. It has been published. Nobody administers policing in Aboriginal communities as well as we do. Alternative legal custodial apprehension procedures are all in place and working effectively. These were designed for Aboriginal people by this government. This government established bilingual education in Aboriginal communities. Batchelor College is the only institution of its kind in Australia. We lead the way in recognition of customary law and in the employment of Aboriginal Health Workers. These are all very effective schemes and they are working well for Aboriginal people. There is also our sacred sites legislation. The list goes on and on.

The only limit on self-management for Aboriginal Territorians in the Territory is the Land Rights Act. It limits the ability of Aboriginal people to manage their own affairs at community and traditional levels. There is a long history of mismanagement in the land councils. A perfect example of that is the debate over the separate land council in the south-east Arnhem region. A succession of federal ministers have caused enormous problems in their efforts to resolve this issue from Canberra. By the time federal ministers recognise the need for change, they are removed from the portfolio and the frustration starts all over again.

When Mr Hand was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, he visited me in my office in Darwin. He assured me that, if there was a substantial majority at the plebiscite, he would declare a new land council forthwith. I can only take heart at the attitude of the present Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in relation to breakaway land councils. On television last night, he expressed clear support for separate land councils at Groote Eylandt and Bickerton. However, will he express the same support for a separate land council for Ngukurr and Numbulwar? I trust that he will. If he intends to separate Groote Eylandt from the plebiscite area, remembering that Groote Eylandt and Bickerton polled 61% in favour, then he will have to create a separate land council for Ngukurr and Numbulwar which voted 67% in favour. If he does other than that, he will be shown for what he is - a minister who aims only to satisfy the needs of a few. I hope that he will provide that separate land council. I believe it will be the first of many. I urge him to continue those consultations with other bodies that are showing an interest in separate land councils.

In the Territory, we have recognised for some years that people want separate land councils. Remote control from Canberra did not work for us and it will not work for them. Aboriginal Territorians should be given the same right to local control over matters of importance to them as all Territorians have had over major matters since self-government, except the few that have been held back such as Aboriginal land rights, national parks and industrial relations. We have had control over the rest and so should Aboriginal people have control within the Northern Territory.

The large, bureaucratic land councils have no authority to speak for much of the land yet have attempted to do so on numerous occasions. I have been close to this in the past. I have had dealings with them and have been frustrated at every turn. If you establish a large land council to make decisions relating to land yet perhaps only 1 or maybe none of the people in the room have the capacity to make such decisions, you will not get anywhere. However, that has been the case with the Northern and Central Land Councils. They meet but they do not really have the capacity to make a

decision because the only people who can make a decision over land are the traditional owners of that land. Often, they are not represented when discussions are taking place. Clear anomalies have been created as a result of that occurring.

I dealt with the Northern Land Council for many years in order to obtain a lease for the traditional owners of Palumpa over their own land. That was frustrated until very recently when they were given that lease even though it was the traditional owners seeking it. The only way that people will have their wishes met is to have the people from the area sit down and talk, as we did on that occasion. We brought together all the people of the Daly River area. They sat down, without white advisers, and worked out exactly where their boundaries were.

Small land councils do not need consultants, anthropologists and lawyers. The Tiwi Land Council needed none of those. If it needed a lawyer to take up a legal argument for it, it could hire one. Certainly, it did not need anthropologists to indicate where its boundaries were and neither did the people of the Daly River area or the people of Arnhem Land. They know where their boundaries are. They know where they belong and they know who the traditional owners are. They do not need anyone else to tell them. The enormous cost will not be necessary if the councils are much smaller.

Let us have a look at some of those costs. Not long ago, the current Director of the Northern Land Council said that he could not be charged with mismanagement and that he was not at fault for the problems created in the Northern Land Council. I suspect that he is right because he did not know what was going on. The bureaucracy of the Northern Territory Land Council ran the debt up in 1988 from its budget of $3.357m to $6.794m. In fact, it ate into the ABTA funds, which were available to be disbursed to Aboriginal people to buy much-needed equipment and other necessities of life, to the tune of $3 294 689. It doubled its budget by chewing into the funds that should have been distributed on the ground to Aboriginal people. It used it up in its bureaucracy. The Central Land Council did much the same in the same year. Its budget increased from $2.130m to $2.184m. That is amazing!

Mr Ede: Hang on! How much did it increase by? Give those figures again, will you?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, the figures were $2.130m to $2.184m.

Mr Ede: Not bad. A $54 000 overrun.

Mr McCARTHY: It was up $2.184m to $4.606m, Mr Speaker. We are told that the directors of those places cannot be accused of mismanagement. If we look at the Touche Ross report on their mismanagement, it is all there:

> The NLC has historically not required activities projects to be individually costed prior to being approved. The NLC management has not ensured that individual activities projects have always been completed within the approved level of funds. The NLC management has only recently recognised a need for detailed planning and costing. We believe that the lack of financial planning significantly contributed to the NLC's financial position as at 30 June 1989.

Mr Speaker, Touche Ross is a reputable firm and it says that there was gross mismanagement in the Northern Land Council.

It is easy to show that the large land councils have not done their job effectively. They have supported an enormous bureaucracy which has only created dissent. It has not really made things easier for Aboriginal people. In many cases, it has made life very difficult for them. There is a significantly better way. Let us look at the Tiwi Land Council which separated from the other land councils when the Land Rights Act came into place. It not only spends its money wisely but ends up with a surplus. It receives only 2% of the moneys available to land councils. There is no need for lawyers and anthropologists. The traditional and cultural leaders know the land boundaries. We need land councils based on boundaries of affiliation. We do not need land councils that are based on some mandatory line across the Territory. The people of Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Groote Eylandt, Daly River and many other places in central Australia have recognised that. These boundaries would not be drawn up based on the word of an anthropologist. They would be drawn up on the word of the traditional owners of the land. They know where their boundaries are. I have sat with the traditional owners often enough to know that they are in no doubt at all. They certainly do not need anybody to tell them.

Land councils would come together, but it would be individual landowners who would make the decisions about their land. That is essential. We know that a group of people, coming together as the Northern Land Council or the Central Land Council, has no capacity to make decisions over land to which they have no right. There is no doubt at all that, under the Territory government, land rights would be managed much more efficiently. We have shown that we can do it. We have shown that we can deal with Aboriginal people. We have shown that we can provide for Aboriginal people. We know what their needs are because we are much closer to the situation than Canberra will ever be. I believe we are much closer to the situation than are the members of the opposition, because we travel the whole Territory and we speak to all people when we travel. We do not simply run around our own electorates and stir up a few stories. We listen to people and we obtain their views. The view is being expressed more strongly all the time from senior Aboriginal people that they are fed up with the current system. They want a system through which they have some say in how their land is administered. I do not know whom the members opposite talk to, but I know that the people that I talk to are saying that to me. They have respect for what this government is doing and they believe, in many cases, that we can do it better. Recently, I have had discussions with a number of senior Aboriginal people who tell me that nobody could do it worse than the current federal government.

It is not unreasonable for the Territory government to be able to acquire an interest, short of freehold, in land in order to provide public amenities across that land. With few exceptions, those public amenities would be for the benefit of Aboriginal people. It is not unreasonable for the Territory government to have a provision that would mean that public purpose land was not available for claim. It is not unreasonable that Territory law should apply without doubt to Aboriginal land. It is not unreasonable that repeat claims should be discounted. It is not unreasonable that Territorians should have access across and through those lands on public roads. It is absolutely essential that the Northern Territory government have that capacity.

I have no doubt that, eventually, control over land rights will be returned to the Northern Territory. I doubt very much that the present Labor government will do it. However, I am convinced that a future coalition government in Canberra will, because it will recognise, as it has already indicated, that the only body that is actually achieving for

Aboriginal people is the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party government. I strongly support the Chief Minister's motion. I expect him to move it forcefully at the meeting of state Premiers and the Prime Minister. I strongly oppose the amendment moved by the member for Arnhem.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I rise with some pleasure to support this proposition. It has been long overdue and should have been there from the start in 1978. As I have said before, we do not have self-government in the Territory. We have partial self-government and that is an insult to all Territorians. The fact that it came from a coalition Liberal National government in the first place does not give me a great deal of pleasure and the situation certainly has not been rectified by a Labor government. The key to all of this is whether Territorians are capable of governing themselves. It has been demonstrated amply over the last few years that we are capable. Besides, if we make a mess of it, we have to live with it. I will always support the concept that the government should be as close to the people as it possibly can be. The people who make the decisions must live in the same community, and abide by and suffer or benefit from the decisions.

It is long overdue that land control was given to the Territory people. The fact that that has not been done boils down to some horrible suspicion on Canberra's part that we would not look after Aboriginal people. The belief is that Territorians would not care about Aboriginals as much as wiser, according to them, members of the federal parliament on both sides of the House. Phooey! Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must live together. If we remove some of these power-broking groups, we will be able to rub the rough edges off one another. There are many examples where we are getting on together very well indeed. That is the way it should be.

What we have coming from the wisdom of Canberra are some ridiculous organisations. One paternal system from Canberra has been replaced by another that has been proposed by Canberra. The fact that Aboriginal land is administered by land councils is ridiculous. I have said it before, and I will say it again: the average Aboriginal person is no better off than he or she was before, indeed possibly they are a darn sight worse off. If land granted to Aboriginal groups were given to family groups under freehold title rather than being held in trust by land councils, nobody could interfere with them or tell them what to do. The land councils would not be able to act as they do at the moment. They have become power brokers.

I remember that, when I came to this House in 1980, almost every issue of The Australian would contain articles haranguing Queensland about the way it treated Aborigines, but it has been years now since I have read a complaint in The Australian about rough treatment of Aborigines in Queensland. I believe that is because the land has been divided and given to individual families. In a way, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government was supporting the idea of land councils. I believe that, if any land granted were given to family groups under Territory title with people having the right to buy and sell, we would eliminate much of the problem. It is the case the world over that, where people have control over property that they can call their own, they will do things with it. That would happen here. Examples would be set that others would follow. The people would undertake productive activities which would restore their pride and dignity and make them feel part of the Territory. That is vital.

There will always be friction if the Aboriginal people do not feel themselves to be part of Territory. That feeling has to come from within

themselves. When the member for Arafura speaks in this House, he speaks from the heart and contributions that he has made from time to time have been really terrific. He knows and realises that much has to come from within. If people have some land which they can call their very own and to which they feel entitled - and that is not the case with the involvement of the land councils - they will be encouraged to make a start. When Aboriginal people feel that they can stand up tall and proud, beat the grog problem and create the wealth necessary to look after their families without dependence on welfare, they will feel part of the Territory. A great many Aboriginal people are doing that already. They are standing proud and tall. Each time an Aboriginal person becomes motivated to make such a start, they deserve the greatest encouragement that we can provide because their example will be an encouragement to others.

Of course, there are many impediments to this type of development. The federal government has a social welfare system which goes right across the board. It provides benefits in such a way that there is little incentive for people to make an effort. Why work 40 hours a week for a few more dollars than you receive on the dole and through family allowances etc?

Mr Hatton: Sometimes a few less dollars.

Mr COLLINS: Yes.

Of course, when we start in the work force, most of us have to start on the bottom rung unless one happens to be one of the favoured few who are employed by an organisation which pays much higher rates than the private sector in general can provide. Until people can stand on their own feet, their dignity will not be restored. Things that are done with the best of motivation often have the worst results. Some of these schemes form a poverty trap and there is very little incentive for people to get out of it.

This country may be heading into a recession and things could become very tight indeed. However, that dark cloud could well have a silver lining because the government might have to cut its spending in the social welfare area. That may well mean that people who are not working may be forced to make an effort even if it is only to grow their own vegetables. That may well happen. Dr Hewson said that he believed that we would be lucky to stabilise our debt at $250 000m. That is merely to stabilise it before taking the long hard road to reduce it to zero. Huge interest payments will have to be made on such a debt and that imposes a burden across the entire community. In one sense, we will all have to pull our belts in and, in another sense, we will have to roll up our sleeves and and work a darned sight harder. I believe that those who survive the experience will form a better nation.

All the matters which the Chief Minister has put to us in his statement must be supported by all true Territorians. Clearly, we are heading towards an election. Both the major parties in this Assembly have hopes that they may be in government following the election but, whoever takes power, whether it be the Country Liberal Party or the Australian Labor Party or a combination of some kind ...

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I doubt very much whether it will be a combination of those 2, but there are a few other interesting wild cards in the pack.

Mr Speaker, I believe that we must all support the proposition that Territorians should have control of Territory affairs. That is what this motion is about. Each of us must support that proposition. The Territory's problems are real but they can be tackled. With goodwill on all sides, we must address those problems, including the so-called Aboriginal problem. The Aboriginal people must become sick and tired of the endless debates in this place, in the media and elsewhere. However, with goodwill, we can build a Territory of which we can all be proud. I believe very strongly that every member in the Assembly should support this motion so that it can be taken to the federal government requesting that the Territory be given full control over its land. We have to live with the decisions that we make. If we make bad decisions, the people will tip us out ...

Mr Bell: In your case, we certainly hope so, Denis.

Mr Ede: We all agree on that.

Mr COLLINS: I have a great disappointment for the member for MacDonnell because ...

Mr Bell: It seems that I am the only one in your constituency who has shown any perspicacity in that regard.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, you are about the only one who opposes me. I must be a little humble. One cannot have 100% support.

Mr Bell: I know how hard it is for you then.

Mr COLLINS: Yes.

Mr Speaker, with those words, I believe the whole land matter has to be tackled in a different way. It can be tackled by giving individual Territory title to individual families. Land councils are not needed and, once people have land they can call their own, the Aboriginal people will blossom in a manner of which we will be very proud. They simply need the tools. They do not need a Central Land Council or a Northern Land Council or even a breakaway land council. If they have the land, they will do the rest.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in relation to this debate, both sides of the House know that the Chief Minister will not be successful at the special Premiers Conference with a motion in these terms. We all know that.

Mr Vale: Then, sit down and let someone else speak. You oppose everything for the sake of opposing.

Mr EDE: If you keep quiet for a moment, I will tell you how you might have had something that might actually work.

Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, this is about the third time that the Chief Minister has put this proposal and, every time that he does it, he shoots the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development in the foot. The member for Jingili knows that is so because he is a member of the committee and he travels out bush with us. He knows that, every time that we go to the Aboriginal communities, the fundamental points raised are land rights and cultural matters. Those are what people are concerned about. Their biggest fear is what a Northern Territory state government would do in relation to those areas.

Mr Setter: That is what you try to tell them.

Mr EDE: No. That is what they say to us. If you check the transcripts, you will find that is exactly what they say. The only time they show any willingness to discuss the idea of constitutional development and statehood is when we say to them: 'The issue is wide open. In a constitution, you can provide safeguards for land rights and the safety of your culture and traditions'. Some people want the entire Land Rights Act included. Some arguments revolve around the impracticality of that and the possibility of having different levels of entrenchment.

The new line that the Chief Minister has been taking for a year or so now appears to contradict the Northern Territory publication 'Towards Statehood - Land Matters Upon Statehood'. That document advocates that Aboriginal land rights should be patriated to the new state and provides a number of options as to how that might be done. The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act would become a law of the new state and would cease to be a law of the Commonwealth. At that stage, there was at least some rationality to that proposal. It was linked with statehood and gave us room to move. The member for Jingili will have to eat his words if he was a member of the committee in October 1987. Certainly I was. If the honourable member looks at page 93 of the Discussion Paper on a Proposed New State Constitution for the Northern Territory, under the heading of 'Aboriginal Rights' he will note the broad approach to the Land Rights Act taken by the select committee, as it then was. The second paragraph states:

> One option, favoured by the select committee, is to entrench these guarantees of Aboriginal ownership in the new state constitution, such that they can only be amended by following specified entrenchment procedures. The extent of these guarantees and the degree of entrenchment are matters upon which public comment is invited.

Mr Setter: What about the other option?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that is the option favoured by the sessional committee. The committee has been working towards that option which offers the only possible means of achieving the broad community consensus that might transcend the divisions which have been created over this issue.

People have told us that their concerns will not be addressed simply by an act of this parliament. As my colleague's amendment to the motion indicates, because of the actions of successive CLP governments, Aboriginal people have a high degree of distrust which, I must admit, applies not simply to the CLP government but to the Northern Territory government as such. That is because, since self-government, the CLP government has become synonymous with the Northern Territory government. People do not yet realise how much good work a Labor government will be able to do to overcome some of the distrust that exists in the community.

There are even people in some of the land councils who say that they would prefer to have the existing act remain under a federal coalition government than under a Territory Labor government. I am not hiding that fact. These people believe that, if a federal coalition were to attempt to dismantle the Land Rights Act, the Australian Democrats or the Greens would intervene. I must say that they have far more faith in the Australian Democrats than I have. That is because I recall that, when the Liberals spat the dummy in 1984 and said that they would not pass a whole series of bills in the Senate, one of those bills related to the transfer of title to

Uluru. The Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, pleaded with Don Chipp, the then Leader of the Australian Democrats, not to vote with the coalition to block all the bills. He said that he could block all the other bills but not that one. Chipp refused, and that demonstrated the extent to which one could trust the Australian Democrats in the Senate. For that reason alone, I would prefer to have control of the act in the hands of a Labor government in the Northern Territory.

There is a way of achieving this and that is in terms of the amendment which the opposition has moved. It can be achieved only by calming the various groups and creating a consensus among them. We need to bring together various groups in the Territory so that they will no longer have the fears which they currently have in respect of Aboriginal issues. The various groups need to have a much deeper knowledge of each other's position. They need to understand, for example, why people talk about a law which is 40 000 to 50 000 years old, a law which is fixed and must not change. They need to understand that that cannot encompass everything which people of a materialistic bent want. By bringing together the groups, it is possible to identify areas where compromise is achievable and where meeting points can be negotiated between traditional culture and materialistic ways.

Such issues have to be tackled by the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development and by the constitutional convention which will occur after the committee finishes its work. That is the way to handle it. If we have the basic principles entrenched in the constitution so that we have a body of law which cannot be changed by a simple majority of this House, land rights can be administered by this parliament with the broad agreement of all sections of the Northern Territory population.

I listened to the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government. He seemed to be attempting to make a veiled attack on the Labor candidate who will be standing against him who, as we know, is the Director of the Bureau of the Northern Land Council. In his talk about the increases in funding, he failed to mention that the increases in expenditure in both the Northern and Central Land Councils during the period to which he referred were devoted almost totally to one particular area: negotiation of exploration agreements and mining agreements. When all sides reached agreement on what was to happen in respect of the veto and changes were made to the act, the floodgates opened. Negotiations are occurring constantly, much more so than ever before. This process has really stretched the resources of the land councils but, only a few days ago, 2 more mining agreements were negotiated in my electorate. This means that 2 new mines will open up, creating wealth for the Northern Territory.

Excellent outcomes such as that can be achieved only if resources are available to conduct negotiations. Such resources will never be available if we have a huge proliferation of tiny land councils. The member for Arnhem pointed out that there were 13 language groups around Milingimbi alone. I do not know how many languages there are in Arnhem Land, but I know that the figure runs into hundreds. Are we seriously saying that each one of those groups will have a land council? It is a ridiculous idea!

Mr Hatton: What about a land trust?

Mr EDE: That is not what the motion refers to.

Mr Manzie: Yes, but the regional groups might want a land council.

Mr EDE: If the government is talking about land trusts, let it say so. I am on record in this parliament as saying that I believe that there is room for substantially more devolution from the centralised land councils to land trusts and local groups of decision-making powers in respect of land matters. However, it is not possible to make a sweeping statement to the effect that that will occur right across the Territory. It would have to be negotiated carefully. It is quite possible, for example, that one result of the current negotiations in south-east Arnhem Land could be a combination of options, perhaps with some areas having separate land councils and others having substantial local autonomy. Such matters have to be fully negotiated.

The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government said that Aboriginal people support the government's position. I would like him or any other member opposite or on the crossbenches to name one community which supports the provisions which the Chief Minister said he would write into his Land Rights Act. I challenge them to name one. Certainly, the majority of people here may agree that some provisions are quite acceptable, but I challenge honourable members to name one Aboriginal community that will agree.

The Chief Minister referred to 'an ability for the Territory government to acquire an interest less than freehold for essential services'. I would like to know of a community which agrees with that. He referred to 'a provision that land which has been reserved for a public purpose under an act of the Territory will not be available for claim'. He spoke about confirmation that all Territory laws apply to Aboriginal land. That is already the case. He referred also to a tightening up of provisions relating to repeat claims, provisions relating to the ability to claim pastoral leases and the clear identification of Territory public roads.

Whilst various groups will agree with some of those provisions, I would like the Chief Minister to tell me of any community which would indicate that it knows exactly what he is talking about and would give up its current rights and powers to the Northern Territory government. That will not happen. People will not relinquish their powers and rights unless they know that they will acquire something much more important in return. That something would be security of title into the future. That will not come about simply by giving the Northern Territory government control over the Land Rights Act. I am not going to point the finger at any particular member opposite. We are not talking about the present. We are talking about a time which is 5, 10, 15 or 20 years away. Who can say what the composition of the government will be then?

Mr Manzie: It will not be a Labor government.

Mr EDE: It may not be. It may not be a CLP government. Who knows? Who knows what policies it will have in relation to Aboriginal land? Who knows what it will do in terms of the tenure and the title which Aboriginal people have over their land, if we are talking about a simple act of parliament in this place?. That is why people will not agree.

Mr Hatton: Who knows what the federal government will do?

Mr EDE: Aboriginal people have a feeling that, somehow, the bicameral system of government is safer. I do not think that even you believe that we will have a bicameral system in the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: Absolutely not.

Mr EDE: Thank goodness for that. At least we have 1 thing in common. If you explained the system to some of the traditional Aboriginal people and asked them what they wanted, they would want a tricameral system, a system with so many safeguards that nothing could happen.

Of course, there has to be balance. The Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development has suggested that balance could be achieved through overriding principles or guarantees which would entrench land rights to a degree that would provide people with the security they want in that fundamental area. Once that was achieved, it might be possible to have some discussion about such matters as 'confirmation that all Territory laws apply to Aboriginal land', although I do not believe that that is a problem. At that stage, provisions relating to repeat claims, identification of Territory roads and so on can be negotiated.

The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government seems to think that it would be quite simple to determine boundaries. He seems to think that, when Aboriginal people come together, everybody will agree that they know where the boundaries are.

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: Balderdash! Have a yarn to the Warumungu and ask them where their boundary is in the Tanami Desert. Ask the Walpiri where their boundary is. They have already claimed Katherine and they reckon that they are making fair inroads into Darwin.

Mr Manzie: Yes, but they are warlike.

Mr EDE: Warlike? They are the greatest imperialists in central Australia. Some of the old records indicate that, in fact, Yuendumu is on Amatjerre land. Just try to tell the Walpiri that they have to move out. There is no way in the world that will happen. They will fight you as the day is long over issues like that. There are always arguments about matters such as that. People do not obtain their title and rights by patrilineal lineage along. People also obtain rights because of where they are born. That is why Walpiri people have considerable ability to talk about Lajamanu, which is in Gurindji country. It is not simple. It is not clear-cut.

Mr Hatton: But the traditional lines are. They do know where they are. They might try to nudge their way through the fence but they know where the traditional boundaries are.

Mr EDE: Times have changed, Mr Speaker.

My final point concerns Aboriginal candidates. I have often heard the members opposite say that it is great that we have Aboriginal members of parliament on this side of the House and that their side of politics is working towards that. Mr Speaker, I will believe that when they decide to run an Aboriginal candidate for a safe CLP seat - Port Darwin for example. We run Aboriginal candidates for safe Labor seats where they actually will win. The CLP puts its Aboriginal candidates in to contest seats where they have Buckley's chance of winning. The Chief Minister said that tomorrow he will announce 2 more Aboriginal candidates. I will announce them for him. He is talking about Eric Panankain in my electorate of Stuart. He is a fine and honourable gentleman. I believe that he is talking also about Alison Hunt, a ministerial adviser, as a candidate for the division of MacDonnell. That saves the CLP the whole cost of having a launch tomorrow with all the brouhaha. The names have now been announced in the House.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, it is one of the saddest aspects of politics in the Northern Territory that any serious and genuine attempt to debate the critically important issue of Aboriginal land is instantly categorised as black bashing. I expect now, as a matter of course, to be denigrated in such a fashion because I dare to rise in the House to talk about an issue of overwhelming significance to the portfolios that I administer. Nevertheless, all I am seeking to do today is to lay before the House the facts relating to access to land and to talk constructively and positively about land use and resource development for the benefit of the entire Territory community in all its various shades of skin colour.

Firstly, I will refer to the facts as they relate to access to Aboriginal land. The 1987 amendments to the mining regime of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act were designed specifically to place time limitations on the various stages for the processing of an exploration licence on Aboriginal land. The spirit of the act is to ensure that an application is processed within a reasonable period. However, the reality is that the negotiating period is actually being extended through over-reliance by the land councils and the federal government on section 42(13) and section 42(14). The average time taken between lodgment of an application for an exploration licence on non-Aboriginal land and the date of the grant is less than 6 months. In comparison, the average time on Aboriginal freehold land is 6 years.

Let me give honourable members some more facts. Since the Aboriginal Land Rights Act came into force, only 27 exploration titles have been granted out of a total of 420 applications lodged. 85 of those applicants have since withdrawn, mainly because they have been frustrated by delays lasting several years, whilst 90 applications have been vetoed by the land councils. In the same period, from June 1981, when consents to negotiate were first given, the Department of Mines and Energy has granted more than 1850 exploration titles on non-Aboriginal land. Those are the facts. I appreciate fully that it may well be easier to grant an exploration title on non-Aboriginal land because the issues may well be less complex, although that is not necessarily true in all cases. I appreciate also that an exploration title on any land is not an automatic right of the applicant. However, I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that the difference between the 2 situations is a wide chasm and the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the chain is definitely being dragged.

Honourable members opposite are not obliged to take my word for this even though they know it to be true. Instead, they can refer to the Industries Commission report, released last week, and its specific examination of this issue. This is the federal government's own report. In fact, it was commissioned by the federal Treasurer, Paul Keating. The Northern Territory submitted its views to the commission panel and so did the land councils and every lobby group in the country. The Industries Commission stated:

> The current situation in the Northern Territory with respect to exploration and mining on Aboriginal land has become unworkable and is characterised by widespread distrust among the parties involved. In particular, insisting that consenting to exploration implies a consent to mine is an unnecessary complication which substantially constrains the negotiating process. If the 1987 amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act were made with a view to reducing negotiations and decision-making delays, they appear to have been unsuccessful.

The commission goes on to make a series of recommendations on this matter:

> Traditional Aboriginal owners should be free to negotiate agreements directly with exploration mining companies and to conclude deals on all aspects of exploration and mining on their land, including conditions under which exploration can be expected to lead to mining royalties additional to those that will accrue to the Crown if mining occurs.
>
> In undertaking such negotiations, owners should be free to appoint any agent they wish to negotiate on their behalf, including the land councils. If either the traditional Aboriginal owners or an explorer prospective miner declares that an agreement cannot be reached over terms and conditions of an exploration licence granted under normal procedures by the Northern Territory government, the area should immediately become available for application by other parties. This would allow traditional owners to choose an exploration company that will meet their requirements.
>
> Royalties equivalent to 30% of those payable to the Crown continue to be paid into a trust fund to be used for the benefit of all Northern Territory Aborigines, with the remainder accruing to the Aboriginal people in whose land the mine is established.

These are the recommendations of the federal government's own inquiry by the Industries Commission. With those recommendations in mind, I invite honourable members to consider the approach the Northern Territory government ought to take to the next matter that I will raise.

A group of a dozen or so traditional owners in central Australia has approached the government saying its members want to become directly involved in negotiations for mining and exploration on their traditional land. They say their primary reason for doing so is that they have lost confidence in the ability of the land councils to represent their views. The request has come through solicitors acting on behalf of traditional owners in the Mereenie, Pultari and Docker River areas. They are interested in seeking exploration licences in their own right, and so they should be entitled to. They want to form their own company to represent their joint interests and they do not want to negotiate through the Central Land Council even though they are obliged to do so under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

This situation is exactly what the Industries Commission referred to in its 5-volume report and its findings and recommendations. In this case, traditional owners genuinely want to negotiate for themselves, and not be forced to negotiate through the land councils. There are many other such cases throughout the Northern Territory. I am not saying the land councils have no role and that they are always obstructive. There have been circumstances in which the government and the land councils have worked together cooperatively, and probably the best example was on the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline. At present, the government is experiencing similar cooperation on the development of a Mataranka/Gove gas pipeline proposal. I believe there is room and reason for much greater cooperation between us, despite the limitations of federal legislation.

For example, I intend to put to the land councils an invitation to work with the Department of Mines and Energy to set up model agreements for exploration on Aboriginal land. Under these model agreements, the land

councils could work positively with those traditional owners who want to develop corporations to take an interest in exploration ventures. The department could then put proposals to exploration companies seeking permits and gazettal areas with model agreements in place. This would greatly facilitate exploration in these areas and provide benefits for all parties. The Territory would gain from increased exploration and royalty income, the traditional owners would benefit from private royalty arrangements and the land councils would benefit through royalty payments under the terms of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

There is some degree of urgency attached to this proposal. The fact is that the Territory is currently a hot prospect for oil and gas exploration, both onshore and offshore. Onshore exploration results are increasingly promising and the lengthening Middle East crisis is providing immediate incentive for companies to look for new deposits. Many of the most promising exploration areas are on Aboriginal land and many companies have approached the Department of Mines and Energy seeking new exploration permits. The prospects are real and the opportunities are exciting. A genuine chance exists to put past bickering behind us and to work together for our own common good.

I do not resile from my view that the current Aboriginal Land Rights Act is bad legislation that does not work in the best interests of the Territory. Nevertheless, the government is willing and anxious to work with the land councils, to work with Aboriginal people and to work with exploration companies to produce results that will benefit the entire community.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's motion and I do so with some fervour. First, I would like to refer to the very predictable amendment moved by the member for Arnhem. As usual, it contains the litany of allegations that issue from the opposition every time our government puts forward any proactive suggestion in respect of anything to do with Aboriginal people. The members of the ALP have a vital interest in land rights. That is why they are spending so much time sitting in this parliament following the debate with great attention.

I have been listening to these debates in this parliament since the early 1970s. I lived in Nhulunbuy from 1973 to 1975 and I recall the visits there by Mr Justice Woodward when he was examining land rights issues. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that many debates arose out of the circumstances surrounding the declaration of the Nabalco agreement. There were concerns about whether Aboriginal people actually had ownership of land because the Justice Blackburn decision indicated that, in British law, they did not have ownership of the land. Mr Justice Woodward made some recommendations in respect of Aboriginal land ownership and those provisions found themselves in the Land Rights Act. There is one thing about the opposition's proposed amendment that is correct: that particular law has been the source of more controversy and more racial tension than any other act ever implemented in the Northern Territory or perhaps even in Australia.

That tension arose for a couple of reasons. Certainly, many non-Aboriginal people had great difficulty coming to terms with the concept that Aboriginal people have a traditional and important attachment to the land and that they have known land responsibilities. I think 'responsibilities' is a better term than 'ownership' for Aboriginal people. In the Northern Territory in particular, where Aboriginal culture is so strong, that sense of responsibility to the land, to their law and to the

ceremonies associated with the land is still very much alive. The European concept of ownership is less clear. Nonetheless, there was a need for them to define their own legal framework and thus the Land Rights Act emerged.

A couple of problems arose. Firstly, we went through the horrific period of defining what this act meant. The federal government really did fail the people of the Northern Territory with this act. Firstly, it said that the act would enable people to claim land. Some people would automatically obtain title to their land under what was known as schedule 1 land. That was all those areas that had been previously Aboriginal reserves. It included Arnhem Land for example. That was probably the most significant and well-known reserve. There was no need to demonstrate traditional association or any of the rules that exist in the act. They would get the land automatically. It envisaged that, having granted the land, there would be a sorting out process to determine which group of Aboriginal people had ownership of or responsibility for a particular part of the land in Arnhem Land. Did they bother to do that? They gave the responsibility for that to the land councils which they created.

Also, it provided a method for other people to claim other unalienated vacant Crown land. I can well remember the debates on this legislation in the mid-1970s. It was suggested by people like Dr Letts and others that this act had the potential of placing 26% of the Northern Territory under claim as Aboriginal land. The federal coalition ministers - not Labor - scoffed at the suggestion that that could possibly happen. We all know that they had good reason to scoff, but for exactly the opposite consequences. They said it would not reach as high as 26%. Instead, we are looking at the possibility of its almost doubling that. It was never envisaged that claims would be lodged over national parks and pastoral properties. It was said that it related to vacant Crown land that no one was using.

What happened? It is all very well for legislators to pass a law but it is the judges who interpret the law. That is where the fun has been, particularly with a break-through social law of such magnitude as this one. We went through years of testing exactly what this act meant. Did it mean that national parks could be claimed? The politicians in Canberra had said that they could not. Eventually, the Aboriginal Land Commissioner said that they could be claimed. Which particular national parks? A land claim was lodged over Katherine Gorge, and that was a test case because it was a reserve under section 103B of the Crown Lands Act. It was not declared under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act. The reason why it was not declared was because the Northern Land Council approached the Chief Minister of the day and said: 'Trust us. Don't declare it. Let us keep everything in the status quo. We do not want to create racial tension'. The Chief Minister decided to trust the NLC. Immediately, a land claim was lodged. Suddenly, racial tension erupted in Katherine and continued over a decade. Whose fault was that? We argued that the gorge should not be able to be claimed. No one argued about whether there was a traditional association or not.

Then there were other claims. There was Utopia Station. A sneaky shelf company bought a cattle station and, lo and behold ...

Mr Collins: Ti Tree.

Mr HATTON: Ti Tree, was it?

Mr Coulter: McLaren Creek.

Mr HATTON: We will check the name later. They bought a cattle station, said that it was owned by Aboriginal people and made a land claim. Thus, there was dispute about whether there could be a claim for Aboriginal title over a pastoral property. That had to be tested. So the issues go on.

Can claim be laid to beds and banks of rivers? Nowhere else in the country do people obtain control of beds and banks of rivers. That went to court and, eventually, the Aboriginal Land Commissioner ruled that it could be done under the Land Rights Act. Thus, bit by bit, the act was interpreted in peculiar ways. Suddenly, there was a whole new ball game under way. Sometimes someone claims traditional association with land and there is an obligation on the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to test that, and the government responsible for the act should exercise its responsibility and test the validity of a person's claim to have rights under the Land Rights Act to ownership of that land. That has to be tested. Should I be able to walk in and say that I am an Aboriginal, that I am entitled to that land and that you should sign on the dotted line so that I receive royalties and all the other benefits. No! You determine whether I have entitlements.

The federal government has not been prepared to stand up and bring these matters forward. It wants to sit back and be the good guy. However, this is very important for the Northern Territory and for the real traditional owners themselves, who would not want their ownership to be usurped. The Northern Territory government has taken on that responsibility in case after case after case. Thank goodness, we are getting better at it. I remind members of the controversial Lake Amadeus Land Claim. The terrible Northern Territory government opposed the claimants. We found the right owners and put their position to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner who determined the government was right and the land council was wrong. Were we wrong to test the validity of the claim? We did our job. In fact, we did the federal government's job because it wimped out. It has dumped this social legislation on the Northern Territory and walked away from it because it does not affect people who live in Canberra. That is not good enough.

There are people in the bush who really do not like the way the 2 monolith land councils operate. In Aboriginal law, unless you have custody rights, you have no say over somebody else's land. You cannot speak for that land or for the ceremonies associated with that land. What did we have in the 1970s? Under the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, 9 Aboriginal people, who were selected from around the Territory, made decisions in relation to sacred sites. I know, the member for Arnhem knows and the member for Arafura knows that, if it happened to be Pitjantjatjara country, no one from Arnhem Land could even look at that submission because that would breach Aboriginal law. That gave enormous power to the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority. All that these people could say was that they agreed.

We have changed that act. Under the new sacred sites legislation, the people responsible for the land and for the sites must be approached and their permission sought about what can be done on that land. In effect, we are applying Aboriginal law through our own law. Under the Land Rights Act, all the clans in the area are asked for their opinion instead of simply consulting the particular clan whose land it is. That is not Aboriginal law. That is land council law. That is why there is a move for breakaway councils. People are saying that they, not the land councils, should speak for their own country.

I do not know whether a number of separate land councils is the right answer. What I do know is that, if you believe in Aboriginal ownership of

land, you should give the responsibility to the owners. The act provides for a land trust. They should have a land trust for the particular area of land and they should be the people who speak for it. If they require an administrative system, it should be lean and mean. That is what should be done in relation to Aboriginal people. Mr Justice Woodward was the creator of the Land Rights Act. The land councils had no association with Aboriginal law at all. They were a white man's invention to create an administrative support. Last year, Justice Woodward said that he knew they were not appropriate, but they seemed all right as an interim solution while matters were sorted out. He does not agree that they should continue, and he is the person who invented the blasted system. The people in the bush do not want the land councils. The only people who want them are the people who work for them or those who are building their political power base around them.

Another big problem with the Land Rights Act is land administration. The fundamental difficulty lies in the fact that it is a Commonwealth act. We have a Commonwealth act which relates to land administration and which lies across all land administration and a network of laws throughout the Northern Territory. There is an interrelationship between land administration, land legislation and everything else. The laws that administer the land are the foundation stone on which government is built and the network of laws. The Land Rights Act states that all Northern Territory laws 'shall apply on Aboriginal land to the extent that they are not inconsistent with the Land Rights Act'. We had to seek in the High Court of Australia a determination of whether the Control of the Waters Act applied on Aboriginal land.

There are hundreds of acts in the Northern Territory. We have to go through this nonsense of running backwards and forwards to the High Court of Australia to find out whether our laws apply on Aboriginal land. The people on Aboriginal land are Territorians. We had a crazy situation whereby, if someone was caught speeding or creating a traffic nuisance in a particular Aboriginal community, prosecution in court failed because they were driving on private land. We had to amend the Traffic Act to deem all roads on Aboriginal land to be public roads for the purposes of that act. What nonsense! There were 1100 people in that particular community and their lives were at risk because, as result of this Commonwealth act, Territory laws did not apply there. If that act were a Northern Territory act, the laws could mesh together and land administration could mesh together properly. Territory people, black and white, should be able to work together for their mutual future.

Members opposite have talked about the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development. I am the chairman of that committee and I have been on it since its inception. The goal of constitutional development and statehood is a very real passion of mine. It is true that, among other things, we are debating and examining the possibility of recognising Aboriginal law and even land rights in a Northern Territory constitution. In the end, those decisions will be taken by Northern Territory people. That is the essence of that process. Consultation is proceeding, but that does not mean that this motion should not proceed.

The opposition's amendment is nothing more than the type of racist propaganda that it has been pumping out over the last 12 years in an attempt to promote the idea that somehow we do not support Aboriginal people. We have fought for the cause of Aboriginal people. In his speech, the Chief Minister gave example after example, right across government. We are leading the country on matters affecting Aboriginal people in all areas of

government - health, education, policing - right across the board. Other governments come to us. The federal government praises us, but the opposition in this House does not. The opposition says that we hate Aborigines. If we hate them, why do we spend so much money and put so much effort into helping them? It does not follow, does it? It is time that we brought the laws of the Northern Territory and the land administration of the Northern Territory together. Vesting the control of this act with the Northern Territory government would be a most significant step in bringing the people of the Northern Territory together. Let us work together to build a good future for everybody.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, first, I would like to endorse the comments of the Minister for Health and Community Services because I believe everything that he said was absolutely accurate. I know that he speaks from a great deal of experience, having travelled around the Northern Territory and met most of the Aboriginal people within the Territory over his term in parliament, both as a minister and as a Chief Minister. On numerous occasions, as a member of the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development, I have had the pleasure of visiting many communities in his company, and I can endorse his remarks.

There is no doubt that Aboriginal people have a great mistrust of the land councils. It is one of the complaints that we hear continually when we talk to them privately. They tell us that they do not believe that they have had a fair go from the land councils. The minister is quite correct in his assumption that the growth of the breakaway council movement results from the fact that the people mistrust the bureaucrats within the land councils. As I have said in the Assembly before, the majority of the bureaucrats with the land councils are not traditional Aboriginal people. They are non-Aboriginal people or people of mixed blood. The traditional Aboriginal person has a real problem with that.

My position with regard to land rights and constitutional development was totally misrepresented by the members for Stuart and Arnhem. The member for Stuart quoted from a report of the sessional committee which stated the committee's preferred position. I endorse that. However, this motion will in no way affect that position. In fact, I believe that it will complement it.

I mentioned that the traditional Aboriginal people mistrust the land councils because of the way they operate and manipulate things. About 18 months ago, at Mataranka, I was talking to a traditional owner who came from the south-east Arnhem Land region where the breakaway land council movement has been growing. We were talking about permits and how many non-Aboriginal people wanted legitimately to visit Aboriginal communities for the purposes of work or whatever. He said that it was not his people who introduced the permit system. He said: 'The Aboriginal people do not want the permit system. We did not ask for the permit system. It was introduced by white people. It was imposed on us by the Land Rights Act. We would be happy to see it go'.

Mr Hatton: That was at Numbulwar, wasn't it?

Mr SETTER: No, it was at Mataranka.

Mr Hatton: He was from Numbulwar.

Mr SETTER: He was from Numbulwar. That is correct.

Mr Speaker, one of the problems that we have had with regard to the Land Rights Act over the years, and the minister alluded to this, is that we have had a succession of Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs from both sides of politics who have come from southern urban areas of Australia. With 1 or 2 exceptions, most of them had little concept of what it was all about or how this matter should be addressed. As was said earlier, by the time a minister gains a feel for the issues, there is reshuffle in the ministry and a new person comes in. More than likely, the new minister will never have visited a traditional Aboriginal community and we have to start all over again.

In his foreword to the Northern Territory's response to Mr Justice Toohey's review of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 'Seven Years On', Hon Paul Everingham wrote on 10 April 1984:

> Few pieces of Commonwealth legislation have had such an effect on the Territory as the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. Whatever one thinks of its principles, the act has caused a great many legal and administrative difficulties for the Territory government, and has inhibited Territory development in certain areas.

Do you realise, Mr Speaker, that between August 1975 and the last sittings in August, there have been 56 debates in this House on Aboriginal matters? The majority of those debates related to land rights. We have added to that total during these sittings because we had a major debate on the subject yesterday and are involved in another today. I cannot think of any other issue which has taken up the amount of time which matters relating to Aboriginals, particularly land rights, have taken up.

I will quote some facts so that this issue can be seen in perspective. Since 1976, when the Land Rights Act first came into force, 130 land claims have been lodged. Only 25 of those claims have been finally settled. 17 claims are in progress, and the commissioner has been precluded from hearing 28 claims on stock routes and reserves. Under section 50, the commissioner is precluded from hearing a further 12 claims which relate to repeat claims. The total area of Northern Territory land granted or under claim is 634 392 km^2. That represents 47.12% of the land mass of the Territory. That is a considerable amount.

Thus, members can see exactly where the Land Rights Act has led us during the last decade. I will quote from a document called 'Aboriginal Land Rights in the Northern Territory: What It Means and How It Will Work'. This document was issued by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In fact, it is a paper written by a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Ian Viner. Mr Viner held the portfolio in the days of the Fraser government. The period is 1976 and several years after that. I will quote selectively rather than reading the entire paper:

> My visit to the Northern Territory this week, to present Aboriginal people with legal title to their own lands, should mark the beginning of a new era of unity for the people of the Northern Territory.

The next extract indicates that they were talking about statehood even in those days:

> If a new state is to develop on the basis of the unity and aspirations of its people, this is the only way it can reach full

> potential. If Australia is to become an example to the world of the harmony which is possible amongst people, it is important that people do not fear the future because of misconceptions and misunderstanding.

He goes on further:

> In recent months, I have read and heard many alarming rumours about the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory, how they are getting 50% of land and how afraid people are that their own land may be taken over. I want to put an end to these rumours because they are not only untrue but dangerous to the future racial harmony to which I have already referred.

That was what the minister said in 1976. Today, the Land Rights Act has resulted in 47.12% of the Northern Territory being claimed or granted. Mr Viner went on to say: 'The titles I will be handing over to the Aboriginals this week are a former reserve of land totalling 245 200 km^2, about 18% of the Territory's 1 348 013 km^2'. He was referring to areas which had been designated as Aboriginal reserves for a long time. He continued, and honourable members should listen to this very carefully: 'It is expected that claims will be lodged, including those already lodged, to another 10% of the Northern Territory'. That was what was intended when the Land Rights Act was first introduced in 1976. Of the Territory's area, 18% was granted because it constituted existing reserves, and it was expected that a further 10% would be claimed under the act. From an anticipated 28%, we have moved to just over 47%. There is no sunset clause to the act and, as I understand it, claims can continue to be lodged.

Mr Viner went on to say: 'Alienated land bought by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission for Aboriginals ... can be subject to claim by Aboriginals on traditional grounds. If the claim is upheld, it takes on the status of traditional land and inalienable freehold title passes to the traditional owners'. We have seen many pastoral properties purchased and claimed on that basis. He went on: 'This will mean most Aboriginal land claims to land that is outside Aboriginal reserves will be determined within 2 years'. That is what the minister of the day, Minister Viner, said in 1976. The process is still continuing in 1990. A number of claims are still in the process of being settled.

The Chief Minister's motion says that this Assembly 'asserts unanimously that the Commonwealth should now transfer administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, now administered by the Commonwealth, to the control of the Assembly'. There is no doubt that, as the honourable minister said earlier, Aboriginal people do not have any problem with that at all. In fact, they are as sick and tired of Canberra bureaucrats telling them how to run their affairs as they are of the land councils attempting to do the same thing. It was quite incorrect for the member for Stuart to imply that Aboriginal people have been expressing concerns about the Northern Territory government taking control of the Land Rights Act. I know that that is quite untrue because I have discussed the matter with Aboriginal people. They do not have any concerns at all about the Northern Territory government doing that. In fact, they would be very happy for it to occur because it would bring them much closer to the decision-makers.

I have attended public meetings of the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development with the member for Stuart. I have heard him stand up and say: 'It was the Australian Labor Party which gave you land

rights. We want to entrench land rights in the new constitution of the Northern Territory. If there is a change of government in Canberra and the Liberal Party gets back in, it will take your land rights away from you'. That is the type of tripe that he peddles. I have heard it on several occasions. He is quite wrong in saying that Aboriginal people are concerned about what would happen if the Land Rights Act were patriated to the Northern Territory. There is no doubt in my mind that it would be much better for them if that occurred.

I have only a few minutes left but I would like to quote from a book called 'Hawke's Law: The Politics of Mining and Aboriginal Land Rights in Australia' by Ronald T. Libby. Under the heading, 'The Party's Socialist Doctrine', he says: 'In a letter to the ALP parliamentary caucus preceding the party's 1984 biennial national conference, Graeme Campbell ...' - whom we all know to be the Labor MP for the seat of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia - '... argued an opposing interpretation of the party's Aboriginal Land Rights Platform. Campbell said that one-issue zealots had managed to write into the party's platform an Aboriginal land rights commitment that was at odds with the party's socialist philosophy. If this continued, it would inevitably lead the ALP into a political landmine'.

According to the book, Mr Campbell attributed this ill-conceived land rights commitment to 'the ultra-democratic nature of the ALP structure which a group of one-issue zealots could exploit during the dying days of conferences'. Campbell argued that the notion of land rights in the party's Aboriginal affairs platform was misconceived. He said that it was essentially an emotive white term that in fact conflicted with the ALP socialist policy. Campbell indicated in this regard that 'it was primarily the tribal Aboriginal who required access to land and not the urban part-Aboriginal who had lost traditional cultural identification with the land'. That is absolutely correct but, unfortunately, organisations like ATSIC will be dominated by what Mr Campbell calls 'urban part-Aboriginal people'. Mr Speaker, I took the time to point that out myself only yesterday. The book goes on to say:

> Campbell asserted that this could only mean one thing. The Labor Party is committed to the socialist principle that minerals and royalties derived from mining belong to all Australians, regardless of race and the type of land ownership - that is, leasehold, freehold or any other land tenure. He pointed out that, if the ALP contradicted its own socialist doctrine by giving Aborigines privileged rights to mineral ownership, it would produce a backlash against Aborigines and against the ALP.
>
> According to Campbell, the source of the backlash was the working class throughout Australia. Unlike the proponents of Aboriginal land rights, who claimed that this backlash was restricted primarily to country or rural electorates, Campbell argued that the Aboriginal land rights issue was likely to affect all working class areas of Australia.

It seems that there is a bit of a split within the ALP, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Chief Minister. It is long overdue. The debate on Aboriginal land rights has been going on across the Northern Territory and Australia for many years. I believe it is time to have the administration

of the Land Rights Act transferred from federal to Territory control. I am amazed that members opposite would oppose this. They aspire to be a government yet they do not want to have a large part of the Northern Territory land transferred back to their administration. It indicates 1 of 2 things - their inability to manage, or their incompetence. What has become patently obvious in the Territory in recent years is that the Aboriginal community, like the white people before them, have suffered as a result of remote control. There are dozens of examples of development proposals which occurred after self-government and which were bottled up before self-government in 1978. Gas pipelines, bitumen roads and tourist developments are just a few of those.

In the early 1970s, a well-known Labor identity, Jock Nelson, as Mayor of Alice Springs, gathered together a number of tourist operators from central Australia. He took them down to Canberra to discuss with ministers of the Whitlam government a proposal to develop a large tourist resort at Ayers Rock. From memory, 12 federal ministers were involved - land, transport, environment, Aboriginal affairs etc. When Jock Nelson returned to Alice Springs, he recounted his embarrassment at the difficulties experienced in becoming involved with a federal government because of the remote control problems. About 15 tourist operators travelled at their own cost to Canberra to meet with these 12 ministers. When they arrived there, only 3 ministers were available for consultation. The other 9 were scattered round the Commonwealth somewhere. The tourist industry representatives returned to central Australia having had no worthwhile discussions. They suffered the same type of frustration that other developers had suffered over a long period.

It is quite obvious now that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are starting to suffer that same type of frustration with remote control by a government that may have good intentions at heart. However, it is mission impossible to run a department from nearly 2000 miles away with any degree of efficiency. It does not matter whether it is the Department of Transport and Works or the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Any department will go down the same path if it is governed by an administration that is thousands of miles away.

In 1975, at the time of the tabling of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the then minister, Ian Viner, said the act would lie on the table for so many months. He wanted the communities to discuss it and to come back to him with their comments and suggested amendments. The Finke River Mission people, who operated over a large area in the Centre, took the minister at his word and obtained the services of one Brian Martin who was then practising law in central Australia. They had the legal implications of the Land Rights Act explained to them and then went bush for several months. They translated the act into language for all community groups with whom they worked. They recorded faithfully the Aboriginals' comments on that legislation.

Subsequently, the tapes were transcribed and the verbatim transcripts were sent to Canberra. The attitude of the federal parliament was that no one in central Australia knew what they were talking about, and it ignored them. I have in my possession tonight those documents referred to as the Finke River translations of Aboriginal land rights legislation. This is a set of the original copies. Whilst it is repetitive, clan group after clan group expressed concern that the act did not represent Aboriginal law. It would pay anyone in this Chamber to read these documents. I would suggest that the member for Arnhem could gain an insight into the thinking of

central Australian Aboriginals. Quite obviously, he does not know what his own people in the Top End think.

The comments are repetitious because clan group after clan group expressed the same consternation and concern about the legislation. This is the only set of the documents that I have left in my possession. I seek leave to table them with the proviso, and I have mentioned it to the Clerk, that I can have them returned to me at a later stage. For the information of honourable members, I believe these documents should be tabled.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable minister, a tabled document becomes the property of the Assembly. I advise all honourable members that you have those documents in your possession. Any member who would like to read them can correspond directly with you.

Mr VALE: Mr Speaker, I thank you for your advice. I think the documents are of such value that a copy of the set should go into the Parliamentary Library. I discussed this with the Clerk earlier. He said that, if I tabled the originals, he would make arrangements for me to have photocopies of them at a later stage. There is no rush for that. Those documents will become as important to an understanding Aboriginal people as did the Strehlow papers.

There has been much discussion about frustrations experienced with the administration of the act. Obviously, there is need for amendments to the legislation, whether it stays in Canberra or comes back to the Territory. The Chief Minister gave an undertaking that the land administration would be transferred to the Territory and that the federal government would retain an assent power, through the Governor-General, over any Territory amendments to the act. One problem is that the Central and Northern Land Councils have become so big and unwieldy that either the land councils need to be broken down - and that was claimed in those tapes that I have just tabled - or smaller clan groups or land councils need be formed.

The easiest way to proceed would be to amend the legislation so that anyone proposing any development on Aboriginal land would be required to talk to a lawyer nominated by a clan group - whether it is pastoral, tourism, mining, transport or whatever. Proposed developments could then be established more quickly. I refer to a proposal that I had put to me last year by a group of pastoralists from New South Wales. They wanted to put cattle at Haasts Bluff where there are windmills, stockyards and good feed. I set up a meeting for them with the Aboriginals. The proposal was that the pastoralists would move several thousand head of cattle to the Northern Territory. They would put them out at Haasts Bluff on a type of agistment, without any exchange of funding by the Aboriginals. The Aboriginals would be employed automatically by the company and would receive automatically 20% ownership in the company. At the end of the first year, with the sale of x number of head, the percentage of the ownership by the Aboriginals would increase by 10% and that would continue each year until they were majority shareholders.

The Aboriginals thought that was a fairly good idea. I thought it was a fairly good idea and the cattlemen from New South Wales thought it was a fairly good idea. There was abundant feed around. The problem was that a quick decision needed to be taken because cattle cannot be moved in hot weather. The Central Land Council employed a delaying tactic that continued for days, weeks and months. As a result, the cattlemen decided that it was too late to move the cattle - by then, it was late October or early November - and walked away from the project. It was not the cattlemen from

NSW who lost out; they went elsewhere with their cattle. It was the Aboriginal people of central Australia who lost out.

That is a typical example of the type of frustrations that have existed in central Australia because, on the one hand, there is a large bureaucracy that is unable to meet quickly and, on the other, some European advisers to the land councils are philosophically opposed to any type of development, whether it be swings or merry-go-rounds at Traeger Park or uranium development in Arnhem Land. I believe that the sooner the legislation is transferred to the Territory, where Territorians of all colours can discuss common problems and resolve them, the better it will be for the Northern Territory.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. Until such time as Territorians have control over all land in the Territory, we cannot relax. I believe that Territorians are the same as all other Australians and, as such, we should have the same rights. Any system is wrong which puts the control of land in the hands of a group of people who are not democratically responsible to those for whom they are controlling that land.

The member for Arnhem's amendment notes that 'successive Country Liberal Party governments have maintained a consistent opposition to land claims lodged on behalf of Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory'. That is one of the furphies that are continually put forward by members opposite. Land councils and the Territory Labor Party claim consistently that the government has opposed every land claim. That is not correct. In some claims, the adversary role of lawyers is a key part of the process which is established under the Land Rights Act. Under section 50 of the act, the Territory has an obligation to make submissions on matters of detriment and land use patterns, and the importance of the Territory's role has been acknowledged by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. Everyone is aware that the Territory has taken a very strong stand in relation to particular claims: the Jawoyn, the Warumungu, Kenbi, Alligator Rivers Stage II, Finniss River, Daly River and Lake Amadeus. These are areas near major centres or areas with considerable mineral or tourist potential. That strong stance has been taken because of the effect of the claims on other Territorians.

It is interesting that the federal government introduced legislation that was enacted by people who are not affected by it. However, it does affect us in the Territory. That act provides a responsibility for matters of detriment to be argued and traditional ownership to be tested. After the federal government enacted the Land Rights Act, it walked away and left the Territory government to fulfil the provisions of section 50 of the act. Though the Commonwealth set the mechanism in place, Territorians have to pay for it. Even under those circumstances, the Territory has not opposed traditional evidence in 15 of the claims and, of those, 12 have been granted and 1 is awaiting a decision from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Those 12 claims represent 58% of the area of land granted as a result of land claims. Thus, in relation to 58% of the land that has been granted, there has been no argument about traditional evidence. Three of the claims were settled by negotiation.

Pastoral property has been included in some of the claims. As the member for Nightcliff pointed out, we object in principle to pastoral land being converted to schedule 1 Aboriginal land. It is a ridiculous scenario. The member for Wanguri might like to say something about this because he is always talking about protection of land, environmental

concerns and pastoral land. He tells us that we must ensure that we do not lose the pastoral estate and that we must not change the existing system of pastoral leases even though the mechanisms involved do nothing to protect the land or to encourage its sustainable use. Nevertheless, we have a situation where pastoral leases purchased by Aboriginals can be converted to schedule 1 land and alienated forever. The title is stronger even than freehold because, as all Australians know except some people in the Territory, governments have the ability to acquire land for a public purpose.

We have a situation where pastoral land can be converted to absolute freehold. In those cases, we have mounted challenges to test the validity of the claims. Unfortunately, we lost out in that regard and the situation is ongoing. There is a commitment by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to purchase 3 pastoral properties a year in the Territory. Every year, 3 pastoral properties go into the system and, farther down the line, they are converted to Aboriginal freehold. I do not know how many years it will take but, unless the processes are changed, I do not think anyone in this House is naive enough to believe that all pastoral land in the Territory will not end up eventually as schedule 1 land under the Land Rights Act. It is a situation that we cannot endorse.

We have objected to stock route claims, but it is interesting to note that we have never opposed the traditional aspects of the claims. The same applies with the pastoral leases: we have never opposed the traditional aspects of the claim, only the principle. It is important that people understand that this Assembly has been misled by opposition claims that the Territory government opposes all land claims. In fact, we have supported some land claims and negotiated settlements in several others. The Territory government determines its position in relation to each land claim prior to the commencement of the hearing by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. That is done after consideration of anthropological material provided by the land council on behalf of the claimants and the detriment material provided by Territory departments and agencies. The Land Rights Act requires the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to comment on matters of land use patterns and detriment to other parties. As the elected government that has to administer the affected lands, obviously the Territory government would be negligent if it did not present evidence to the commissioner on those matters. That has been the basis of the government's opposition.

Unfortunately, the Commonwealth has not become involved in the hearing process resulting from its own legislation and we are left to test evidence presented to the commissioner and to demonstrate whether the evidence meets the statutory requirements. In all, 25 claims have been dealt with and 17 claims are in progress. The break-up of Territory responses to date might be of interest to honourable members. We have strongly tested the evidence in 7 claims: Jawoyn, because of its effect on the town of Katherine and the Katherine Gorge; Warumungu, because of its effect on the town of Tennant Creek; Kenbi because of its effect on the future development of Darwin; Alligator Rivers Stage II, because of the mineral resources in the region; Daly River, because of its effect on the patterns of land use in the region; Finniss River because of its effects on the patterns of land use in the region; and Lake Amadeus, because of disagreement on anthropological evidence provided by the Central Land Council, and a lease issued to Conway and Landers at Kings Creek Station. As the member for Nightcliff pointed out, the people presented as traditional owners by the Central Land Council in the Lake Amadeus Land Claim were the wrong people. Had it not been for the Territory government providing evidence as to the correct traditional owners, the Central Land Council would have done them out of their land. As a result of this government's actions, that did not happen.

The Aboriginal Land Commissioner commented pretty severely on the attitude of the Central Land Council and some of its lawyers with regard to their actions which could have denied the rightful owners their claim.

The Territory has opposed 6 claims in part: the Upper Daly River, because of its effect on the pattern of land use in part of the area of the claim; Uluru, because of the national park; Borroloola, because of the McArthur River mineral deposit; Kaytej Warlmanpa, because of the Tennant Creek water control district; Warumungu, also because of the Tennant Creek water control district; and Kidman Springs, because of the government research station. The Kidman Springs claim is an example of taxpayers' property situated on an area which was claimed. The claim has been granted and we are fighting a concept whereby we may be required to pay many thousands of dollars in rent to use our property. That is certainly not a system that we can support.

However, the Territory government has supported 6 claims. I do not know if the members of the opposition can hear me, but I will guarantee that we will still hear them on the radio saying that we oppose all land claims. We have supported 6. As I pointed out, we opposed some others only in part, and we chose not to be legally represented during the hearing of traditional evidence in those matters. We made submissions on minor matters of detriment only. Those claims were: the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru; the Alyawarra and Kaititja; Limmen Bight; Mount Barkly; the Walpiri Kaititja; and Ti Tree.

The Territory government tested 3 claims to Aboriginal pastoral leases, in a minor way, on matters of principle relating to the conversion of pastoral leases. The last of those was actually 9 years ago. The Territory government has tested traditional ownership in 16 claims. I will not read through those. We have opposed 2 claims on jurisdictional grounds, and the challenge was upheld: St Vidgeon Pastoral Lease and Eva Valley Pastoral Lease. Settlements have been negotiated in relation to 4 claims: Wombaya, Cobourg, Timber Creek and Wakaya/Alyawarre.

In summary, of 42 claims heard or in process, 4 claims have been settled by negotiation, 6 claims have been supported, 3 claims have been tested in minor ways, 16 claims have had the evidence of traditional ownership tested and 13 claims have had evidence presented of major detriment or land use disruption in relation to the whole or part of the claim. That certainly is not a record of totally opposing all land claims. I believe that the amendment proposed by the member for Arnhem is mischievous in its assertion that we oppose land claims.

In terms of what is proposed in the Chief Minister's motion in relation to the patriation of land rights to the Territory legislature, it has been pointed out that, under our proposals, the role of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner would be preserved in the claim process and the responsible minister would be locally accountable. I do not think that anyone could argue against that. We would redefine the principal role of the major land councils, relating it to completion of the land claim process only so that, when a land grant is made, the administration is assumed by smaller land councils more directly representative of the people involved. We would assist in the creation of smaller land councils based on tribal groupings, and we would vest Aboriginal land in Aboriginal traditional owners with boundaries based on tribal ownership.

Not only are those proposals fair and reasonable, they are actually proposals which are argued for by Aboriginal people themselves. They want

to have more control over the land that is granted to them. They want to remove the finger of the bureaucratic land councils from the land. They do not want to see the money that comes from their land being spent on Toyotas and fat cats who ride high on inflated salaries without ever getting out on the ground. It is their land and they say that they want to have control over it. I say that it is the perfect concept and it is one that we should be fighting for in this House, not supporting bloated bureaucracies which simply siphon money away from where it should be going - to Aboriginal people on the ground.

We should also be very much aware that we would write into the law an ability for the Territory government to acquire an interest less than freehold for essential services. This is vitally important. Under our present restricted legislation, we cannot obtain land for a public purpose. We cannot obtain land for the building of roads, for power easements, water easements, for building schools and health centres. It is a ridiculous scenario. The government uses taxpayers' money to provide property and facilities on land that does not belong to the taxpayer. In other words, we are giving away the ownership of taxpayer-funded facilities. We would also include in law a provision that land which has been reserved for a public purpose under an act of the Territory would not be available for claim. That is quite sensible. When you talk to traditional Aboriginal people about it, they see it as a sensible thing. They do not believe that areas that are used for public purposes should be locked up.

The Chief Minister said that also we would write into the law a confirmation that Territory law applies to Aboriginal land, along with a tightening up of the provisions relating to repeat claims. How could any member in this House not support the removal of the repeat claim process? We could be involved in a claim process for many years and, after it is concluded, find that we are back into it again. It would be interesting to see members opposite wearing their hearts on their sleeves in relation to this repeat process in the same manner as they did a few days ago in respect of the liquor licensing laws. If they did that, we might get somewhere. We would write into the law provisions relating to the ability to claim pastoral leases. We really have to remove the anomaly which allows that situation to continue. We would also include the clear identification of Territory public roads.

These are sensible moves which will not remove ownership of land from traditional Aboriginal people. However, they will allow the land to be utilised in sensible ways, as it is in all other parts of Australia. The proposals are very fair. They have been discussed by a number of Aboriginal people who state continually that they want to get rid of the bureaucratic controls and systems of the major land councils and put the control of the land in local hands.

I have said in this House on many occasions that a system which gives separate rules, controls and guidelines to people on the basis of race is wrong. We cannot have a system which creates division in our community. Our problems in relation to the granting of land claims do not arise because Aboriginal people are claiming the land. They arise because, once that land is granted, it is not subject to the same standards which apply to other land. Therefore, the provision of land for essential services is denied to the community. The ability to construct roads and power easements is denied. The land is not subject to the same provisions as apply to land held by other Australians, not only in the Territory but all over the country. That situation cannot continue if the Territory is to develop in a way which will allow our grandchildren to live in harmony. We must have

equality across the system without basing advantage or disadvantage on race. The Chief Minister's proposals have my wholehearted support.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a contribution because this is an important issue. Unfortunately, it is not an important motion. Members on this side of the House have always recognised land rights as being an important and emotional issue. My predecessor as Leader of the Opposition, Senator Collins, used often to say that we spent more time talking about land rights in this House than any other matter. That is still the case. Unfortunately, we do not seem to make much progress.

I think it was at the beginning of last year that the Chief Minister made a statement saying that it was his target that all powers that had not been transferred across to the Northern Territory would be transferred by July 1990. Does anyone remember that? That is all that happened, Mr Speaker. We had the statement. We perhaps had a letter from the Chief Minister to the Prime Minister and nothing else happened. We are engaged in a similar process here tonight. We are engaged in a 1-night stand rather than a serious attempt to address the problem. If honourable members want an indication that this is a 1-night stand, they should read the terms of the motion: 'Accordingly, this Assembly asserts unanimously that the Commonwealth should now transfer administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, now administered by the Commonwealth, to the control of this Assembly'. To me, the word 'now' means 'at the moment'. Of course, in his speech to the motion, the Chief Minister qualified that somewhat, saying that he would settle for a transfer of the act in 12 months. All he has done is to replace a 12-month target set 18 months ago with another 12-month target set now.

Of course, we could simply accept the Chief Minister's approach as a bit of pre-poll electioneering. However, as the member for Arnhem pointed out, the issue is much more important than that. Members on this side of the House believe that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is capable of being amended, and always will be, to make it a better act and to make it more appropriate to the needs of the people in the Northern Territory. We accept too that gaining control over land rights is part of achieving statehood. We have been active supporters of the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development, one of whose major tasks is to discuss with people the question of land rights and other powers to be transferred, and to gain some support from the community. The feedback that I have received from members of the committee indicates that the land rights question is by far the most difficult matter that the committee has to deal with. Obviously, that is because it is the most emotional matter. People in the community who are directly affected are quite emotional about it.

The Minister for Lands and Housing can stand here as often as he likes to tell us that the Northern Territory government has a good attitude to Aboriginal land matters. It is not easy to convince the majority of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and that, essentially, is the problem that we have. We are asking Aboriginal people to change the present system of administration and control of their land rights, without their having confidence in those who hold office in the Northern Territory at present. Without wishing to be provocative, I will say that the quickest way to have land rights transferred to the Northern Territory will be for a Northern Territory Labor government to be put in place at the next election. That will be the quickest way because we will then be in a position to participate in meaningful discussions and consultations with

Aboriginal communities and organisations on the matters which are of immense concern and interest to them.

The major problem at present is the baggage that the partners in this process are carrying. They have 12 years of bad negotiations, bad blood and ill-feeling in their negotiating bags. Of course, that makes it almost impossible for the first steps to be taken. It is a matter of taking it slowly, step by step, and ensuring that we consult properly with the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory who, after all, comprise 25% of the Territory's population. It is significant that the Chief Minister's speech was very specific about a number of changes to the present system but very vague about how he would ensure that the basic element of land rights for Aboriginal Territorians - that is, the perpetual freehold title - would be cemented in Northern Territory legislation or the constitution. In fact, until we have such a constitution, it will be very difficult to provide Aboriginal people with a guarantee that the perpetual freehold title that they have at present can be handed across under Northern Territory legislation.

Mr Hatton: How is it guaranteed in the Commonwealth?

Mr SMITH: Now, it is guaranteed in the Commonwealth by default because of numbers in the Senate and the way the Senate operates. Aboriginal people see that as a great protection.

I know that, particularly when the member for Nightcliff was its chairman, the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development had discussions with Aboriginal groups about the type of constitutional guarantees which would reassure Aboriginal people that they would not be subject to the whims of future governments, of no matter what political persuasion, in relation to significant matters such as the type of title Aboriginal land would be held under. That is a very important matter to which proper consideration needs to be given. Unfortunately, the Chief Minister's motion does not even recognise that problem, let alone deal with it.

There is another thing that I find upsetting about this motion. The Chief Minister himself says that land rights as an issue is starting to settle down and Aboriginal people are beginning to use their land for their economic benefit and the economic benefit of the Northern Territory. Despite that, once again, the Chief Minister is attempting to raise this question in a provocative way.

Mr McCarthy: What provocation?

Mr SMITH: Everybody knows that it is a very difficult issue and that there is much talking to be done. The Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development has started that process. Members of that committee realise how difficult and how demanding that process is and how long it will take. Nevertheless, we have the Chief Minister assuming that it can all be railroaded through in the next 12 months. If that is not provocative, I do not know what is. If this motion has the effect of turning Aboriginal communities and organisations away from their emerging emphasis of seeing how they can use Aboriginal land to help themselves, I think that would be disastrous. It has taken us long enough to get Aboriginal organisations to that position. They have had to fight hard and long for their land rights. They are are starting to feel secure with their land rights and they want to move on to the next step. It would be most unfortunate if the effect of this motion is to turn them back to looking at the security of their land

rights and whether they are facing the prospect of being railroaded into a system where they do not have adequate protections.

I want to repeat the offer we have made on a number of occasions in relation to this matter. We would like to cooperate with the government in working through these issues. We have made that offer before. We have indicated that concretely through the consultative committee that has been established to look at constitutional questions. However, it will not have our support for an approach like this which is doomed to failure. It is not proposed with any serious intention of succeeding.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to make a brief contribution to this debate. I begin by saying, in a lighthearted fashion, that the Territory Nationals could probably send a bill to the CLP. The total thrust of the motion and statement by the Chief Minister is almost lineball with many sections in our policy which we introduced in March 1987. I guess we will get a letter of thanks for that. It is lineball to the point that it is almost scary. It is either that or the Chief Minister's speechwriter has had an easy time of it.

On a more serious note, land rights is probably the most discussed subject in the Northern Territory. Certainly, in the various places that I visit and the various organisations that I have contact with, it is very much talked about. It is of concern to many Territorians. With an election around the corner, it is appropriate that the statement was presented and the motion moved. At least, we will know clearly the positions of the various parties in relation to land rights.

Central to the statement is the question of whether we can govern ourselves. The Chief Minister made some quite extensive comments in his statement. As I said the other day, I believe this Assembly has more collective experience in terms of understanding Aboriginal people than does any other parliament in Australia. We have 2 Aboriginal men in this parliament, the members for Arafura and Arnhem. They represent Aboriginal views and I believe they are given quite a courtesy in this parliament when they rise to speak, particularly on Aboriginal subjects. In addition, the ALP represents most of the Aboriginals in the Northern Territory and it has quite a large input into what occurs in this parliament.

I would say that we spend more time in this parliament discussing Aboriginal affairs than does any other parliament in Australia. When one considers that only 1.5% of Australia's population is Aboriginal and that 80% of those people are rural dwellers and live in approximately one-sixth of the land mass of Australia, one realises that their problems are unique. Possibly the best understanding of those problems comes through this Assembly. I would have to agree with the overall thrust of the motion.

We should never underestimate the force of what I call loosely the 'Aboriginal industry'. There are a number of people who attract very lucrative salaries and conditions through a large number of Aboriginal organisations. I believe they have a vested interest in creating a wedge between black and white relationships in the Northern Territory. If this motion is acceptable to the federal government, we could break down some of the barriers that now exist between black and white.

I agree that the federal act is inflexible. Because of the complexities with the federal parliament, a large number of investors who might come to the Northern Territory are scared off from coming here. The other thing that I found rather disturbing in the statement by the Chief

Minister was that the government cannot acquire land for public purposes. That is not acceptable. In addition, I believe there is a great deal of confusion between local Northern Territory people and the Aboriginal people themselves in regard to this act. I cannot think of any forum better than this one to administer the act. There are many Aboriginal Territorians who are not happy with the fact that the Commonwealth administers the act. They would be happy to see the Chief Minister's proposals come to fruition.

I might make a comparison between our policy and some of the proposals in the motion. It is rather interesting that our policy says that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act should be transferred to the Northern Territory parliament. I note that the motion refers to the transfer of the administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act to the control of this Assembly. I reckon they pinched it, Mr Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Mr FLOREANI: The classic one is that it proposes smaller land councils that are directly accountable to the people whom they serve, and that the Tiwi Land Council is the desirable model. Our policy states: 'The preferred model for Aboriginal land management would be based on the very successful Tiwi Land Council'. I would like to know where I send the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I do not believe that the motion goes far enough. The Chief Minister's motion should have recognised the fact that the Northern Territory people do not have control of uranium mining or national parks. I believe the 3 very important issues should have been included together rather than just the issue of land rights.

I believe that this federal government - and, I might add, the federal government before it - has paid only lip-service to Territory self-government. It has given us limited self-government and developed the theme in the hope that we will look on it as a crumb from the rich man's table and be thankful for what we have received. We should have the same rights as people in other parts of Australia. That is only our rightful due. We should have state rights, and included among those would be determination of matters relating to Aboriginal land, uranium mining and parks.

My views are the same as those of members who have spoken already in support of this motion. I believe that it is not right that divisions in the community should be encouraged. I believe that there are great divisions in the community because of the way the land rights issue has been handled by the federal government. This is brought home very powerfully when we consider that about 48% of the Northern Territory is under claim or already claimed by Aboriginal interests. This means that the Northern Territory government, which is supposed to be representing the people of the Northern Territory, cannot fully administer its charter because it has full control over only 52% of the Northern Territory.

It makes a bit of a mockery of equality in the community when the government provides essential services on Aboriginal land - bores, roads, telephones and police stations etc - only to find that there is talk of charging the government rent for the facilities which provide these services. It is a bit like telling people that you want them to do something for you but that you will charge them for doing it. To ask for payment for facilitites supplying essential services in Aboriginal areas is ridiculous. I know that it has not occurred in many cases but, even if it occurred in 1 case only, that would be 1 too many.

Over the years, there have been cases of public servants having their entry to Aboriginal land refused or queried for no reason. This happened to staff of the Water Resources Branch, a number of whom I have known for years. They went regularly onto Aboriginal land during the course of their work. Many of them are straightforward Northern Territory bush types in the old-fashioned mould, although they are not necessarily old in years. They are upright people who always do the right thing. In a particular case, they were investigating water resources for a community and their entry onto the land was queried. Things were sorted out eventually but that incident remained in my memory as a detrimental episode in the context of differences between black and white in relation to land matters.

I have a personal interest in land matters, as do many other people in the community. It is very important to have the same land laws governing people of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origin. It is only when we iron out the differences in the community that we will have a peaceful, homogeneous society in which people will get on with each other because they will all be equal.

Amendment negatived.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, in view of the opposition's attitude to this motion, I move that the word 'unanimously' be omitted from the penultimate paragraph of the motion.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION
Mulholland Report

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Chief Minister, I move that:

(1) any report by Robert Mulholland QC relating to the manner, direction and effectiveness of investigations by the Northern Territory Police in relation to:

(a) the investigation and prosecution of certain former police officers charged with drug-related offences;

(b) the investigation of a complaint concerning possible criminal offences against a certain police officer by another police officer; and

(c) the investigation of an alleged incident involving a police officer and a member of the public;

shall, subject to paragraph 4, be forwarded to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly immediately upon receipt by the Secretary of the Department of Law;

(2) on receipt of any such report, the Speaker shall lay the report on the Table of the Assembly at the earliest opportunity;

(3) if the Assembly be not sitting, or if it be prorogued when the Secretary of the Department of Law has received such a

report, subject to paragraph 4, he shall provide the report to the Speaker or, if the Speaker is unavailable, to the Deputy Speaker, and in that event:

(a) the report shall be deemed to have been presented to the Assembly;

(b) the publication of the report is authorised by this resolution;

(c) the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, as the case may be, shall give directions for the printing and circulation to members of the report;

(d) the report shall be laid on the Table of the Assembly at the next sittings; and

(4) so as to ensure the fair trial of persons before the court, no part of the report prepared by Mr Mulholland relating to matters the subject of court proceedings either in progress or pending shall be tabled or published until such time as those proceedings have been completed.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister made it quite clear in his speech today that it is his intention, as he always indicated, to bring this report to the Assembly at the earliest possible time. He has said that he does not intend to hide anything and that he would make the report available. I do not believe that there is any need for me to elaborate further.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for his brevity and I will be equally brief. This is obviously a sensible proposition and the opposition supports it.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Police Powers Review Committee - Second Interim Report

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table the second interim report of the Police Powers Review Committee.

STATEMENT
Police Powers Review Committee - Second Interim Report

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, during the February 1990 sittings of this Assembly, I tabled the first interim report of the committee. This second interim report provides further information on the operation of the investigatory detention power. It also deals with the committee's consideration of the listening devices legislation and the electronic recording of interviews.

In relation to the investigatory detention power, the committee notes that the analysis to date does not present any evidence to indicate the intentional abuse of power by the police. However, in its report, the committee does indicate that it has a number of concerns as to the way the power has been exercised in certain circumstances. It has indicated that, in its final report, which the chairman of the committee has indicated will be available within 6 months, it intends to make recommendations to the government on the operation of the section, having regard to its concerns

and judicial consideration of the legislative provisions. I look forward to the committee's final report on the investigatory detention power.

TABLED PAPER
Draft Heritage Conservation Bill

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I table a draft Heritage Conservation Bill and, in doing so, I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

It gives me great pleasure and a great deal of satisfaction to table a bill to establish a Heritage Conservation Act for the Northern Territory. It is the culmination of 2 years work by officers of the Conservation Commission, who have been greatly assisted by a wide range of contributions from individuals and organisations throughout the Territory and interstate. It is almost 2 years since my predecessor as Minister for Conservation announced the government's intention to introduce heritage legislation. During the first half of 1989, a discussion paper was made available for public comment and the response was supportive of new legislation rather than revision of existing statutes.

Work commenced on the framing of a bill and, in November last year, I tabled a discussion draft Heritage Conservation Bill. I took that course of action because I was convinced that there would be value in greater community participation in helping to determine the direction of the legislation. I was not disappointed. The draft bill stimulated a great deal of public interest. During the first 9 months of this year, 46 written submissions were received, many of them going into considerable detail.

Consequently, a series of meetings were held with key interest groups and departments, resulting in several revisions of the draft bill. The present bill represents the outcome of a lengthy period of careful consultation, and the proposed legislation will provide for a range of financial and other incentives to encourage heritage conservation on private property. It will also encourage the establishment of voluntary agreements between government and private landowners for the protection of Northern Territory heritage. Such agreements will become a covenant on title under the Real Property Act.

Another major objective of this proposed legislation is to establish open, public procedures for determining what places and objects should be recognised as being important parts of the Northern Territory's heritage, and to promote community awareness of, and input into, the assessment process. To assist in the development of appropriate expertise in the assessment of heritage places and objects, the bill provides for the creation of a Heritage Advisory Council. I have received a great deal of advice concerning the membership of the council and much thought has gone into the provisions finally selected for incorporation in the bill. The 3 government authorities with prime responsibility for the protection of the Territory's heritage - namely, the Museums and Art Galleries Board, the Conservation Commission and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority - will each nominate a member to a 9-member council. As well, the National Trust will nominate a member and the other 5 members shall be selected and appointed by the minister. They will be persons who have expertise or experience relevant to the administration of the act.

Many organisations sought to have 1 or more representatives on the council. To have reserved places for all would have been impossible. Rather than give automatic representation to one community interest group

and not another, the legislation provides that the minister carries a responsibility to ensure that a balanced membership is achieved, utilising the best expertise available. The bill provides that the majority of the council shall be appointed from outside the public service wherever practicable. In addition, the council will have an independent chairman appointed by the minister.

The prime function of the council will be to recommend to the minister places and objects of heritage value for inclusion in the Register of the Northern Territory Heritage. In order to do that, the council is also responsible for the preparation of criteria for assessment of places and objects of heritage value in accordance with objectives or guidelines established in the legislation. I shall have more to say about that process a little later. Other functions of the Heritage Advisory Council are to carry out relevant research, to advise on the conservation and uses of heritage places and objects, to promote public education programs, to encourage the public use and enjoyment of heritage places and objects, to make recommendations with respect to the heritage agreements with private property owners and to recommend to the minister actions necessary for the protection of heritage places and objects.

The council is charged with keeping a register of all heritage places and objects and other relevant information. It will prepare an annual report on the performance of its functions and a copy of this will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. The proposed Heritage Advisory Council will carry out very significant responsibilities and I anticipate that, over time, it will make a very beneficial contribution to the identification and protection of the Territory's heritage. It will have an increasing workload and will receive executive and other support from the Conservation Commission in order to discharge its responsibilities.

Let me turn now to another important aspect of this bill - namely, the provision for the identification, assessment and declaration of heritage places and objects. Part III of the bill outlines provisions for the establishment of heritage assessment criteria according to objectives incorporated within the bill. The Heritage Advisory Council has responsibility for preparing draft criteria taking into account comments and representations from the public. If the minister accepts the council's recommendations, these draft criteria then become statutory criteria by way of the regulations. This provides a flexible mechanism for reviewing the criteria from time to time and allows for public review. The Heritage Advisory Council then has clear statutory criteria to apply in the assessment process.

Any person may apply to the council to have a place or an object assessed according to the criteria for declaration as a heritage place or object and, if the council recommends to the minister that such a place or object be included in the Register of Territory Heritage, the council must first give the owner or occupier an opportunity to make representations. The Heritage Advisory Council is obliged to consider all comments received and to forward these to the minister, along with its final recommendations, supporting registration or not supporting it. The minister makes the final decision. Where the minister refuses to make a declaration, he or she shall write to the council giving the reasons for doing so. Where the minister agrees to make a declaration, the decision is subject to appeal on questions of law by any person having a possessory interest in any land or object directly affected by the decision. The whole process is open and accountable. It promotes the public interest while safeguarding private property interests.

I would like to deal with the provisions relating to the protection of heritage places and objects. In doing so, I want to make one point clear. The declaration of the heritage place is a recognition that the place is of value to present and future Territorians. It does not mean, however, that the place will be locked away and become an impediment to development or progress. It means that the heritage value of the site should be considered when any change in the use of the site is being contemplated. The Heritage Register will be of benefit and will assist planners and resource managers in their work. The consent of the minister responsible for heritage or of his delegate is required before any work is carried out which could alter a heritage place or object. However, the regulations may provide for certain work, being in the nature of normal maintenance, not to require the minister's written consent. Approval is also required to remove a heritage object from the Territory.

Development proposals can still be handled in the normal way, but consent authorities, such as the Planning Authority, will need to seek the approval of the minister before authorising any redevelopment of a heritage place. Alternatively, the minister has the capacity to delegate his consent power where this is appropriate and desirable. Within the town planning areas, it is anticipated that the minister's powers to deal with development applications would be delegated to the Planning Authority subject to certain conditions in the instrument of delegation. Such conditions would be along the lines that, prior to making any determination, the Planning Authority shall seek the views of the Heritage Advisory Council and take account of those views in making its determination.

In situations where a development is proposed for an area which has not been assessed for its heritage significance, it is possible for the minister to declare an interim conservation order which allows 90 days during which heritage assessment can take place. While the order remains in place, a permit is required from the minister before any work on the place may be carried out and this must be done only in accordance with any conditions specified in writing.

For heritage places of the highest value and where long-term preservation is seen to be the prime objective, a conservation management plan is provided for. The council may prepare a conservation management plan, taking into account the opinion of the owner and or occupier of the place. A draft plan should also be made available to the general public for review and comment with a minimum of 28 days being allowed for this consultation process. The council will then forward the plan, together with any representations, to the minister for presentation to the Administrator. If the Administrator makes any alterations to the plan, he shall prepare a report specifying the alterations, and the report shall accompany the plan when both are tabled in the Legislative Assembly. If the Assembly does not disallow the plan within 7 sitting days, the conservation management plan comes into operation.

Further to this, a landowner may enter into a heritage agreement with the Territory government relating to the protection and conservation of a heritage place and heritage objects. This agreement is binding on the landowner who enters into it and also to successors in title, but may be varied by further agreement. The bill provides for a variety of financial and other incentives. These are not specified in detail, but might include special grants, loans or other funding assistance for the maintenance of the heritage place or object. It also provides that, where a minister or a statutory corporation is exercising a power under a law in force in the Territory which could assist in the conservation of a place subject to a

heritage agreement, he or she should exercise that power in accordance with any recommendation of the minister for heritage.

The whole emphasis in this proposed legislation is directed to cooperation and agreement with property owners, rather than to regulation or acquisition. However, in the final resort, acquisition may be necessary in order to ensure the protection of some heritage places and objects. There are substantial penalty provisions for those who might seek to ignore the protective provisions of the legislation. The penalty provision for corporations, in particular, has been set deliberately at a substantial figure to dissuade corporations from taking the view that a fine under heritage legislation might be regarded as the equivalent of a small development fee which it is not worth worrying about. In addition, employees and officers of a body corporate are also liable to a penalty, including the possible jail penalty. I wish to reiterate that individual property rights have been safeguarded. A decision to register a place is subject to appeal by the owner. Furthermore, if any action of the minister is determined by the court to be an acquisition of property within the meaning of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act of 1979, then the Territory shall pay just compensation.

This bill is the outcome of a lengthy period of public consultation, and I believe that most people will be well pleased with the result. It is now available for final review by those who have contributed to its development, so that it will be ready for introduction early in the new year. I commend consideration of this tabled paper.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the Dog Act Repeal Bill (Serial 313) and the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Bill (Serial 314): (a) being presented and read a first time together, and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

DOG ACT REPEAL BILL
(Serial 313)
LAW REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 314)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

For a number of years, the Northern Territory government has set out with local governments to streamline and simplify respective arrangements and activities in the Northern Territory. The creation of the Inter-Governmental Rationalisation of Functions Working Party in November 1987 was the first stage in this process. This working party took the first look at the situation since self-government and questioned why

certain functions were carried out by the level of government which operated them. It looked at relevant functions of both spheres of government and made recommendations as to which sphere should operate which function for maximum public economy and efficiency.

The working party's report in November 1988 brought logic to a situation that had developed historically, mostly under Commonwealth administration, and lacked both logic and efficiency. It recommended the transfer of certain assets and functions from local government to the Territory government and vice versa. As a result of this report, the government has reviewed its activities and has updated policies on such key matters as local government, land tenure, drainage in Crown subdivisions and local road tenure. Government has also introduced greening subsidies to councils for watering parks, ovals and landscaped areas. These principles and revised policies were then applied to each of the municipalities, beginning with Darwin.

Honourable members would be aware that, earlier this year, the government and the Darwin City Council agreed on a rationalisation of functions package. This package sees the transfer of assets between government and council. Perhaps the most significant asset to be transferred under the package is the Botanic Gardens. This will enable the government, through the Conservation Commission, to develop the Botanic Gardens in a state-like way, with full botanic, scientific and research functions. Agreement was reached also on the transfer of a number of other functions. Working parties are now looking at rationalising functions in other municipalities in concert with local councils.

The rationalisation process is not confined to physical assets. It has also considered administrative overlaps with a view to removing duplication wherever possible. One such area of overlap is in relation to dog control. For a number of years, the government has been considering amendments to the Dog Act to make it more effective. In the past, one of the problems with the act has been that, while local government has administered the act generally, it has had no control over what was in it. Another problem has been that different local government areas have required different levels of dog control. To draft legislation which provided for all the different circumstances was almost impossible.

Under the Local Government Act, councils have the power to make bylaws for the control of a range of functions. However, those bylaws cannot be in conflict with any act of this parliament. The repeal of the Dog Act will remove the barrier which stands in the way of councils bringing in the measures that they see as necessary to manage dogs within their boundaries. These 2 bills, the Dog Act Repeal Bill and the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Bill will achieve this purpose.

The Dog Act Repeal Bill repeals the existing Dog Act and continues some of the necessary provisions relating to existing registrations and licences, existing registers, dogs already impounded and court orders for the destruction of dogs. It also exempts dogs not resident in a council area from the registration requirements of that council's bylaws, and from being charged a surcharge over and above the normal fees for release from a pound. However, such visiting dogs will be subject to all other aspects of bylaws once they enter the council area concerned. These other aspects are at the discretion of each council, but could include menacing and attacking people, being not under adequate control, creating a noise nuisance, disturbing the peace etc.

The repeal bill will have a finite life because it is the government's intention to include its ongoing provisions in the Local Government Act presently under review. The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill continues 3 provisions of the Dog Act. These provisions are considered necessary to define who is responsible for a particular dog, and to protect the rights of individuals. The provisions are that a dog owner is responsible for any actions of his or her dog and their consequences, that there is a prima facie defence for a person who kills or injures a dog if it is attacking them or another person or an animal or bird in the person's care, and that a dog may lawfully be put down pursuant to a court order or when it is diseased or injured. These provisions will have effect throughout the Territory, regardless of the existence of local government bylaws.

It is important to stress that these bills do not make it compulsory for local government councils to adopt bylaws for the management of dogs. Neither do they limit the strength of those bylaws provided, of course, that they are not in conflict with any act of the parliament. In other words, this legislation puts dog control firmly in the hands of local government.

Some councils have already stated their intentions as to the level of control which will exist within their boundaries. For example, Darwin and Palmerston councils, with their urban-based constituencies, have both indicated their preference for stronger controls than those currently available under the Dog Act. The Litchfield Shire Council, with its rural constituency, has indicated its preference not to institute bylaws for dog control. These differing needs will be accommodated with this legislation. The bylaw method will also continue the capacity of local government to set its own fees for dog registration, impounding, maintenance and release. This is far better than the situation in some of the states, where the state legislature imposes maximum fees, thus forcing councils into net loss on the dog control function. Northern Territory local governments will continue to have the flexibility to finance their dog control, either as a full user-pays function or as a partial user-pays function with all ratepayers contributing. It is their choice.

To assist in the drafting of bylaws, I have offered the Local Government and Community Government Associations the services of the Office of Local Government. I believe the Community Government Association has already accepted this assistance. This will allow local government councils, which intend to introduce bylaws, to have them in place by the selected commencement date. As I have indicated previously, the commencement date for this legislation is to be agreed between the government and the Local Government and Community Government Associations. The bills allow the commencement date to be gazetted, once agreement has been reached. Naturally, there are certain matters which will need to appear in each council's own bylaws. For example, I am sure local government will ensure that it recognises registrations from other local government areas, and from outside the Northern Territory, so that Territorians and our visitors are not inconvenienced.

With the commencement of the Coomalie Community Government Council later this year, covering the areas of Batchelor and Adelaide River, more than 90% of Territorians will have taken on local government. The question of what happens outside council areas has also been considered. These areas are mainly rural, where the control of dogs is not a problem. Unlike urban communities, dogs in rural areas cause few problems for the environment, for other animals or for people. However, there are legislative controls in place already to ensure that dogs do not create a nuisance in areas either

outside the boundaries of local government or where local government decides not to adopt bylaws.

The Summary Offences Act has several provisions relating to noise pollution which includes noise from barking dogs. It creates an offence too where anyone 'suffers to be at large any unmuzzled, ferocious dog or sets on or urges any dog to attack, worry or put in fear any person or another animal'. Under the Traffic Act, it is an offence to lead any animal while riding or being carried on a bicycle or vehicle or to obstruct a street or clearway with an animal. The Stock Diseases Act applies to domestic pets, including dogs, and covers health aspects. Canine diseases, including distemper, hepatitis, venereal tumour, rabies, demodectic and sarcoptic mange, are all listed specifically in the relevant regulations. Similarly, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act enables control of dogs by poisoning on rural land and prohibits or constrains their entry into certain areas. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act contains further relevant provisions in this area. This act is presently undergoing a comprehensive rewrite with substantially increased penalties. It provides specifically for the offences of abandoning a dog and unlawfully killing or injuring a dog. Extensive consultation is to be undertaken and I will introduce that bill to the Assembly once that process is completed.

The combination of these bills and existing measures will ensure that the present inadequacies in dog control in the Territory will be removed. I commend the bills to the House.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Eighteenth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Eighteenth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. What I believe to be a very serious failure to implement the Criminal Code has been brought to my attention. I was told that, recently, a 31-year-old man was charged with unlawful sexual assault of a 4-year-old child. The case was heard in the Supreme Court and the man was sentenced last week. The man was charged under 2 sections of the Criminal Code. He was charged with unlawful sexual assault, which is equivalent to rape, and he was charged too with indecent dealing with a child. For the first charge, he received a 3-year sentence. For the other offence, he received an extra 5 years, making a total of 8 years. He has to serve a minimum of 5½ years before he is eligible for parole. Judging from previous experience, this man, who committed this heinous offence on this very small child, will serve only 5½ years in prison. In anybody's estimation, that is a negligible sentence for what was done to the child.

I do not know if the Attorney-General has been told of the lack of certain provisions in the Criminal Code. If he has not been, it is time that was rectified. I believe that the Northern Territory Criminal Code should have the type of deeming provisions which operate in other states.

That would mean that the child would not have to go to court. The offender would receive a more severe sentence because of this deeming provision and would be charged with rape. In the case I referred to, the offender pleaded guilty. The bottom line is that he could not receive a more severe sentence because it could not be proven that the child did not consent to the act. In this case, if it were not so serious, one could make the flippant remark that the law is an ass. This 4-year-old child was seriously assaulted and all the offender got was 5½ years.

The maximum sentence for unlawful sexual assault, which is equivalent to rape, is 14 years. That is under section 192 of the Criminal Code. Indecent dealing with a child, under sections 127 and 128 of the Criminal Code, also carries a maximum penalty of 14 years. In my book, 28 years would have been a fair sentence for that fellow. I would have been even harder than the present situation. Perhaps, if it were left to me, I would have given him a few years off for good behaviour or rehabilitation. However, for somebody like that to walk away with a 5½ year sentence is staggering.

I am sure that the majority of people in the community, especially those with young children who would feel nearer to this actual case, would have thought that that outcome was grossly unfair. Certainly, it favoured the offender and not the victim of the crime. I believe that the parents of young children or the parents of that child could be excused if they were waiting outside the jail gates at the end of the 5½ years to ensure that the person received the retribution that he deserves.

If the Attorney-General has not examined this matter already, I hope that he will examine it to make certain that the victims in cases like this ...

Mr Manzie: There are people looking at it at the moment, Noel, and also at the whole process of young people giving evidence.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am very pleased to hear that. I hope that, in future, when very young children are assaulted in this way, the offenders will be subject to the full force of the law in terms of the jail sentences that they receive.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT
Aboriginal arts and artifacts, counterfeits 10 717
ALP, national conference on communications 10 414, 10 418
Animal husbandry, draft codes of practice 10 714
Attorney-General -
allegations relating to 10 661, 10 663, 10 794
tabled papers relating to indemnity against prosecution 10 722
Aviation policy 10 719
BTEC, alleged denial of rights to Mr Dunbar 10 801
Bus service, misbehaviour by drunken passengers 10 418
Butler, Harry, Conservation Commission board 10 804
Changes to Australian Constitution 10 664
Conservation Commission rangers, harassment allegations relating to permit for keeping native birds 10 808
Criminal Code, failure to implement in sexual assault case 10 931
Freedom of speech 10 801
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 10 717
Indo-Pacific Marine, relocation 10 796
Leader of the Opposition, comments on 7.30 Report re ALP platform 10 415
Member for Barkly -
New Age thinking 10 798
next election, electorate 10 799
Middle Point, confusion relating to name 10 417
Minister for Transport and Works, comments on aviation policy 10 720
Ministers, subject of police investigations 10 811
Mulholland brief, allegations raised on 7.30 Report 10 659, 10 663
New Age thinking 10 798
Nightcliff -
birthday celebrations 10 803
community chest 10 802
Northern Territory -
secondary students, achievements 10 807
telephone directory for 1951 10 801
Oil, Australia's obligations in event of war in Middle East 10 716
Pensioners, federal government policy re investments 10 806
Preston, Mrs Betty, President of Grey Power, Brighton Branch 10 664
Prison officer, stabbing with syringe containing AIDS-infected blood 10 807
Sadadeen Secondary College students, contribution to Computer Pals Conference 10 807
Schedule 7 poisons, irresponsible use 10 713, 10 716
United Nations conventions 10 664, 10 716

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 330, 10 441, 10 578
Dog Act Repeal (Serial 313) 10 928
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (Serial 314) 10 928
Mine Management Amendment (Serial 288) 10 787
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 679
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 302) 10 792
Supreme Court (Judges Long Leave Payments) Amendment (Serial 289) 10 793
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 298) 10 785

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 303
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 320

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Mr Tipiloura 10 291

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE
Letter from Cridlands to member for MacDonnell 10 783, 10 815

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 725
Censure of Attorney-General 10 815
Censure of Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries 10 423
Land Rights Act, control of 10 879
Mulholland Report 10 923
Noting statement, review of Aboriginal education 10 672
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 549
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 291

PERSONAL EXPLANATION
Mr Manzie 10 667

STATEMENTS
Police Powers Review Committee - Second Interim Report 10 924
Review of Aboriginal education 10 670

TABLED PAPERS
Draft Heritage Conservation Bill 10 925
Ombudsman of the Northern Territory - Twelfth Report 10 878
Police Powers Review Committee - Second Interim Report 10 924
Publications Committee - Sixteenth Report 10 659
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 291
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Eighteenth Report 10 931

BAILEY J.D.

ADJOURNMENT
Indo-Pacific Marine, relocation 10 796

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 386, 10 459
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 298) 10 785

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 869
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 299

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT
Aviation policy 10 719
Minister for Transport and Works, comments on aviation policy 10 720
Ministers, subject of police investigations 10 811

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 356, 10 468
Mine Management Amendment (Serial 288) 10 787
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 679, 10 710
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 302) 10 792
Supreme Court (Judges Long Leave Payments) Amendment (Serial 289) 10 793
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 298) 10 786

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 304
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 327

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE
Letter from Cridlands to member for MacDonnell 10 783

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 768
Censure of Attorney-General 10 827
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 552
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 292

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT
Changes to Australian Constitution 10 664
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 10 717
Oil, Australia's obligations in event of war in Middle East 10 716
Pensioners, federal government policy re investments 10 806
Preston, Mrs Betty, President of Grey Power, Brighton Branch 10 664
Prison officer, stabbing with syringe containing AIDS-infected blood 10 807
Schedule 7 poisons, irresponsible use 10 716
United Nations conventions 10 664, 10 716

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 392, 10 465
Mine Management Amendment (Serial 288) 10 789
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 685, 10 711
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 302) 10 792

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 317
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 325

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 847
Land Rights Act, control of 10 896
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 566
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 294

COULTER B.F.

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serail 297) 10 462
Mine Management Amendment (Serial 288) 10 789

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 310
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 326

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 755
Censure of Attorney-General 10 858
Land Rights Act, control of 10 903
Mulholland Report 10 923
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 549 10 575

DONDAS N.M.

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alce Fong Lim AM 10 318
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 329

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE
Letter from Cridlands to member for MacDonnell 10 815

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT
ALP, national conference on communications 10 418
BTEC, alleged denial of rights to Mr Dunbar 10 801
Freedom of speech 10 801

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 444
Summary Offences Amendment (Serail 291) 10 697

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 743
Censure of Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries 10 423
Land Rights Act, control of 10 898
Noting statement, review of Aboriginal education 10 672
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 573

FINCH F.A.

ADJOURNMENT
Member for Barkly -
New Age thinking 10 798
next election, electorate 10 799
New Age thinking 10 798
Northern Territory telephone directory for 1951 10 801

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serail 297) 10 570
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 699

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 316

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 747
Censure of Attorney-General 10 854
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 556

FIRMIN C.C.

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 314
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 327

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 843
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 297

FLOREANI E.A.

ADJOURNMENT
Aboriginal arts and artifacts, counterfeits 10 717

BILL
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 405, 10 651

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 318

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 763
Censure of Attorney-General 10 844
Land Rights Act, control of 10 921

HARRIS T.

BILL
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 330, 10 512

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 306
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 326

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 873
Noting statement, review of Aboriginal education 10 672

STATEMENT
Review of Aboriginal education 10 670

HATTON S.P.

ADJOURNMENT
Butler, Harry, Conservation Commission board 10 804
Nightcliff -
birthday celebrations 10 803
community chest 10 802

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 361, 10 526
Summary Offences Amendment (Serail 291) 10 705
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serail 298) 10 786

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 313

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 758
Censure of Attorney-General 10 860
Land Rights Act, control of 10 905
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 569

TABLED PAPER
Draft Heritage Conservation Bill 10 925

LANHUPUY W.W.

BILL
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 382, 10 504

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 734
Land Rights Act, control of 10 887
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 300

LEO D.M.

BILLS
Appropration 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 578
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 690

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 777
Censure of Attorney-General 10 849
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 568

MANZIE D.W.

ADJOURNMENT
Attorney-General, allegations relating to 10 663
Mulholland brief, allegations raised on 7.30 Report 10 663

BILLS
Appropration 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 336, 10 491
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 710
Supreme Court (Judges Long Leave Payments) Amendment (Serial 289) 10 793

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 311
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 324

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 766
Censure of Attorney-General 10 823
Censure of Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries 10 437
Land Rights Act, control of 10 915

PERSONAL EXPLANATION
Mr Manzie 10 667

STATEMENT
Police Powers Review Committee - Second Interim Report 10 924

McCARTHY T.R.

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 341, 10 612
Dog Act Repeal (Serial 313) 10 928
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (Serial 314) 10 928

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 738
Censure of Attorney-General 10 867
Land Rights Act, control of 10 892
Noting statement, review of Aboriginal education 10 675

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT
Animal husbandry, draft codes of practice 10 714
Bus service, misbehaviour by drunken passengers 10 418
Conservation Commission rangers, harassment allegations relating to permit for keeping native birds 10 808
Criminal Code, failure to implement in sexual assault case 10 931
Middle Point, confusion relating to name 10 417
Schedule 7 poisons, irresponsible use 10 713

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 377, 10 447
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 692
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 298) 10 785

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 309
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 328

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 856
Land Rights Act, control of 10 922
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 301

PALMER M.J.

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 315

MOTION
Censure of Attorney-General 10 875

PERRON M.B.

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 411, 10 442
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 708

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 303
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 320

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 725, 10 780
Censure of Attorney-General 10 832
Land Rights Act, control of 10 879
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 291, 10 302

POOLE E.H.

MOTION
Censure of Attorney-General 10 857

REED M.A.

ADJOURNMENT
ALP, national conference on communications 10 414
Leader of the Opposition, comments on 7.30 Report re ALP platform 10 415

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 348, 10 643
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 688

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 868
Censure of Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries 10 429

SETTER R.A.

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 372
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 694

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 328

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 772
Censure of Attorney-General 10 852
Land Rights Act, control of 10 909
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 301

SMITH T.E.

BILLS
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 441
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 291) 10 702

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 308
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 323

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 751
Censure of Attorney-General 10 838
Censure of Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries 10 433
Land Rights Act, control of 10 919
Mulholland Report 10 924
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 558

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADJOURNMENT
Attorney-General -
allegations relating to 10 661, 10 794
tabled papers relating to indemnity against prosecution 10 722
Mulholland brief, allegations raised on 7.30 Report 10 659, 10 663

BILL
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 407, 10 622

CONDOLENCE MOTIONS
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 307
Death of Ronald John Withnall 10 321

MOTIONS
ATSIC, fair funding and the treaty 10 778, 10 876
Censure of Attorney-General 10 815
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 563
Report of Distribution Committee 1990 10 296

VALE R.W.S.

ADJOURNMENT
Northern Territory secondary students, achievements 10 807
Sadadeen Secondary College students, contribution to Computer Pals Conference 10 807

BILL
Appropriation 1990-91 (Serial 297) 10 397, 10 652

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Alec Fong Lim AM 10 312

MOTIONS
Censure of Attorney-General 10 874
Land Rights Act, control of 10 912
Price of petroleum products in remote areas 10 562