NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 14 August 1990
Wednesday 15 August 1990
Thursday 16 August 1990

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

Speaker
Nicholas Manuel Dondas

Chief Minister
Marshall Bruce Perron
Treasurer
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

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Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community

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Mr F.A. Finch
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
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Mr E.H. Poole
PART I

DEBATES
DEBATES

Tuesday 14 August 1990

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT

Australian Participation in Multinational Force in Middle East

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister) (by leave): Mr Speaker, on Friday 10 August 1990, the Prime Minister, Hon R.J.L. Hawke, announced that Australia would participate in a multinational force in the Gulf to enforce a blockade of Iraq and Kuwait. The force comprises 2 guided missile frigates, HMAS Darwin and HMAS Adelaide, and the supply ship, HMAS Success.

Mr Speaker, you laid the keel of the HMAS Darwin in Seattle and were present at its commissioning. It is the first Australian warship to be named after the capital of the Northern Territory. On this occasion, the first time that the vessel is to take part in active duty in a situation which I believe is potentially fraught with danger, I seek leave to move a motion.

Leave granted.

MOTION

Australian Participation in Multinational Force in Middle East

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I move that:

(1) this Assembly extend to the captains and crews of the HMAS Darwin, the HMAS Adelaide and the HMAS Success its every best wish for a safe voyage, a quick and successful tour of duty in the Gulf and a speedy return home; and

(2) that the Speaker forward the terms of this resolution to the Chief of the Naval Staff, requesting him to pass on the resolution of the Assembly to the captains of the HMAS Darwin, Adelaide and Success accordingly.

Mr Speaker, a total of 600 men will be sailing to the Gulf on the 3 Royal Australian Navy ships. They will be joining very considerable forces already assembled in the Gulf by the major European and Middle East nations who are totally committed to putting a stop to the destructive aggression of the Iraqi leadership. As we heard on this morning's news, more nations, including the majority of the Arab nations, are joining the multinational force every day.

None of us wants to send Australian forces so far from home on such a dangerous mission, but the events in the Middle East in recent weeks bring to mind the old truism that all it takes for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing. Without pretending to be a scholar of the complex politics of that region, it seems from the actions of Iraq's own Arab neighbours that they believe that evil is on the march in their region. They are prepared to accept help from traditional adversaries and friends alike in order to teach President Saddam Hussein that naked aggression is not acceptable in the world of 1990.
We can take some comfort from the fact that the 2 Australian front-line warships, the guided missile frigates HMAS Darwin and HMAS Adelaide, are designed to operate in the full range of military emergencies they may face in Gulf waters in a worst case scenario. We can only hope that they do what they have to do without being put to that ultimate test.

I attempted to obtain the names of Territory personnel sailing with the task force so that they could be recorded in the Hansard of this Assembly. However, I am mindful that, in this situation, they are all very much Australians together. I know of 1 Darwin man sailing on HMAS Darwin and that is Alex Rouse, whom I wrote to last Friday when the expedition was announced. I am sure every member of this Assembly joins me in wishing a safe journey and a speedy return to Alex Rouse, and every one of his 600 shipmates on the Darwin, the Adelaide, and the Success.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the resolution moved by the Chief Minister. Quite clearly, this is a very sensitive time for the world. Everybody is talking about what will happen in the Middle East. Quite clearly, the crews of the Australian ships being sent to the Gulf will be in for an exciting and perhaps dangerous time. They should go, as they do, with our best wishes and hopes for a speedy return.

It is also appropriate to spare a thought for those Australian citizens who are stranded in Iraq and those who are working under some pressure in Saudi Arabia. A number of Darwin people or ex-Darwin people are currently in Saudi Arabia doing jobs of various descriptions. In fact, I know one of them, David Collins, personally. I am sure that this House's sentiments go out to them in what cannot be a very pleasant time for them.

In closing, I refer to a matter which the member for Stuart has pointed out to me. As I understand the terminology of war, the Chief Minister, on behalf of the Northern Territory, has perhaps unilaterally declared war on Iraq and Kuwait. I understand that the governments of the United States of America and Australia are very careful not to use the word 'blockade' because, in legal parlance, a blockade is in fact an act of war. I am pleased that the term used by the Chief Minister does not appear in the resolution. Had it done so, we might have had to make an adjustment. I would suggest that the Chief Minister should consider the fate of the member for Port Darwin, when he entered into similar uncharted waters some time ago. Of course, Mr Speaker, I am making a frivolous comment on what is in fact a very serious subject. I close by saying that the thoughts of everyone in this House and, I am sure, in the Northern Territory, are with the sailors on HMAS Darwin, HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Success.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to support, in very clear terms, the sentiments expressed in the Chief Minister's motion. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is a very unsettling time for everybody in the world. One does not know what is likely to emerge from these events, particularly when we are dealing with very unpredictable people.

I watched the departure of the ships on television last night. I always feel a little sick inside when I see such events taking place in a gala atmosphere. In fact, they are not really cause for great celebration. They represent a very sombre occasion for the people involved and for the nation. My thoughts go out, not only to the men and women serving on the ships, but also to their families, who must wait very apprehensively for the
return of the ships. Family members suffer as much, and quite often more, than the people who actually serve on the ships and go into combat areas. I have no hesitation in supporting and commending the Chief Minister's motion.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I will also be very brief in rising to support the motion of the Chief Minister. As honourable members know, a fairly large number of my constituents live on the Coonawarra navy base and I have become very close friends with many of them over a number of years, as well as with people from the Darwin base. As has been stated, those people are also apprehensive for their friends.

Like the member for Barkly, I saw the television coverage of the departure of the ships yesterday. I recognised several faces in the crowd of men who had been involved in the Darwin area in the past. Like the honourable member, I feel very strongly for the families and friends of those personnel who must be feeling some apprehension. I wish those involved a speedy and safe voyage and a safe return to Australia.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the people outside Darwin, including Alice Springs and central Australia, I would also like to extend my best wishes and hopes for a safe and speedy return by the captains and crews of HMAS Darwin, HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Success. Yesterday, I received a message from Mr Bruce Farrands of Rabbit Flat, who asked me to pass on to the Prime Minister his congratulations on the actions which have been taken and the courage which has been shown. Rabbit Flat is certainly not going to have any problems with any sea blockade of the Iraqis.

Be that as it may, I think that people throughout the world have been extremely concerned about the way Iraq has been moving in recent years. Iraq has attempted to impose its will on the region. Its leader, despite the way in which he has sometimes been portrayed, is clearly not a madman. Clearly, he is not in the mould of the mullahs and other Arab leaders. He is more in the mould of European leaders such as Hitler, who attempt by force to exert their will in particular regions for the purpose of aggrandisement and the exercise of power over smaller countries. That is something of which this country has to be extremely wary.

I certainly do not wish to beat up the situation. I was bemused by the use of the word 'blockade' in the statement which was distributed to honourable members. Obviously, we all hope that the use of these forces, together with the agreement that has been reached with other nations in the Middle East, will be such that the economic pressures brought to bear on Iraq will be powerful enough to make it realise that strength and unity of purpose among peaceful nations is too strong a force to be overcome. I commend the motion. I hope that it will be passed on speedily to the captains and crews, and that they will be back home safely before Christmas.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 293)

Bill presented by leave and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

All honourable members will be aware that I received the 1990 Report of the Distribution Committee on the division of the Northern Territory into
proposed electoral divisions. Following submission of the report to me, an
error in the report was identified. The Chairman of the Distribution
Committee wrote to me on 9 August 1990 identifying the error. I now table
the letter from the Chairman of the Distribution Committee, which reads as
follows:

Dear Chief Minister,

On 25 July 1990 you received the Report of the Distribution
Committee on the division of the Northern Territory into proposed
electoral divisions.

It is now appropriate that I advise you formally of an error in
the boundary between the proposed divisions of Sanderson and
Karama as indicated on sheet 2 of the maps included as
attachment E to volume 1 of the Distribution Committee's report.
The error is also reflected in the description of the proposed
Sanderson/Karama boundary as shown in pages 59, 77 and 78 of
volume 1. It should be noted that the error also appears on the
maps of proposed divisions displayed for public comments pursuant
to section 15 of the Electoral Act.

It was the committee's intention that the proposed boundary
between the existing divisions of Sanderson and Karama be
realigned so as to transfer 655 electors from the division of
Sanderson to the proposed division of Karama. The committee's
intention in this regard is reflected in the pre-distribution and
post-distribution figures for Sanderson and Karama shown on
pages 35 and 36 of volume 1.

It was intended that the boundary between the proposed divisions
of Sanderson and Karama should proceed along the centre-line of
Malak Crescent to its intersection with the centre-line of
McMillans Road and thence on the centre-line of McMillans Road
south-easterly to its intersection with the western boundary of
Hundred of Bagot portion 1841, thence southerly along the western
boundary of Hundred of Bagot portion 1841 to its intersection with
RAAF base boundary.

The area retained incorrectly in the proposed division of
Sanderson contains 655 electors and is indicated on the enclosed
map. The error in the Distribution Committee's report is
regretted.

Yours sincerely,
E.E. Johnston
Chairman.

Mr Speaker, honourable members will note that the formal advice of the
error in the Distribution Committee's report indicates that the error
appeared also on the maps of proposed divisions displayed for public comment
pursuant to section 15 of the Electoral Act. Following the receipt of legal
advice from Queen's Counsel and consultation with the Crown Counsel, a range
of options has been considered on how the error in the Distribution
Committee's report might be rectified. In arriving at the solution
expressed in the Electoral Amendment Bill now before the Assembly,
3 fundamental concerns were considered. First, it is necessary to ensure
that interested persons, community groups and political parties have the
opportunity to comment on the corrected boundary between the divisions of
Sanderson and Karama. Secondly, it is necessary to ensure that the redistribution is completed before the last possible date for the next Territory general election. Thirdly, it is essential that members of the Legislative Assembly have the opportunity to consider a revised report of the Distribution Committee which correctly identifies proposed boundaries and addresses legitimate public comments on them.

The Electoral Amendment Bill before the Assembly addresses these 3 fundamental concerns. Proposed new section 18A(1) of the bill empowers the minister to direct the Distribution Committee to prepare and forward a revised report whenever the minister receives formal advice from the Distribution Committee that there is an error or inconsistency in the initial report. Proposed new section 18A(3) ensures that a revised map, from which the error or inconsistency has been eliminated, will be displayed for public comment for a period of 30 days as provided for in the normal distribution process.

The opportunity for public comment on the corrected boundaries is an essential consideration. The option of legislating to correct the error in the report, without opportunity for public comment, is clearly not desirable. Proposed new section 18A(3) ensures the opportunity for public consultations. Proposed new section 18A(5) requires that the Distribution Committee shall submit its revised report to the minister, who is required to table it in the Legislative Assembly consistent with existing redistribution procedures. This will ensure that all honourable members will have the opportunity to consider the report in the Legislative Assembly.

Proposed new section 18A(7) ensures that, in the event of the death, retirement or resignation of any of the members of the Distribution Committee following the notification of an error in the committee's report, a committee comprised of members other than the originally appointed members would be able to prepare a revised report as directed by the minister under proposed new section 18A(1).

I strongly believe that, as politicians, we should do what we can to demonstrate to the community that our electoral system and the establishment of electoral boundaries is fair and has, to the extent possible, bipartisan support. After all, the system is the very basis of democracy. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition shares my view in this regard and I thank him for initiating advice to me regarding his party's view on what should be done following discovery of the error which makes this bill necessary. I advised other honourable members of the government's intention, prior to the commencement of proceedings this day, to give them some forewarning of these matters.

I advise that it is the government's intention that this bill should be processed through the Assembly on the next sitting day in order that the matter can be referred back to the committee, and again placed on public display as early as is reasonably possible. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPERS
Office of the Auditor-General
Annual Report 1990

Mr SPEAKER: I lay on the Table the Report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1990.
Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Public Accounts Committee
Consultants' Reports

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table 2 consultants' reports received by the Public Accounts Committee in relation to its reference on the Auditor-General's Annual Report of 1988-89.

These reports have been received from, firstly, Professor Bob Walker, the head of the School of Accountants at the University of New South Wales and, secondly, Dr Chris Hall, Senior Lecturer in Economics at Sydney University, Ku-ring-gai. Both these gentlemen are well known and respected in their respective areas of expertise and, on a number of occasions, have worked as consultants to various government bodies and parliamentary committees.

In tabling these reports prior to making its report to parliament, the committee's intention is that they can serve as the basis of further discussion on the issues raised by the Auditor-General. It is the committee's hope that the various professional bodies or individuals, who may have an interest in the public accounts, will take the time to read these reports in conjunction with the Auditor-General's report and to provide further comment to the committee.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving the following motion forthwith:

That this Assembly:

(1) note the CLP election promise to create 1000 jobs a year in the Northern Territory economy from March 1987;

(2) further note the national increase in jobs since March 1987 of over 12%; and

(3) express its concern that, in the Northern Territory, the number of jobs has dropped by 1000 over that period.

Are you going to accept this?

Mr Coulter: Oh my word, with pleasure! We created 2000 jobs in July, so why wouldn't we?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
CLP Election Promises on Employment

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:
(1) note the CLP election promise to create 1000 jobs a year in the Northern Territory economy from March 1987;

(2) further note the national increase in jobs since March 1987 of over 12%; and

(3) express its concern that, in the Northern Territory, the number of jobs has dropped by 1000 over that period.

In policy documents for the Territory election of March 1987, this CLP government made the following claim: 'If you want it to happen, stay with Hatton'. You saw what happened to him, Mr Speaker. However, more importantly, it made the claim that the CLP had developed plans for industry and business to create at least 1000 jobs a year. In its advertising, the CLP government went even further. It said: 'We will generate 1000 new jobs a year through growth'. It was underlined in the advertisement because it was the keystone promise of the last election campaign. It was a promise that the CLP used to justify its claim to one more term in government and, since then, nobody has been allowed to forget that promise. For members opposite, it became a football chant: 'Jobs, jobs, jobs!'

Mr Coulter: It always has been, and always will be.

Mr SMITH: We hear all the time from members opposite that what they are here for is jobs, jobs, jobs.

On the basis of this promise of 1000 jobs a year, they asked to be re-elected and, on this promise, they asked to be judged. Mr Speaker, it is judgment time. If one wants to find out about jobs in the Northern Territory, there is 1 set of statistics to use: the Trend Employment Series published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Nobody gets excited by the monthly figures because they tend to exaggerate small changes, as members on both sides of the House have accepted from time to time. But the trend series gets under all the clutter of seasonable variables and aberrations and glitches. It is the set of figures which tells the story as it really is. It is the most accurate and reliable indicator.

The trend figures show that, when the CLP launched its platform of jobs, jobs, jobs in March 1987, the number of people employed in the Northern Territory was 74 500. With 1000 CLP-generated jobs a year, at least 3000 more people should now be employed in the Territory because it is more than 3 years since the promise was made. However, at the end of last month, the trend series reported that only 73 500 people were employed, not 3000 more but 1000 less.

Mr McCarthy: A bit muddly with the trend figures. You are putting a monthly aberration with them.

Mr Ede: The trend series.

Mr SMITH: You don't even know ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government will be able to make his contribution in due course. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, to pick up that interjection, the trend figure for June was 73 300. The figure for May was 73 200 and the figure for April was 73 500. There is no aberration. A trend is being revealed and that
trend indicates that we have actually lost 1000 jobs in the Northern Territory over the past 3 years. How did it happen? The CLP said that it had the plans. It said that it would deliver the jobs. What happened when we went backwards? We have fewer jobs now than we had when this government came to office. That is bad enough, but it gets worse when we look at the national trend series since the election of March 1987, since the CLP's promise of jobs, jobs, jobs.

In 1987, 7 million people were employed in Australia. Today, the figure is 7.9 million. Nearly 1 million additional jobs have been created. If the Country Liberal Party had done nothing more than drift along on the national employment wave of 900 000 additional jobs, a 12% increase, we would now have, not another 3000 or 5000 jobs but almost 10 000 additional jobs in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, can you imagine what that would have meant for the Territory economy? All we had to do was keep up with the rate of job creation nationally and we would have had 10 000 new jobs in 3 years. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, what would have happened to the Northern Territory economy if we had had 10 000 new jobs in 3 years?

Forget that the CLP blew its promise. Of course, the member for Nightcliff paid a pretty high price for that. How did it manage to foul things up so comprehensively that, while 1 million jobs were being created nationally, not a single additional job was created in the Northern Territory and, in fact, 1000 jobs were lost? To be fair, nobody doubts that the CLP is sincere. People say that members opposite have their hearts in the right place. It is where their heads are stuck that is the problem. Nobody doubts that they were sincere when they said that they had a plan to create 1000 jobs a year. Over the past 3 years, we have watched that plan unfold. The Trade Development Zone was an industrial revolving door where, one by one, firms went in and, one by one, came out again - Hungerford, the plastic bag manufacturer, Skycom and, last week, Hengyang.

Mr Coulter: Every 3 minutes, a small business shuts down in Australia.

Mr SMITH: And every year, in Australia, 300 000 jobs are created.

Mr Coulter: We are not denying that. Some are successful and some are not.

Mr SMITH: Where is the Northern Territory's contribution?

The zone plan has cost the taxpayer $50m. Nobody in the business community wants to ask how much it has cost them in bad debts and aggravation. Of course, we also have State Square. It is the concrete expression of a CLP idea, but do our kids really want to have a $100m debt strung around their necks for 30 years to give us, the politicians, a nicer lifestyle? The State Square plan will not impact much on the trend series because it does not create any long-term, new employment.

Those are the projects which got off the ground although, in some cases, they did so only for a short time. What about all the others? The government has Myilly Point involved in some sort of sweetheart deal at a time when people have been knocking on the door asking to submit an expression of interest. There was the Milatos proposal and the plan to turn Darwin into the new Subic Bay for the US Navy or, failing that, the new Hong Kong. That is the sort of rhetoric members opposite have been spouting instead of getting on with the task of creating jobs.

Mr Coulter: Where would you do it? Coronation Hill? Jabiluka?
Mr Finch: More public servants and sack the contractors. That is your policy.

Mr SMITH: The members opposite know that they have blown it, and they know how they blew it. They blew it because they are economically illiterate.

The question is, Mr Speaker, where do we go from here?

Mr Coulter: Ask Wayne Goss.

Mr Reed: Yes, ask Wayne Goss.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the first thing that you must recognise is that, in the past 3 years, a small miracle has been occurring. The miracle is that we have a business community which has learnt to survive all that the CLP has been able to throw at it. It has taken the CLP's worst shots and kept going. It has been resilient, intelligent, alive and vibrant. It has managed to hold the line.

The business community has faith in the Territory and that faith is matched by an optimism and an enthusiasm about our long-term future. Our job - and members opposite have not realised it - is to create a government which can connect with that energy and that faith. Our job is to create an environment where business can work and plan assured of a reliable and sensible approach by government. How can business rely on the government to create a proper environment when it keeps messing up the marketplace with deals like Darwin Joinery and the Sheratons ...

Mr Finch: There are another 80 jobs that you would wipe out?

Mr SMITH: ... or when it wraps up special development deals which freeze out the market competition, as at Myilly Point. How can it work and plan with this government when the government changes the rules halfway through the game, as it did in the case of mining royalties and the Groote Eylandt Mining Company? You cannot function when you always have to be looking over your shoulder wondering when Big Brother will come barging in again.

This side of the House is committed to changing the way government operates in the Northern Territory. We are committed to providing Territorians with government that is open, honest and accountable, and that treats the taxpayers' money with respect and responsibility. We will begin immediately after the election. In the 'state of the Territory' talks, for the first time since self-government, we will open the book - not partially but completely. Every Territorian will be able to see and know the Territory's true financial position. All Territorians, through the various peak business, union and community councils, will have their say in setting the government's action priorities in the 1990s. Already, we have reached consensus on the major priority, that of getting the Territory moving again, and of doing so in a manner which allows it to move in a steady way towards lasting and sustainable growth. We can achieve that because we will be building on the efforts Territorians have made and sustained throughout the past few years. On this side of the House, we are committed to working with Territorians and building with Territorians.

Mr Coulter: Where will the jobs come from?
Mr Finch: One example.

Mr Hatton: One example would be interesting.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we have announced already some of the policies that will enable private enterprise ...

Mr McCarthy: You are looking at social ownership. You say so in your policy.

Mr Vale interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask both the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to remain silent. Some interjections, obviously, will trigger a reply from the Leader of the Opposition, but I ask that the cross-Chamber chatter cease.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have announced already some of the initiatives which the ALP will introduce to enable private enterprise to get on with the job of creating business in the Northern Territory. I will go through them briefly.

Firstly, there is the North Australian Economic Community. Territorians know that we have already reached agreement with the Queensland and Western Australian governments, and Senator Bob Collins on behalf of the federal government, on an agenda for quadripartite talks to establish the NTEC. Getting the north of Australia moving is high on that agenda, as is doing it in a way which sets aside political boundaries and looks at the region as a whole. That simple mind-shift alone will create an atmosphere in which business can grow and flourish right across the top of Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory.

Trade North, an authority run by private enterprise, will guide the government to an effective, integrated program for trade development and foreign investment. It will integrate all of our export effort and all of our private investment effort. It will put it together in a coherent way so that we can offer coordinated assistance to all industries wishing to be involved, not simply favourites which might want to move into the Trade Development Zone. We will have an integrated effort right across the board. We will recognise the efforts of Territorians who might want to expand their job creation base and move into exports, instead of ignoring them as the government does at present.

We also have the Regional Facilitator Program, the single most successful program for regional development in the last decade. We have made a commitment to introduce that program, initially in Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy, and we confidently expect it to create a number of jobs. It is an indication of a government commitment to help people with good ideas to put those ideas into action, and to get out of the way so that they can do so.

Development agreements are another vital area. The government, for example, has spent $50m on the Trade Development Zone to allow companies to set up there. It makes no demands of them. It does not demand that they liaise with local industry. It does not demand in any way at all that they integrate their efforts into the local community. They are out there on their own. Under Labor, those free rides will be finished. Businesses which come into the Northern Territory with government assistance will have to deliver something to the people of the Northern Territory in return. We
will formalise that by means of development agreements. Throughout Australia, there are examples of development agreements which have been very effective in ensuring that local industry picks up as much work as possible from major new projects. Such agreements have been beyond the wit of this government. We have a commitment to do something about it and we will. It is as simple as that.

Mr Speaker, I have spoken about some of Labor's initiatives which will create jobs and develop a climate of confidence after the next election. Obviously, further initiatives will be announced in the build-up to the election campaign. Let me conclude by saying this. The CLP government made a commitment, spelt out in black and white, to create jobs. It said: 'We will generate 1000 new jobs a year through growth'. Those words appeared in the NT News on Wednesday 4 March 1987. But what do the ABS trend figures say, also in black and white?

Mr Coulter: They do not mean anything.

Mr SMITH: They do not mean anything?

Mr Coulter: It is wage and salary earnings that you should be quoting. You are being set up. Sit down. Conclude quickly.

Mr SMITH: Employed persons. Jobs. Let me say it simply. Jobs equals employed persons, equals a trend in the labour force in the Northern Territory. The Employed Persons Trend Series provides the most accurate figures available in terms of the job situation in the Northern Territory. The Australian Bureau of Statistics itself says that these are the most accurate figures available in the Northern Territory.

Mr Coulter: Based on a 1% sample group.

Mr SMITH: Sure. The trend figures indicate that there is a serious problem with the Northern Territory economy. The 3000 new jobs which we thought would be created have not been created. In fact, 1000 jobs have been lost over the past 3 years.

The honourable members opposite might like to look at the July figures, which indicated a jump of 2000 people. If one were bold enough to rely on those raw figures, they would indicate a job creation improvement from March 1987 to July 1987 of about 500 - a 500-person increase. We all know that we have to be very wary indeed of those sorts of figures. We now have the most accurate and reliable figures available, and they indicate clearly that this government has failed in its central election commitment to create 1000 jobs a year.

It has failed. No other words can describe what has occurred. This government has failed abysmally, while there has been a 12% increase in the number of jobs in the rest of Australia. There have been 900 000 new jobs in the last 3 years and 1.6 million new jobs since 1983. However, in the Northern Territory, we have lost 1000 jobs in the last 3 years. That is why we have moved this motion today. The heights of this government's ineptitude have been revealed. It said that it would generate 1000 new jobs but, 3 years later, what has it done? It has lost 1000 jobs. We have moved this motion in order to bring to the attention of the public of the Northern Territory the disgraceful record of this government in terms of economic management.
Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I think we all know what the motion is about. It is not really about the words on the piece of paper circulated to honourable members. It is an excuse for the Leader of the Opposition to try to launch forth in time to obtain media coverage this evening. I think he may be trying to release some sort of new policy, but I am not quite sure. These ALP policies all become a bit grey these days. They flutter about with about as much impact as a piece of confetti. I gather that the Leader of the Opposition was trying to tell us that a new organisation would set the world on fire under a Labor government. I have forgotten exactly what it was called. I think it was a commercial promotion agency, or something similar.

Like other honourable members, I find the range of statistics which are available these days from various sources, including the ABS, to be confusing at times. Of course, we all rely on other people to assist us with these matters. I would be prepared to match my economists with those of the Leader of the Opposition at any time. As I understand the situation, the Labour Force Australia statistics, which the Leader of the Opposition has been using as the basis for the figures in his motion, are generally regarded as being fairly unreliable. They are only broad indicators, based on a random sample of selected households. Of course, they serve a purpose. I am not denigrating the figures or saying they are of no use at all. However, they are broad trends figures, whereas we are talking about how many people are employed in the Northern Territory at given periods of time. That is really what counts if we are talking about whether we are making progress or not.

The figures released by the ABS in the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series in fact contain all wage and salary earners who received pay for any part of a relevant pay period. The figures are based on the numbers of people who actually receive money - people who are working - rather than a random sample survey of 1% of households to find out whether people in the household are working this month or not working this month. We are talking about the jobs. In fact, the CLP's promise to create 1000 jobs a year in the Northern Territory has been more than fulfilled. The Opposition Leader would have us believe that that is not the case. The promise was based, as our figures have been, on wage and salary earners. Between 1987 and 1989, the period referred to in the motion, total wage and salary earners in the Northern Territory have expanded by 6600 jobs to a total of 61 300. This represents an annual growth rate of 3300 jobs, which is over 3 times what was promised. We were a little conservative in those days about how many jobs we really could create.

The second section of the motion indicates that things are much better outside the Northern Territory because there has been a 12% increase in jobs nationally. The advice that I have received, and I will back my economists against the opposition's at any time, is that the opposition's figure is wrong and that the amount of growth is 10% rather than 12%. Perhaps the opposition could go back to the drawing board and at least make sure that the motions which it puts before this Assembly contain correct information.

The third part of the motion suggests that the Assembly should express concern because the number of jobs in the Territory dropped by 1000 during the 3-year period in question. ABS releases 2 publications showing job growth. The first refers to wage and salary earners and the second to the labour force. As shown in the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series, over 6600 jobs have in fact been created since 1987. The total number of people employed in July 1990 was 75 800, an increase of 2300 jobs on the March figures in 1990. This is due to a strong rise in full-time employment,
which has risen by 3000. In other words, there has been a strong increase in the quarter leading up to July this year. Let me refer again to the figures used by the opposition. Labour force statistics for the month of July were released by the ABS only 5 days ago. They showed that employment in the Northern Territory rose by 3.4% over the month compared with a national increase of 0.3%. The Northern Territory unemployment rate of 6.4% remains below the national rate of 6.7%.

The significant fact which has emerged today is that there has been some growth in the Northern Territory despite what obviously is a very difficult national economic environment. That growth has been achieved in spite of the policies we carry around on our back like several bags of sand, the policies of the ALP, which are endorsed by the party both nationally and locally. Territorians have felt the impact of the lack of sensible decisions on uranium mining. Such decisions could have seen this place up and running, probably together with the rest of the country. The federal government's decisions have resulted in the insane situation affecting Coronation Hill at present. The federal government will not let us run a powerline to Jabiru which would enable us to make some economies in our power system. During the past 6 years, we have received a 28% reduction, in real terms, in funding from the Commonwealth. All of this has helped to slow us down as far as creating jobs is concerned.

The local opposition maintains its constant criticism and opposition to the TDZ, to the construction of the Supreme Court Building and the new Parliament House, its attitude towards 5-star hotels in the Territory and its attitude to Yulara. The ALP is now trying to persuade the electorate that it should take the CLP's place on the government benches at some time in the near future. However, it is quite clear that, had the ALP been in power in the Northern Territory for the last 12 years, Yulara would not exist and the phenomenal number of jobs that have been created there would not exist. Instead, there would probably be a tent city at Uluru or, at the most, an up-market demountable city. There would be no 5-star hotels and the TDZ would not exist. The BTEC program would have been shut down about 3 years ago. Of course, there would have been none of the type of support that the government gave to a company to take over the former Darwin Joinery. We would not have the jobs that are being created by those activities.

Mr Bell: Good grief. It is a pretty poor effort, Marshall.

Mr Ede: It is one of your worst efforts.

Mr PERRON: It is very hard to put your heart into it because there is just ...

Mr Bell: I suppose if you have Doctor's Gully to worry about ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will remain silent for the next 7 minutes.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, indeed it is difficult to get fired up after hearing the Leader of the Opposition in his very poor support of a motion which itself is pretty poor. Really, his motion was an attempt to advise Territorians that his government will fix everything and create lots of jobs, and to persuade them that this government has not done the job at all.

I would like to reflect on a couple of the policies of the ALP. The Leader of the Opposition did this himself. He told us how he would fix it
up and get the place moving. We all know that members opposite are bound to implement the policies in the ALP platform. They cannot simply do a dodge, despite what the Leader of the Opposition has been telling us lately - that they will do some things and not others.

One of the ALP policies says: 'A Labor government will support, by all possible means, union advocacy for a shorter working week with no reduction in wages and conditions'. I suppose it could be argued that, theoretically, a shorter working week will lead to more people being employed because more people will be needed to do the same amount of work. Whether the private sector will be able to sustain economic viability and simply keep shortening the working week at the same time is another question.

Another policy states: 'A Labor government will review the current system of contracting and subcontracting with the aim of increasing the government's permanent work force'. Clearly, the government could have a significant influence in that area. The government could take back much of the work which is put out to private enterprise and, indeed, this government probably puts out more work to private enterprise than do most governments in Australia. A Labor government would reverse that trend. It could control the number of new jobs simply by creating more and more public service positions and recruiting to them as fast as taxes could be raised to pay for it. Whether that would be effective or efficient, or would advance the cause of the Northern Territory, is another question.

Here is another one: 'A Labor government will ensure that no government employee or employee of a statutory authority will be required to work in excess of 35 hours a week'. That is pretty interesting. There is quite a number of people in the executive levels of government who certainly work more than 35 hours a week and I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that they are expected to. They do not put their hand out for overtime rates. They are expected to do the job whatever the hours required. Obviously, we would have to increase staff quite dramatically in order to ensure that no one worked more than 35 hours. It is a nonsensical policy and the ALP platform contains many more of them.

'A Labor government will support union initiatives to discourage the use of modern technology to monitor performance in the workplace'. It is really incredible stuff! I only picked the eyes out of a few of these policies.

'Labor in government will assist those who choose not to be part of the normal labour market to establish economic independence to enable them to generate a level of income appropriate to their lifestyle'. I am not sure whether this is creating work or redefining the word 'work'. We will come to that in a minute. Maybe ABS will have to develop a whole new raft of statistics.

'Labor in government will adopt a more liberal definition of the word "work" to support those developing work programs not as important as paid work, those who wish to become self-sufficient without using labour as a means of exchange, and those who pursue cultural activities which may not lead to self-sufficiency'. If ever the ALP gets into power, heaven forbid, we will have a completely new statistical basis as to what work is and what jobs are. I suppose that an ALP government would be able to pump the figures up a bit here and there so that they would reflect anything it wanted.
'Labor in government will work to ensure that labour-saving technology is introduced only after full consultation with trade unions and only in such a manner as to share the benefits as widely as possible'. It is quite clear that one way in which the opposition will try to keep jobs in the Northern Territory will be by stopping anyone from becoming any more efficient by the use of labour-saving devices.

'A Territory Labor government will act in the marketplace in whatever ways may be necessary to ensure that people living in rental accommodation pay fair rents'. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that that will not help to increase the work force. The only effect rent control has had - and we have experienced it at first hand in the Northern Territory, Mr Speaker, as you would be well aware - is to bring the commercial accommodation industry to a dead stop. That is exactly what it did for some years. It certainly does not create any employment.

'A Labor government will give priority to establishing legislation to regulate the operation of subcontractors with the aim of ensuring that they receive, as a minimum, those wages and conditions applying under the appropriate award, determination or industrial agreement'. It seems that we are now even saying to people who are prepared to be self-employed that we will interfere with the prices they tender for work because we will ensure that they obtain a minimum of award condition rates. Probably, a subcontractor would not be able to work overtime without paying himself overtime rates. It is absolute nonsense to propose that we interfere in a subcontracting system basically in order to tell people what their prices will be. The only role that we should have in that regard is to ensure that subcontractors have appropriate insurance for themselves and their employees and that they abide by normal industrial safety standards. What we have here is a good example of people who do not like subcontracting at all. They would much prefer day labour.

'A Labor government will ensure that, as far as possible, all labour employed by local government authorities is employed as council's permanent work force and that use of contract labour is discouraged'. If ever we were looking for something that distinguishes between the 2 sides of this House, this certainly is it. Our policy is precisely the opposite. We believe that government and local governments should minimise their day labour forces and have the more efficient private sector do as much work as is humanly possible.

'A Labor government will ensure that preference to unionists shall be extended by councils to all officers, staff and wages employees'. I am not quite sure why they have limited it to ...

Mr McCarthy: That is equal opportunity.

Mr PERRON: ...local government. Yes, I do not know what happened to equal opportunity. You have the same right not to be a member of a union as you have to join a union. Sadly, now and then in the world of politics, we get into the realm of prostitution of principles.

'Labor will prevent the development of any uranium mines other than Nabarlek, Ranger and Roxby Downs'. This is local Labor policy of course. Even if the federal government over-turns its insane 3-mine policy nationally, the local ALP has a policy of not supporting the development of any more mines in the Northern Territory, notwithstanding what its federal colleagues may think.
Mr Speaker, that is all I have to say in this debate. Obviously, we reject the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. As I have demonstrated, he used inaccurate figures. His reason for moving the motion had nothing to do with labour force statistics, but was to give him an opportunity to speak to the Assembly about ALP policy. I have been pleased to enunciate a few of those sections of ALP policy which he probably prefers not to have enunciated.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that, in a debate of this nature, the facts tend to be easily distorted by the corrupt use of statistics. Unfortunately, the public has become fairly cynical about statistics and agrees with the old adage of lies, damned lies and statistics. The best people to judge which figures are most accurate are probably the people who compile them. I see that the Leader of Government Business is agreeing with that. That is excellent; we are getting somewhere. We should ask the ABS which statistics are the best.

In this debate, the opposition is relying on the Labour Force Australia Series, not on a month-by-month basis but on a trend basis. The reason is that this irons out monthly variations which can throw up some rather bizarre fluctuations because of the size of the sample. You iron out those fluctuations by taking the trend analysis, which is what we have relied on. Government members are relying on another series called Employed Wage and Salary Earners. That is the difference between the 2 sets of figures that are being used today.

Let us consider which is the more accurate set in terms of being able to decide where the movement is taking place and what is actually going on.

Mr Coulter: How do you get the wage and salary earners figures?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government Business is interjecting and demonstrating his ignorance. He will have every chance to stand up next to demonstrate to the whole world his ignorance in this regard.

Mr Coulter: Where do the figures come from?

Mr EDE: I beg him to take it easy. We will all know his ignorance in a few minutes.

I will quote from the publication of the Australian Bureau of Statistics which the government is relying on: the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series. In terms of the methodology employed ...

Mr Coulter: Do the trend first.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, he will have his turn. All he has to do is wait. Hopefully, he will be educated and will not make such a fool of himself when he stands up.

It states that there are conceptual and methodological reasons for differences in the estimates produced by the 2 surveys. It says: 'The 2 series should be seen as complementary. Movements in them have generally been broadly consistent. In recent time periods, the 2 surveys have shown some divergence in the estimates produced'. The next section is in heavy type so that even the Minister for Industries and Development may be able to follow it: 'The ABS considers that the Labour Force Series provides the better indicator of overall employment movements at the Australian and state
levels'. That is on page 1. Obviously, members opposite did not even get to page 1.

Mr Coulter: Read out what it says about trends.

Mr EDE: You have been wiped off the floor, right? Take your medicine. The ABS itself states that the better indicator of the 2 is the Labour Force Series. This is the series whose figures we have relied on and which shows exactly what we have stated.

We have figures here for the years 1985 to 1990. Obviously, in this debate, we are relying on the figures for March 1987 through to July 1990. March 1987 shows 74 500 persons in the labour force. The July 1990 figure shows 73 500. According to the ABS, these are the figures which provide a more reliable basis for arguments and discussions of this kind. We can wander into the realms of mickey mouse figures, we can play with figures that the Australian Bureau of Statistics itself has said are not reliable, or we can take the advice of the ABS and utilise the figures which it says we should be using.

We have established already that the figures which the ABS believes to be valid show that we have lost 1000 jobs during the last 3 years. This contrasts with the 1000 jobs per year which the CLP promised to create, which would have made a total of 3000 jobs. That makes a difference of 4000 jobs - 4000 jobs that we do not have. It relates directly to the inefficiency and inability of the government opposite to deliver on its promises. Government members have spoken about jobs, jobs, jobs. I have always categorised it as promises, promises, promises - because that is all it has been.

Mr Coulter: Is that right?

Mr EDE: Yes. It's 'gunna, gunna, gunna'. The government is always 'gunna' do something. Mr Speaker, what do you see when you look at the actual results? You find that it delivers nothing. It delivers inertia, lack of growth and fewer jobs. That is what is wrong in the Northern Territory today.

On the national scene, we know that more than a million new jobs have been created during the period we are talking about. Meanwhile, members of this government have been blaming everything except themselves. We have heard them blame high interest rates. We have heard them blame the pilots' dispute. We have heard them blame the federal government. I can see now that they are getting themselves organised to start blaming Iraq. That will be the next thing that we will hear. They blame everybody except themselves but they cannot explain why, in a period when they lost 1000 jobs having promised an additional 3000 jobs, governments elsewhere in Australia were able to create a million new jobs.

Even if the government had done nothing except match what has been done elsewhere in Australia, if it had just flowed with the tide, there would have been 10 000 new jobs here. That is the number of new jobs which would have been generated in the Territory if we had matched the rest of Australia in job growth. But, we have not. The shame of it is that this government has presided over probably the most substantial decline in jobs in this Territory since the war. It has taken a great Territory, a great place, and it has failed in its duty to do anything to assist in its development. The government has missed opportunities because its members have been off in fairyland. That is where their policies have come from. I will not go
through them all chapter and verse but we all know the problems with Myilly Point, the Sheratons, the Yularas and the casinos.

Mr Coulter: 1753 jobs. That's what the Sheratons and Yularas are.

Mr EDE: The net effect on the Territory has been 1000 fewer jobs. You can talk about individual situations, but what you have done is to completely destroy the economy, with jobs leaking out in various sectors. The net result is 1000 fewer jobs than existed when this government came to office. We have had the scandals at the Trade Development Zone, and the story goes on and on! The government has not put its old ways behind it. It has not changed its philosophy or approach. In fact, it has now involved itself with the Darwin Joinery.

Mr Coulter: That saved 70 jobs. Jobs, jobs, jobs.

Mr EDE: You saved 70 jobs, did you? I am continually approached by people throughout the Territory who are in predicaments which are not of their own making.

Mr Coulter: That's what you said about BTEC. We found that to be false after a police inquiry too.

Mr EDE: I could talk about how many jobs were lost as a result of that devastating act on the part of your colleague.

The fact is that the government has not learnt from its mistakes. It is continuing with a mishmash of socialistic polices which it has somehow dreamt up - policies which have no credibility with this side of the House and which will not be used in our program for the development of the Territory.

We have talked already about the work that we are doing in putting together the Export North program. It will have a private enterprise board of management, thereby ensuring that there is a differentiation between the government's role of setting the parameters and creating an environment within which growth can occur, and the role of private enterprise in actually carrying out the activities which create that growth. That is something which this government has never learnt and shows no indication whatsoever of learning despite the losses it is taking in the job market.

These are the policies that we have been putting together and they will be put into effect after the election. We are looking at a whole range of areas. My colleague spoke about the North Australian Economic Community. Let us take one aspect of that in order to understand how we are missing out on job growth in the Northern Territory because of this government's failure to find a means of cooperating with other governments across the north to develop the northern part of Australia in a consistent manner.

Mr Coulter: We have a lot to learn from Queensland about roads - not to build them like it does.

Mr EDE: Exactly. When you get to the Queensland border, the roads disappear. In the Territory, there are roads whether you are going through Wollogorang or on the Plenty or the Sandover. As soon as you reach the border, you have nothing. One would have thought that this government could have negotiated when the conservatives were in power in Queensland. They should have come to some sort of an agreement about fixing the gaps. If they had done that, the job growth in Borroloola and movement on the Plenty
Highway would have been quite substantial. Members opposite still cannot see the potential there and that is a shame. I do know that they will have a long time in opposition to countenance where they went wrong. I have this feeling that I will give them nothing to do when they are in opposition. They will have a long and fruitful period of looking at where they went wrong. I hope that some day the penny will drop.

One of the final nails in the government's coffin is the banner that it held up as its philosophy and what it would achieve when it was re-elected in 1987. The 1000 jobs a year was at the centre of all of its ads. What do we find after 3 years? Not even 1 job per year. Unlike the rest of Australia, which has experienced job growth, the Northern Territory has had a net loss of 1000 jobs over that period and, for that, the government stands justly condemned.

For that reason, I call on members to support this motion. Unless we in this House are concerned about the fact that we have lost those 1000 jobs, what hope is there for private enterprise to get on with the job of developing the Territory? What hope is there for the average Territorian who is looking for some personal job security and for future employment opportunities when the children grow up? What hope is there for such people when members of this House show no concern? The only way that this House can demonstrate its concern and display a commitment to start getting on with the job is to pass this motion and work out the ways and means so that, finally, we will have something done in this Territory.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I cannot believe the Leader of the Opposition's timing in respect of this motion. It is about the equivalent of my standing up and saying that everything in the Trade Development Zone has been running smoothly for the last 12 months. That is how bad it is. His timing is absolutely awful. The very latest set of figures available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that employment in the Northern Territory rose by 3.4% in the month of July 1990. That increase was well above the national average increase of 0.3%. At the same time, the Territory unemployment rate of 6.4% is the second lowest in Australia and below the Australian average of 6.7%. You need look no further than 'The State of the States' in The Weekend Australian to get some of the figures and to see what has been happening around Australia. In fact, the total number of employed persons in the Territory rose during July by 2500 to 75 800.

In a moment, I will speak about the trends and whether or not, and why, we use the wage and salary earners section of the ABS figures or the labour force figures. However, at this stage, it is interesting to note from the labour force trends that the December figures for each of those years indicate an increase. Members opposite are very selective in their regard for the truth.

As many as 3000 more Territorians were employed on a full-time basis - that is what the figures tell us. Of the 2900 people who entered the Territory labour force in July, 86.2% found jobs. The rest of Australia achieved only half that rate. This is all undeniably good news for the Northern Territory. Any economist or demographer who has standing in the community will tell you that. Never mind the feeble attempts of the Leader of the Opposition and his very, very faithful deputy leader. I take back everything I have said about him trying to take the Leader of the Opposition's job from him. Anyone who would follow him on a subject like this must be loyal. It was a gutsy effort, and I admire the Deputy Leader.
of the Opposition in his new-found faithfulness. Instead of trying to take
the job from his boss, obviously he is now prepared to die with him.

Mr Ede: You have not backed up your boss's remarks yet. I suppose
somebody ought to.

Mr COULTER: It is not mere government rhetoric. These are figures
produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The whole tenor of the
opposition's contribution to this debate is designed to give the impression
that job numbers in the Territory are declining. Clearly, that is not the
case. The trends are all positive. There is one thing that I will say for
the members of the opposition: they have a ton of cheek. The essence of
their story is that the economy is in decline, that jobs are disappearing,
and that only Labor has the right answer. That is what they want us to
believe. Of course, the facts show that they do not know what they are
talking about.

Australia today demonstrates that Labor definitely has the wrong
answer. The national economy is severely depressed under the Keating plan.
We were told that we were in for a soft landing. The truth is that we are
in a nosedive on full throttle. That is what is happening. Citizens are
marching in the streets in Victoria. The Premier and the Treasurer have
been sacked, and the creditworthiness of the state's financial
administration has been downgraded by Moody's. In Western Australia,
another Premier has been sacked because of irresponsible handling of the
economy. Unemployment has increased in every state in Australia from
January to July this year.

Queensland, the state now tied into the Territory Labor Party's
pre-election strategy, has the nation's second highest unemployment rate
at 8.3%. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition talk in very derogatory
terms about K.K. Yeung, our representative in Hong Kong, and his efforts to
help us in the Trade Development Zone. As the Leader of the Opposition has
now hooked himself to Wayne Goss, I wonder if he will continue to rubbish
K.K. Yeung, who is out to lunch with the Premier of Queensland, Mr Goss,
advising him on investment opportunities in that state. Let us see the
Leader of the Opposition eat his words about K.K. Yeung now. All of a
sudden, K.K. Yeung will be the shining star and we will be told how we
should not insult him and what a great guy he is. Let us see him do a 360°
backflip on that. Of course, Mr Goss would have told the 'would-be' and
'will-be' Leader of the Opposition about that.

I predict that the member for MacDonnell will be the Leader of the
Opposition in a very short time, and it would not surprise me if the member
for Wanguri were elected as his deputy.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I know that the Deputy Chief
Minister is pretty thin on material for his contribution to this debate, but
I would point out that speculation about the shape of a future Labor
government is beyond the scope of this topic. I suggest, Mr Speaker, that
you encourage the minister to stick to the actual terms of the debate.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. During this morning's debate,
I have allowed members on both sides of the House to range widely and freely
because of the content of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition,
and I intend to allow debate to run freely this afternoon.
Mr COULTER: I understand the nervousness of the honourable member. He has some considerable trouble in manoeuvring for the leadership of the opposition and, now that victory stares him in the face, he cannot recognise it.

Mr Speaker, the fact is that K.K. Yeung had lunch with Mr Goss in Queensland the other day. I am interested to hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say now, bearing in mind that he has done nothing but rubbish K.K. Yeung over a long period.

It has been shown that the Keating plan is in tatters all over Australia. Unemployment increased in every state from January to July this year. Queensland, the state which is the focal point of the Territory Labor Party's pre-election strategy, has the second highest rate of unemployment in Australia. Last time around, the opposition was saying: 'Labor's Territory will boost development and put the profits in your pocket. A Smith Labor government will draw on the expertise and success of the Western Australian model and establish the same system for developing the Territory'. The opposition has gone off the west coast now and has turned to the east coast. It is now using the model of Queensland which has the second highest unemployment rate in Australia, a rate of 8.3%. Only Tasmania, another Labor state, has a higher rate at 9.2%. Job vacancies in Victoria have fallen by a massive 24.2% in the past 6 months. They have fallen by 16% in Western Australia. In fact, job vacancies as measured by the ANZ Bank have fallen by an average of 16% across the nation.

What about retail trade? It has fallen by a massive 3.9% in Western Australia in the last quarter and by 0.6% in Victoria. Business confidence has fallen by 28.6% in Victoria, 18.2% in Queensland, 13.2% in South Australia, 26.6% in Western Australia and 23.2% across Australia. We need not go much further to realise which parties are in power in those states.

Is the Labor recipe for success supposed to be our model? The Labor Party here pins its hopes for electoral success on the Goss Queensland model. Nevertheless, in Queensland today, Premier Goss has instituted an unbelievable 85 reviews of government departments and authorities. The effect has been a virtual halt to government activity while everybody concentrates on reviews. In the last Queensland election campaign, Mr Goss proudly announced that he would run Queensland as Premier Cain ran Victoria. That is what he said. Those were his words. Now we have the Leader of the Opposition saying that he will use the east coast success model this time, not the west coast model. However, it was Mr Goss who proudly said that he would run Queensland along the same lines as Cain was running Victoria.

Does the Leader of the Opposition endorse that approach? We will certainly tell people about it. We will certainly highlight the words of Mr Goss, the man to whom the Leader of the Opposition turns because he has no ideas of his own. The Territory Labor Party's pre-election strategy is in tatters. We all remember Labor's campaign advertisements in the last Territory election. It referred to WA Inc and VEDC. It said that, if elected, Territory Labor would bring institutions of that ilk to the Territory. There is no getting away from that. We have to admire the Territory electorate, which woke up to what would happen if a Labor government was elected. I take my hat off to Territorians. It all goes to show that the opposition's economic policies are merely the policies of opportunism, an attempt to jump on the nearest band wagon.
The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, with his new-found admiration for the Leader of the Opposition, has said that we should ignore the figures concerning wage and salary earners, those people who were actually paid during the period referred to. Let me give the honourable member a few definitions which I have obtained from economists and other people who know a little about these matters. We refer to the wage and salary earner statistics when we refer to job growth over long periods. The survey of wage and salary earners is the most accurate indicator of job growth because it includes all wage and salary earners who receive pay for any part of the relevant pay period. All permanent, temporary, casual, managerial and executive employees are included.

On the other hand, I am reliably informed that labour force statistics, which include trend estimates, constitute a less useful indicator of job growth. Labour force figures are based on a randomly selected survey of households considered to be representative of the entire population.

Mr Smith: Who is your source?

Mr Ede: Who told you that?

Mr COULTER: The information comes from people on whom I rely, people who have advised me on many occasions.

The Leader of the Opposition should read the definition of 'trend' before he replies in this debate. We know how many people are consulted in the process of putting together the trend figures. The interviewers simply pick up the telephone or knock on some doors. How many people do they telephone? Does the opposition know? The answer, Mr Speaker, is 35 people. I do not understand the Leader of the Opposition. We have always agreed that, in the Northern Territory, a sample of 1% or less is unreliable. He is now staking his political future on such a sample. We have never accepted those trend figures because of the poor sampling. It is nothing to do with the reliability of the ABS, whose officers will tell you that themselves.

Mr Smith: They tell you that it is the most reliable statistic.

Mr COULTER: That may be the case in other cities, where a 1% sample is a broad group. But here, a 1% sample might be made up of 6 people in Karama, 10 in Fannie Bay, 2 in Tennant Creek, 1 at Rabbit Flat and 16 in Alice Springs.

Mr Bell: Are you sure that the Australian Bureau of Statistics will agree with you?

Mr COULTER: It will. Go and speak to its staff. The trend statistics are not representative of the entire population. They are used to make judgments about activity in the last few months. The latest such statistics came out in July 1990. As wage and salary earner figures are not as up to date, trend estimates provide a broad indication of the current state of the economy and are less volatile than other labour force figures as they take into consideration seasonal changes, school holiday patterns etc. Whilst that is the case, trend estimates are still based on a small proportion of the population, in this case some 35 people.

Let me now return to the figures for wage and salary earners, which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not quote from. What information do they give about the number of people who are being paid a wage or
salary - that is, people who have a job. I might say here that, given the opposition's definition of the term 'work', it is hard to imagine what it considers a job to be. However, in March 1987, 54 700 people were employed. In March 1990, 61 300 people were employed. That is an increase of 6600 jobs since March 1987. That is what the figures show, but the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made no reference to it. If that does not represent additional jobs, what does? We have done much better than the extra 1000 jobs per year that we promised. That is so obvious that even the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should be able to understand it.

Mr Ede: You are digging a very big hole. My colleague will soon bury you in it.

Mr COULTER: Your colleague will probably walk out on you. You should be nice to him because he will be the new Leader of the Opposition - if he retains his seat, of course - in a very short time.

Mr Speaker, I could go on and on about this. The Weekend Australian devoted many pages last weekend to the retail trade sector, job vacancies and so forth throughout Australia. It is no secret that the national economy is in a disgraceful state with jobs being lost hourly. 60 000 positions have been lost already in the manufacturing sector in the 1990-91 fiscal year. That is the proud record that we have under Labor governments around Australia. Mr Goss said that he would be proud to run Queensland as Mr Cain has run Victoria. We will quote those words regularly.

In today's NT News, Frank Alcorta quotes a range of statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the NT Treasury and the Chief Minister's Research Unit. This is what he had to say about jobs:

Just as important as population levels is what people do for a living. The figures here also show a dramatic difference from the rest of Australia. While, in Australia as a whole, there has been a big jump in the numbers employed in the public service and just as big a loss in the numbers employed in the private sector, here the reverse is the case. Employment in the private sector expanded by 5400 jobs or an astonishing 16.1%, from 33 000 jobs to 39 000 jobs in March 1990.

A similar comparison for the public service reveals growth of 800 jobs, or 3.7%, from 21 500 to 22 300 jobs. Increases in employment in the NTPS (up 700 jobs) and local government (300 jobs) offset a fall in employment in the federal government (down 200 jobs).

I will not be long on this, Mr Speaker. Telecom people lost jobs. In the Department of Housing and Construction, 70 jobs were lost. Most of the loss of jobs is directly attributable to federal government centralist policies taking people out of the Territory and back to Canberra. We welcome this motion because it is so obviously a nonsense. The timing is atrocious. If this is the first volley from members opposite in a budget debate, we welcome their incompetence.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, that was another example of the type of diatribe which so often substitutes for any substance or real thought on the part of the Deputy Chief Minister. The Leader of the Opposition quite damningly indicated the shortcomings of this government and quite clearly indicated, in terms of the fundamental issue of concern to the electorate in the Northern Territory, why the CLP government has had its day. The
hysterical and ill-informed contribution of the Deputy Chief Minister indicated not only that his time is past but also that the time of this government as a whole is past. The Northern Territory electorate is simply waiting for its opportunity to ring in that change. The approach that has been taken and the broken promises so amply demonstrated by the Leader of the Opposition give a clear indication of how hollow the contributions of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister are.

The Deputy Chief Minister spent some not inconsiderable time in trying to extricate his government and himself from their election promise of March 1987, the promise of 1000 jobs a year in the Territory over the 3 years. That did not eventuate. For 15 or 20 minutes, the Deputy Chief Minister tried to explain that the government had fulfilled its election promise. In doing so, he left himself an out. He said, 'I am reliably advised', or words to that effect. He was not even prepared to stand by the information that was provided to him.

With the relatively scant resources available to this hard-working opposition, soon to be the Territory's first Labor government, I might be able to assist the Deputy Chief Minister where both his staff and his own brains leave him short. The Deputy Chief Minister would do well to pay a little closer attention to the sources of statistics. In his loud-mouthed fashion, he attempted to draw a false distinction between the importance of 2 series of Australian Bureau of Statistics figures. He made some extreme statements, off the cuff, about samplings. I do not profess to be a statistician and I presume that the same applies to the Deputy Chief Minister. Therefore, I will not indulge in the sort of absurdities which the Deputy Chief Minister indulged in about people who live here and there and elsewhere around the Territory. It would be all very good if he was on stage but, Unfortunately, he is supposed to be running the Northern Territory, in association with the Chief Minister. I have to tell him that the people of the Territory are not too impressed by the sort of absurdities that he came up with today.

I will rely on the opinions and the judgments of the value of different statistics given by the Australian Bureau of Statistics itself. I believe that the views of the ABS in respect of its different series of figures are the most important views to be taken into consideration in this debate. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that the 2 series of figures that are important in this debate are, first, the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series and, secondly, the Labour Force Australia Employed Persons Trend Series. The Leader of the Opposition based his quite clear criticism of the lack of performance of this government on that Labour Force Series. What does the Australian Bureau of Statistics itself say about the relative merits of these 2 series of figures? I will tell you, Mr Speaker. I will quote from the summary of findings attached to the March quarter 1990 catalogue No 6248.0: 'The ABS considers that the Labour Force Series provides the better indicator of overall employment movements at the Australian and state level'.

Mr McCarthy: Compared to what?

Mr BELL: I think, Mr Speaker ...

Mr McCarthy: Compared to what? You did not compare it.

Mr BELL: I will answer the interjection from the member for Victoria River in a moment. The fact is that the ABS has indicated clearly the shortcomings of the figures that the Deputy Chief Minister relied on.
What is the distinction between these 2 sets of figures? The fact is that the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series figures do not include some very important categories. Again, I quote from explanatory notes to the series of figures that the Deputy Chief Minister was quoting from...

Mr Hatton: Page number?

Mr BELL: I am referring to the December Quarter 1989 figures, catalogue number as before...

Mr Hatton: 6248.

Mr BELL: In respect of the scope of the survey, it says: 'All wage and salary earners, who received pay in any pay period ending within the quarter, were represented in the survey except - note this exception, Mr Speaker - 'members of the Australian permanent defence forces ...'. I presume honourable members will remember a place called Ti ndal? The list of exceptions goes on: '... employees of enterprises in the private sector primarily engaged in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, employees in private households employing staff ...'. The other categories are not of importance. The fact is that large sections of people who are self-employed, people in that important small business community in the Northern Territory, are not included in the figures on which the Deputy Chief Minister seeks to rely. For that reason, the point needs to be hammered home, and I believe that the terms of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition deserve to be supported.

The figures indicate clearly that, in March 1987, 74 500 people were employed in the Territory. More than 3 years later, 1000 fewer people are employed. The CLP government promised that there would be job increases of 1000 per year and that has not happened, because of fiscal mismanagement by this government and because it has made huge blunders in relation to projects like the Sheratons and the TDZ. We heard the Deputy Chief Minister gleefully recounting the problems which the Victorian and Western Australian governments are experiencing. Let me draw his attention to the fact that he does not seem to have noticed that this government has the same problems. Whilst he has not noticed, the electorate has done so. It will shortly record its displeasure with the failure of the Deputy Chief Minister to notice what a shambles this government has created.

Let me return to a particular area that is of concern to me, because it is in my electorate. I refer to the Yulara Resort. The fact is that, through its fiscal mismanagement, this government has caused serious concerns to my constituents who live at Yulara. The decade of the 1980s was very kind to Australia in tourism and the Territory should have been in a position to capitalise on that. But, what have these people done with respect to Yulara? It is a shambles. I hear the Deputy Chief Minister giggling. After the next election, he will have considerable time to giggle.

Mr Coulter: Earlier, you told me that I would lose my seat. What are you saying? I am going to get back in again?

Mr BELL: That is what I mean. I suggest that he will have considerable time to giggle after the next election because he will lose his seat.

Mr Coulter: Should we have built Yulara or not?
Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection. It was a commitment by the Whitlam government in 1974 ...

Mr McCarthy: So the Whitlam government built it?

Mr BELL: It was a commitment by the Whitlam government in 1974. I know that that is pretty unpopular and makes pretty bad press. For the benefit of somebody like the Deputy Chief Minister, who evidently lacks a sense of history and certainly chooses to ignore the future, it was a Whitlam government decision in 1974 to move the structures from around the base of Ayers Rock to an area some distance away.

Mr Vale: Ask Jock Nelson about that.

Mr Manzie: You were not here in those days.

Mr BELL: I look forward to the contribution from the member for Braitling. I am not sure that he will have much to contribute, but I will look forward to hearing what he has to say.

Mr Coulter: Should we have built it or not?

Mr BELL: It would be a lot easier, Mr Speaker, if I did not have these interjections. I will give these people their history lesson, but they keep interjecting and that makes it very hard.

I believe that that decision was a sensible one. However, I ask the Deputy Chief Minister or any future speakers in this debate to explain why we have not been able to make Yulara pay for itself when we have had a record decade in terms of tourist numbers. Somebody will be able to tell me whether the number of visitors to Ayers Rock over the last decade has increased tenfold or twentyfold; I do not have the figures off the top of my head. Under those circumstances, we should have been able to make Yulara pay for itself. I should be able to tell my constituents that the government's investment is secure, that the cash flow situation is such that we are able to service the capital investment at Yulara and give them the figures. I cannot do that. Whenever the opposition in this Assembly raises that issue, we are told that Yulara is a private company. The government pours millions of dollars into it but will not tell us about it. How does it expect my constituents at Yulara to feel when it inflicts that quality of financial management on the Territory? Yulara was a good idea which has been reduced to a fiasco by Marshall Perron and his cronies.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find the term used by the honourable member to be quite offensive. I ask that he be required to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for MacDonnell referred to the Chief Minister 'and his cronies'. He did not say the Chief Minister's 'cronies in the parliament'. One could have cronies outside of the parliament. It is a very fine line, but I ask the member not to use the word again and to refer to the honourable Chief Minister.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will refer to the honourable Chief Minister and his cronies in future.

I think it really needs to be placed on record and Yulara is one small example ...
Mr Coulter: What about the Sheratons?

Mr BELL: Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, in the time that is available to me, I am unable to give a thoroughgoing analysis of all the financial shambles that succeeding CLP governments have visited on the Territory. I could talk about the casino, the Darwin Sheraton and the Alice Springs Sheraton as well. I was concentrating on one specific example. Unfortunately, the time available does not enable me to catalogue all the sins that will result in the demolition of this government.

I have given a clear example of the sort of financial mismanagement which has impacted on my own electorate and which is an example of the overall mismanagement of the economy by this government. I believe that it more than amply supports the terms of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the CLP's broken promises. There is nothing more important to people than job security and opportunities for their kids to get jobs. This government has made promises that it has not kept. In an environment in which the federal Labor government has done a great deal over the 7 years of its tenure to put people in jobs, this government has gone backwards during the last 3 years. I have no doubt that the people of the Northern Territory will visit their judgment on this government because of its failure to deliver its promises.

We heard the Deputy Chief Minister attempt to slate the federal government's record. If there is anything that makes me proud to represent the Australian Labor Party in this parliament or simply to be a member of the Australian Labor Party, it is the performance of the Hawke-Keating Labor government.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I ask the Deputy Chief Minister and members opposite to recall the circumstances and the inflation rates which characterised the last years of the Fraser government. They should recall those circumstances, along with the extent to which that government was rebuffed by the Australian electorate in 1983. Because of promises which it has failed to deliver on, and because of the dramatic contrast with the federal government's efforts in relation to employment, the Northern Territory electorate will deliver harsh judgment and remove the CLP from office.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I will begin by picking up the final comments of the member for MacDonnell and talking about what his leader thinks of political promises. I refer members to a talkback program of 8 May 1990. Col Krohn asked the Leader of the Opposition: 'So really politicians' promises count for nothing, depending on the circumstances?' The Leader of the Opposition's response was: 'Well, I think most people's promises are made in that context, Col'. I think that is outrageous. That is really surprising, considering the rhetoric we have had from members opposite today and promises that the Leader of the Opposition has been making to the people of the Northern Territory in recent times.

With this motion, I believe the Leader of the Opposition has failed again. He has failed to back up his claims. He has failed to convince anybody in this Chamber. I am certain that he has failed to convince anybody in the rest of the Northern Territory. The reason that he has not been able to convince anybody is because he got it wrong. He is wrong again.
He refers to the Australian Bureau of Statistics trend series being more accurate than the monthly figures and that is correct. Everybody would agree that, to use the monthly figures, would be quite inappropriate in this instance. If one looks at the trend figures for June this year, it is clear that they indicate that the labour force of the Northern Territory was 73,300. The monthly figure for the previous month was 72,100, indicating an increase of 1,200 people in the labour force. Of course, the monthly figures are likely to be inaccurate because of the very small sample used. Only about 35 households across the Northern Territory are sampled and the location of the sample varies. It might be Fannie Bay and Palmerston one month, and Nightcliff and Karama in another month. Of course, the figures from such areas will vary quite enormously. Obviously, samples of such a small portion of the population will provide a varying statistical base and will not provide us with particularly good figures.

The Chief Minister and the government tend to use the Wage and Salary Earners Series for the Territory because, quite clearly, they are more accurate. The Australian Bureau of Statistics does not compare wage and salary figures with the trend series and say that one is more accurate than the other. It compares monthly figures with the trend figures, and that is a fact which the opposition did not care to pass on to people in this House. I have always been of the view that the more accurate figures are those which are taken from the real figures. Whether they refer to wage and salary earners or to power and water connections or telephone connections over disconnections, those figures will be more accurate. Figures for people leaving the Territory and for people who do not have jobs cannot all increase at the same time - not that the figures necessarily refer to jobs in this case. But, when we are talking statistics, the real statistics are the ones that are more accurate. The Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series, quite clearly, would give a more accurate measure of people in jobs. Likewise, domestic power and water connections over disconnections and telephone connections over disconnections would be far stronger indicators of population trends. I think that is something that most people would agree on, and that is why the government has been more apt to use those figures than the sorts of figures that the opposition would have us believe.

There is no doubt at all that figures for wage and salary earners in the Northern Territory have increased by 6,600 jobs over the period. That is what the ABS statistics indicate. There has been an increase of 6,600 jobs over the 3 years from March 1987. That is an inescapable fact. They are real figures, genuine figures, and they cannot be denied. The same degree of realism does not apply to statistics gleaned from a sample of 35 households in randomly selected places. The trend figures are better, but still not accurate. Quite clearly, the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series provides the most accurate figures that we can come up with. Some 6,600 jobs have been put in place over the 3-year period that the opposition carps about and that has been achieved in circumstances which certainly cannot be described as good times. It has been achieved in times when the federal Labor government has made life extremely difficult for the people of the Northern Territory.

The Commonwealth has deliberately set in place a program to cut the Australian work force. We know that the federal government is increasing interest rates to the point at which people will be put out of work. Paul Keating sits comfortably in his office, knowing that he has a job for the next couple of years, and hoping beyond all hope that more people will be out of work this month so that his promises can be fulfilled. He is
pushing the figures down. He is keen to get people out of the system. Unfortunately for him, and fortunately for those people who have jobs, he has failed in that.

We have also achieved those figures in spite of deliberate federal government policies of moving people out of the Northern Territory. It has been doing this now for the last 2 or 3 years ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, just listen to this fellow over there, who carps on about this. He is the only person I know who is reputed to have had a charisma transplant and even that obviously has failed.

The effect of Commonwealth transfers is that 75 employees of Telecom and 50 employees of the Department of Administrative Services have been moved out of the Territory. In addition, 150 jobs in the Civil Aviation Authority have been transferred, together with 71 jobs in Australian Construction Services. It is not only the individuals who leave but their families as well, as husbands and wives are put out of work.

Further, there have been cutbacks of $30m in federal government works in the Territory. If one considers 60% of that as the labour component, it means that 600 people did not get jobs in the Northern Territory because the federal government has cut its funding of capital works. The only federal government capital works project in the Territory at present is the new airport terminal.

Mr Smith: And the 2nd Cavalry.

Mr McCARTHY: If you go out to the terminal site, you will see that two-thirds of the cars have Western Australian and New South Wales plates. The work force is coming from interstate for those jobs. Territory people are not getting work there. The people in those jobs come from interstate.

On top of all that, as of last Friday, 53 people who worked for ATSIC are out there looking for jobs. No doubt, they are lined up outside the CES office today. In other words, 53 families were given their notice last Friday. A freeze has been placed on ATSIC funds in the Northern Territory, out of the Darwin office. In my office, at lunchtime, I had people representing Aboriginal communities seeking to find out why ATSIC was not releasing funds to them. No funds are coming out of the Darwin office of ATSIC to people who want to get jobs. Aboriginal people will be out of work in their communities because ATSIC is not releasing funds. Perhaps that has something to do with the fact that, prior to 1988-89, $250m is still not accounted for in DAA accounting. It was not acquitted prior to 1988-89. I suspect that that matter is still under investigation and that it is causing funds to be withheld, funds which would keep Aboriginal people in work. Some more people will be out of work because of federal government policy.

In comparing numbers of people in and out of jobs in the Northern Territory and interstate, it becomes obvious that the federal government has used sleight of hand in its job creation programs to hide many of the unemployed people around the country in job creation programs. All honourable members know that.

Mr Smith: What? So job creation programs are no good now?
Mr McCARTHY: Job creation programs have their place, but they should not be used to hide unemployment.

Despite all the efforts of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory has been able to maintain a good and steady level of growth - 6600 real jobs for salary earners - in the 3-year period during which the Leader of the Opposition would try to indicate that there has been a 1000 decrease. There was 12.1% growth in the Northern Territory over that period, against only 10% nationally. That result has been achieved not because of any great effort on the part of the Commonwealth, and certainly not because we have been sitting on our backsides. It has been achieved because the Territory government has made a huge effort to get people into jobs in the Northern Territory even though the Commonwealth has constantly stood on us.

The member for MacDonnell ridicules the development of places like Yulara. He says that the place is a shambles. I also go to Yulara, although I do not spend as much time out there as he does. I am sure that he enjoys the pleasures of Yulara on a regular basis, being the local member. I do not get there all that often but I am proud of Yulara, and I listen to people who come to this Territory and talk about the things that we have done. One of the highlights is the great development at Yulara, which would not exist if it had not been for this government - nor would the jobs in the Sheratons. In terms of the income for the Territory which those projects bring about, and the amount spent on them, we are way in front. I am proud of them and I believe that every Territorian should be proud of them.

Across the road from here, we see the development of our new Parliament House. Nobody, not even the members opposite, really believes that that building is not required. In addition, the project is keeping people in work at a time when they would not have jobs otherwise. We know that the construction of the new Supreme Court is providing jobs but it is also providing a suitable court facility for the Northern Territory, now that we have outgrown the existing facility. These developments, together with all the other developments initiated by this government, have generated great benefits for the Northern Territory.

Through our training program to get people into employment, we have gone a long way in a short period. To augment our thrust in relation to development, the government has joined hands with industry in an across-the-board effort to train Territory youth for employment. Nobody will deny that, over recent years, we have done wonders in the area of school leaver training programs and traineeship schemes. We are deeply involved in those programs, despite the early efforts of unions to hold them back. Apprentice training programs have held their own despite the withdrawal of funds available to the Territory in recent years. Even with cuts of 28% in real terms, we have been able to maintain apprenticeship numbers in the Northern Territory. We have had a decrease in some areas, such as building, but we have had enormous increases in other areas. That is a proud record for this government.

We have created employment opportunities for disabled people, together with cadetships, scholarships and the school leaver employment program. Over 700 people are currently involved in the latter program. We also have widespread Aboriginal employment training programs which are well accepted and highly respected because of the initiatives of this government. We are training people for the jobs for which ATSIC will not be able to pay them because it is not providing the dollars. The Commonwealth government does some shameful things and gets away with them. An amount of $250 000 of DAA
funding prior to 1988 still has not been accounted for. I think that that is disgusting. This government could not even consider getting away with something like that, but the Commonwealth hides it. How does it do that?

Traineeship numbers are up, school leaver program numbers are up, apprenticeship numbers have been well and truly maintained and are up in many areas.

Mr Ede: Will you table the figures?

Mr McCARTHY: I have no problem with letting you have those figures.

Mr Smith: Thank you.

Mr McCARTHY: I did not quote them, but I am indicating that they are up.

This government is very proud of its employment development strategy. We have developed office skills programs, garment construction programs, tourism training, video productions, access programs, prevocational access, carpentry, screen printing, access courses in a number of communities, clerical intakes and strategic planning coordination. All of those are Aboriginal programs which we have put in place to try to get people into the work force and off the dole, unlike the types of programs which the Commonwealth is putting in place - programs which will result in people's unemployment situation being hidden so that it does not show up in the statistics.

In spite of everything the Commonwealth has done to us, and the very positive things we are doing to get the Territory up and running, the opposition believes that a politician's promise stands for nothing. The Leader of the Opposition obviously is talking about his own promises. I will tell you right now, Mr Speaker, that my promises stand for something, that the Chief Minister's promises stand for something and that the Deputy Chief Minister's promises stand for something, unlike those of the Leader of the Opposition who does not think that a politician's word can be relied on. I am glad that he has said that because it gives the lie to his assertions that he will not follow his party platform. Every time we mention an item in the platform which he finds embarrassing, he says that he does not intend to implement that item, and in that context, it is well worth repeating some of the things that the Chief Minister said this morning. I quote: 'The Australian Labor Party stands for establishment and development of public enterprises based upon federal, state and other forms of social ownership in appropriate sectors of the economy'. Social ownership, Mr Speaker. No doubt, the Leader of the Opposition would be out there buying up businesses and getting people into jobs by putting them into the public service.

Mr Smith: I promise not to buy a joinery, right?

Mr McCARTHY: 'A Labor government will support union initiatives to discourage the use of modern technology to monitor performance in the workplace'. That is absolutely shameful. Labor's platform looks unfavourably on the monitoring of performance in the workplace. Members opposite dare not have somebody found out for not doing a fair job. They believe that, if people are not doing their job, they should be protected. That is the policy of the opposition.
'Labor in government will assist those who choose not to be part of the normal labour market to establish economic independence to enable them to generate a level of income appropriate to their lifestyle'. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition would provide shelter at Lameroo Beach or Gardens Park for those who like to sit under the trees drinking, because he believes that they have a right to their alternative lifestyle and should not have to work if they do not want to. That is the policy of members opposite.

'Labor in government will support, by all possible means, union advocacy of a shorter working week with no reduction in wages and conditions'. I could go on and on with examples because there are pages of those sorts of promises. Of course, we do not have to worry about them because the promise of a Labor politician stands for naught. These are the promises of the Labor Party, the promises of shadowy figures who hang around the back door and who will not hold an annual conference because they are afraid such matters might be debated. Those are the people whom we have to be afraid of. We know we cannot trust the Leader of the Opposition, but what do we know about those faceless people behind him?

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I suspect that we are going to have an election within the next 6 months. Judging by the air of desperation which accompanies the speeches of government members, I suspect that this side of the House has every reason to believe that it will enjoy the outcome of that election. I have never heard such desperate speeches in my life.

The thing that the statistics do not show, of course, is what is happening in the electorate. A lack of employment generally does not directly affect the many people who continue to live in places like the northern suburbs. They are employed or have a lifestyle which can accommodate to the situation and, in that sense, the big barometer of politics, the hip pocket nerve, is not immediately affected. However, it is beginning to be affected in a way which is being publicised nationally. As a consequence of the drop in employment in the Northern Territory, housing prices have suffered. There are people who have taken out equity in accommodation in the Northern Territory and have seen that saving equity, that nest egg, diminish in value since the last election.

Mr Collins: It has happened all over Australia.

Mr McCarthy: It has certainly happened in Victoria.

Mr Manzie: It has actually happened less here than anywhere else.

Mr LEO: A national magazine, The Bulletin, recently publicised the fact that it had occurred here more than anywhere else in Australia and that Darwin was a buyer's market. That is a consequence of the lack of jobs.

With a note of sheer terror and desperation in their voices, members opposite have blamed the federal government, international money markets, interest rates and everything else imaginable. However, it does not matter whom they blame. They comprise the government of the Northern Territory and they will wear the political consequences whether they like it or not. That is a fact of life. I hope that the member for Nightcliff will speak because he will certainly be able to tell this House what his constituents are suffering. I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, that the situation has not directly affected my constituents. We are somewhat buffered from the events that are occurring in Darwin. Because the government has not provided us with any services, we have nothing to lose.
Mr Hattori: What, no schools, no hospitals?

Mr LEO: Oh, forget it Steve. Go home.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: The bottom line is that the constituents of most of the members on the government benches have been affected by this economic downturn. Of course, the biggest indicator of that has been the loss of jobs. There is no question about that, and the member for Nightcliff cannot deny it. It is a simple fact of life. I really do not care whom members on the other side blame. I do not care because it does not matter. They make up the government of the day and that is another simple fact of life. The political consequences of interfering with the hip pocket nerve of their constituents will inevitably lead to their political demise. If they do not understand that, they have not learned the lessons from Western Australia and Victoria. As a result of people learning the lessons in those places, 2 state Premiers have lost their jobs. Those are other simple facts of life.

It was absolutely pointless for John Cain and his Treasurer, probably quite accurately, to try to shift the blame to those persons whom they had employed to undertake various ventures. The fact of political life is that blaming people in those positions does not stick. It did not stick in Western Australia, it did not stick in Victoria and it will not stick in the Northern Territory. The government members' contribution today sounded as though it was coming from a collection of carping corpses who have recognised political reality for what it is. The political consequence of the loss of jobs in the Northern Territory is staring them in the face so baldly that even they cannot ignore it.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, this has been a fascinating debate today about statistics. One can but remember that famous saying that there are lies, damned lies and statistics. I can understand quite clearly why the media and the public generally must become exceptionally confused at the many figures that are quoted separately. We heard a brilliant contribution from my good friend, the member for Nhulunbuy, who said: 'The facts do not matter at all. Because you are the government of the day, you will wear it no matter whose fault it is. That is all I need to say. See you later, alligator'. And off he goes to the bar again or wherever.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise for even suggesting that the honourable member would have gone to the bar. He certainly left the Chamber.

I would like to deal with a couple of matters relating to the statistics. What are the indicators of employment growth, maintenance or decline in the Northern Territory? It comes down to an argument between 2 separate sets of figures, both published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. One is the Employed Persons Trend Series and the other is the Labour Force Australia Series. All of those figures are different and the trend line shown in each set of figures is different also. It must be really confusing for people to follow.

During the last few years, every member of this House has used the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series as the basis for employment figures. The latest figures that I have are for the March quarter 1990. I think that the figures for the June quarter have been released, but I do not
have a copy of them. In March 1987, there were 54,700 people in the Northern Territory public and private sectors combined. In March 1990, the figure was 61,300, which indicates a growth of 12.1% or 6,600. The seasonally adjusted figures, which are also shown, indicate a rise from 56,100 to 62,700, a growth of 11.76%. These compare to national growth rates of 10% and 9.9% respectively. In other words, according to these statistics, the percentage growth in wage and salary earners in the Northern Territory is greater than the national growth in wage and salary earners for Australia.

The opposition says that the figures which I am quoting do not come from the most reliable set of statistics. The member for MacDonnell quoted a reference from the ABS: 'The ABS considers that the Labour Force Series provides the better indicator of overall employment movements at the Australian and state level'. I will come back to that in a moment, Mr Speaker. The paragraph before that states: 'The 2 surveys should be seen as complementary and movements in them have generally been broadly consistent. In recent time periods, the 2 surveys have shown some divergence in the estimates produced'. Generally, they have been the same but, in the last few months, there has been a divergence in those figures.

The Leader of the Opposition quoted the July 1990 trend figures. The trend series indicates that 73,500 people are employed in the Northern Territory at the moment. He then referred to a March figure of 74,500. It is interesting that he chose those dates because those figures are the ones which I consider to be suspect in terms of comparisons. I will give an example. If he had chosen January 1987 to January 1990, it would have shown an increase from 73,400 to 76,200, an increase of 2,800 jobs. If he had taken December 1987 to December 1989, it would have shown an increase of 11,100 jobs. Between January and July this year, it shows a decline in employment in the Northern Territory from 76,200 down to 73,500. The Leader of the Opposition would ask us to rely on these figures to indicate there has been a decline in employment in the Northern Territory in the last 6 months, contrary to every other indicator in the Northern Territory and contrary to the Employed, Wage and Salary Earsner Series figures.

I also refer honourable members to a statement in respect of the labour force in the Northern Territory by Mr Gardner, the Northern Territory statistician. I will quote from his statement and I am happy to make it available to the Leader of the Opposition. In referring to the qualifications to be made in respect of the labour force statistics, he says:

These qualifications are particularly relevant for NT data as most of the Labour Force Series have proved to be extremely volatile from month to month. This comment should not be interpreted to mean that volatility itself is the reason for any variations, but simply that it is a factor which needs to be considered when drawing conclusions from the published data. The trend estimates of total Territory employment, as presented in table 2, do provide some assistance in analysing the underlying behaviour of the series over time. It should be noted, however, that the last few months of the series are subject to revision as additional observations become available.

That is certainly the case with respect to these figures, and I refer to adjustments that have been made already this year. The July labour force trend estimates show that, in June, the total NT labour force was 73,300. However, in the previous month's catalogue, it was claimed that the NT labour force was 72,100 for June. That is an underestimate of 1,200. The
July survey shows that the labour force, in trend estimate terms, was 73,200 in May, which is quite different from June's survey which quoted 72,500. The figures are moving by 1000 to 1500 month by month. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition asks us to accept the latest very preliminary figure, which perhaps will be subject to variation over the next 2 or 3 months, a variation which in the past has always been upwards, and to agree that this figure indicates precisely that there has been a decline of 1000 jobs.

When we look at the figures for other points in time, we see that there have been dramatic increases in job numbers and that such increases are consistent with the wage and salary earner statistics and the general labour force statistics. If we take the last couple of months, the only one that is out of sync is the trend statistics.

Mr Bell: Cut it out.

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr HATTON: That is what these figures are showing, and members opposite can say 'rubbish' as much as they like. I am only quoting the numbers in the documents that the Leader of the Opposition referred to. The fact is that, on all the evidence available to us, they are exceptionally unreliable.

All the figures indicate that there was a decline in employment in the Northern Territory during 1987. It started in June/July 1987 and continued until December/January 1988. Nobody would dispute that there was a decline in employment in the Northern Territory then. Every statistic shows it. The statistics also show that, from the beginning of 1988 onwards, there has been a steady and rapid increase in employment, and the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series shows that the employment growth has been in the private sector. We have already heard that these statistics exclude defence force growth. Obviously, if defence force growth was included, the figures would show much more significant growth in the public sector. However, they undoubtedly show employment growth since the beginning of 1988.

I intend to deal with the period June 1987 through to the second half of 1987 in referring to this data because, although we can argue and throw words around, there are some facts which we have all to recognise and live with. The fact is that that is the period when the decline occurred and that growth has occurred since then. According to the statistics, the growth has occurred in the private sector, with the general public sector being held fundamentally constant.

During the middle of 1987, a number of things occurred. Among those was the temporary relocation of No 75 Squadron out of the Northern Territory, prior to its changing over to F18s and its relocation at Tindal. Secondly, there was the relocation of the Australian Construction Service, the Telecom people, and the other Commonwealth public servants. Some 1000 jobs went out of the Territory, particularly out of Darwin, in that 6-month period. During that same period, the Commonwealth government refused to allow Nabarlek to exploit other mineral reserves within its mining venture, under the so-called 3-mine policy. Nabarlek closed down and another 300 jobs went out of Darwin. That was in the second half of 1987.

In addition, every member of this House will be very conscious of the fact that, at the 1987 Premiers' Conference, the Northern Territory suffered a 10% cut in allocations from the Commonwealth. It was the most traumatic
cut ever imposed on any state or territory. We had to make decisions that
hurt, resulting in a decline in employment in both the public and private
sectors in the short term while we restructured to get back onto a growth
path. All these events occurred in 1987. We took our medicine up front and
we have been back on a growth path since the first half of 1988. That
growth has been consistent. It has been achieved by promoting development
through the private sector rather than by use of the public-sector purse. Every
statistic shows that the growth has occurred.

At the time of the last election, we could not have foreseen Commonwealth cuts amounting not just to 10% in 1 year but to 28%, in real
terms, in the past 4 years. Are we to ignore the effect of that on Territorians and on employment growth in an economy which has been driven
principally by the public sector? We have been restructuring to deal with
that, and Territorians should be very proud of the way in which we have done
that responsibly during the last 3 years to handle the financial holocaust
which the federal Labor government has inflicted on Territorians. We have
managed that. We have the economy on a growth path and we have maintained
fiscal responsibility throughout that process. The problem with the states
and the federal government is that they have not achieved that, and that is
now coming home to roost in Victoria and Western Australia.

Mr Manzie: Tasmania.

Mr HATTON: Bannon in South Australia and Field in Tasmania - they are
all copping it in the neck because they have been borrowing and burning up
money to fund deficit budgets, and the Commonwealth has been doing the same
since 1983. The member for MacDonnell says: 'Hallelujah! Hawke and
Keating have saved the world'. Nobody believes that. How can anyone
possibly support Hawke and Keating when families are suffering under 17%
interest rates and are paying 22% to 23% on their bankcards when Hawke and
Keating have cut real wages consistently over that entire period? The
federal government is trying to drive down demand and employment. Through
its monetarist interest rate policy, it disadvantages Australian
manufacturers and advantages overseas manufacturers who are supplying our
imports. Foreign manufacturers do not face the same interest rates which
our manufacturers face, and have a competitive advantage because of the
nonsensical policy of this federal government.

Despite that, all the statistics show that the Northern Territory is
performing better than the rest of the country. Unemployment is down. Our
employment growth is the highest and our unemployment is the lowest. Our
CPI increases are the lowest. Our home loans are the most affordable. One
honourable member opposite - I cannot remember which - wanted to argue that
the fact that people can actually afford to own a home in the Northern
Territory, despite the efforts of Treasurer Keating, was a disaster for the
Territory. Let opposition members ask the young couples who are trying to
get a start whether they would rather be paying 17% of their income in
repayments in the Northern Territory or 55% in New South Wales. I know what
the young people will tell them, and that is why they will never win
government. They do not understand that sometimes you take your bumps, wear
the consequences, and rebuild. We have done that in the Territory. We are
in a stronger and better position. Not only that, the employment statistics
show significant growth.

The Leader of the Opposition can fiddle around with this month's trend
figure or he can pick up other data from trend figures. By taking a
different month-by-month average, he can show a growth of 11 000 jobs. If
we take January 1988 to January 1990 and compare the figures with those for
the period December 1987 to December 1989, we can show a growth rate of 11.1%. Even if we use the February 1987 to February 1990 period, despite the inevitable dip, there is still a growth of 1400 jobs. We do not deny that that happened. It did happen. Every Territorian who was here through that period knows that it happened. In June/July 1987, I knew that, at just about this time, the Leader of the Opposition would be jumping up and saying: 'They have not honoured their promise. They have not produced 1000 jobs a year'. I could see it coming back in 1987 when the budget cuts hit us.

We knew he would try to run that line, but the fact is that he is running on very dodgy statistics, very preliminary figures. Even his own series, if one uses different time frames, shows significant employment growth, particularly since the first 6 months of that financial holocaust in the second half of 1987. The wage and salary earners data shows that the growth has been in the private sector, not the public sector. That is precisely in line with what we sought to achieve and what we told the electorate we would do.

The programs and plans we implemented to deal with the 1987 problems, and the work that has been put in consistently since then, have put the Territory back on a growth path in spite of the recessionary problems faced by the rest of Australia. Territorians ought to be very grateful that they have a fiscally responsible government in the Northern Territory which was prepared to take the hard decisions when they needed to be taken and has continued to work in the interests of the Territory. This government ignored the nonsensical, carping criticism of the opposition and got on with the job, and has put the Territory on a growth path. Even the Leader of the Opposition's own statistics show that we have been consistently on a growth path since the first half of 1988.

I think the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is a joke. The only good thing about it is that it has given us a chance to put the lie once and for all to the nonsense the opposition is peddling. If he wants to talk about broken promises, where was he when the federal government backed out of its promises in relation to the railway and the new airport terminal? There is a great list of promises that the federal government has broken. When it dumped the accelerated Stuart Highway program, where was he? He was not around. He said: 'Oh, they had to do it because they have hard times in Canberra'. Nonsense! He is an apologist for the federal government.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak briefly to the motion. First, I will pick up the Minister for Health and Community Services on the exact statistics from which he has just quoted. I agree with him that, in the latter half of 1987, there was a major dip in the employment figures, which then picked up throughout 1988 and into early 1989. But, if he had been prepared to quote the continuing trend, we would have found that a line drawn at best-fit from then on would show that the figures have gone down and have continued to go down since ...

Mr Hatton: Those are only the rubbery figures.

Mr BAILEY: You have just tried to say that the figures showed a build-up after a major decline at the end of 1987. Compare the figures as they move from the peak in late 1988 and early 1989. They have continued to decline for the last 18 months.
I have risen to speak because of the significance of this stagnation of the Northern Territory economy and its effects on people in the northern suburbs. We have heard the minister say that it is great that we have some of the cheapest housing prices. I was one of many people who bought my house within the last 10 to 12 years in the Northern Territory. People are asking what is the point of buying a house when, after 5 years, the house is actually worth no more than its original price. There has been no capital appreciation on an asset.

Mr Collins: What about the high interest rates? Where do they come from?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: In the states, housing prices reached record levels driven by high demand even in a very high interest rate market. We brag about our low interest, subsidised schemes within the Northern Territory and still the prices of housing have remained almost constant for many years. Ask people who own houses. They are the bulk of the people. It may be very pleasant to be able to buy a house cheaply. It is not pleasant to own a house for many years and to see the value of that asset decrease in real terms.

We talk about statistics relating to whether there are variations in the number of people employed or not employed. All you have to do is to talk to the people in the northern suburbs who are out of work. The Greek contractors, hundreds of them literally...

Mr McCarthy: You would put all subcontractors out of work.

Mr BAILEY: The contractors in the northern suburbs have been going interstate and overseas trying to find work because there is no work in the Northern Territory for them. This government supposedly was creating jobs for such people by pouring millions of dollars into projects like State Square, with which none of these small contractors had any hope of being involved.

Mr McCarthy: They certainly have no hope at the airport.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: If this government really wants to know whether or not its policies on employment and stimulation of the economy are working, it has only to go to the northern suburbs of Darwin and ask the people there whether or not they believe the claptrap that we have heard today about the Northern Territory economy being in a major growth phrase. What a load of rubbish!

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief. Anyone who initiates a debate on statistics should be taken out at dawn and shot. There is nothing more boring or more dull. Someone once said that, if you want 2 opinions, ask 1 economist. There are a couple of things that I would like to raise. In relation to the decline in employment numbers that the member for Wanguri mentioned a few minutes ago, he should perhaps check with the Prime Minister for the reason behind that decline. It occurred in the middle of the pilots' dispute.

It is patently obvious that the ALP members in this Assembly do not understand much about the economy. Two weeks ago, the member for Nhulunbuy said that the tourist industry was fragile. Today, the member for
MacDonnell said it was a shambles. Neither of them attempted to justify their remarks. They just made them on the run and left the matter at that, ignoring the fact that the tourist industry is the fastest growing industry in the Northern Territory. It now directly employs 10,000 people whereas, in 1978, it directly employed 1200-odd people. That amounts to close to 1000 jobs a year in that industry, let alone the other industries that have been directly employing people.

The member for Stuart waffled about statistics and how the federal government was doing such a great job with the economy. Someone should quote to him what his father-in-law said only a few weeks ago. Senator Walsh referred to Bob Hawke as an old jelly-back who did not have the courage to take any of the tough economic decisions that this country needs.

There was some criticism or comment by a number of the members opposite in relation to Yulara and the Sheratons. Do not believe what I say or what the government says, Mr Deputy Speaker. However, let me quote what Mr Len Taylor, the federal Chairman of the Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, said recently: 'The Northern Territory government investment in Yulara and the Sheratons was one of the best investments in the Northern Territory tourist market'. Taylor's organisation is the premier organisation of all of the inbound tour operators which bring tourists to Australia.

The member for Stuart also mentioned the 1 million jobs that the federal government had created. It is a bit like the planting of 1 million trees that the Prime Minister initiated. Press reports indicate that over 45% of those trees have since died. The jobs that the federal government has attempted to create are fence painting and pothole filling, in contrast to the permanent occupations provided by this government over a long term in the Northern Territory.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned how the Whitlam government promised to build Yulara. I was in Alice Springs in 1984, as was the member for Sadadeen, when Prime Minister Whitlam told a crowd of people on the lawns where the council chambers are now located, that he would start within 30 days to construct a dual-lane highway to Adelaide. Of course, 18 months later, he was gone and the highway had not been started. So much for Labor promises.

During the member for MacDonnell's speech, I interjected that he should ask Jock Nelson. As many Territorians would know, Jock Nelson is a very distinguished senior citizen who has served in many senior roles across the Northern Territory. In 1973, Jock Nelson took a number of tourist operators to Canberra to talk to the federal government about the building of Yulara. There were to be 8 or 9 ministers involved and the appointments had been set up some weeks prior to the visit to Canberra. When Mr Nelson and the group arrived, only 2 or 3 ministers showed up. Jock Nelson came back to the Territory and told everyone exactly how embarrassed he was about his former parliamentary colleagues in Canberra.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this would have to be one of the most absurd debates ever raised in this House. It has no basis in statistics. There has been no factual documentation. I would have thought there were many more important issues to be debated here today.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this topic of employment figures and statistics gives me an opportunity to raise a matter which has come to my attention in recent days. It relates to CDEP, the Community
Development Employment Program, which seems to have had some success in some Aboriginal communities. In others, it has fallen rather flat. A few months ago, a person who works for ATSIC in Katherine was talking to me about this program. I was travelling with him on a plane. He said: 'We have to be very careful about it because the people must volunteer. You cannot force them to join a CDEP program. A large number of people in the community have to be willing to participate. Then, you have a chance'. It was good to hear from him.

Just 3 or 4 weeks ago, it was pointed out to me that Australia has ratified an International Labour Organisation convention, sponsored by the UN, which states that no person can be made to work for the dole. I bet that not too many members of this House are aware of that. I am not surprised because the ratification of a UN Convention is an interesting process. All that has to happen, depending on the nature of the convention, is for the appropriate minister - the Minister for Foreign Affairs or the federal Attorney-General - to sign it. One would like to think that he might obtain the prior agreement of his colleagues in the ministry. Subsequent to that, it is tabled in the federal parliament. There are people in this House who have had experience in that area. These matters are tabled on the last day of a sittings, generally towards the end and often with many other things, at a time when all the members of our federal Houses have no doubt had a tummy-full of the place and simply want to get home and attend to electorate business. These papers then sit unnoticed in the parliament for 30 days and, if nobody objects or comments, they are ratified. That is how we bind ourselves under such conventions. It is an interesting state of affairs.

It must be particularly interesting for the federal Coalition, whose policy states that people should be working and training with the dole money that is provided to them. I dare say that such money would not be classified as dole payments but, nevertheless, I would not be surprised if members of the federal opposition are unaware of the ILO convention. I asked John Howard's secretary about it. She is a lass who is well known to some people in Darwin because she comes from this area. She seemed to be unaware of it, although she certainly was aware that the Coalition had a policy which required work and training in return for the dole. Occasionally, one even hears comments from some Labor members which suggest that they feel that it would not be such a bad thing to require people to work or train for work in exchange for the dole. The community supports the concept. People who work and pay the taxes which allow people to receive the dole believe that those people should do some work.

From what I have been told, it appears that there is no listing of these conventions until after they are ratified according to the process which I have just described. Often, the process takes 2 or 3 years, during which period the community is unaware of their subject matter. To me, this is a fascinating state of affairs and an indication that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark.

The job situation in the Territory would certainly be a lot better if mining was under way at Coronation Hill. It is obviously a very rich mine. I think that the mineral riches involved are worth about $5000m. The commencement of mining was delayed for a year. That year has passed but the delay continues. Perhaps the reason is political, in the sense that there are those who do not want the Territory to go ahead in leaps and bounds again, with people obtaining employment, spending their money and generally aiding the economy right across the board. Such people would not want that to happen prior to a Territory election.
The member for MacDonnell said that he was terrifically proud of the Hawke-Keating government. I am darned if I know what he could be proud of. We have a foreign debt of about $150 000m. Let me just refer to another matter which has been brought to my attention in graphic terms in recent days. I refer to the gold tax. As far as I am aware, there has never been a company tax on gold. If there has been, it certainly has not been levied for many years. Because of this, companies have put their profits back into the gold industry and we have gone from 20 t of gold production about 5 or 6 years ago to something like 220 t today. The Territory, through some of its mines, makes a considerable contribution to this production. In fact, gold is now Australia's second biggest export earner.

This brings me to the question of our balance of payments. Boy, am I ever sick of Treasurer Keating! Whenever we have a monthly deficit of something like $1600m between what we buy and what we sell, he says that the figures are 'on stream'. One can only ask whether he wants to wreck the economy of this country. You cannot blame ordinary people for thinking that. More and more people are saying that the federal government is deliberately trying to wreck this country and it is making a good job of it.

The federal government is proposing a gold tax, which is a negative tax. Its effect will be to generate less revenue than would be generated if there were no such tax. We should be looking at the fact that gold production has increased from 20 t to 220 t, making it the second biggest export earner in this country, and asking how we could encourage such increases in other areas. Instead, the federal government is imposing a gold tax. Because gold companies want to get as much gold out as they can before the tax applies, instead of mixing the rich ore with the low grade ore, they are just taking the rich ore out. The output of low grade ore, which would have increased the life of mines and increased employment in this country, has been curtailed. Some mines are likely to close when the gold tax comes into force.

One such mine is located at Arltunga near Alice Springs. The source of my information is not official, but a supplier to the mining company. I have been told that the company has put on hold a large number of orders for materials which were to be used in expanding the mine. If this mine does not expand, it will be very sad for employment in the Territory. The gold tax can only be described as a stupid initiative.

One has to wonder what is behind such a move, which will result in low grade ore not being mined, a reduction in the life of mines, and the non-opening of other mines which otherwise would have proceeded. It is totally negative. No doubt, the mines and companies committed to mining gold will continue to operate, at least for a time. However, they will be likely to mine only the higher grade ore. Depending on how the tax affects production, estimates are that it will drop from 220 t to 150 t, a decrease of 70 t, soon after the gold tax is applied. Some say that those figures are optimistic. That is incredibly stupid, when gold is the second biggest earner of export dollars. It does not make any sense, and one has to ask what the federal government is up to.

Employment is important to all of us. I believe that it brings dignity to any and every person. I believe that the best thing you can do for unemployed people is to provide them with jobs which are real and wealth creating, which are satisfying, and which allow them to support themselves and their families. Such things are vitally important to the morale of the community.
We have seen mining at Coronation Hill delayed for a year. I recall the member for Arafura saying in a debate in this House that it was only one year. However, the delay was for political purposes rather than for the welfare of the country. It is just so very sad and so very stupid. If the federal government cannot see that the gold tax is negative and harmful to this country, and that it hurts the Territory because of the amount of gold mining which occurs here...

Mr Coulter: We also have a gold tax in the Territory.

Mr COLLINS: Maybe you should consider reducing it, minister.

These matters concern me, Mr Deputy Speaker. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, we cannot live in isolation. The truth is that we have but partial self-government. There are many areas in which we do not have the control which we should have. I believe that we could make a grand contribution to the economy of this country if we were allowed to do so. Hopefully, the day will not be too long coming when we will be allowed to make that contribution and the Territory will thrive and again be a place which will attract people. That will not occur because we receive more from the taxpayer-funded federal purse than the states receive, but because we will have developed our economy and our resources and created the wealth and jobs which will enable us to stand tall and proud. Nobody will be able to point at us and say: 'You are just riding on the rest of Australia.' We can make our contribution if only we are allowed to. It is a bit like the gold tax. Can't the federal government understand what a contribution this Territory could make to the rest of Australia? I am sure that it can, but perhaps vested interests down south do not want to see the Territory go ahead. If that is the case, it is very sad. We are part of Australia and Australia needs us just as much as we need it.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the quote of the sittings so far came from the member for Nhulunbuy earlier today. He said: 'I suspect that there is going to be an election in the next few months'. I wondered whether he had read the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. That motion smacks of the commencement of the Leader of the Opposition's election campaign. He launched his campaign here this morning. His motion asks this Assembly to note 'the CLP election promise to create 1000 jobs' and continues in that vein. He did not even tell his own mate on the backbench, the member for Nhulunbuy. That is disgusting, Mr Speaker, absolutely disgusting.

Of course, as we all know, the best means of defence is attack. You whip up feelings and get stuck into your opponent which, in the Leader of the Opposition's case, is this government. He is doing this in an effort to disguise the inadequacies of his Labor Party policies. He was supported by the economic eunuchs who surround him, and we will hear a lot more about that as the days roll on during these sittings. Together with the fellow who sits next to him - he who would perhaps be king one day - and his other colleagues, he is caught up in a mess of left-wing policies. We heard the Chief Minister talk about a whole range of those earlier today. I know that the Leader of the Opposition is a member of the centre left. His deputy resigned from that faction and is now unaligned, and is having 2 bob each way. I particularly noticed how the Leader of the Opposition squirmed in his seat when the Chief Minister kept referring to specific Labor Party policies. He has released various up-front election policies and he has tried to hide the Labor Party policies, the policies of his own party rank and file - not the parliamentary wing but the party.
I would like to take a moment to quote from today’s ‘Views on the News’, by Frank Alcorta. I know that the Deputy Chief Minister referred to this article in his comments. The article is headed ‘NT Economy Misses Slump’, and I would like to quote selectively and very quickly from it. It is worth reading into Hansard:

The increase in population, although small compared with the giddy levels of 1978-85, is a very encouraging sign when put together with the effects of the pilots' strike, the federal government's relocation of about 200 Telecom staff to Adelaide and the downgrading of the Darwin office of Australian Construction Services by 70 personnel in 1989.

Thus, 270 of the 1000 jobs that the Leader of the Opposition claimed that we had lost from the Territory were lost as a direct result of his own federal colleagues' actions. The article goes on to say: 'By the year 2001, it is anticipated that the population will range between 181 400 and 208 800.

Mr Smith: Can you read that again?

Mr SETTER: Alcorta goes on to say that 'Employment in the private sector expanded by 5400 jobs or an astonishing 16.1%, from 33 600 jobs to 39 000 jobs in March 1990'. It is all there in black and white. You can read it for yourself.

Mr Alcorta continues: 'A similar comparison for the public service reveals a growth of 800 jobs, or 3.7%, from 21 500 to 22 300 jobs. Increases in employment in the NTPS (up 700 jobs) and local government (300 jobs) offset a fall of employment in the federal government (down 200 jobs)'. I would like to correct Mr Alcorta there because, in one of the previous paragraphs, he indicated 'that 270 jobs were lost in authorities controlled by the federal government.

Mr Alcorta points out that the 'NT has the highest total earnings in Australia and average weekly ordinary time earnings of full-time adults are above the national average'. He also points out that 'Consumer Price Index figures released by the statistics bureau on 1 August reveal the NT has the second lowest inflation rate in Australia'. I would like to repeat that: the Northern Territory has the second lowest inflation rate in Australia. Alcorta points out that the 'annual NT inflation rate for the June quarter stood at 6.4%, well below the national rate of 7.7%'.

Mr Speaker, this debate has gone on long enough, but I could quote you more and more statistics from that article which puts the lie to what the Leader of the Opposition was trying to lead this House to believe earlier. The reality is that Labor governments in this country have no economic credibility at all. You have only to look ...

Mr Ede: A million jobs.

Mr SETTER: 'A million jobs', says the member for Stuart. Yes, I can recall the million jobs. I recall that, when the Hawke government first came to power in 1983, it employed people on quick-fix, short-term, job-training programs. I must say that we can thank such programs for many of our cycle paths, but what the federal government was really saying was that those jobs were cumulative. It did not deduct the number of jobs that were lost, because they were all short-term programs. It was a sham.
Mr Speaker, have a look at the Western Australian government, WA Inc. What happened to what's-his-name, that previous Premier, the fellow who went to Ireland as Australia's Ambassador? Look what they did to Dowding just the other day, and who knows what will happen to the current Premier? And what about that bastion of Victorian state Labor leadership, Premier Cain? I could stand here for another half an hour and talk about what has happened in Victoria. Down the gurgler! Labor government after Labor government has gone. Look at Tasmania. Labor came to power on the coat-tails of the greenies, and there has not been a decision made in Tasmania in the last 12 months, because the greenies have the government over a barrel.

Somebody goes sailing with one of the greatest greenies the Northern Territory has ever known - although I will not go into the details of that. Although I understand that the Leader of the Opposition and this person have fallen out in recent times, after the Wanguri by-election they indicated that they were great friends and that the greenies would provide great support for the Leader of the Opposition in the next Northern Territory election. In fact, referring to the flow of preferences, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'Oh no, we do not want them to join the Labor Party. They are of more value to us where they are'.

Then, there is the federal government. This country is in an absolute economic shambles. Really, what we have to look at is how the Leader of the Opposition has been using the Premier of Queensland as the person whom he intends to put in the forefront of his election campaign. It is his coat-tails that the Leader of the Opposition intends to hold on to very strongly. However, the reality again is that Premier Goss has not had to make a decision since he has been in parliament, and he has really stuffed up a couple of things.

Nevertheless, the important thing that needs to be remembered about Mr Goss is that, whilst he is saying that Queensland's economy is in good shape, the reality is that the economy of Queensland is flowing along from what happened over the previous 20-odd years under a conservative National Party government. Queensland has full coffers, and that is why it is looking so good right now. However, give Labor in Queensland another 4 or 5 years and it will be in exactly the same position as Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria ...

Mr Smith: Excuse me. Who was the government for 15 years, before the Labor Party?

Mr SETTER: I am not talking about 15 years. I am talking about Labor governments, regardless of their term of office. I am saying that the Goss government will blow it in Queensland even as your other state government mates around Australia have done. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks for one moment that the people of the Northern Territory can be conned or lulled into voting for the Australian Labor Party at the coming election, then he has another think coming. If, by some slim chance, through a flow-on of preferences from the greenies, he is ever elected into power, then boy, oh boy, we would see this place go down the gurgler so fast that it would be unbelievable.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it has certainly been an interesting debate. I agree that statistics can be very confusing and therefore I simply want to go over the statistical bases that we have used and our reasons for using them, and to remind people that we are not talking about a simple matter of statistics. We are talking about the central plank
in the CLP's last election campaign in which it clearly and unambiguously stated that it was its aim to create 1000 jobs a year.

Mr Reed: You have abandoned your policy before we have even reached the election.

Mr SMITH: To answer that interjection, I am very glad to go into an election campaign and to be judged, when we win, on the policies that we have put forward in the election campaign, and I would hope ... 

Mr Reed: It is all done with mirrors.

Mr SMITH: ... that members opposite would have the courage to do the same, but obviously they have not.

Mr Reed: We have done that.

Mr SMITH: One thing in this debate confuses me a little. We have heard members opposite claim that the valid figures are the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series and that, in fact, there has been a dramatic increase from 54 000 to 61 000 in March 1990. My confusion is this. We know, and the Deputy Chief Minister accepted it in an aside earlier, that in fact there are 81 000 people in the work force. That means that 81 000 people are actually employed or are looking for jobs. Are we to assume, if there are only 61 000 wage and salary earners, that 20 000 people are unemployed, an unemployment rate of 25%? Of course not. The figure is ridiculous.

The problem with using the Employed Wage and Salary Earners Series as a benchmark, as the Deputy Chief Minister and the member for Nightcliff tried to do, is that we know and always have known that it is an incomplete record of those who are employed in the Northern Territory. That is because it does not look at those employed in agriculture and defence, and those who are self-employed. It has big holes in it. It picks out the industries and comes up with a figure, and that figure of 61 000 is 12 000 people short of the total number of people who are employed in the Northern Territory. If members opposite do not accept that, they should say so. I am prepared to accept that 73 500 people, or thereabouts, are employed in the Northern Territory at present, but I am not prepared to go as far as the government seems to be doing, saying that only 61 300 people were employed in the Northern Territory as of March 1990. That is obviously a nonsense. And that is the reason why we cannot rely on the wage and salary earner figure at all. It does not pretend at all to be a comprehensive figure covering the whole of the work force in the Northern Territory.

What we do have is the Labour Force Australia Series, which overcomes the monthly glitches and covers the whole of the work force. It is based on an adjusted monthly survey of about 800 people, not the 35 people which the Deputy Chief Minister referred to off the top of his head. In terms of indicating long-term employment trends, it is the best figure available to us in the Northern Territory. That is what we are on about - long-term employment trends in the Northern Territory. What those figures quite clearly indicate is that there has not been an increase of 3000-plus jobs since March 1987, when the last election was held.

Mr Coulter: Right. 6600 is the figure.

Mr SMITH: I can understand why one of the first jobs that the Chief Minister did when he became Chief Minister was to take over the Treasury.
After hearing that comment from the Deputy Chief Minister, I am practically speechless.

Mr Coulter: They are ABS figures. I do not know what you are speechless about.

Mr SMITH: Watch my lips, as George Bush said on a famous occasion.

Mr Coulter: Look what he did. He increased taxes within 12 months of saying it.

Mr SMITH: I will say it very slowly. The problem with the wage and salary earner figures is that they do not reflect the total number of employed. They are 12,000 short of the total number of employed. The reason is that agriculture, defence and self-employment are not included. To use a practical example, all the doctors and lawyers who are self-employed in the Northern Territory obviously are not covered by the wage and salary earner table because they are not wage and salary earners. They are self-employed.

I do not want to prolong this debate any further. The evidence is clear. There was a definite government commitment - 'Make It Happen with Hatton' - to create 1000 jobs a year, beginning in March 1987. As of July, on the best figures available, figures supplied by the ABS indicate that, instead of a 1000 jobs a year being created, we have lost 1000 jobs. There is no one else to blame. The federal government did not twist the arm of the Chief Minister in February 1987 and insist that he make this promise. He had available to him all the information about what would happen. This promise, the key plank in the Northern Territory's government election commitment, has been broken. That is why this motion was moved today.

Motion negatived.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ISC Report Into Road User Charges

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, in May this year, a report was tabled in the federal parliament entitled, 'Road User Charges and Vehicle Registration: A National Scheme'. This report, compiled by the now defunct Inter-State Commission, recommended far-reaching changes to the way in which our roads are funded and just who is paying the bill.

The report's recommendations represent a dramatic challenge to the way freight is moved in this country in the name of micro-economic reform. In doing that, the ISC has put the cart before the horse in that it pre-empts the Hawke government's national freight initiative and the overall need to provide a more rationalised and efficient freight network. Clearly, an integrated freight system is an urgent priority, given the demonstrably inefficient nature of the rail network. Ironically, it is the same inefficient rail network which stands to benefit from many of the ISC report's recommendations.

While the ISC report lacks a global land transport perspective, its recommendations clearly have ramifications for the whole land transport sector. It deals with road transport in isolation, and suffers because of it. Indeed, there is also a clear need to examine the sea land interface which is vital to any micro-economic reform process. The thrust of the report was to forge a direct link between road use charges and road expenditure. At present, there is no connection between road user related
revenues, such as registration fees and fuel excise, and the funding of federal, state and territory road programs.

The ISC report recommends that all diesel fuel excise payments, all vehicle registration fees and a portion of petrol fuel excise be earmarked specifically for roads. This would involve greater federal control in 2 key areas. Firstly, state and territory vehicle registration charges would be eliminated in favour of a single national registration scheme. Charges would be imposed on a supposed user-pays basis with all vehicles paying through the pump via an increased petrol levy. In addition, heavy vehicles would be subject to a mass-distance charge. In other words, for heavy vehicles, charges would vary according to the weight of the vehicle and the distance travelled. Secondly, states and territories would no longer have the right to impose any fuel tax. Current state and territory charges would be incorporated into the federal charges and, in the case of petrol, there would be a 9.4¢ per litre increase above the current 24.2¢ per litre federal fuel excise. I believe that, in the last week, that federal excise has gone up another 1¢ or so.

In addition to these 2 cost aspects, road funding programs submitted by the states and territories would be determined by an independent federal body which would assess grants based on funds received from the federal fuel levy and what it saw as national priorities. The road funding formula would be based on a traffic density basis which naturally would favour the high density areas of the east coast. There would be no comfort to remote areas from the proposal to have the funds administered by a so-called independent committee of 3 who, after all, would be appointed by the federal minister himself.

The basis of funding is not good news for remote areas. Irrespective of traffic density, government is required to provide a basic level of service to essential areas as demanded by the community. A simple traffic density formula ignores this. States and territories would continue to collect registration fees on behalf of the federal government and would continue to take responsibility for road construction and maintenance using funds allocated by the so-called independent board.

As I have stated, the concept is user pays and, for Australia's major population centres, there is some logic to it. From the downtown Sydney consumer's point of view, why should someone who uses their car only occasionally pay the same amount for wear and tear on the road as the frequent user? If they pay their share through the petrol pump only, then there is some justice to it. Of course, the real target of the ISC report's attention is the heavy transport industry, which is perceived as being responsible for the majority of wear and tear and accidents on the nation's highways.

However, in recent times, there has been an announcement which indicates that, in fact, heavy transport does not have the major responsibility for some of the accidents on the east coast. The east coast has seen a massive explosion in the heavy transport industry. It has provided a highly competitive alternative to the inefficient and over-subsidised rail network. The heavy transport game has become a cutthroat business with just about anyone who knows how to drive a truck gaining access to easy finance and putting a rig on the road. The result has been a dramatic increase in the number of heavy vehicles on the east coast roads, obviously causing damage to those roads and creating that much-publicised road safety concern. It now seems that that concern is falsely based.
The Inter-State Commission has sought to defuse this situation by applying an extremely strenuous user-pays principle to the heavy transport industry based on a mass-distance charge. This charge will not apply to the prime mover, which will be the subject of an administrative fee only, but will be levied on a per trailer basis. Distances travelled would either be assumed at an annual average of 90% for the class of vehicle or would be measured by a costly 'hubometer' - an instrument which is not tamper-proof. Vehicle weight or mass is calculated on an average figure based on information obtained from the New South Wales Road and Traffic Authority.

It starts to become clear why there may be 1 or 2 problems with this report's recommendations in relation to remote Australia. The objective of this ISC report is clearly to shift the transport of freight from road to rail, a strategy which might have some merit where both options exist. Need I say that the Northern Territory would not be nearly as disadvantaged by the report's recommendations should an Alice Springs to Darwin railway be in place. The mass-distance charge represents such a substantial increase on the current registration fee charge that road freight would be rendered less competitive compared with rail. Rail fuel will be exempted from the 24¢ per litre federal impost, again putting rail in a more artificially attractive light - all this, despite the fact that the taxpayer currently subsidises an inefficient rail network to the tune of some $3000m per year. However, there is a political climate on the metropolitan east coast which suggests that any move to shift the big rigs off the roads is a move in the right direction.

In this House, we have concern about the needs and welfare of Territorians and the sad reality is that this report is not good news for the Northern Territory or the developing north generally. In fact, it is a recipe for disaster. While the Northern Territory government has no objection to a user-pays principle in relation to road funding, we do have a problem with the way in which the principle has been applied. Simply put, in seeking to promote a road to rail freight emphasis, the report ignores the consequences for those areas of Australia which have no rail network. In other words, areas such as in the Northern Territory, which are almost totally dependent on road transport, are automatically disadvantaged by any moves to penalise the road transport industry.

More to the point, the formula adopted by the ISC is particularly devastating for the road train industry which itself forms the backbone of the Territory freight lifeline. 90% of our incoming domestic freight arrives in Darwin by road train. Similarly, the vast majority of our Territory products are dependent on road trains for movement to southern markets.

The breakdown of figures speaks for itself. At present, the Territory government charges an average of $1100 per road train per annum. This is $2000 to $3000 lower than in the states. This low rate is not an accident. The Territory government has always recognised the need for an efficient road transport industry because we have no alternatives. Why put obstacles in the industry's path? We have no rail north of Alice Springs and virtually no coastal shipping. The ISC has put more than obstacles in the path. The formula would take charges for the average road train from that $1100 figure to a massive $70 000 per annum. Initial estimates of the charges put the figure at $53 000 per annum. However, a careful examination of distances travelled by Territory road trains painted an even more dramatic picture.
Given that the charges apply on a per trailer basis, 1 Territory firm, which operates 200 trailers, would see its annual registration charges rise from just over $100,000 per annum to about $5m per annum. Even supposing that this firm could accommodate such an increase, its freight charges would go through the roof to accommodate not only the immediate increase but also the servicing of borrowings required for that company to stay afloat.

Industry indicators predict that 50% of Territory transport operators would immediately go to the wall should the ISC report's recommendations be implemented. Competition would be reduced accordingly and it is the Territory consumer who would meet the ultimate cost of the report's folly. Increased freight charges for incoming goods would be passed on to the consumer. Similarly, Territory product, which competes on the open market, particularly that of livestock, would be dearer to freight interstate. In reality, not all these increased freight costs can be passed on and, in the end, Territory primary producers would bear the brunt of them.

On a recent inspection of rural roads, a number of Tanami cattle producers suggested to me - and they were quite serious - that they would consider droving cattle to their markets if freight charges rose to the levels proposed under the ISC report's recommendations. Are we going back in time? Is this some sort of employment program? Is it all about employing Aboriginal stockmen to drive thousands of cattle for weeks on end? If it is, we will need some reconsideration of stock routes throughout the Northern Territory. The cost of shifting livestock by road to southern markets is likely to increase between $15 to $20 per head at the very least if increased freight costs are passed on to primary producers. A possible 14¢ per kilo increase in freight charges, and reduced availability of transport - and that is far more important to the producers - for cost-sensitive products such as melons and other horticultural produce, could leave growers with little option but to leave crops in the ground.

This report supposedly has something to do with the micro-economic reform. However, quite clearly, its recommendations are economically counterproductive. You have to ask yourself where the federal government is coming from on this issue. ISC Chairman, Ted Butcher, told a group of road train operators in Queensland on 3 July that they had to recognise what pressure the federal government was under to deliver a $100 per car reduced charge to the motorist. Is pandering to the Sydney motorist what this whole thing is all about - buying off the general public at the expense of the transport industry? Of course, for Territorians, the cost of registering small and medium cars would actually increase. The general public in this part of the world would cop it both ways. It would be slugged an extra 9.4¢ per litre, less the current Territory charge of 4¢ per litre for petrol.

The efficient movement of goods to our export markets is hardly going to benefit from skyrocketing freight costs. It seems obvious to me that the report has simply failed to address the problems faced by areas in which efficient rail transport is not available - areas which probably include the entire nation - and which are totally dependent on road transport. Further evidence of this can be found in the so-called externality charge incorporated in the petrol and diesel excise.

In recognising the fact that road use imposes costs on society other than wear and tear, the ISC report identified 2 major external costs: firstly, congestion costs, estimated by the Bureau of Transport Economics at $2000m per annum; and, secondly, air and noise pollution costs of about $1300m per annum. However, the ISC report recommended a levy on diesel users for air and noise pollution costs only, that levy being 8.5¢ per litre
in the total proposed diesel levy of 24.1¢ plus recent variations. To put it into perspective, the figure of 8.5¢ per litre represents almost double what the federal government spends on road construction.

The rationale of a charge on noise and pollution costs only is quite beyond me since congestion costs are by far the greater economic evil, although they do not apply in the outback but only in the major cities. Additionally, the noise and air pollution levies appear to be designed with only city conditions in mind, where the problems are obviously far greater than in the bush. Needless to say, this is another example of the report's failure to come to grips with the reality outside the east coast of Australia. Life does exist beyond the Blue Mountains, and it does exist beyond the railhead. Do the report's authors honestly believe that kangaroos and buffalo will be offended by the sound of road trains moving down the track and that, accordingly, our road train operators need to be levied 8.5¢ a litre to compensate for that? Clearly, this externality charge, or environmental charge as it is also known, is all about downtown Sydney and has nothing to do with Australia's remote regions. In the meantime, the congestion problem caused by traffic in our cities would simply go unpenalised. There is simply no logic in that.

The ISC report's recommendations are contrary to any policy of decentralisation or of equity in Australia, given the reliance of many regional centres on heavy transport to link regionally-based plant and markets in Australia and overseas. In addition, the Territory government has a philosophical problem in relation to road users - and, more specifically, those involved in the heavy transport industry - having to pay the total cost of roads. The Territory government believes that road users, particularly the heavy transport road users, should pay only for the damage that they do to the road system - in other words, the marginal cost. The ISC report seeks to penalise heavy transport to the extent of paying for the local cost not only of road maintenance but also of the initial road construction cost. After all, roads are a public utility that benefits the whole community and therefore no one section of the community should be singled out to pay for their total construction cost. By all means, if one section of the community causes damage to a road, it should pay the cost of repairing that damage.

Of course, we are not talking only about philosophy in this case. We are concerned about the very real impact on all Territorians if the ISC report findings are not challenged. There would be an immediate impact on the road transport industry, pastoral industry clients, and every Territory home. Territory families would pay more in the supermarkets and electrical stores and Territory businesses would pay more in their day-to-day operations. Competition in the freight industry would be dramatically reduced and, invariably, reduced competition has a sequel in increased prices. The flexibility of the freight industry would be reduced and the only logical outcome of such inflexibility would be an increase in costs. When a freight operator is forced to cough up more than $20 000 for every trailer in operation, the option of having trailers left at strategic locations, which gives current operations their flexibility, will be a thing of the past. Either that or the end user will have to pay more to accommodate that flexibility.

Government, industry and the public were given the opportunity to comment on the report 3 months ago, before the Chairman of the ISC made his final recommendations to the federal Land Transport Minister, Bob Brown. I have to say that, given the extraordinary impact these recommendations are likely to have on the Northern Territory, the response from the ALP in the
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Territory and from members opposite has been nothing short of disgraceful. The Leader of the Opposition has had precious little to say on the subject. All he has done is to say, 3 months ago, that he would read the report to ensure that Territory interests were looked after and, more recently, to criticise me for actually trying to do something about the report.

This report represents one of the most serious challenges to the Territory in the past decade. The Territory stands to lose $100m a year, and the Leader of the Opposition's only contribution has been to complain that the government has spent $5000 getting a lobby group down to Canberra to do something about this Territory disaster. If we succeed in exempting the Territory from this report's recommendations or, at the very least, in minimising their impact, that $5000 will have been very well invested by this government.

We have heard barely a peep from the opposition's transport spokesman. He came out of hibernation a couple of weeks ago to say he had mentioned the matter to Senator Bob Collins.

Mr Coulter: Who is he?

Mr Finch: For the benefit of those honourable members who are not aware of the fact, the opposition spokesman on transport is the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr Coulter: No, I meant Bob Collins.

Mr Finch: Oh! That is a tricky question. I will bypass that one.

This comes, of course, some 2 months after the report's release. The opposition spokesman or his leader could have been rather more constructive if they had spent 41¢ on a stamp and sent a letter to the Land Transport Minister to complain about these recommendations which, as it turns out, basically reflect the view of the minister's own department.

As for our federal member, who after all is the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Land Transport, what have we heard from him? There have been 2 statements. The first was issued on the day after the report was tabled in the federal parliament. It suggested that I was a bit presumptuous in my comments that this report might be damaging to the Northern Territory. The second was made on radio the other day. It pointed out that the report's recommendations will need to be adjusted, heaven forbid, for those areas with no rail option in order 'to ensure that remote Australia receives maximum benefit'. Maximum benefit! Mr Speaker, what benefit? What is this man talking about? There is no benefit in destroying the economy of northern Australia. Minimising the damage is what he should be talking about or, if he has the Territory's interest at heart, eliminating any damage to this developing part of Australia.

What a pathetic response we have seen from the ALP in the Territory. It has done nothing but criticise this government's attempts to get something done about this dramatic and catastrophic report. For the benefit of members opposite, I will bring them up to date with what has been going on in the real world while they have been off in Queensland shooting television commercials. Yes, I did take a lobby group down to Canberra. We did meet with groups such as the Livestock Transporters Association, the Cattle Council of Australia, the National Farmers Federation, the Long Distance Transport Association, the Transport Industry Forum, the federal minister and the chairman of the committee. We spoke with everyone who
would listen to us. We provided them with the facts and figures needed to convince the federal government that there is a problem with this report and its implications for northern Australia.

As I said, I met with the federal minister and the Chairman of the ISC to brief them on the problems that we have. It is a real world out there, but members of the opposition do not want to know about it. If they want to be educated on the subject, I am more than happy to undertake the task. The Chairman of the ISC, Mr Ted Butcher, acknowledged that he was getting the message. In fact, right across Australia he has been given a clear picture of the report's impact. The Leader of the Opposition, who is seeking to find some new-found northern Australian compact between the states, would be interested to know that at least Western Australia shares our views on this issue whilst, of course, his friend in Queensland is sitting on the fence.

The chairman of the committee does not mind admitting that the report initially did not take into account the road train situation in northern and western Australia. He has now re-examined a whole range of assumptions that he made in preparing his initial report, a report which took some 3 years to put together. I must confess at this point, with a great deal of sympathy, that the Chairman of the ISC has had his work cut out for him. There has been an excessive demand on his time to put together some extremely important documents on behalf of all transport sectors in Australia.

Assumptions were made, for instance, that road trains operate at 90% capacity, both ways, because figures supplied to the commission via the New South Wales Road Traffic Authority showed that that was the case for semitrailers operating on the Hume Highway. I explained to him that a road train shifting livestock in the Territory does not bring much back on the return trip except, of course, a load of manure. The average loaded distance for road trains carrying livestock is not 90%. Rather, the industry figure is about 40% to 50%.

I think it is fairly clear that the ISC report was based on a number of assumptions which have nothing to do with remote regions. The ISC Chairman got that message here and he got the same message in Queensland from the industry last month, at a series of meetings with transport and primary industry groups. He admitted that he had been stunned by the cost impact on the oil drilling industry, for instance, after he was supplied with figures by Santos. Higher transport charges for that industry would make many smaller oil and gas fields uneconomical.

The Chairman of the ISC, Ted Butcher, has now made a number of recommendations to the federal Land Transport minister for consideration - and I emphasise the words 'for consideration' - before the federal minister makes his report to a meeting of Transport Ministers in Hobart early next month. I have been provided with that review and its recommendations. There has been a view in some quarters that this report's recommendations are so disastrous, and I refer to attitudes of the Darwin media in particular, that they could not possibly be implemented by any reasonable government. That might be a comforting thought if it were not for the fact that it has taken 3 years to produce a report which adopts the recommendations of the federal minister's own department. This government has now been confronted with that fact and that is why we have been out there fighting hard.

With that in mind, I have to inform honourable members that there is not a great deal of comfort in the review of the report which was handed to the Land Transport Minister last week. The review's author states that the
ISC's original recommendations 'are sound and should stand'. The review does recognise a number of areas of Northern Territory government concern, but by no means alleviates that concern.

Let me first deal with the changes to the proposed mass-distance charge for heavy vehicles. The report acknowledges the need for a special category for road trains and livestock trailers and adjustments have been made to the mass-distance charge affecting those types of vehicles. The charge, if approved - and I emphasise the words 'if approved' - has been adjusted downwards and is calculated at a figure of $41 000 per annum for the average Territory triple trailer road train. That is hardly a figure to make us throw our hats in the air.

The review does seek to compensate heavy vehicle operators with recommendations in a number of other areas, but it is as good a pea and thimble trick as one could expect to see anywhere. To ease the burden of such a sudden impost, the review recommends a 2-stage implementation period beginning in 1992 with the mass-distance charges to come fully into force in 1994. First year estimates on annual distance travelled by individual vehicle classes would be deliberately conservative. Mr Speaker, now you see the saving but, hold your breath, now you don't. That is because, to compensate for the shortfall in revenue from these initially lower mass-distance charges, the review recommends a 6¢ per litre of diesel fuel transitional surcharge. In order to make up for such kind consideration, 6¢ per litre for diesel fuel is to be added. That will apply to all vehicles which use diesel fuel, including small trucks, school buses, 4-wheel-drive vehicles, light vans and so on. Thus, in this initial 2-year period while operators are reorganising their contractual and repayment arrangements, something which will not easily be achieved, they will be paying an extra 6¢ a litre or $11 000 per annum on average, through the pump. Every user of diesel fuel will pay that additional 6¢. However one looks at this scheme, someone new gets slugged.

Let me refer to another compensating recommendation designed to alleviate the problems of the mass-distance charge in remote Australia. It is recommended that sales tax on trucks and truck tyres be reduced from 20% to 10%. For a road train, that would reduce the annual bill for tyres alone by some $5000 while sales tax on trucks would average out also at about $5000 per year. The forced elimination of the Territory's 4¢ per litre diesel fuel excise would save operators a further $7000 per annum. In other words, for Territory operators, there would be a saving of some $17 000 per year. That is, of course, if the federal government were to take up the option of the reduced sales tax.

Of course, the $7000 per annum is a Territory road funding cost. Deducting that figure from the mass-distance charge of $41 000 per annum, the average net increase in charges per road train is around $25 000 at the very least. That is still a big problem, given that the current Territory charge is only $1100 per annum. If one adds on the higher finance and servicing cost to meet such an increase, the figure will rise to more than $32 000 per year for that component of the exercise alone. Is this the result of what Warren Snowdon last week referred to as his 'consultation on the need to take special care when establishing the size of charges to be levied on road trains'? Does increasing a cost from $1100 a year to $32 000 a year represent special care?

More to the point, I am far from convinced that any federal government in Canberra would give even a fleeting thought to a 50% reduction in sales tax. That $10 000 per annum sales tax savings on trucks and truck tyres is,
I believe, a little contentious to say the very least. The report itself recognises this, proposing that a 3¢ per litre reduction in the price of diesel fuel be implemented until such time as the sales tax decrease is introduced.

Mr Speaker, if you are becoming confused about the ups and downs of this exercise, I do not blame you. How do you think the average motorist or average transport operator feels? That 3¢ compensation decrease, of course, is to be deducted from the 6¢ per litre increase in diesel fuel, which was designed to compensate for the 2-year transitional introduction of the mass-distance charge.

The ISC report and review is a hotchpotch, hit-and-miss conglomeration of financial levers and pulleys which has more exceptions than rules, but which still manages to cast an economic shadow over the Northern Territory and over northern Australia that is, frankly, frightening. I go back to the review's introductory remarks that the report's recommendations were 'sound and should stand'. From the Territory's perspective, the threat of massive freight cost increases is still there. The proposed 9.4¢ per litre increase in the price of petrol is still there, an increase in registration charges for the average Territory car is still there, and Territory families will be slugged in the supermarket and on the road. This is all because the east coast of Australia cannot deal with the congestion caused by trucks on metropolitan roads and needs an excuse to get freight off the trucks and onto the rail network, which is an inefficient network at that.

The overall direct impact on the Northern Territory economy will be the best part of $100m per annum. That figure - and this is the frightening part - could be more than doubled with secondary effects such as flow-on from reduced competition, lost primary production and other business reductions. Each and every Territory family, regardless of financial capacity to pay, is likely to be up for an extra $2000 per annum at the least. Australia does exist beyond the railhead and the Territory government will continue its fight to ensure that this report is dismissed and discredited as the disaster that it truly is. I seek the absolute and unequivocal bipartisan support of members opposite.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the minister has chosen rather a strange way of seeking bipartisan support. I think that events have probably got beyond him. We have made our position quite clear in other forums and we wish to make it quite clear at the commencement of our contribution to this debate. We oppose any increase whatsoever in operating costs for Northern Territory freight providers.

Our position is that costs should not rise by a single cent. We recognise that that may require the exemption of road trains from the provisions of this report.

I believe that the minister was among those who welcomed the appointment of the federal member, Mr Snowdon, and Senator Bob Collins to their portfolio positions, stating that he would work with these gentlemen in Canberra to ensure the best outcomes for the Northern Territory. I would hope that, in his reply, the honourable minister will advise us of the meetings that he has had with Mr Snowdon and Senator Collins in relation to this matter. My advice is that there have not been any.

A member: Whose fault is that?

Mr EDE: Oh, it is their fault, is it? The honourable minister did not seek meetings with Territory members of the federal parliament who could
have given him direct access to the very portfolio which is the source of his problems, the federal land transport portfolio.

I have a copy of the original submission which the Northern Territory made to the ISC, the body which produced the original report which did not take into account the needs of remote areas or the difficulties of those areas which do not have adequate rail networks. Nor did it take into account the differences in externalities, the difference in usage, and the difference in kilometres travelled in such areas. That point was acknowledged very early in the piece by Hon Bob Brown, the federal Minister for Land Transport. The point was made to him by members representing the Northern Territory, Senator Collins and Mr Warren Snowdon. They identified the problems underlying the whole approach.

As a result, Mr Brown asked the retiring Chairman of the ISC, Mr Butcher, to carry out another report into the recommendations of the ISC, which was called 'Road Use Charges and Vehicle Registration: A National Scheme'. He asked him to carry out a report looking particularly at problems that arise in remote areas such as the Northern Territory and rural areas of Queensland and Western Australia. That report is now available and I have a copy, although I must admit that it did not come to me from the Minister for Transport and Works. Last night, I looked at the list of submissions contained in the report. Whilst the minister made a submission to the original review, it was clear that this report would be crucial. This opposition had put its point of view where it would be most effective, by talking to people like Warren Snowdon and Senator Bob Collins. But, Mr Speaker, do you know who did not make a written submission? The Northern Territory government.

A member: We made one.

Mr EDE: I went through the list of written submissions, and it is a pretty comprehensive list. The submissions are detailed in the appendix. This government's name does not appear. That is rather amazing. I presume that the minister was too busy making television and radio appearances in relation to the issue to make a formal submission to Mr Butcher, putting forward the same positions as Senator Bob Collins and Mr Warren Snowdon. If he had talked to them, he would have known that they were putting positions which this opposition had discussed with them. They were attempting to secure changes at the heart of the portfolio. That is the way to get these things done.

There was a meeting with the honourable minister. He did meet Hon Bob Brown, the Minister for Land Transport. It was on 20 July at a seminar called 'Rail 2000' in Adelaide. He asked the federal minister whether he would give an assurance that the Territory would in no way be penalised under any new proposals. He received an assurance from the federal minister that the Territory would in no way be penalised under any new procedures that were being introduced under any new proposal.

In spite of that assurance, he has decided to waste the time of this House today with a hodgepodge of a report. If one reads the minister's statement, it is easy to see what has happened. The first 21 pages of the statement were prepared before he received the report from Mr Butcher. When all the waffle and the asides are left out, it contains criticisms of the original ISC ...

Mr Finch: It is the only report before federal parliament.
Mr EDE: We will come back to that in a moment. It is one of many reports which are being examined in this total context. Your federal counterpart was wrong when he stated that it would be presented to Cabinet this week. It is far from that point.

The minister was in full flight in relation to what would happen if the recommendations of the original ISC report were implemented. He was not going to let a few facts get in the way of a good story, including the fact that aspects of the original report were being rationalised. He told his colleagues: 'I have a beauty here. This will really rock them'. He then appended a few extra pages to his statement, in which he talked about possible savings under Mr Butcher's proposals and attempted to knock them.

The real problem is that he has not understood Mr Butcher's report. Even after reading it, he has persisted in drawing comparisons between the registration fee which we charge in the Northern Territory and the total fee which would affect a road train in a year's operation if the proposals contained in the report were accepted. As I said, it is one of many reports which will be submitted. The beauty of it is that it starts to come some of the way towards where we want to be.

The minister has made a fallacious comparison. As any fool knows, as any idiot who has been around the industry will tell him, registration is not the only cost which road transport operators have to bear. They also have to pay excise duty on fuel and sales tax on the initial purchase of the vehicle and on spare parts. The only way a comparison can be made is by aggregating all the federal and Territory costs as they were prior to the event and as they will be after the event. It is then possible to conclude whether there will be an increase or not, and the extent of any increase. However, it is an absolute nonsense to argue that it will increase from $1100 up to $21 000. I see that the honourable minister has the grace to grin.

Mr Finch: I am grinning at you.

Mr EDE: He is being either dishonest or incompetent in this regard. His grin gives me a clue because, obviously, that $21 000 is not comparable with the $1100.

Mr Finch: Why?

Mr EDE: If he wants to understand the costs and some of the comparisons, he should look at this report. In the case of triple bottom road trains of 104 t, depending on the state or territory, the Butcher report says that changes to charges could range from a decrease of 0.6% to an increase of 2.5%. For 115 t triple bottom road trains, the change could range from a decrease of 0.5% to an increase of 4.2% in the first year of operation. That demonstrates - I was about to say 'the dishonesty' but that would be unparsimonious - of what the minister has attempted to portray here today.

Mr Speaker, we will not accept this report either. I have said 'not a penny' because the Territory would be in the higher range of those percentage increases. Those increases would apply only in the first year of operation and the increases in subsequent years would go well beyond that percentage increase. It is an impost that we cannot bear in the Northern Territory. It would be unfair and unjust to place such an impost on a growth area like the Northern Territory.
Let us look at how we can tackle these things. This is a prime example of how Labor's concept of a north Australian economic community could operate to our advantage. The governments of Western Australia and Queensland made written submissions to the inquiry. In their remote and rural areas, particularly those with no rail services, they face similar problems to those which we face. As an aside, I would dispute the minister's statement that we would not be affected if we had a railway. Rural producers certainly would be affected because they would not be moving such short distances.

Mr Finch: I said affected less.

Mr EDE: They would not be loading their cattle and moving them to a railroad. They would go straight past.

Mr Finch: At least you have some minimal understanding.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, we understand the Territory government's inability to operate with other governments. It has always wanted to be out on its own. Working with others would make it much easier to have these matters corrected. I will come to that aspect in a moment.

First, I want to explain what the timetable is. The honourable minister carried on as if the report's recommendations were to be implemented during the next couple of weeks. There is a mad panic because 1 report is before parliament and, suddenly, there is another report. The recommendations are for a number of stages. It is hoped that there will be an in-principle agreement on the scheme and the legislative responsibilities by 31 September 1990.

Mr Finch: 7 September.

Mr EDE: The authority designate, the federal state and territory officials, would develop a detailed structure for the agreement of ministers by 1 July 1991. The other dates are: legislation for the new scheme, be it territory, federal or state, 31 December 1991; the independent authority, 31 December 1991; and vehicles operating under the new charging arrangements from 1 July 1992. That is the time frame that we are dealing with. Let us not be panicked by the honourable minister into believing that what he reads on a piece of paper at the moment is what will finally be enacted. Members on this side of the House, together with our federal colleagues, are working to ensure that costs do not rise by a single cent and that, if necessary, things like an exemption for road trains can be envisaged.

Let us have a look at the broader issue which is involved in this. From the way the minister has spoken, one might think that what we have is simply a proposal that the federal government increase all the costs of transport vehicles around Australia. The basic principles, those which Mr Butcher said should still be supported, relate to the micro-economic reform of the whole road transport industry. I hope that no member of this House would dispute the need to effect that micro-economic reform. The Prime Minister has spoken about the difficulties which we labour under in Australia. He has pointed out that, in a few years time, trade between various countries in Europe will be freer than trade between the various states of Australia. We must address those issues.

The minister said that there is a clear need to examine the sea land interface. If he was on top of his job, he would realise that, a matter of weeks ago, Senator Bob Collins gave a reference to the House of
Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, chaired by Peter Morris. That reference concerned the appropriateness, efficiency and performance of the interface between sea transport and land transport. If we adopt the honourable minister's time frame, we will never keep up with the rest of the world. We will never regain our competitiveness. These matters have to be addressed simultaneously if we are to get the country back on the efficient road it would have been on had it not suffered so many decades of Liberal National Party rule.

Mr Finch: It took 7 years to fix up the waterfront.

Mr EDE: It took your mates down in Canberra 25 years to destroy it.

Mr Speaker, the opposition has a position on this matter. We have put that position to Senator Bob Collins and Hon Warren Snowdon, both of whom are involved in the transport portfolio. Our position states that the costs of Territory transport operators should not be increased by another cent. It can be no clearer. If the honourable minister will take a little advice, he will get his act together and meet with people like Warren Snowdon and Senator Collins.

Mr Finch: I have done that.

Mr EDE: In that case, the minister might like to give us some times and dates.

Mr Speaker, if he meets with those people, he could possibly begin to put the Territory's case more effectively in the halls of power. His current approach, which involves screaming, yelling, ranting, raving, incorrect figures and comparisons between apples and oranges, is getting him nowhere. He is simply making a joke of himself and making it more difficult for the rest of us, who want to look rationally at micro-economic reform in this country.

Mr Finch: You have sold us out! You are snowing us.

Mr EDE: We want to come up with a rational and sound basis for the development of Australia. That is what we are after.

Mr Finch: You are kidding yourself!

Mr EDE: The honourable minister should get back on track and stop carrying on like someone who is deeply in love with the sound of his own voice. He should start to utilise the available processes. Our position is clear and we are stating it to great effect, using the proper processes, the processes which I recommend to the minister. I have confidence that those processes will produce the results which we all desire.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, it was very pleasing to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition supporting the Northern Territory government's attitude towards this report by Mr Butcher, which certainly carries out a bit of a butchering job on the Northern Territory. During the transition period referred to in the report, an amount of 6c per litre would be added to the cost of diesel fuel. Of course, many tourist operators in the Northern Territory utilise diesel fuel to transport tourists around the countryside. Petrol prices would rise by 9.4c per litre which, of course, would greatly affect the costs which face the average Australian holiday-maker, the person who drives around the countryside in his own motor vehicle.
A large percentage of tourists who come to the Northern Territory arrive in private vehicles, including 4-wheel-drives, often towing caravans. With the horrendous prospect of the price rises which could result from the Iraq situation, I dread the thought of what might happen in the long term when additional amounts are levied on petrol and diesel fuel.

Mr Ede: Offset by lower registration fees, of course.

Mr POOLE: Maybe. That is debatable.

The Northern Territory is almost solely reliant on road transport for freight. Most people here would consider that the road transport industry is very competitive and efficient. If this report is implemented as it currently stands, I do not believe that we have much to gain from it. In spite of the benefits which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition sees in terms of micro-economic reform, I doubt that we will ever be on a level playing field in terms of road and rail competition. I am told that we would face freight price increases of about $15 per tonne between Alice Springs and Darwin, and more than double that from state capital cities.

The honourable minister stated that the living costs of an average Northern Territory family could rise by between $1000 and $2000 per annum. Of course, the additional transport costs will have an adverse impact on the viability of exports, the cost of living and employment, the cost of delivering government services and the capacity of the Northern Territory government to raise revenue through the fuel franchise revenue system. The concept of a level playing field implied in the report is an illusion. Other transport policies in areas such as domestic shipping and, to a certain extent, international aviation, impose added costs and growth restraints on the remote areas of Australia, and similar imbalances result from trade protection. These, of course, tend to favour the south-east corner of Australia, where most manufacturing is located, at the expense of the north. A true level playing field would imply the use of countermeasures to compensate for this tendency.

The cost penalty imposed by distance is compounded by taxes on transport. Earlier ISC reports opposed taxes on transport as an intermediate product. This applied particularly to sales tax but is applicable to other revenue such as stamp duty. I understand that the Northern Territory submission to the ISC suggested a 50% allowance. At the very least, these imposts should be reduced to the average level on products throughout the economy. Sales tax on freight costs should also be removed in line with the original 1983 ALP election commitment and, we understand, as is the current case in Canada. Not only does it add arbitrarily to costs but it distorts the normal business arrangements.

The report proposes that the revenue from mass-distance charges be returned to the states in which the vehicles are registered. Registrations are proposed to be nominal only. Leakage could be a much more serious problem with the mass-distance charge than is the case for current registration charges, with the less populous states more likely to lose out unless a suitable adjustment method can be identified. The resultant distribution of revenue lacks any logical rationale.

The impact of a reduction in the Northern Territory tax revenue base and related loss of discretionary power from any loss of fuel franchise and registration revenue certainly needs to be addressed. What assurance is there that the Commonwealth can be trusted regarding its use of additional
taxing powers? History gives people in the Territory no confidence, whatever the Commonwealth's motives are initially. How can this be overcome?

Given the present developmental stage of the Northern Territory economy, it is essential that the cost impact on the Northern Territory's people and its industries be reduced by direct reduction of the charges and by application of provisions which have both subsidy and compensation elements. In terms of road funding, there is uncertainty about future funding levels and concern that the road investment economic evaluation methodology presently employed at the federal level tends to favour the more populous urbanised states. The problems with this methodology stem from its over-reliance on traffic demand and under-emphasis on external costs such as congestion and pollution, on the one hand, and economic development and the social benefits of roads in rural areas on the other.

In any negotiating situation, the NT is at a disadvantage because the main interests of most, if not all, states are in the developed areas. In practice, the Commonwealth tends to operate this way also. There is a lack of discretionary power in the use of road funds to respond to local situations. This is unlikely to be appreciated by any centralised vetting group and will lead to a misallocation of resources.

There is a need to ensure that, in any national evaluation system, all roads are correctly categorised so that the evaluation correctly identifies relevant needs and costs. For example, if too high a road standard is presumed to be needed, the evaluation results may suffer. There is also a need to avoid the traps of standardised data. For example, vehicle operating costs are higher in the Territory than in the main population areas. There is a need for special allowance to be made for the funding of local roads in areas which cannot support local government, including those servicing rural and Aboriginal communities.

The eastern states are concerned to retain current road funding, and they will compromise moves to develop more appropriate evaluation approaches. There is likely to be less bias towards economically developing areas. It may well be that a different evaluation methodology needs to be employed for economically developing areas to capture the external developmental benefits of roads in areas like the Northern Territory.

The road industry itself will face difficulties with up-front payments of mass-distance charges. Even with quarterly payment, more than $15 000 extra will be required per quarter for a road train. The industry is unlikely to be able to pass on all the costs above marginal costs to, for example, small businesses or export industries. Disproportionate increases in road train charges versus those for articulated units will result in a 16% greater increase per tonne for a 100 km trip.

As a group, road trains tend to carry a higher proportion of unidirectional loads than articulated units. The mass-distance charge does not appear to allow for this. Many road train operations are totally unidirectional, such as those carrying ore and often those carrying cattle. Where there is no backloading, it is common practice to carry piggybacked general trailers.

Distance measuring devices would seem to be an expensive way of allowing lower payments. There may be some scope for alternative administrative arrangements and treatment of road train operations in conjunction with a modified charge regime. Many operators who do not use
road trains also carry unidirectional loads and are thus discriminated against under the mass-distance pricing regime.

It appears that no apparent consideration has been given to a third option - namely, the provision by the Commonwealth of a legislative framework with complementary state and territory legislation. This would provide for national consistency whilst recognising legitimate differences in local needs. The Uniform Shipping Law Code is an example of this kind of legislation.

The report suggests that, even if the Commonwealth alone were to regulate vehicle registration and driver licensing, the states and the territories could administer the provisions so that full use could be made of local knowledge and so that local factors would be taken into account as far as practicable. The Northern Territory would want to be convinced that the Commonwealth could and would allow such flexibility. As an example, even before Federal Interstate Registration Scheme legislation was finalised, the Northern Territory sought to ensure that transport inspectors had the same scope for FIRS vehicles as any others, in terms of directing them to a weighbridge for weighing. The most recent amendment to the FIRS regulation makes even more specific a maximum limit for FIRS vehicles of 5 km in the forward direction for this purpose. The Territory government has consistently sought a maximum limit of 30 km for this purpose which is more in keeping with local operational conditions. If the Commonwealth cannot accommodate the Territory on such a simple matter, how can it offer adequate flexibility on much more significant matters?

While the concept of a single national registration system sounds attractive, the major benefits may be attained on a much more cost-effective basis through a uniform rather than a centralised national system, and this is being progressed now for heavy vehicle driver licensing through a committee set up under the auspices of the Australian and New Zealand Transport Authorities Conference.

The Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy envisaged broadly based diversified growth across the minerals, energy, primary and secondary, and tourist industries, supported by an efficient transport sector. Efforts to attract private investors to establish a rail link between Darwin and Alice Springs should and will continue. This economic development strategy also involves extending and upgrading the road network to improve access between urban centres and remote communities. Thus, while the railway is a logical part of the development strategy, it is important to hold overall transport costs down. Certainly, inflating road transport costs is not seen as a desirable objective in this context. The key objective is efficient, cheap transport. Such a system is essential for our rapid economic development.

The Northern Territory is a developing economy characterised by long distances, a small population and with a significant portion of the community living in remote conditions and relying on social security. Therefore, its industries and people have special needs and should be insulated from the adverse side effects of a range of national policies which run counter to the concept of a level playing field which would apply equally to manufacturing industry and the primary and tertiary industries upon which the Northern Territory is mostly dependent.

To the extent that the proposals preclude local flexibility and discretion for administrative action and in the raising and spending of funds, they will also lead to misallocations of resources and make it more
difficult to obtain the broader long-term social and developmental objectives. As far as the Territory government is concerned, the outcome from any review of road pricing and investment arrangements must be consistent with its own strategy in relation to the economic development of the Northern Territory.

I am sure that honourable members share my concerns about this matter and that all are waiting anxiously to see the final outcome of this report and its subsequent review. I do not share the confidence of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that all is well and that we can rely on Canberra to do the right thing by us, because the federal government has certainly not done that in the past. There are many people in the Northern Territory who operate motor vehicles, coach companies and so on. I believe that they have good cause to worry about what is happening in the south in respect of our road transport costs. I support the Minister for Transport and Works in his concern and I hope that, at the end of the day, we really will be able to stand up and say that the opposition was right and that that latest transport review will have ended up without a single cent of additional cost being passed to the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest to the statement to this House by the Minister for Transport and Works in respect of the ISC Report into Road User Charges. I want to place on record in the Assembly today my concern about the possible impact this may have on my own electorate. As honourable members will be aware, the electorate of MacDonnell includes a large area of central Australia, and I have received representations in respect of the proposed increases in road user charges. A few years ago, I had the privilege of representing the parliament at a backbenchers' conference in London. During that conference, I was asked on a number of occasions how many voters lived in the electorate of MacDonnell. Quite a few eyebrows were raised when I said that there were about 3000, give or take a few. Other MPs thought this was an extraordinarily small number by federal standards in Australia and, certainly, by UK standards. I was at least able to rejoin by saying that the area of MacDonnell would take in all of the British Isles and all of the United Kingdom. When I make such comparisons in Australia, I tell people that MacDonnell includes an area somewhat larger than Victoria. That shuts them up fairly effectively.

I refer to those comparisons in this context because I really do not think that people who live in the southern capitals realise just how big northern Australia is. I do not think that they realise the extent of our dependence on road freight. For that reason, I want to support the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and indicate to the Minister for Transport and Works our desire to participate in an exercise of lobbying the federal government to ensure that fair charges are levied on road operators in the Territory. It comes down to that very basic northern Australian concern about distance and about the extent to which people are or are not able to afford charges in the same way as they might be able to elsewhere. We should not be ignorant of the fact that half the population of Australia lives in Sydney or Melbourne. As an Australian, I find that fact quite chilling. In this context, it is important for us to ensure that that political reality does not prevent a greater element of fairness applying with respect to these charges than appears to be being contemplated at the moment.

As an Australian, I endorse the proposal that road user charges be increased where rail services are available. I notice that, in his
statement, the minister made a broad-brush accusation of inefficiency in respect of rail services. I am not convinced that that broad accusation is reasonable, when one considers all the costs associated with road usage. I might say in passing that it sits oddly with the Minister for Transport and Works who is keen to see, as we are, the construction of a railway between Alice Springs and Darwin. I am concerned that the minister has seen fit to make such an unconstructive broad-brush attack.

It basically comes down to this. A current charge of $1100, plus the existing fuel excise and sales tax, is being paid by constituents who have made representations to me. These people, who cart their own cattle, face prohibitive costs. I am determined to do whatever I can to ensure that any charges levied on them are fair and that the system of national charges reflects the realities of northern Australia as well as the realities of the Hume and Pacific Highways.

I have had cause to say this on a large number of occasions, but I thought that the tone of the minister's statement was objectionable. On the one hand, he attempted to seek a bipartisan approach but, on the other, he devoted a large portion of his speech to bagging the federal government and the Territory's representatives in Canberra.

Mr Finch: I bagged your leader as well. He has had 3 months in which to comment.

Mr BELL: I am just talking about the federal representatives at this stage. If the minister genuinely wants a bipartisan approach, I suggest that the tone of his statement does not particularly encourage that.

The member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, has been energetic in his representations on behalf of the Territory. I draw the honourable minister's attention to Mr Snowdon's press release of 7 August in which he indicates that he has been making representations to the federal Land Transport Minister, Bob Brown, in this regard. That press release is headed 'Snowdon protects remote Australian transport costs'. I believe that the minister's accusation that Northern Territory Labor is not interested in this issue does not, in the final sense, serve the interests of road transport operators. It certainly does not serve the interests of my constituents who own trucks in their efforts to move cattle out of remote properties around the Centre. It does not assist them in their battle to ensure that those charges are fair.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table Mr Snowdon's press release.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: In conclusion, let me assure the Minister for Transport and Works of the opposition's desire to ensure that only fair charges apply, charges which do not result in massive increases either to road transport operators in the Territory themselves or to other Territorians by way of increased food prices and prices of other commodities. I assure the minister of our desire to ensure that a fair taxing regime operates in this regard.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak in this debate, I must say at the outset that, if the member for MacDonnell was concerned about the tone of the minister's statement, which he found objectionable, I find equally objectionable the silence of the opposition on this issue for a period of approximately 3 months. This issue
has been on the boil for at least that long and the opposition's silence has been deafening notwithstanding the importance of this impost to freight service operators in the Northern Territory and, indeed, to all Territorians. I might say that the opposition is not displaying any great commitment in relation to this matter if one judges that commitment by the number of opposition members present in the House during the course of this debate. I do not believe that the Leader of the Opposition has been here at all during the debate.

Mr Bell: Have you actually got anything to say, Mike?

Mr REED: I know that it might be a sensitive matter for you but it is a point that Territorians should be made aware of.

Mr Bell: If that is the best argument you have, you should sit down.

Mr REED: My point is valid. It clearly indicates the opposition's lack of concern and lack of genuine commitment on the part of the opposition ...

Mr Bell: Bulldust!

Mr VALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell interjected whilst not in his chair and I believe that his interjection was unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. 'Bulldust' is not an unparliamentary term.

Mr VALE: He interjected whilst not in his chair.

Mr SPEAKER: That is debatable.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, in confirmation of my remarks, I note that there are now no members of the opposition in the Chamber. That is a clear indication of their lack of commitment to both the Territory and to this real problem which faces us all.

I welcomed the comment of the member for Stuart that not another cent should be imposed on Territorians in relation to these matters. We have waited for a long time to hear such a comment, one which the opposition has been very wary of making until now. I cannot, however, be comforted by his views or the views of the member for MacDonnell on these matters. Whilst the member for Stuart might be satisfied with being sold a pup, I do not think for a moment that we can rest assured that, in the event that these charges were imposed on the states and not on the Northern Territory as he suggests, the states would sit by and accept such a situation. We are, after all, talking about a national scheme. That is what it will be in the final analysis. I do not think that any of us should be fooled that something to the contrary will occur.

Even in the unlikely circumstance that the member for Stuart's hopes were to be fulfilled and that, for some unusual reason, the federal government decided to vary the treatment which it has given to the Northern Territory in respect of a number of matters in recent years, the fact is that we would not escape the imposts which the introduction of the ISC recommendations would place on transport vehicles interstate. It is obvious that vehicles carrying goods to and from the Northern Territory are not all registered in the Northern Territory. Clearly, there would be a flow-on of
costs to Territorians, both in prices paid for produce transported from interstate and in the cost of transporting Territory goods interstate, where interstate-registered vehicles were used. It is for this reason that I believe that the members opposite have been sold a pup. If they think for a moment that we will receive special treatment, they will ultimately find that they were sadly mistaken.

I was disappointed that the member for Stuart did not address some of the problems that will confront primary producers in the Northern Territory, given his responsibilities in that area. They are really much deeper than they appear to be on the surface. There has been a tendency for the media and, today, for members opposite to consider this problem simply in relation to the shipment of cattle from a pastoral lease to an abattoir or to a point interstate where the producer receives a return upon sale. However, there are many inputs in the pastoral industry and most of them come from interstate. Most of them also apply to all of us, as consumers, because much of the product that we consume is supplied from interstate. From the point of view of the pastoral industry, I speak of fertilisers, hay and feed supplements.

It is interesting to dwell on those few issues because, in recent years, we have seen a great transition in the pastoral industry, from a situation in which producers virtually harvested semi-wild animals to the current situation in which producers are improving their land, and ploughing and fertilising areas. They are putting in improved pastures and they are putting out feed supplements for their cattle. This transition is transforming the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. It is vastly improving the quality of the product that is raised and put on the market and, as a consequence, it is opening up new markets which were previously closed to us. The potential impact of the imposts proposed by the interstate commission is therefore dramatic. They could be devastating to a vastly changed pastoral industry in the Northern Territory.

The increased costs would also apply to other goods which pastoralists purchase, at least to some extent, from interstate. Such goods include: fuel, fencing materials, most of which come from interstate, and, of course, food for owners of pastoral leases, their managers and other employees. All of these goods are imported, mostly from interstate. They are taken to regional centres in the first instance, before being transported to the properties. The oncosts not only affect the financial viability of the property at its heart, but will increase the cost of production, therefore impacting significantly on our ability to access other markets.

Operational costs on the properties will be affected, including equipment costs, the transport of equipment for graders, the grading of firebreaks, maintenance of roads and fence lines, and the rehabilitation of specific areas, something to which the opposition has given great emphasis in its greener moments. The proposals put forward by the ISC jeopardise the ability of pastoral lessees to continue to operate in the very responsible manner in which they have operated in the past and, indeed, in the improved manner they have adopted in recent times. The proposals place the whole pastoral industry in the Northern Territory in jeopardy. I single out the pastoral industry because it is large, but I do not ignore industries like the horticultural industry which will suffer similar imposts, although its lower operating levels mean that they will be on a lesser scale. The situation of the pastoral industry clearly emphasises the problem which we all face.
As I have said, it is not simply a matter of the transport of stock from the property to the point of sale. There are intervening movements of cattle which producers necessarily face in particular circumstances. When a property is hit by drought or is suffering because of a lack of food or water, cattle may have to be moved for agistment to another property in the Territory or indeed interstate. When better conditions begin to prevail on the original property, the cattle then have to be returned. Under such circumstances, the Territory's pastoralists would not be able to bear the additional costs imposed. It may be necessary to transport cattle for fattening before slaughter, to feedlots within or outside the Northern Territory. The cost imposts are too great to relate. They do not apply only to the outputs of pastoral properties but to the inputs as well.

That is what disappoints me about the concerns expressed by members of the opposition today, and the lack of concern which they have displayed until now. They have completely overlooked the overall imposts and the issues that will arise from the ISC proposals, as they affect both the pastoral industry and the broader sectors of the Northern Territory. I understand that the freight costs involved in moving cattle could increase by as much as $15 to $20 per head. That is simply the costs which would apply to the movement of cattle from the property to the point of sale interstate. It does not take into account all the other costs to which I have just referred.

I call on members opposite to have a much closer look at these proposals and to investigate more precisely the imposts which they place on the pastoral industry. Hopefully, in doing that, they will recognise that there is no easy fix. We cannot be comforted by their view that these costs will not be applied to the Northern Territory but will be applied to the states. That flies directly in the face of statements made by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to his cooperative approach to northern development. Mr Speaker, can you imagine for a moment that the Leader of the Opposition will be able to convince the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia that they should face these imposts but that the Territory should not? I cannot imagine that happening and I do not think for a moment that the states would allow it to happen, although I must say that there has been a deafening silence from Queenslanders on this issue.

In Adelaide recently, I met with Hon Ernie Bridge, Minister for Agriculture in the Western Australian government. He was not aware of these issues at the time, but I was heartened to find that, as our discussions proceeded, he showed a considerable appreciation of the imposts which would be imposed on the pastoral industry in the north of Western Australia and, indeed, on anyone living in that region. I am pleased to say that, in response to a statement which I made to the Agricultural Council in Adelaide last month, I received very strong support from the Western Australian minister. He was certainly appreciative of the fact that I had drawn these matters to his attention and, in turn, I was appreciative of his support.

I am not at all surprised that the member for MacDonnell has received representations in relation to this report and the imposts it envisages. I am, however, a little surprised to find that he has also accepted the pup that the member for Stuart was sold. I found his response to the minister's statement to be objectionable. Likewise, I find that the members opposite have blighted themselves by their silence in relation to this matter. They have sold the industry short and they have sold all Territorians short. I hope that they realise that they still have not found a solution which will be satisfactory to any of us and that there is still a large amount of work to be done. In realising that, I hope that they will take up the cudgels
and accept the honourable minister's suggestion that we adopt a bipartisan approach on this issue, because it is sorely needed. Members opposite need to realise that this matter is important and that there is as yet no solution at hand. Although, as the member for Stuart said, the measures will not be implemented in the short term, once these sorts of programs are on track, they are very hard to derail, which is what we have to do if we are to save our manufacturing base and to ensure that Territorians can continue to live here without being burdened by insufferable costs.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the transport system in this country is in a shambles and the shambles has been becoming gradually worse and worse. We have heard about the sea transport problems that this country has experienced over many years now. Senator Bob Collins, the Minister for Shipping, tells us that he will solve all of those problems within the next 12 or 18 months or else depart the scene. More importantly, what we are talking about today is the ISC Report into Road User Charges which, I believe, the federal government sees as a panacea which will solve all of the problems that have been created by its neglect over the past 7 years.

I say 'its neglect' because the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The facts show that, during that 7 years, road funding has decreased dramatically in a whole range of ways. During its period in office, the Labor government has almost totally neglected road development and the upgrading of roads. What will happen if the recommendations of this ISC report are implemented? We will see inflation in this country increase dramatically. It will not result only from the charges that follow from those recommendations. Because of the conflict between Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and others, there is a distinct possibility that oil prices will go through the roof. In the last week or 10 days, there has been a 4¢ per litre increase in petrol prices at the bowser. A freeze on petrol prices was imposed by the federal Treasurer a few days ago. That will be in place for only about 3 weeks. Once that is lifted, and if the conflict in the Middle East is not resolved in the short term, we will see the cost of fuel increase dramatically.

On top of the additional charges proposed to be imposed by this report, we will see inflation in this country go through the roof. That particularly affects the top end of the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory in general. We do not have any alternative means of transport. In the Top End, we depend entirely on road transport. As the minister indicated, based on the recommendation of the ISC report, that will mean an increase of up to $2000 per annum in costs to the average taxpayer in the top end of the Northern Territory. Fortunately, the people at the bottom end have rail. We should have a railway too. In 1983, Mr Hawke said that, if elected, his government would continue to construct the railway which was already under way, courtesy of the Fraser government. That was one of the first promises that he broke. We are at the mercy of the road transport system. We now see this impost being added on top of everything else.

I indicated earlier in my comments that the responsibility for the present situation can be sheeted home to the federal government and its policies. When it came to power, the fuel excise imposed by the federal government was around 5¢ or 6¢ a litre. Today, it is something like 26¢ a litre. However, that same Hawke government has cut road funding by almost 30% in real terms. I feel sorry for the Greiner government in New South Wales. There have been some horrendous road accidents in New South Wales in the last year or so because the standard of the roads in New South Wales, and indeed in most other states of Australia, has hardly improved in the last decade. The original concept of the fuel excise was that that
money was to go towards road funding. Despite the fact that there has been a fourfold increase in the excise, we have seen a 30% reduction in real terms in road funding.

If the level of road funding had been maintained at the 1983 level, the Pacific Highway would now be a magnificent road. The Victoria Highway and other roads would have been upgraded. That money, which was originally designed to be directed into road funding, has been redirected into alternative lifestyle funding. We heard a bit about that today. It has gone into the welfare industry that has been created by the current Hawke government. It is absolutely disgraceful.

The revenue that the Hawke government has raised through this excise has increased by 482% in its terms of government. The estimated revenue from that fuel excise in 1989-90 is $5645m. In 1989-90, it spent $1333m on roadworks. That is a shortfall of well in excess of $4000m. That is why we have a problem and that is why this ISC report will now impose all these horrendous charges in the hope that it will be a quick fix.

A month or 2 ago, I can recall an MP from the federal Labor government suggesting that we impose an additional excise charge of 3¢ or 4¢ per litre at the bowser. I forget the exact amount. The additional charge would be used to upgrade roads. One of the backbenchers came up with this proposal.

Mr Finch: 1¢. He was told by the Prime Minister: 'Don't be silly. There will be no increase'.

Mr SETTER: 1¢ a litre was it?

In fact, the federal government is already ripping off 25¢ a litre. That goes almost unnoticed. It is like the indexed excise and taxes on alcohol and cigarettes. It is taxation by stealth. There is no doubt that the federal government has become a past master in that area. In fact, I will quote Frank Alcorta for the second time today. On 17 July this year, he wrote an article entitled, 'Grasping Taxman Robs Job Incentive - Regime Discourages Work'. It describes how the Hawke government has been taxing this country to such an extent that we are now on our knees.

Whilst there has been decreased expenditure in real terms on our roads and whilst road improvements have not kept pace with the conditions that prevail today, since 1983 there has been a horrendous increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. There has also been a change in the vehicles. A few years ago, I used to drive a Ford Prefect utility. I drove it from Mt Isa to Darwin in 1964. She would do 45 mph downhill, flat out. Today, it is nothing to see somebody in a modern car doing 160 km/h on the highway.

We have also seen a horrendous increase in the use of road transport. A couple of decades ago, there was hardly a road train on the roads in the states. Today, there are thousands. I would hate to drive at night on the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne. You would be taking your life in your hands to attempt to do that. There has been an enormous swing of commercial freight away from railways to road transport at a time when the number of domestic vehicles has dramatically increased and the standard of our roads has remained almost static for the last decade. That is why we have a problem.

Why has there been such a move away from the railways, a move that the ISC report is now trying to reverse? It is doing it the hard way by imposing all these increased charges in the hope that people will move back
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to rail. The reason why people moved away from rail was because the charges were far too high and the service was inefficient. The damage sustained by freight as a result of lack of care and poor handling was horrendous.

I will give you one example, Mr Speaker, and you can see it today. If you went to the Roma Street goods yard in Brisbane at 9 am or 10 am, you would see at least 100 trucks lined up waiting to load. Imagine the cost involved in that exercise, as all the drivers sat reading books or chatting. When one truck was loaded, the next moved down the line. The cost would have been astronomical. Where the loading occurred, there were no forklifts or cranes. It was done by a gang of railway workers with old-fashioned trolleys. In many cases, they still use the same means of handling that they used 20 years ago.

Until the railways modernise their equipment and eliminate featherbedding in work practices, there is no way they will be competitive. A couple of years ago, I heard that New South Wales railways was being subsidised by its state government to the extent of some $400m per annum. It is probably closer to $600m now. That is why people moved away from rail to road. It is sad that the federal government has neglected the transport system in this country in such a way. It has come up with this quick-fix package which will not fix anything. What we need to do is to redirect that 26¢ per litre back into road construction and the upgrading of roads and bridges.

Recently, the Commonwealth tried to force us to accept its road safety package. Of course, it dangled a carrot as an incentive, saying that it would make available up to $110m over the next 3 financial years to eliminate road black spots which exist as a result of all the conditions that I described a moment ago. How much would the Territory receive if we participated in this road safety package? We would get $5.4m over 3 years. The package also contained a bit of blackmail, the inference being that we would receive a few dollars if we accepted the road safety package. The amount, however, was really peanuts. Even $110m spent nationally, is peanuts really. I recollect that the construction of 1 km of road in the Northern Territory costs well in excess of $1m. What we are obtain over that period for that amount of money is an absolute joke.

The Commonwealth was trying to impose all sorts of things on us. It wanted to impose a national 0.05% alcohol limit for drivers. It wanted to introduce national licensing of heavy truck and bus drivers, and I believe that the ISC report also recommends that. I might say that, even though trucks registered in the Northern Territory will not have to face this horrendous increase in annual registration if we are not part of the overall package, an increase which will range from $3000 or $4000 to $40 000 or $50 000, the reality is that the majority of our freight is carried by vehicles which are registered interstate. The cost of all the additional charges borne by those interstate-registered vehicles will be passed on to the consumer, the average Joe Bloggs on the street.

The Commonwealth also wanted to impose speed limiters on heavy vehicles. I think that has already been done in New South Wales, with a limit of 80 km/h on New South Wales roads. I noticed that a recent move was made to have that increased to 90 km/h or 100 km/h. Other measures included a zero alcohol limit for young drivers, increased enforcement to ensure that 1 in 4 drivers are random breath tested for alcohol in a year, the introduction of compulsory wearing of helmets by cyclists, the introduction of daylight running lights for motorcyclists, and the enforcement of the use of seat belts and child restraints. Whilst I have no problems with a number
of those provisions, and I know that the same applies to the minister, some of them are unacceptable to the people of the Northern Territory.

Whilst I appreciate the fact that the federal government is finally trying to do something about the problems that we have on our roads, it is doing so in a heavy-handed manner which attacks the problems from the wrong direction. What we need to do is to redirect the resources presently being contributed by the taxpayer, the road user. Those resources need to be redirected from welfare packages, the funding of murals and Trades and Labor Council buildings, into upgrading our roads. That is apparent to anybody, but the federal government does not want to do that.

I share the minister's concern and I was pleased to see that members of the opposition endorsed quite a few of his remarks and shared the concerns of members of the government. I also noted that one of the members opposite gave an undertaking to lobby, in an effort to ensure that these horrendous and unacceptable charges are not imposed on the people of the Northern Territory.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks on the honourable minister's statement in relation to the ISC Report into Road User Charges will be brief. In commenting on the report, I would like to support the remarks of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries.

The minister spoke about the increased charges to the pastoral industry. He concentrated on the likely results if the report's recommendations in respect of higher fuel charges and registration charges for heavy vehicles are implemented. The charges, levies and tariffs on primary production in the Northern Territory are extremely high as it is. Anybody who cares to inspect the situation closely will recognise that the Australian farmer is one of the most careful and productive primary producers in the world. Primary producers in the Northern Territory are among the hardest-working people in the Northern Territory. Despite high production and transport costs, they compete advantageously with southern growers on both the southern and export markets.

Transport costs are the major costs borne by primary producers and I can speak from experience in that respect. Only yesterday, I commented on the price per kilogram for which I sell my goats. I was told that I was getting a pretty good price. The person who said this came from down south and was surprised to learn that I have to pay $18 a bag for lucerne chaff, which sells for $3 to $5 in South Australia. Even if I buy locally produced cracked maize from Katherine, I have to pay about $330 per tonne. I have to pay about $400 per tonne for my goat pellets. These products are produced locally but they still contain a freight component, which represents the cost of bringing farm machinery up from down south, and importing fuel and parts from down south. There is also a greater cost component in relation to wages and salaries in any agricultural production.

If there is a further increase in the costs of primary industry, as intimated by this report, I can see many primary producers simply going to the wall. I can see many enterprises going out of production, which will be to the detriment of the job situation and the development of the Northern Territory. I believe that the small operator will feel the brunt of these increased charges more than the large operator.

The increased registration charges on heavy transport operators are so ridiculous that they would be a big joke if they were not so serious. When the honourable minister went south to discuss the situation with his federal
counterparts, he took 3 very well-known freight operators with him to put the case for the Northern Territory. I do not know whether those 3 people were listened to or not, but they certainly have a world of experience behind them. They are very successful businessmen but they also have very strong grassroots knowledge.

If the cost of fuel and registration and other charges rises, every cost of production for agriculture, horticulture and the pastoral industry will rise, from the cost of tractor parts to the twine used for bailing hay and the star pickets for fencing. The price of every item will rise and, if the producer is to remain viable, those charges will have to be passed on. The resulting increase in the price of produce will not allow farmers to compete in export markets or southern markets and Territory consumers will therefore bear the brunt. In other words, a very large proportion of the community will bear the increased charges. Whilst the report states that increased fuel and registration charges would be countered by a reduction in the sales tax on certain items, my answer to that is that pigs might fly but the reductions will not come.

Many aspects of the report are very confused. Mention is made of a phasing-in period of 2 years before the recommendations are fully implemented. I believe that will add further to the confusion of the situation.

I might refer in passing to the fuel levy which was applied to fund the Bicentennial Road Program. To my knowledge, that levy is still in place. I wonder whether the minister could confirm that.

Mr Finch: It is still on.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is what I thought. It seems that the federal government levied this charge to fund a road building program for the Bicentenary and has never removed it. I cannot see it doing so now. Meanwhile, our roads are not getting any better. We all know that our roads are becoming more congested with increased heavy transport traffic. I was made very aware of that recently when I drove down to attend the Katherine Show. I passed and was passed by a large number of road transports carrying all manner of goods used in housing construction, farming, mining and so on. Other honourable members would be more conversant with the effects of increased transport and fuel costs on the mining industry in the Northern Territory. No doubt, it would suffer as much as agriculture and other forms of primary production.

The federal government has fallen into the old trap of using the stick rather than the carrot. I believe that the carrot in this case is the objective of making rail transport more attractive. However, the federal government is using the big stick, in the form of added costs, to penalise the people who use the roads. In encouraging the use of the rail system, a rehabilitative approach would be better than a punitive approach. Governments tend to have a particular blind spot in this respect, always tending to impose punitive measures.

In the Territory, we do not have a railway, although we would very much like one from Alice Springs to Darwin. Of course, that is very relevant to the subject of this debate. I think that perhaps the government may have something up its sleeve as far as the railway is concerned and may intend to give us a plethora of information on the matter just before the election. Whilst I know that the cost of the railway is becoming more and more prohibitive, somebody has to bite the bullet and construct the darned
thing. Only when that railway is built, and runs from Adelaide to Darwin through Alice Springs and all the places in between, will we see an increased rate of development in the Territory both along the line and radiating out from it, as well as a great reduction in our freight costs. The transport operators may well believe that they have a vested interest in opposing the construction of the railway. That situation could change if those operators had an interest in the railway and did not stand to lose business if people were to take advantage of lower rail costs.

In conclusion, I support the remarks of the honourable minister in his statement on the ISC report. I hope that, in his continuing fight for a fair deal for people in the Northern Territory, he will pay particular attention to the interests of those engaged in primary production.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I include the speakers from the opposition benches, although they were a little distressed by my approach. I do not apologise for that. I think that the results speak for themselves. I am disappointed that, despite the Leader of the Opposition's statement some 3 months ago that he would examine the report and its implications for Territorians, and would subsequently make appropriate comments, we have not heard today from either himself or his spokesman on transport. That is disturbing. This is a major matter and is not to be treated lightly.

The member for Stuart did not seem to want to acknowledge the cost implications of the report. Concerns about those costs are held not only by this government, but by the Western Australian government. Unfortunately, the Queensland government has not acknowledged the problem. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, he needs to come back to the real world and to realise that there will be many occasions on which he will disagree with members of the Labor Party, whether they be in Queensland, Western Australia or, pertinentiy, in Canberra. It may be of interest to him to know that the most vociferous speakers at ATAC are often members of the same party. That has always been the case, Mr Speaker, as you would well know. Even when the Liberals were in power, some of the most heated debates were between state governments of the same political persuasion, and that is as it should be.

In fact, at the very first ATAC meeting which he attended, the South Australian Minister for Transport, Frank Blevins, vigorously attacked the federal government in relation to the 10-point road safety package - and so he should have, because he was there to speak on behalf of South Australians. He is not being paid to echo the voice of the federal government. I find it extremely frustrating, although of course the scenario he paints will never actually occur, that the Leader of the Opposition attempts to convince the Territory electorate that, as Chief Minister, he would have some sort of easy cooperative run with his Labor colleagues interstate and in Canberra. What an absolute nonsense! Queensland cannot agree with Western Australia on this issue. They could not agree on the 10-point package. Different electorates have different requirements and different needs.

The reality is that a Coalition government will be in power in Canberra within 2 years. In Victoria, it is a fait accompi and the sooner the Victorians go to the polls the better, not just in a political sense but in an economic sense. As for Western Australia, it is also heading down that trail. Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is living in Disneyland in terms of the potential courses of action available to him.
I was interested in what the member for Stuart had to say about my not consulting with our federal members. Of course, I have consulted with our federal members. I did so in the presence of the federal minister at the opening of a section of road on the Victoria Highway. I had what I thought at the time was a constructive discussion with the federal minister and our federal member, and I suggested that we compare notes in respect of this matter.

Mr Smith: What, on the side of the road?

Mr FINCH: The Leader of the Opposition can laugh as much as he likes, but it was a constructive meeting. The federal minister then said to me: 'Of course, Warren Snowdon will be the very man who coordinates all the replies and suggestions which come from throughout Australia. Warren will take particular care to look after the needs of the Northern Territory'. Among them, of course, was our original submission and the written submission which, for the benefit of the member for Stuart, was handed to the committee chairman during his review. If the member for Stuart had comprehensively read the supplementary report from Mr Butcher, he would realise that Mr Butcher sought comments from the Territory government, from myself and from 3 officers from my department. At our meeting with Mr Butcher, he was given a report some 6 pages long. I will table that report for the benefit of the member for Stuart so that he is no longer under any misapprehension that we did not provide a written response to the original report.

Naturally enough, at those meetings and at subsequent meetings, one of them in South Australia, we reinforced our views in an extremely pointed way, views which are shared by Western Australia and by every transport organisation and every primary industry organisation in Australia. It is all very well for the member for Stuart to use figures that are inappropriate to the Northern Territory, when he tries to assure Territorians that costs will change only by a factor of between plus or minus 3%, or whatever figures he used, but those are nonsensical figures. They are figures which relate to the submission of the New South Wales Traffic Authority. They have nothing to do with the kilometres that we travel in the Northern Territory or with the types of trucks that we have in the Northern Territory. We do not have B doubles here. We do not have in common use the vehicles which are represented by the figures to which the member for Stuart referred.

The reality is that, whichever way one looks at the figures, they spell disaster for all of those people who use road trains similar to those used here. People in other places, primarily parts of Queensland and Western Australia, will suffer that dramatic increase of some 3000% at the very least. Certainly, the figures are complicated, and I will allow that the member for Stuart may have been confused by them. However, if he wishes, if his leader wishes, or if Warren Snowdon or Senator Collins wish, I am more than happy to make a comprehensive briefing available to them, by experts from the Department of Transport and Works. That offer is extended to any member of the Assembly because this is a critical matter. Whether fuel is included or excluded, the figures are catastrophic. At the very least, the net figure for a triple trailer road train in the Territory will be $32 000 per annum.

Some of the other comments made by the member for Stuart were extremely interesting. He placed on the public record an assertion that the federal minister gave me assurances, at our meeting in Adelaide, that the Northern Territory would not suffer at all. That was not true and I will put that on
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the public record. Unfortunately, it is not true. The minister is not in a position to give such assurances. How could he treat the Northern Territory differently from other remote areas in Australia and expect to get away with it? It is just not possible. Certainly, he gave me an assurance that he would give us a sympathetic hearing. However, the sympathetic hearing has been and gone. I have the supplementary advice from the ex-chairman, Mr Butcher, and the supplementary advice still stinks.

In respect of the timing and the implementation of the program, the member for Stuart argued that it will not all happen tomorrow and, in fact, it will take years for it to be put in place. The fact is that, if it is implemented, it will be trouble from the start. Even the phasing-in will be trouble. How do people invest in new equipment under the shadow of the catastrophic increases which are foreshadowed when the recommendations are implemented in a few years time? As for the member for Stuart's suggestion that approval in principle does not need to occur until December, I remind him that the ATAC meeting to be held in Perth on 7 September was called originally purely to deal with the ISC report. Although the purpose of that meeting has now been expanded, that was its sole purpose originally, and it remains the fundamental basis of the meeting. Minister Brown said to me in Adelaide recently that what he wants to achieve at that meeting is agreement in principle.

We have only a few weeks to get this matter straight and, unless we get the forces of this nation behind us in this regard, we will be rolled by the federal government. If anyone does not think that that will occur, let me take them back to the day when federal Minister Brown tabled the original report in parliament. In fact, technically speaking, that is the only report before parliament to date in relation to this matter. The other report has not yet been aired in parliament. On the day of tabling it, the minister walked out to the parliamentary steps and said, almost word for word: 'If the states do not go along with this report, we will not hesitate to use federal powers to implement it'.

That is the atmosphere in which we have operated since day 1 of the tabling of this report, a report which was in the hands of the minister 2 weeks before a federal election, but was sat upon. Obviously, it was sat on because of all the horrible information it contains. Look at the date of the original report, look at the date of the federal election and tell me that this is not skulduggery. The members opposite have the hide to denigrate the efforts of honest Territorians who have a long history in the transport industry and who went to Canberra, on their behalf and on their constituents' behalf, to put a case. They gave up their own time to do that, substantially at their own expense. Certainly, the air fares were picked up by the Northern Territory government, and so they should have been.

I will ask the Leader of the Opposition, who has not given a peep in relation to this matter for 3 months, whether he has spent 41¢ on a stamp to send his views to the federal government. The response is ear-shattering. We have yet to hear what his views are. His deputy, the member for Stuart, said that he thought that the costs of freight providers should not go up by a single cent, and that road trains should be exempted. He has not said anything about the 6¢ diesel levy on coaches, school buses and light trucks that was not to be imposed before. It might be for an interim period only while the full implications of the mass-distance charges come into effect over 4 years, but what about his constituents in that regard? What about the impost on ordinary Territory motorists of 9.4¢ per litre for petrol, not to mention the nominal administrative charge? Different views are being expressed on this, but we understand that that charge will be more than the
current registration fee on small motor cars in the Northern Territory. We have not yet talked about the hundreds of dollars involved in that fuel tax alone.

This whole subject requires a great deal of airing in public. There are many aspects of it that have not yet been discussed. We have not talked about the radical changes which are required to the total transport infrastructure in this country, including the integration of services. The member for Stuart suggested that I am not up with what is happening and am not familiar with new reports on the waterfront to land transport interface. Of course I am. What is required is for the waterfront review to be implemented, for shipping efficiencies to be implemented, for land transport corridors to be set aside, for a national rail bridge to be adopted and for private entrepreneurs to be brought into rail freight. All of these things need to be done. There needs to be an expansion of the network to include Darwin so that we can get that land bridge down from South-east Asia. All of those things need to be done.

The member for Stuart says that there are no demonstrated inefficiencies in rail. What nonsense, Mr Speaker! New South Wales railways has put off 9000 employees in the last 6 months, and it still has 5000 to go ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr FINCH: There was an instance of a country railway station which had 6 train drivers permanently on duty. I was told about that by the federal opposition spokesman on land transport. There were 3 vehicle drivers whose job it was to drive the 6 train drivers to and from the railway station. The only difficulty was that, for many years, those drivers had never had to work on trains because the trains no longer interchanged at that station. There were 5 or 6 ticket sellers in the office, selling tickets to 5 passengers a day. Then, there were half a dozen extraneous workers. I forget the name of their classification but they really did not have a job. Nevertheless, they were still there. All of those people were there to serve some $30 000-worth of business a year. That is incredible. It is no wonder that the country is going badly, particularly in transport matters. There are billions of dollars to be saved in this country and, what is more, there is much to be gained from business that can use a reliable, integrated freight system that is efficient and can gain us a decent reputation overseas instead of making us a laughing-stock.

The member for Stuart had the hide to suggest that the inefficiency of the rail system is not proven. Something like 15 000 man days a year are lost in the Victorian rail system as a result of sickies. In New South Wales, about 1500 workers would be absent from work at the same time for one reason or another. Those are incredible figures and figures that the member for Stuart and Deputy Leader of the Opposition surely ought to know about.

Some of the things that need to be done but have not yet been addressed involve sales tax on freight. The great 1983 Labor policy platform said that Labor would address the subject of sales tax on freight. That has still not been done, despite this 3-year review. For the information of members opposite who have bush electorates, the question of running trucks on gravel roads has not been considered in either this report or the review. It has said that people who drive on private roads can go through the administrative nightmare of applying for a rebate. What nonsense!
Mr Speaker, let me talk briefly about some of the scenarios that are likely to eventuate. Not only will people go to the wall, but road trains will become a thing of the past. They have proved that they are efficient carriers of freight in this part of the country, but we will see each road train being replaced by 3 smaller trucks with single trailers. Capital investment will be reduced because a lower-powered unit will be needed to pull them. We will have 3 times the amount of traffic on the road resulting in 3 times the amount of danger. The carriage of freight will cost much more because a driver will be needed for every trailer instead of 1 for every 3 trailers. There will be more pollution. All of that is quite predictable. That is what this will bring. We have heard nothing from the Leader of the Opposition to date, and we still await his views.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Equal Opportunity Legislation Discussion Paper

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a statement concerning an equal opportunity legislation discussion paper. The Territory government has always been a strong proponent of equal opportunity programs for Territorians. We believe that, while our society is made up of a whole range of different people, every one of them is entitled to the same opportunities. Every Territorian has the right to be treated with fairness, equity and dignity, whatever their colour, sex, status, background or beliefs.

The Northern Territory government regards equal opportunity as an integral part of its policy of recognition of the individual worth of each member of the community. It is committed to the principle that each person has the right to be treated with dignity and to make decisions unrestricted by assumptions based on prejudice. The government supports the right of any person to be judged according to his or her skills, abilities and experiences. It rejects the notion that the colour of a person's skin, the place where he or she was born, or his or her religious beliefs or lack of them, are relevant to that person's capacity to perform a job, to repay a loan or to use a service.

While these are notions which I believe are held by the vast majority of Territorians, simply believing in them is not good enough. This government believes it must do more than merely encourage non-discriminatory practices. We must actively promote equal opportunity practices. With this in mind, it is my pleasure today to table a community discussion paper on proposed equal opportunity legislation for the Northern Territory. This discussion paper will serve 2 purposes: firstly, it will stimulate community debate on equal opportunity and raise public awareness of the issues involved and, secondly, it invites community input into the drafting of equal opportunity legislation for the Northern Territory.

This discussion paper will be circulated widely throughout the community in the coming weeks. This will be followed by a series of public meetings to ensure the widest possible consultation. As the discussion paper says, discrimination costs the community dearly. While many people consider only the situation of the person being discriminated against, we should also be mindful of the great costs society suffers through the under-utilisation of people. We simply cannot afford not to fully utilise the skills and abilities which are available throughout the community. By putting difficulties in the way of people reaching their full potential
simply because they differ in some way from what may be considered as the norm, we are wasting our most precious resource - our people. Equal opportunity is important therefore, not only for those who suffer from discrimination but for the community as a whole.

This discussion paper talks about proposals for legislation, but the government does not believe that legislation should stand alone. It is just one part of a broad program which has been introduced to overcome discrimination. Some of the actions already taken by the government include the establishment of the Women's Advisory Council, the Office of Women's Affairs, the Disabled Persons Bureau, the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the Aboriginal Development Branch and the Office of Equal Opportunity.

In establishing the Office of Equal Opportunity, the government resolved initially to monitor relevant legislation and to raise community awareness of issues associated with discrimination. Functions of the office include advice to members of the community on related issues, handling of complaints, identifying areas in employment and in the delivery of services where equal opportunity is being denied, promoting awareness of issues in the community, and advising the government on matters of equal opportunity.

Already, legislative and administrative provisions are in place to protect workers in the public service, and the government has also introduced equal opportunity management planning into the public sector to ensure that active strategies are developed to promote equal opportunity. These equal opportunity management plans will be greatly enhanced by the equal opportunity survey which was carried out across the public service early last year. The survey results have been completed recently and publicly released. This was the most comprehensive survey of its type conducted by any state or territory government, and I believe that that shows our commitment to equal opportunity in the Territory.

I would like to table a summary of the survey results for the information of honourable members, because the results are encouraging, regardless of what the Leader of the Opposition has reportedly said to the media. Mr Deputy Speaker, I table that summary.

A few weeks ago, I saw the Leader of the Opposition on television. He was saying that the survey results show that 1 in 5 public servants fear cronyism. Either he failed to read the survey properly or he was quoting from a different survey altogether because our results do not indicate that at all. In our survey, 2 sections related to politicisation, patronage or favouritism. The first listed a series of factors which respondents may perceive had affected their employment in the public service. In this section, only 2% of respondents commented on what they perceived to be politicisation of the service, and 11% of employees commented on what they perceived to be patronage or favouritism. In the second section of the survey dealing with this issue, the 8500 respondents were asked to comment on areas of concern to them. Only 269 people, or 3%, commented on what they believed was patronage, favouritism or politicisation of the public service. Even this very low figure, which represents less than 2% of NT government employees, should be put in context.

The responses included comments, but I need to point out at this stage that the comments I am about to read out were not taken from the forms which came back. These are comments that were concocted within my office, but I am advised that they would be representative of the types of comments made on the survey forms which, of course, have been destroyed. The data was not available for public scrutiny or even for my scrutiny and the forms were
destroyed. My office concocted these comments in order to give an idea of the sorts of remarks made and we agreed that, in that form, survey responses could be referred to. They included such comments as: 'I did not get a promotion because I do not drink with the boss on Friday nights' and 'The woman who got the promotion is more popular than me, so they picked her instead'. Whilst those specific comments were not taken from the forms, they indicate the nature of comments made. Of course, such comments are very clearly based on a perception rather than the rule.

I am sure that you will agree, Mr Deputy Speaker, that these are hardly examples of widespread cronyism in the public service, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe. The Leader of the Opposition has his own axe to grind, and that is understandable. He has spent the last 18 months trying to build up a perception of widespread discontent in the public service in an effort to justify his rather second-hand election strategy. He must have spent months sweating it out hoping that our equal opportunity survey would lend some credibility to his campaign. However, he got it wrong. The figures show that 94% of respondents did not feel that they were discriminated against because of their sex. 96% of people surveyed did not feel that race, colour, ethnic origin or accent was a disadvantage. 98% were unconcerned about sexual harassment and 98% felt that political conviction was no impediment to employment or promotion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while you will agree that these results are extremely encouraging, I do not believe that there is any room for complacency. While even 1% of people believe that they suffer from discrimination, we still have work to do. Since this survey was carried out, the Public Service Commissioner has issued new guidelines for selection procedures to ensure that interview panels do not discriminate against any employee in any way. The guidelines point out that, without realising that they are doing so, interviewers can sometimes give the impression of engaging in discriminatory practices. The guidelines outline ways in which interviewers can positively promote equal opportunity to end any possibility of discrimination.

I do not believe that our equal opportunity survey is anything to be ashamed of. I am proud that this government has had the courage to face up to the problems of discrimination and to address them positively. Through the mechanisms outlined above, the government has laid the foundations for combating discrimination. However, as has been witnessed in other states and other countries, goodwill is often not enough. It may well be that legislation which provides avenues for redress will be the vehicle to ensure that the rights of all Territorians will be protected.


Mr Deputy Speaker, given the apparently extensive coverage of the Commonwealth legislation which already applies to Territorians, you may ask why it is considered necessary to introduce our own legislation. The answer is that, for all its legislative provisions, there are several grounds, and sectors of the community, which are not protected against discrimination.
These include age, mental and physical impairment, sexuality, political belief and religious conviction and cover a range of areas including education, accommodation, provision of goods and services, and clubs and associations. The area of employment is already fairly comprehensively covered by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act and regulations. However, the existence of Commonwealth legislation is no bar to the Northern Territory initiative. For example, where there is Commonwealth legislation in existence covering grounds such as sex or race, Northern Territory legislation could reflect and, in some cases, extend Commonwealth legislation.

Administrative arrangements between the Commonwealth and the various states which have already enacted equal opportunity legislation allow for the particular state government not only to administer its own legislation but also to act as an agent for the Commonwealth. It is proposed that the Northern Territory government would enter into negotiations to facilitate a similar arrangement in the Northern Territory, thereby avoiding any possible duplication and providing easier access for members of the community.

The provision of Territory legislation which covers all grounds and situations will simplify the complaint procedure for all matters associated with discrimination in the community and ensure that local issues are solved by Territorians. Territorians have nothing to fear from the introduction of equal opportunity legislation although honourable members opposite may have a few problems with their policy to give preference to unionists in local government employment. They give us a great deal of rhetoric about their commitment to equal opportunity, yet their own party platform specifically states that they will discriminate against people who will not join unions.

Responsible equal opportunity legislation should not infringe on the private lives and thoughts of individuals. Its aims are to see equality of opportunity and human rights for the citizens of the Northern Territory, to provide effective remedies against unlawful discrimination on the various legislated grounds, to encourage the application of equal opportunity and human rights principles and practices in education, employment, the provision of goods and services, accommodation, partnerships, in clubs and associations and in sport, to develop in the community an understanding and appreciation of the contribution equal opportunity laws and practices could make to the economic and social welfare of the Northern Territory, and to ensure that victimisation of complainants is not permitted. It is proposed that the legislation will contain a strong emphasis on educating the community on the merits of equal opportunity and its practical application. It is also proposed that a conciliatory approach between the complainant and the discriminator be the basis of the legislation with provision to proceed to a tribunal if conciliation proves unsuccessful.

Appropriate structures would need to be established to facilitate community education programs, to promote equal opportunity issues, to advise consumers and service providers on equal opportunity concerns and to receive and investigate complaints. Such mechanisms could be provided by the establishment of an Equal Opportunity Commission in line with the practice in the states, but the Northern Territory government is not necessarily wedded to this concept.

A critical element in developing equal opportunity legislation for the Northern Territory is to include the views of the community which it will affect. I cannot stress strongly enough how important this consultation is. I understand that members opposite have produced some form of equal opportunity legislation which they plan to introduce next week. I doubt
that they have taken the time to find out what the community wants from equal opportunity legislation. Simply plagiarising other legislation is not good enough. Legislation for the Northern Territory must reflect the factors particularly affecting Territorians. Unless there is wide-ranging consultation, we will end up with a lame-duck act which will do nothing to end discrimination in the community. Our consultation process will include interest groups and the wider community prior to drafting of legislation.

The discussion paper explains why the Northern Territory government considers legislation necessary and provides background information similar to that which I have already provided to honourable members. The main body of the paper then discusses the grounds where discrimination could be prohibited in Territory legislation. It highlights areas where current situations could be seen to be discriminatory, but it also explains where exemptions may be necessary, particularly as a result of statutory requirements.

Discrimination on the ground of age is an example of an area in which exemptions may have to be considered. For example, would it become discriminatory to limit ages for driving licences, to divide sports into age groups or to restrict aged hostels to aged people? The discussion paper does not seek to answer these problems, but to stimulate debate on them. It does not present a Northern Territory government position on the grounds or format of the legislation. It provides information and seeks community input.

The Office of Equal Opportunity will also call for submissions through the local media and will hold public meetings in all major centres to encourage additional input. This whole process is aimed at educating the community about the issues and facilitating a consultative process which will result in legislation which is relevant and appropriate to Northern Territory society. I commend the discussion paper to honourable members and invite and encourage maximum participation in the development of this important piece of legislation.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker I rise with some pleasure to participate in this debate. It is an important debate and I will attempt to keep clear of point-scoring. I simply make the point that it is an issue that we on this side of the House have been pursuing for some considerable time. We have moved a number of motions on this matter and we have been ignored and defeated on the floor of the House by the government. I welcome its change of heart. The introduction of a discussion paper is a positive move. In part, we have gone 1 step further. We have prepared draft legislation which covers some, although not all, of the areas outlined in the discussion paper. We are of the view that there are some areas which require much more discussion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a draft bill relating to equal opportunity.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, having congratulated the government on its positive initiative, I now wish to speak to the draft legislation which is our response at this time to this vital question. This draft legislation is the first equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation to come before this parliament. The draft legislation provides the core for equal
opportunity. However, a number of other grounds may be included at a later time. Discussions will continue to be held with particular groups with a view to including other grounds once the feeling of the community becomes clearer. The bill itself is presented in draft form to allow adequate time for discussion in the community.

Some of my remarks will be repetitive because there is a surprising amount of commonality between what the government has put forward and what we have suggested. Several Commonwealth acts, notably the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986, apply to citizens of the Northern Territory. However, the Commonwealth has acknowledged that other governments may want to regulate against discrimination and has drafted its legislation to enable the passage of other non-conflicting laws. Most states have proclaimed their own equal opportunity or anti-discrimination legislation - legislation which is complementary to and extends or consolidates federal legislation. Tasmania and Queensland are planning to introduce such legislation.

In each of the states which has its own legislation, there have been negotiations with the Commonwealth which has resulted in the states acting as agents for the Commonwealth legislation. Consequently, administration is undertaken by one body, bringing the benefits of both coordination and cost-sharing. While Commonwealth legislation provides for some disadvantaged individuals and groups, it does leave particular gaps either in the groups covered or in the remedies it makes available to victims of discriminatory practices.

To the extent that the Commonwealth legislation in this field covers citizens of the Territory, it is administered locally by the regional office of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. People in the Northern Territory have a right to equal opportunity and anti-discrimination measures which affect everyone equally and provide equity and predictability in terms of outcomes and available remedies. The Northern Territory government acknowledges in its own publications that past practices have resulted in certain individuals or groups having been disadvantaged to the point where the creation of barriers has become commonplace. The Northern Territory government even has an Office of Equal Opportunity. It also seeks to promote equal opportunity through the Disabled Persons Bureau, the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the Office of Women's Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Branch.

However, the Northern Territory government has not yet sought to underpin all of this activity with laws which spell out clearly people's rights and the remedies available to them when those rights are infringed. Equal opportunity legislation is, after all, about basic human rights. It is about giving everyone a fair go. Equal opportunity is not about people's private lives and their privacy. It is about the fact that everyone has a right to a fair go and to participate equally in what society has to offer regardless of identifiable or assumed characteristics on which prejudice may be based.

Natural justice in providing equality of opportunity in the workplace means that people can be assured of selection on merit, not on the basis of irrelevant characteristics which have nothing to do with their capacity to perform a job. Quite apart from equal opportunity in the workplace, anti-discrimination legislation, linked with appropriate education programs and other appropriate measures, has a real capacity to bring about the social change required for a more just community in the Northern Territory.
It is detrimental to us all if some are disadvantaged and discriminated against.

The causes of discrimination and conditions conducive to its creation are many and they underline the need for broadly-based legislation. We are committed to the implementation of such comprehensive legislation while recognising that priority must be placed where broad agreement is reached on key elements of new laws. The draft bill before this Assembly will provide to the people of the Northern Territory comprehensive legislation on those elements where, in our judgment, broad agreement is currently available and which define the limits of acceptable behaviour.

The bill has been drafted following a broad-based review of legislation in operations at the Commonwealth level and in the states. This review has enabled us to draw on and take advantage of years of trial and error as well as successful experience in other places. The bill declares certain kinds of behaviour unlawful and makes available effective remedies to people who wish to enforce their rights. Such rights may be sought by conciliation processes or, when these fail or are not appropriate to the particular circumstances, by a decision of a tribunal.

The bill provides that it is unlawful to discriminate against another person on the basis of sex, sexuality, marital status, pregnancy, race, impairment or age. All of these grounds featured in the results of the survey among public service employees. Broadly speaking, common remedies are provided in this bill for people experiencing discrimination on these grounds. We believe that this draft legislation reflects the maturity of the attitudes and the values of the Northern Territory community about various discriminatory behaviour towards particularly affected individuals and groups.

As well as outlining the grounds of discrimination, the bill defines clearly those areas to which the laws will apply. The bill covers discrimination in employment, discrimination by associations or qualifying bodies, discrimination in education, discrimination in relation to land, goods, services and accommodation, and discrimination in relation to superannuation. The bill also makes an additional provision for discrimination on the grounds of race if authorities or bodies that confer authorisations of qualifications to practise a profession, trade or occupation fail to inform themselves properly on overseas authorisations or qualifications of applicants for positions.

Victimisation is also a behaviour made unlawful in the bill. 'Victimisation' is defined as unfavourable treatment of a person because of their bringing proceedings under the act, giving information or evidence in any proceedings under the act, because of their making allegations about behaviour which contravenes the act, or because of their asserting the right of a person to complain or proceed under the act. Unfavourable treatment in this definition does not include the making of a false allegation or not acting in good faith.

We believe that sexual harassment is commonplace and that people should be free to enjoy their lives without being subjected to this behaviour. The bill addresses sexual harassment in a provision which defines this as a behaviour which causes a person to feel offended, humiliated or intimidated as a result of an unsolicited and intentional act of physical intimacy, a demand or request, directly or by implication, for sexual favours, or the making, on more than one occasion, of a remark with sexual connotations relating to the person when it is reasonable in all the circumstances that
the person should feel offended, humiliated or intimidated by the behaviour.

The bill therefore provides that it is unlawful for an employer to subject an employee to sexual harassment, for an employee to subject another employee to sexual harassment, for an employee of an education institution to subject a student to sexual harassment, for a principal to subject a commission agent or contract worker to such harassment, or for any person to subject another to such harassment in the course of offering or supplying goods, certain services or accommodation. In addition, the bill will make it unlawful to impose a condition or requirement that would result in a blind or deaf person being separated from her or his guide dog.

Some discriminations are not unlawful under this bill. For example, lawful discrimination is allowed on the basis of actuarial or statistical data in the provision of insurance or superannuation. It is, however, unlawful under provisions of this bill to fail to notify the persons to be discriminated against, to fail to notify them of their right to a summary of the data on which the discrimination is to be based, and to fail to comply with a request for that data. The bill would not make it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of age where, in the case of children, particular responsibilities of adults to protect them are spelt out in other laws.

I have already stated the grounds on which this bill would make it unlawful to discriminate and areas to which this would apply. I would now like to address the definition of 'discrimination' provided in the bill, and to describe more fully the areas covered under the goods and services provisions.

The meaning and definition of 'discrimination' is to treat another person unfavourably (on any of the stated grounds) because the person does not comply or is not able to comply with a particular requirement, and the nature of the requirement is such that a substantially higher proportion of persons from another group complies or is able to comply with the requirement than the person concerned, and the requirement is not reasonable in the circumstances. The definition also extends to circumstances where a person is treated unfavourably on the basis of a characteristic that appertains generally to the group to which the person belongs or to a presumed characteristic generally imputed to that group.

In this bill, 'services' means: access to and use of any place that members of the public may enter; services of an employment agency; banking and the provision of credit or insurance; the provision of a scholarship, prize or award; entertainment, recreation or refreshment; the services of an introduction agency; provision of coaching or umpiring in a sport; transport or travel services; professional or trade services; and provision of services by a government department, instrumentality or agency or a local government council.

This bill seeks to redress the existing and broadly agreed inequalities of opportunity in the Northern Territory. For reasons which I outlined earlier, it does not seek to cover every possible ground of discrimination. Rather, it addresses the most common grounds of discrimination and the areas in which these occur, and commits the Labor Party to further discussions on other areas. The bill is reasonable and fair in its drafting. It defines unacceptable behaviour and makes clear the responsibilities which people in the Northern Territory would have under the legislation. The bill is drafted in parts which cover both the grounds of particularly discriminatory behaviour and the circumstances in which such behaviour would be unlawful.
under the legislation. Each part contains a series of exemptions pertaining to that part which overcome legitimate concerns expressed by everyone affected by new laws. This is not a law for disaffected individuals and groups, but a draft bill for all Territorians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard my comments relating to the description of the clauses.

Leave granted.

Explanation of clauses:

Clause 1 is formal. Clause 2 provides for commencement of the act. Clause 3 contains the definitions for the purposes of the act. Clause 4 contains interpretive provisions. Clause 5 binds the Crown. Clause 6 provides for the appointment of a Commissioner for Equal Opportunity and for the commissioner to be appointed for a term of 5 years and upon conditions fixed by the Administrator on the recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner. Clause 7 provides for the appointment of staff to assist the commissioner in the administration of the act. Clause 8 provides that the commissioner is responsible to the minister and subject to the direction of the minister for the administration of the act.

Clause 9 requires the commissioner to foster among the general public positive and unprejudiced attitudes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexuality, marital status, pregnancy, race, physical or intellectual impairment, or age. The commissioner may carry out or assist in research, and provide information and advice on subjects relevant to the administration of the act; and make recommendations to the minister for administrative or legislative reforms. Clause 10 indicates that the commissioner may provide advice on any matter covered by the act.

Clause 11 provides for the commissioner to make an annual report to the minister and for the minister to table the report. Clause 12 provides for delegation of powers by the commissioner with the approval of the minister. Clause 13 exempted the commissioner from personal liability in carrying out her or his functions under the act.

Clause 14 establishes the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. Clause 15 provides for the appointment of a presiding officer and deputy presiding officers of the tribunal. A presiding officer must be a judge of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth, a magistrate, or a legal practitioner of not less than 5 years standing.

Clause 16 empowers the Administrator to establish a panel of not more than 12 persons nominated by the minister for selection to sit at hearings of the tribunal. Clause 17 provides for validity of proceedings of the tribunal and immunity of members. Clause 18 provides for constitution of the tribunal to be a presiding officer or a deputy presiding officer and 2 members drawn from the panel.

Clause 19 deals with conduct of proceedings by the tribunal. The presiding officer is to determine questions of law and procedure;
all other questions will be determined by majority opinion. Tribunal proceedings will be heard in public unless the tribunal decides otherwise. Clause 20 provides for giving notice of proceedings and deals with joinder of parties and intervention of interested parties. Persons appearing before the tribunal are entitled to appear personally, by counsel or, by leave, be represented by another person. Clause 21 establishes the powers of this tribunal in obtaining evidence.

Clause 22 establishes a power to award just costs against a party to proceedings before the tribunal in certain circumstances. Clause 23 empowers the tribunal to refer parties to conciliation with the consent of the parties. Clause 24 provides for the appointment of a registrar of the tribunal. Clause 25 describes the definition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexuality, marital status or pregnancy.

Clause 26 makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an employee or prospective employee on the basis of sex, sexuality, marital status, or pregnancy. Clause 27 is a similar provision dealing with commission agents. Clause 28, a similar provision, deals with an agency employing a worker under contract. Clause 29 prohibits discrimination by a firm against existing or prospective partners of the firm. Clause 30 provides exemptions from the division.

Clause 31 deals with discrimination by associations on the ground of sex and provides that, where there are both female and male members, each sex must have access to all classes of membership in general terms and to the same or equivalent services. Clause 32 is a similar provision dealing with the ground of sexuality.

Clause 33 prevents discrimination by authorities or bodies empowered to confer professional or trade qualifications. Clause 34 prevents discrimination on the ground of sex by educational authorities. This clause does not apply to single sex schools.

Clause 35 deals with discrimination in relation to land. This section does not apply to the disposal of an interest pursuant to a testamentary disposition or gift. Clause 36 deals with discrimination in relation to the provision of goods and services. Clause 37 deals with discrimination in relation to accommodation. This section does not apply to accommodation in a private household.

Clauses 38 to 41 deal with discrimination in relation to superannuation on the ground of sex. Clause 38 defines and includes 'de facto spouse' in this division and defines and includes 'employer subsidised superannuation scheme'.

Clause 39 provides in subclause (1) that, subject to the division, it is unlawful for a person who provides an employer-subsidised superannuation scheme to discriminate against a person (a) by providing a scheme which requires or authorises discrimination against that other person or (b) in the manner in which the scheme is administered.
Subclause (2) provides qualifications to the general principles set out in subclause (1). Subclause (1) applies only in relation to an employer-subsidised superannuation scheme under which more members (being members who are still employed by the employer) reside in this Territory than in any other territory or state. Other qualifications may be prescribed. Subclause (3) provides that the clause does not render unlawful discrimination in the rates upon which a pension may at the option of a member to whom it is payable, be converted to a lump sum or a lump sum payable to the member may at the member's option be converted to a pension, where the discrimination (a) is based on actuarial or statistical data that has been disclosed to the person the subject of the discrimination, and (b) is reasonable having regard to that data. Subclause (4) provides that the clause does not render unlawful discrimination in the benefits payable where (a) the contributions payable by the employer and employee are fixed by the scheme, and (b) the benefits that will accrue to the employee are reduced by any insurance premiums paid under the scheme in respect of the employee, to the extent only that the discrimination is based upon a lawful difference in those insurance premiums.

Clause 40 provides that it is unlawful for a person who provides a superannuation scheme or provident fund (not being an employer-subsidised superannuation scheme) to discriminate against a person by providing a scheme that requires or authorises discrimination against that other person, or in the manner in which the fund is administered, except where the discrimination is based on actuarial data that has been disclosed to the person the subject of the discrimination and the discrimination is reasonable having regard to that data.

Clause 41 provides that a superannuation scheme or provident fund does not discriminate on the ground of marital status by reason only of the fact that it provides benefits to the surviving spouses of members or that it does not provide benefits for surviving de facto spouses of members, or provides less favourable benefits for surviving de facto spouses than it does for surviving spouses.

Clause 42 exempts charitable trusts from the operation of the foregoing provisions. Clause 43 provides that part III does not prevent the granting to women of rights or privileges in connection with pregnancy or childbirth.

Clause 44 provides that part III does not prevent schemes intended to ensure equal opportunities between the sexes. Clause 45 provides that discrimination on the ground of sex is permissible in competitive sports in which the strength, stamina or physique of the contestants is relevant.

Clause 46 permits discrimination in the terms of annuities, life assurance and other forms of insurance. Such discrimination must, however, have an actuarial basis.

Clause 47 exempts religious orders and denominations from the provisions of part III in so far as such an exemption is necessary to safeguard the free practice of religion.
Clause 48 defines discrimination, as it applies to discrimination on the ground of race.

Clauses 49 to 53 relate to discrimination in employment, commission agency, contract work and partnerships. They are in the same terms as the corresponding provisions of the previous part.

Clauses 54 to 60 relate to discrimination by clubs or trade or professional associations, discrimination in education, discrimination in the provision of goods and services and discrimination in the provision of accommodation. These are in the same terms as the corresponding provisions of the previous part.

Clauses 61 and 62 allow charitable instruments and schemes to confer benefits on the ground of race.

Clause 63 defines discrimination, as it applies to impairment. Clauses 63 to 80 cover the same areas of discrimination as are dealt with by the corresponding provisions of the previous 2 parts. A number of clauses are of particular note. Clause 75 deals with discrimination in relation to superannuation. The clause does not apply in relation to a superannuation scheme or provident fund to which the employer makes contributions and under which a greater number of members (not being members no longer employed by the employer) reside in any one other territory or state than reside in this territory. Subject to that qualification, it is unlawful to provide a superannuation scheme or provident fund that requires or authorises discrimination against a person or which is administered in a discriminatory manner, except to the extent that the discrimination is based on actuarial data upon which it is reasonable to rely and is reasonable having regard to the data. Clause 77 allows positive discrimination in favour of people with impairments, in certain circumstances. Clause 78 allows discrimination where the nature of the disability renders discrimination unavoidable. Clause 80 relates to access to buildings.

Clause 81 defines the extent to which discrimination is lawful based on actuarial or statistical data.

Clause 82 sets out the criteria for establishing discrimination on the ground of age (and is consistent with other provisions of a similar nature throughout the bill). Clause 83 will make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person on the ground of age where the person is applying for employment with the employer, or is an employee of the employer. Clause 84 will make it unlawful to discriminate against a contract worker on the ground of age. Clause 86 will make it unlawful to discriminate against a partner within a partnership on the ground of age.

Clause 87 sets out the various exemptions to the provisions relating to employment. The provisions will not apply in relation to employment in a private household, to situations where there is a genuine occupational requirement that a person be of a certain age, or age group, or where the person's age could affect safety at work. The provisions will also not apply to acts performed under industrial awards or agreements.
Clause 88 provides that, after the expiration of 1 year from the commencement of the new part, it will be unlawful for associations to discriminate against an applicant for membership, or a member, on the ground of age. However, the provision will not apply where an association has, on a genuine and reasonable basis, established various categories of membership or where it is reasonable that a particular service or benefit be provided to a particular age group.

Clause 89 relates to qualifying bodies and clause 90 to educational authorities.

Clause 91 will make it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the ground of age in relation to the disposal of, or dealing with, an interest in land.

Clause 92 applies to the provision of goods or services, but will not regulate various scales of fees or fares, or the terms or conditions on which a ticket is issued, or admission is allowed to any place. Clause 93 applies to the provision of accommodation.

Clauses 94 to 99 set out various general exemptions from the operation of the new part. Nothing in the part will derogate from the law that relates to the juristic capacity of children, or affect the provisions of a charitable instrument. The part will not render unlawful any scheme or undertaking initiated to meet the needs of a particular age group, and will not affect competitive sporting activities. Special provisions are also made for insurance and superannuation schemes.

Clause 100 will require the minister to prepare a report for parliament on the acts of the Territory which provide for discrimination on the ground of age.

Clause 101 defines an act of victimisation and makes it unlawful for a person to commit such an act. Clause 102 defines sexual harassment and makes it unlawful for a person, in defined circumstances, to commit an act of sexual harassment.

Clause 103 protects the right of blind or deaf people to be accompanied by a guide dog.

Clause 104 provides for lawful discrimination in the provision of insurance of superannuation based on actuarial or statistical data where the person to be discriminated against is notified and informed of their right to a summary of that data.

Clause 105 deals with the position of a person who causes, instructs, induces or aids another to commit a breach of the act. Such a person incurs the same criminal and civil liabilities as the person who commits the breach.

Clause 106 imposes vicarious liability for the acts of agents and employees. The principal or employer may offer a defence by establishing that she or he could not, by the exercise of reasonable diligence, have prevented the occurrence of the circumstances out of which the liability is alleged to arise.
 Clause 107 empowers the tribunal to grant exemptions from the operation of the new act. Such an exemption may be granted for a period of up to 3 years and may be subsequently renewed. The tribunal is empowered to make non-discrimination orders to correct discriminatory situations where they are found to exist.

 Clauses 108 and 109 provide for the lodging of complaints by victims of discrimination. Clause 110 sets out the investigative powers of the commissioner in relation to a complaint. Clause 111 deals with the conciliation of complaints. Where, however, conciliation is impossible or unsuccessful, or the complainant requires reference of the complaint to the tribunal, the complaint is referred to the tribunal.

 Clause 112 sets out the remedies that may be granted by the tribunal on a complaint. Clause 113 entitles a party to proceedings before the tribunal to a written statement of the tribunal's reasons for decision. Clause 114 provides for an appeal to the Supreme Court against decisions of the tribunal. Clause 115 provides that the act will not give rise to any civil, or criminal consequences except those expressly stated.

 Clause 116 deals with interaction between the new act and the Industrial Relations Act. Clause 117 indicates that it will be a defence in proceedings under the act to prove that the subject matter arose from written advice of the commissioner. Clause 118 makes it an offence to molest, insult, hinder or obstruct the commissioner or an officer assisting the commissioner, in the performance of official functions.

 Clause 119 makes it an offence to publish an advertisement that indicates an intention to perform an act that is unlawful by virtue of the act. A defence is available to a person who proves belief, on reasonable grounds, that the publication of the advertisement would not contravene subsection (1) (which constitutes the offence).

 Clause 120 provides for the summary disposal of proceedings for offences against the act. Clauses 121 and 122 are regulation-making powers.

 Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, this is extremely important legislation. The government and the opposition have certainly come at it from slightly different points of view. However, what we finally have in common is a commitment to doing something practical about equal opportunity in the Northern Territory. I take the minister's point that we really cannot afford a situation in which, for various obscure reasons unrelated to ability, people are discriminated against.

 I have stated on a number of occasions that the statistic in the public service survey which really got to me was the one which indicated that the average salary of women in the public service was $5000 less than the average salary of male public servants. For the life of me, I cannot think of a reason why that should be the case. There is no reason why, if we have a properly functioning system, we should have such a huge gap between the average salaries of women in the public service and the average salaries of men in the public service.

 Mr McCarthy: That does not occur only in the Northern Territory.
Mr SMITH: I am not singling out the Northern Territory at all and I am not saying that equal opportunities legislation will solve the problem. However, if we put legislation in place and if that legislation is strong enough, it will certainly send a very clear and very strong message to the public service. There are some considerations which are not upfront, but which underlie subtle undertones in the many job applications and the workings of promotion panels etc. Strong legislation in this area would constitute a very clear message from the government of the day, whether it is a Labor or CLP government, that those considerations are not acceptable and that merit and merit alone should determine who gets jobs in the Northern Territory public service.

That is one of the key elements in this equal opportunity legislation. We have to ensure that we obtain the maximum benefit from the human resources we have. For one reason or another, we are not overloaded with human resources in the Northern Territory and we certainly have to ensure that we provide our human resources with the maximum opportunity to achieve their potential. That is not just because of the warm inner glow we might experience when we know that we are doing everything possible for the people to achieve their full potential, but equally and more practically, because there is a definite and strong benefit to the system.

As I have said, our draft legislation covers what we consider to be the core areas, the areas in which we have received continual complaints, both from the private and the public sector, over a period of time. There are other areas identified in the discussion paper, in which we are at the same stage as the government. We think that there is a need for broader community consultation and discussion in those areas and we will be a part of that, both together with the government in response to its discussion paper, and on our own.

We have the rare opportunity to approach this matter with some sort of bipartisanship. I know that it is very tempting, particularly with an election campaign not too far away, to diverge from that. However, if we look very seriously at the issue, we must acknowledge that we have a very real opportunity to address it in as bipartisan a manner as possible. I will be very happy to circulate the government's discussion paper among relevant people and, of course, we will be circulating our draft legislation as well. I would hope that, in the fairly near future, the result will be legislation of which we can all be proud, legislation which protects the rights of everybody in the Northern Territory and which recognises that we have an obligation to ensure that people can perform to their potential and win jobs on merit, and that they can enjoy membership of clubs and be entitled to the provision of goods and services on a non-discriminatory basis.

We are not talking about equal opportunity in terms of jobs alone. In fact, it has been suggested to me that the whole matter might be more appropriately addressed in terms of anti-discrimination than equal opportunity. However, equal opportunity is the phrase which has become accepted in the community. I emphasise again that we are not talking about equal opportunity simply in terms of employment. As the honourable minister said, and as I have said, it covers a whole range of situations in which there is potential for people to be discriminated against for reasons which are not valid.

I close by saying that I look forward to the community discussion which will occur as a result of what we have done in this House today. I inform the people of the Territory that the matter is high on our agenda for action.
and I take it from the government's statement today that it is high on its agenda as well.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, some people might think that I would welcome the minister's statement with open arms, being a female and there having been a perception that I was discriminated against by the Country Liberal Party. However, far from welcoming the statement with open arms, I view it with grave suspicion. I do so for 2 reasons.

The first is because there is an election in the offing, and the honourable minister and his government no doubt think that this statement and the legislation that they plan to introduce will win them votes. I do not believe it will, but that is probably what they think. Secondly, I think that it will be viewed with suspicion by other people in the community because, whilst I believe that certain discrimination is directed at many people in the community, introducing legislation to remedy the situation is not the answer. Human attitudes cannot be changed overnight. Social attitudes have to be changed over a number of years. You can introduce legislation, honourable minister, until you are blue in the face, but that does not mean that you will change people's views.

I do not have a great knowledge of the operation of the public service, but I believe that there has been discrimination from time to time, mainly against women. I also believe that there has been sex discrimination against young women in the public service. Such matters have been brought to my attention on several occasions and I have suggested a remedy for the situation. My remedy for such a situation may not be the sort of remedy that would be covered by legislation. My remedy is usually more direct, but it would bring quicker results and there would be no further sex discrimination or sexual harassment.

I believe that this legislation will see the start of a reduction of the community to a grey, amorphous mass. It follows federal legislation and legislation in the states, but we cannot all be put in the one box as if we were all the same. We are not. We are different. There are irregularities and there will be differences in the human population till the end of time.

Mr Ede: I still open the door for you.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: And I will say thank you, but I will open the door for you too. I will even buy you a drink from time to time if we are at the bar together.

I have in mind the amorphous mass that one saw represented on the streets of China until very recently, when people in that country discovered that the benefits of communism were not what they were touted to be. We saw Chinese people in their thousands, in their grey trousers, their grey tunics, and their little grey Mao hats. I believe that legislation like this leads us down that path. People in China and eastern Europe have realised that communism and reducing the population to the one level in all sorts of ways is not the way to go, but we are still moving along that path.

In any legislation regarding equal opportunity and sex discrimination, I would like to see a provision for an appeal against a decision brought down against an employer. Again, I am speaking mainly of a private employer. On a brief reading of the minister's statement and the legislation put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, I do not believe that this is covered adequately. As I said earlier, the minister and others
can pass legislation till the cows come home, but common sense will still prevail.

I cannot see why, as an extremely small employer, I cannot engage the sort of people that I like. I want a certain person for a job, but that person is a whole person. I consider their sex, their age, their upbringing, their dress and probably even where I think their political affiliation will lie, although we do not usually get down to that in a job interview.

Mr Coulter: You will be in jail on the first issue.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you what came out to my place. One could not call them people; they were things. They came to my place looking for a job on the farm a couple of years ago. I used to advertise for a farm worker. It was hard to differentiate. I really wanted a fellow or a sheila. I did not want one of those things that you could not tell what it was. These fellows came out in skirts and beads, with long hair, and they wanted a job as a farm worker. Imagine putting one of those on a tractor or a slasher. They would not last 5 minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Coulter: He would get his sarong caught in the fan, and that would be it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is just a case in point. I was a private employer. My time was wasted. I could not say to these people that I would not have a bar of them without talking to them because their dress betrayed what they really were. You take all these things into account. Usually, I pick the people that...

Mr Ede: What were they? You said you did not know what they were.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I did not know what they were, but they were not what I wanted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that private employers will waste a lot of time on interviews if they advertise a job or jobs and many people turn up, some of whom the employers would not touch with a barge pole. They would still have to waste everybody's time in interviews and the rigmarole that goes with an extensive panel of interviewees, although they know that only a fraction of the people who present themselves would be suitable for the job. As I said, there is no right of appeal if the employer uses other than actual job qualifications to select for the job.

In some situations, discrimination may be positive. If, in a primary industry situation, 2 people of equal merit apply for a job and one man has a wife and a couple of children and the other has not, I would be tempted to give the job to the family man. But, again, I would be positively discriminating against the other applicant.

That brings me to what I believe is negative discrimination in the community at present. I call it negative discrimination, and it discriminates definitely and negatively on ethnic grounds. I know the reason this negative discrimination exists is purportedly to give opportunities to Aboriginals and others who are said to have been discriminated against in education or health fields. Some jobs are offered
specifically to people of Aboriginal extraction and ethnic group extraction, and I regard that as a form of negative discrimination.

A chap came to see me about a month ago. I think he was a migrant from Germany or Holland. Certainly, he was of European extraction. He believed that he had the qualifications to work as a tracker for the police, and he had applied for such a position. He believed that he had been discriminated against because, when he applied for the job, he did not receive the support he believed he should have for his job application.

Mr Coulter: Sign language in German was not appropriate in the Northern Territory.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: He spoke English quite well, for the honourable minister's edification, and he believed his qualifications were good enough to fit him for the job.

As I said, I view this legislation with some suspicion. There is a limited reason for introducing it, but I do not believe that it will change community attitudes. People like people for their own particular reasons, and I believe they are entitled to have their reasons for liking or disliking employing particular people. Of 2 people applying for a job, one may perhaps have extensive qualifications which admirably fit them for the job and the other person may not have such good qualifications. However, as a result of inquiring on the grapevine, which a good employer should do, one may find that the one with the better qualifications has other detrimental qualities which would preclude the development of a happy working relationship in the workplace. According to the proposed legislation, that person is supposed to get the job. We cannot take all these private and personal matters into consideration. I do not regard that as a correct attitude in the workplace.

I can see that there may be greater costs to industry if the legislation is enacted. I have not studied the legislation, but I have a fear that it would result in greater costs to industry. As occurs in other situations, frivolous complaints may be made. There will be people who try actively to work the system for their own benefit against employers or against other people in the workplace. All of these cases will have to be considered in the lead-up to the minister's proposal to introduce legislation and also in connection with the legislation put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

I am a little confused here. Draft legislation has been put forward and the minister proposes to put forward legislation at a later date. Are we to have a combination of these 2 pieces of legislation or what? I am rather confused as well as being rather suspicious. Altogether, I am not in a very happy frame of mind as far as this legislation is concerned. I will have to give it some thought, together with the honourable minister's discussion paper. Whatever happens, I hope that there will be avenues for appeal. I am not speaking for the public service as much as for private individuals and private businesses, especially small businesses.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the minister's statement and the tabling of his discussion paper tonight, which is probably pretty timely. Whenever the issue of equal opportunity arises, I am reminded of a meeting I had in America many years ago with the principals of a firm called the Kerr-McGee Corporation. It was a very big mining company with a technical and professional staff of engineers and geologists who were mainly whites. USA equal opportunity laws required the company to employ a
certain number of Hispanic and Negro people in its work force as part of the proactive equal opportunity scheme introduced with the legislation. I asked the company how it would overcome this type of problem, given that it might be difficult to attract people from those backgrounds with the necessary mining qualifications. I was told that the solution was very simple. The company bought a professional basketball team, gave it the company's colours and put it on the company payroll. That satisfied the criteria. When I asked how it turned out, I was told that the team won lots of games and made a great deal of money.

That drove home for me the reality of how everybody has their own perception of equal opportunity and how different groups in the community go about paying lip service to the concept. There is no doubt that there is a need for some form of legislation to take account of equal opportunity in the Territory. It is only natural for people who are unsuccessful in obtaining jobs for which they apply to believe that they have been discriminated against, on the basis that they are old or young, black or white or catholic or protestant, and the decisions had nothing to do with their qualifications or their performance. If you miss out on a job, it is pretty easy to rationalise that the reason was because you had the wrong ethnic qualifications rather than not having the right achievement qualifications. If you were denied service in a pub, it is easy to rationalise that you were denied it because you are black or white or under-aged rather than because you were drunk and disorderly. If you are thrown out of a taxi, it is easy to believe that that is not because you were making a mess of the taxi but because you are black or white or whatever. There is always a form of discrimination occurring in the community. It is a matter of how we handle it. Obviously, we have reached a stage in the Territory where we believe there needs to be a formal set of rules to deal with unreasonable discrimination against people.

In handling any set of rules relating to discrimination, what is most important is that we agree that the rules are fair and reasonable and are not designed to make it difficult for one group or another. More importantly, the rules should be designed so that those who use the system and become parties to a dispute believe that they have had a fair go and a fair hearing in terms of having their dispute resolved. I say that because, for all the complaints in the Northern Territory community against people, there are plenty of complaints about discrimination in favour of people. Honourable members would have heard of cases of discrimination in which applicants for positions have to be Aboriginal, female or whatever. That is irksome to people who find that they have missed out because of such criteria. It is a fact of life that that type of proactive discrimination is a part of our system. It may be necessary and it may be a good thing. However, it irritates many people in the community.

The minister referred to the figures in the public service report relating to people who felt that they had been discriminated against. Those figures really highlight what the minister was pointing out. The 20% or so of people in the 2 major departments that were mentioned perceived - whether realistically or not ...
the morale of the people in the workplace to have that type of disgruntled employee on the payroll. It is in everybody's interest to ensure that, if people feel that they have been discriminated against in the selection or appointment or appeals process of their job, they have an opportunity to take that dissatisfaction to a place where it can be arbitrated fairly in their eyes. That is not always easy. Every member of this House would have heard one of the major complaints of public servants which concerns people who apply for jobs and are interviewed by committees. In cases where people appeal against the decisions of these interview committees, they often find that members of the interview committees are also involved in hearing the appeal. Public servants in this situation tend immediately to feel that it is unreasonable that the guys who rejected them in the first place are hearing the appeal.

Whatever system we have, it must be perceived to be fair in the eyes of those who are part of it. If we are to have an appeals system, it ought to be sufficiently independent to be able to hear the appeals and pass judgment on them so that people have complete trust in the workings of the anti-discrimination or equal opportunity legislation.

No matter where you go in the Northern Territory and no matter whether you talk to people working in the public or the private sector, everybody seems to have their own story about how discrimination works around them, for them or against them. What is important is that, if this perception of discrimination exists, it is dealt with in a civilised way. I believe that the minister's statement is a starting point. I would be happy to circulate the discussion paper to people who I know would be interested in it. Whilst it is unlikely that such legislation will get off the ground before an election, people can work towards it in a positive and cooperative way because it is something that will benefit us all at the end of the day.

Mr McCarthy (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments. I was interested in the Leader of the Opposition's comments on the discussion paper and the tabling of his own draft legislation which, undoubtedly, will become a valuable contribution to the debate on the discussion paper.

Having listened to the Leader of the Opposition's speech, there are obvious comparisons between what he said and what I said in my statement. There are some grounds for feeling that we may be getting somewhere. It has to be recognised, of course, that the act of tabling a discussion paper does not lock the Northern Territory government into all aspects of that paper. We seek wide community input to this debate during the next few months so that, when we introduce legislation, it will be satisfactory to the wider community and not simply something which we have thought up ourselves or taken from legislation in the states. It must suit the needs of the Northern Territory and its particular requirements in respect of equal opportunity legislation.

I do not think that there is any need to comment further on the Leader of the Opposition's remarks other than to say that I was pleased with his attitude. I can assume, now that we have this document, that we will be able to make good use of it. We may well be able to use parts of it in our discussions with the Territory population during the next few months.

The member for Koolpinyah was concerned that it was impossible to educate the public in the ways of equal opportunity. I do not think that that is the case. The whole thrust of what we have been doing in the past, and will continue to do, is to provide an education system which will bring
people to an awareness of equal opportunity in the Northern Territory. It has been our position all along that we preferred education initially rather than legislation. We have come a long way in the Northern Territory, particularly in the public sector where very positive equal opportunity programs have been put in place. However, there is still a way to go. Quite clearly, we can now talk about the possibility of legislation and provide a general background to promote discussion.

I cannot accept the member for Koolpinyah's view that you cannot educate people. After all, people have been educated to wear seat belts. Initially, nobody liked it. Today, all people wear seat belts and accept them as being a reasonable solution to part of the road toll problem. When decimal currency was introduced, everybody believed that we would never understand it. Today, everybody understands and accepts decimal currency and metric measurement. We have gone a long way towards educating public opinion in relation to equal opportunity. We can go further and our whole thrust will be to continue that educational process.

I also do not accept that we have come up with a very comprehensive discussion paper overnight. The fact is that we have been working on this for quite some time. Our survey dates back 18 months. That does not relate particularly to this paper, but it indicates how long we have been taking a very strong interest in working towards a better form of equal opportunity in the Northern Territory, in particular in the public service.

The member for Koolpinyah is confused by the Leader of the Opposition tabling his draft legislation. Undoubtedly, it will become a part of discussion over the next few months. It does not need to be tabled. All that the Leader of the Opposition has done is to bring forward his tabling of that document by a week.

The member for Barkly spoke of processes within the public service which need to be improved. If the member for Barkly were as familiar with the public service now as he may have been some years ago, he would recognise that we have changed things dramatically since the days when he had some say in the matter. The discrimination that he may have believed to exist certainly does not exist these days. We have changed things very dramatically since that time. During the last few years, certainly during my time as minister, many processes have been put in place to ensure that members of the public service are not discriminated against. We continue to improve those processes and will do so with or without legislation.

It will take a few months to prepare legislation because, quite reasonably, I have allowed 3 months for discussion on this document. I do not think that we could do it in anything less. If it is found that we need longer, we may have to consider a longer period. However, I think 3 months is a satisfactory period. We will be seeking input right across the Northern Territory community and we will be taking the matter to the people through public discussion forums. I have no doubt at all that, when we do implement legislation in the Northern Territory, it will not be ad hoc and it will not be something which has been grasped out of the air and dumped on people. What we will have will be legislation that is acceptable to the Northern Territory community and will benefit everybody in the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.
Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I would like to take this opportunity to correct some information which I provided to the House in answering questions this morning. The information concerns the cost of self-government celebrations. I advised the Assembly this morning that the total cost was $200,000 and that that included broadcast time for the advertisements when, in fact, the correct figure is $222,355.

Mr Coulter: And 20¢

Mr PERRON: Yes, and 20¢. I am sorry, I still do not have it right.

Mr Speaker, the reason that I did not have the correct total was because, after producing the video, we made a decision to have it put into a format which would enable it to be shown in cinemas. It was also decided to make some copies to leave with Northern Territory government tourist offices around Australia. Those 2 decisions added to the costs. The actual production cost of the advertisement, including the format for cinemas, was $133,840. The cost of playing time on radio, television and in cinemas was $49,318. The remaining $39,197 was for the brochure, rulers, balloons, stickers; print advertising for the flag-raising ceremonies in different parts of Australia, and the hire of a canopy, chairs and sound system for the Darwin ceremony. That is a complete list of the costs and I apologise to the Assembly for any inconvenience that I may have caused in incorrectly giving an all-up figure of $200,000 in this morning's question time.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise very briefly to respond to a small part of what the honourable Chief Minister said - his reference to the decision to show the self-government advertisement in cinemas. From the Labor Party's point of view, I hope that the government will continue to screen it forever. It has received an amazing response.

I was at the cinema on Saturday night when the advertisement came on. I can say without exaggeration that the cinema erupted. Somebody said: 'Wasted taxpayers' money'. People all over the cinema said things like: 'Get it off! We do not want this sort of rubbish on our cinema screens'. They were not Labor Party people and they certainly did not know that I was there because I was running late and entered the cinema when it was dark. I have to say that, if the government keeps the advertisement running, members on this side of the House will have no problems whatsoever with the expenditure involved. The response was quite astonishing.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak in this evening's adjournment debate, I would like to address a couple of matters. The first concerns the lack of a qualified professional in the field of ophthalmology. I have been told by a constituent that patients wanting an appointment with the qualified ophthalmologist at the hospital face a wait of anything from 3 to 6 months. There is only 1 qualified ophthalmologist here at the moment. Another doctor in private practice has some expertise, but I understand that his qualifications are not as extensive as those of the professional ophthalmologist employed by the Royal Darwin Hospital. I understand that, in the old days, there were always 2 ophthalmologists here.
I believe that we need to pay particular attention to the need for specialists in ophthalmology because of the high demand for their services. As well as dealing with accident cases and medical cases, ophthalmologists are in demand by many people who are getting on in years and find that they need the ophthalmology services for cataract removal and so forth. I can imagine that there would be more work here for an ophthalmologist than perhaps for an ENT specialist. I would like the Minister for Health and Community Services to give this matter his consideration because it is stretching it a bit for people to have to wait 3 to 6 months for treatment. Not only is that a test of people's patience but it does not do their medical conditions much good either.

Mr Collins: Have they been discriminated against?

Ms PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes. They are being discriminated against. I understand that, in dire cases, people would no doubt be sent south for treatment. However, I would like the honourable minister to give some consideration to the appointment of another ophthalmologist so that waiting periods for treatment in our public hospital will be reduced to a more reasonable level.

Coincidentally, the next matter I wish to raise also comes within the competence of the member for Nightcliff, this time in his capacity as Minister for Conservation. I have written to him about this matter previously and I have also spoken about it previously. It concerns the shocking state of Fogg Dam which is a disgrace to him and to the Conservation Commission. I do not know whether it is the result of lack of care or lack of concern for the tourist industry and the conservation of the area. I am not talking about people who are highly placed in the Conservation Commission. I am speaking about the concern expressed to me by people lower down in the ranks of the Conservation Commission. They all say that it is more than time that something was done about it.

There are no birds at Fogg Dam now. For bird lovers, it used to be a special treat to go there at dawn to see all the water birds. People made special trips to see them. Nowadays, you are lucky if you see any water at all. I am not necessarily talking about the condition of the dam in the dry season. It is choked with weeds and water lilies, and with rushes and sedges, or whatever the monocotyledonous plant life out there is called. As well as you-beaut things like the creation of new wildlife parks, nature parks and reserves, it is more than time that the Conservation Commission looked at the upkeep of areas under its control. Fogg Dam is in a very deleterious condition.

I do not know whose responsibility it is, but the road into the dam also is in a shocking state. It is bad enough for a private vehicle to have to venture across the dam wall to the other side, but for the masses of tourists who visit the area, many of whom come in large buses, travelling over such a shocking road certainly does not provide a very good introduction to the viewing of the Northern Territory's wildlife. I have travelled over a few roads in the rural area and, if I say a road is shocking, I mean that it is full of potholes one could practically get lost in. I believe that that road is reaching the dangerous stage, especially for buses. Do we want buses loaded with tourists to have accidents on the road to Fogg Dam just because somebody thought it was an area of minimal interest which did not warrant the expenditure of funds?

The locals are also concerned. I am not referring only to the Conservation Commission rangers to whom I have spoken but also the people
who live at Middle Point, the Coastal Plains Research Station, and in the Beatrice Hill area. They are concerned because they believe that it is a beautiful little area. The people there constitute a cohesive little country community, and they would like to see Fogg Dam rehabilitated and returned to what might be called its former glory. It is not a very big place and I do not think that it would cost much to rehabilitate. However, in the interests of true conservation, and especially for the sake of aviculturists, tourists and nature lovers generally, it is more than time for the Minister for Conservation to give serious consideration to rehabilitation of the area.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government say, in response to my question this morning on the repeal of the Dog Act, that individual local government authorities will have discretion in terms of whether they take on the current provisions of the Dog Act in their own by-laws or whether they refrain from doing so. The control of dogs is an important matter. The dog-owning community is divided into 2 roughly even groups: those who like their dogs and look after them, and those who have dogs which other people cannot stand. Dogs belonging to people in the second group roam freely, frequently biting adults and children and killing their pets. These 2 interest groups in the community do not seem to understand each other's points of view. Unfortunately, people who look after their dogs by keeping them on leads, by keeping them in yards and by looking after them from a veterinary viewpoint, are penalised for the mishandling of dogs by irresponsible dog owners.

I believe that the Litchfield Shire Council intends to conduct a survey asking residents whether they want the shire to adopt the provisions of the Dog Act as by-laws. There will also be a statement concerning the amount each person can expect to pay for what could be considered to be a luxury. Officers of the shire have calculated that, if the shire accepted responsibility for enforcing the provisions of the Dog Act, ratepayers in the shire would face a rate increase of $91 to $94 in the first year. If the survey proceeds, it will be up to people in the shire to say whether or not they want the provisions of the Dog Act to be adopted as local by-laws. Certainly, the cost of such a step will have to be considered.

I believe that there are many irresponsible people in the community who should not be allowed to keep dogs. Some of them do not look after their animals as well as they should. If one has animals, one should look after them. If one cannot afford to keep them or if one is not interested in them, one should do the next best thing and give them up or make more permanent plans for their future. I look forward to the results of the survey if it proceeds. I am interested to see what people in the rural area think about the massive increase in rates which they would face if the shire council introduced by-laws for dog control. Whilst this move may be admirable in many cases, the cost has also to be considered.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to say a few words about the Yuendumu Sports, which I attended during the Picnic Day weekend. Once again, the sports were a real credit to the community and the people on the organising committee, who go to a great deal of effort every year to put together a varied set of sports which attract people from all over the Territory. This year, there was very strong representation from South Australia and across in Western Australia. In fact, one of the early highlights was a fly-in by the teams from Warburton, who had chartered a number of planes and arrived in a squadron-like formation. This year, crowds were up by over 1000 on last year and, as always, competition was
entered into with considerable vigour and enthusiasm. People had an incredibly good time.

Of course, next year is an anniversary year and it is expected that the sports will be one of the biggest events for many years. This year, the prizes were spread throughout the teams. As usual, I gave prizes for the best sportswoman and the best sportsman, and those were particularly well contested. Unfortunately, in the case of the best sportsman, the prize was won by somebody from the electorate of the member for MacDonnell, so he can get up and praise him.

Mr Bell: Who will pay for the trophy?

Mr EDE: Yes. I must admit that, now and again, I get fed up with paying for trophies which are carried off by people from my colleague's electorate, who regularly come to the Yuendumu Sports and win all the prizes. However, it is great fun. All of our mob go to the Papunya Sports and to other events in his electorate and, now and again, we have a few wins too.

All credit is due to the people of Yuendumu, particularly to the members of the organising committee who do an incredible amount of work. I would like to thank firms like Adidas which, for the first time, has started to become involved in sponsoring athletics at the sports. It is a great move and, as the fame of the event spreads further and wider throughout Australia, hopefully more firms will become involved as sponsors, helping it to continue to grow and prosper.

Mr Speaker, that was on a happy note. Before I go too much further, I will say that I have heard that there is also some cause for joy in relation to the debate over whether therapists who have long been employed by the Department of Education will or will not move across to the Department of Health and Community Services. It has been my belief all along that those therapists should remain with the Department of Education. I know that there are some grey areas, but I believe that the example set by most of the states, which have such therapists working in education, should be followed. I have heard that the earlier move to locate those therapists in the Department of Health and Community Services has been reversed and that they will stay with the Department of Education. That decision will certainly be welcomed by the therapists and the people whom they look after.

My electorate secretary, Alf Leonardi, has a considerable interest in this subject and, during the course of researching the matter, he spoke to a number of people in various states, including a very senior gentleman in the Queensland department. Initially, it seemed that the department favoured the transfer of therapists, but subsequently changed its mind. When Alf asked why the department no longer supported the move, the answer was like something straight from 'Yes Minister'. The gentleman said that there would be 'severe administrative exigencies at the cooperative inter-agency interface', which I presume meant that they would fight like cats and dogs.

On a less pleasant subject, I would like to talk about the lack of services at the homestead on Ti Tree Station. It is very disheartening to visit the homestead community at Ti Tree Station and to see the incredible lack of services available in that community. The people themselves draw comparisons between the services provided to them and those which have been provided to Pmara Jutunta. Certainly, I will not decry the services which have been provided at Pmara Jutunta. I believe that those are of the
standard which should apply, but one cannot help but see the differences when one goes to Ti Tree Station.

At Pmara Jutunta, which is 6 miles from Ti Tree, the health workers are allowed to take the vehicle home at night so that, if there are problems during the night, they can drive people to the clinic in Ti Tree. At Ti Tree Station, that is not allowed to happen. We have asked constantly for a health worker vehicle there or some ability to home garage one of the vehicles. In spite of the fact that it is more than twice as far from Ti Tree clinic as Pmara Jutunta is, those requests have fallen on deaf ears.

The amount of time that it takes to get people in to do simple things like pumping out overflowing septic tanks etc is simply ridiculous. The number of times that that has been a problem, and that requests have been submitted only to find that nothing occurs, is nothing short of scandalous. Not all of the matters come within the purview of this government. I have contacted Telecom repeatedly with the request that it relocate the gold phone, currently situated on the steps of the store, to a position where it would be more readily accessible to the community. As honourable members who represent rural electorates would know, the gold telephone is often the only phone available to people when there are problems elsewhere and they need to make contact with someone in the community. Of course, when the store is closed and no one is around, no contact can be made. The placement of that phone was determined without consulting with the community at Ti Tree Station. The people of Ti Tree Station are becoming incredibly frustrated with these problems. They are closely related to the people of Anningie who are also experiencing great difficulties.

Earlier, I heard the member for Koolpinyah interject regarding Soapy Bore. The problems with water at Anningie are much more severe than those which were faced by the people of Soapy Bore. At least the community at Soapy Bore had water. The problem was that it was incorrectly located and not available as a full service. I have been arguing the case of the people of Anningie since I was on the old Water Needs Committee in 1979. That community still does not have a decent supply of water. The only water available is from a spear pump in the creek. Such pumps are considered by everybody to be totally inadequate. They are a variation of the old petrol pump and will draw water only from about 5 to 6 feet. We have suggested a number of options. The existing pump could be upgraded and the area fenced so that at least some water might be obtained from that source. The community could be equipped with tanks and water carted in. Thirdly, consideration could be given to a pipeline into the community.

I have spoken about the matter, time and time again. For years, I tried to get the government to agree to the concept of a Mexican dam. Always, we end up in a blind alley. Just when we seem to be getting somewhere, there is a change of minister or a change of public servant and, suddenly, we are back to square 1. Once again, frustration with the whole process has meant that a large proportion of the people who were living in the Anningie community have moved to Ti Tree Station and are now waiting there until such time as they can get water at Anningie. That is resulting in complete frustration. It is also overloading services at Ti Tree Station, making it even more difficult for people there to get on with their lives.

As the Minister for Education knows, I have spoken on previous occasions about the problem of bus services in the Ti Tree area. The minister must have one of the longest-running interdepartmental committees ever to exist. Every time I raise the issue, he says that he is looking at
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it in conjunction with the Minister for Transport and Works, that a committee is about to be formed, or that a committee is about to report. Still, there is no joy. I have now written to him asking him to look at the problems at Pine Hill, where another 9 children have no way of getting to school. The community has said that it may even be able to work on using its own vehicle if it receives mileage allowance at some rate.

People living in that entire area are trying to get their children to school but often there are not enough people living at the smaller communities to justify having their own schools. They realise that they need to bus children to the Ti Tree School but the problem with the buses is never ending. I hope that the Minister for Education will resolve this matter some time within the next month or so, or at least before he retires and we have to start again with a new minister.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to express my disgust in relation to a press release issued by the Minister for Transport and Works. The press release concerns a matter which was raised with the minister by the President of the Alice Springs Branch of the Australian Small Business Association, Jim Thomas, in Alice Springs on 16 July. On behalf of Mr Thomas, I take exception to the wording of the press release. It appears to be almost a personal attack and its terms are most embarrassing. In fact, I believe that some of the wording of the press release is unbecoming of a minister of the Northern Territory. He said that Mr Thomas was muddle-headed and displayed a Luddite attitude and a caveman mentality. I cannot see any reason for a minister of the Northern Territory to issue a press release with words of that kind in it.

Mr Vale: You should get both sides of the story, Enzo.

Mr FLOREANI: I have heard both sides of the story. Various items of correspondence have been presented to me. Let us face it, the chap represents some 50 Alice Springs small businessmen. He put a proposal to the minister saying that he is quite concerned about the sealing of the Luritja Road which connects Yulara and Kings Canyon, suggesting that perhaps the Ernest Giles Road might be given higher priority. I will read from his submission to the minister:

The long-term effects of the sealed access to Kings Canyon from Yulara and none from Alice Springs says the coach companies will base their tours to Kings Canyon from Yulara. Deluxe have coaches using the Ernest Giles Road for the tours based in Alice Springs, but say the wear and tear is far greater on this road than on the sealed roads. The hire-car companies will relocate their businesses to Yulara when the road is sealed and ban travelling on the Ernest Giles Road, due to the poor conditions of this road. There will be significant loss of business from Alice Springs - tours to Kings Canyon, accommodation, restaurant trade, servicing of vehicles etc. A large proportion of the tourist trade to Alice Springs will be lost, especially if the airlines are allowed to bypass Alice with longer runways being built at Yulara.

I think that those are reasonable concerns to be expressed by the president of a small business association. I have correspondence from the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association as well. I believe that a person who represents a number of small businesses in Alice Springs has a right to put submissions to the minister. It is not a question of the content of the submission, but the wording of a press release from the minister in
response. I believe that it was uncalled for and not in keeping with the proper actions of a minister of the Northern Territory.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, talk about muddle-headed! The honourable member himself came into this parliament allegedly as a champion of small businesses.

Mr Floreani: Are you going to sack the press release writer or what?

Mr FINCH: I am amazed at the lack of insight that the member for Flynn has shown in this matter. If he had read the reports in the Centralian Advocate and realised how provocative and nonsensical the comments by the President of the Alice Springs Branch of the ASBA were, he would fully understand why I used terms like 'muddle-headed'. Anyone who stands up in the real business world and says that sealing or not sealing a couple of roads in the middle of central Australia will lead to the total downfall of small business in Alice Springs is reflecting on the state of his own business. If it is so fragile that it cannot survive the possible diversion of traffic, heaven help it.

I believe that the response which I gave and which my office gave was well controlled at the time. I had taken the trouble to explain to him that he was not helping his cause by making outrageously provocative statements in the media instead of talking to us about his concerns. Tourist industry representatives had talked to us. We explained to them that the department was quite happy to listen to their reappraisal of where the priorities in road construction should lie. It was a simple matter which has now been addressed. As it turns out, the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association has now endorsed the original set of priorities put forward by the Department of Transport and Works. It has added a couple of additional priorities, and that is fine.

As far as development of the tourism industry is concerned, people in that industry ought to have the major say, not some businessman in Alice Springs whose business is supposedly so fragile that it will collapse as a result of relatively minor road programs in the middle of the desert. The basis on which he puts his suggestion forward is the supposed extension of the Yulara airstrip. That simply has not been the decision of this government to date. It is all nonsense. These matters ought to be dealt with civilly and not through provocative press statements in the Centralian Advocate.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, since the Assembly last sat, a number of people, who were leaders in the Territory community in a variety of different ways, have passed away. In this evening's adjournment debate, I want to place on record my appreciation of their efforts. I was looking at the names of these people and I was thinking of the various conversations that I had had with them. I realise that, in conversations with all of them, there had been agreement and disagreement in different ways. However, I want to say that I have a fundamental respect for their efforts in their working lives and in their lives generally in the Territory.

The first person whose name I want to place on record was a person who was indeed a good friend. I refer to Dr Trevor Cutter who was a very able specialist physician and who would be well-known to many members here as a resilient and forceful advocate, not only on health issues affecting Aboriginal people in central Australia in his work with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, but also as a proponent of Aboriginal rights generally. I came to know Trevor in the mid-1970s in Alice Springs. I had
a great deal to do with him as a friend and in my capacity as a member of
this Assembly when Trevor would - I think it is fair to say - forcefully put
representations to me about a variety of issues concerning Aboriginal rights
that were of great importance and about which he felt strongly. He was a
candidate for the Legislative Assembly in 1977.

Mr Vale: In Stuart.

Mr BELL: In Stuart, as the honourable member who was then the member
for Stuart recalls. I want to pass on to his family my appreciation and
respect for his work and my affection for him as a person.

The second person I want to mention is Mr Jim Gallacher. Many
honourable members here commented publicly about the recent passing of
Mr Jim Gallacher, and I want to place on record my appreciation of his
work. His Honour the Administrator, Mr Justice Muirhead, gave a very moving
speech at his funeral and it would be very difficult to add to that.

When I first came to work in the Territory, Jim Gallacher was a
respected figure as a director and assistant director of the Education
Department. One did not always agree with what he had to say, but one
always respected his point of view. At the end of the day, there was no
doubt that he was fighter for human rights generally. I have a deep respect
for the contribution Jim made to the Territory.

Jim and I have something in common. We both arrived in Areyonga at the
age of 27. Jim did so in 1950 and I did so 25 years later. On a number of
occasions, I discussed with Jim attitudes towards Aboriginal education,
atitudes towards the Territory and the direction of social change, matters
on which he contributed greatly to public debate throughout his working life
in the Territory. I want to place on record my respect for Jim and to pass
on my thoughts about Jim to his family.

The third person whose achievements I wish to refer to tonight is
Damien Miller, who also passed away recently. Damien Miller was a
constituent of mine. I would be kidding myself if I imagined that he ever
voted for me, but I have a deep respect for Damien Miller's spirit and what
I know of his life's work.

One of the wonderful stories that is still told about Damien Miller
relates to the period when he was flying for Connellan Airways. He, the
late Eddie Connellan and Sam Calder, a former member for the Northern
Territory who is well known to most people here, were part of that
generation of pilots who were pioneers of the airline industry in the
Territory. Damien had a hairlip and that is part of the story. He was at
Ayers Rock, in a 12-seater plane whose make I cannot recall at the moment.
Instead of sitting in the pilot's seat, Damien sat in a passenger seat while
the rest of the passengers filed in. He started to look at his watch and he
lisped: 'What? The pilot is not here? We will have to do something about
this'. They waited a few minutes and he said: 'Well, he is not here. I
will have a go'. He sat down in the pilot's seat and said: 'Been a while
since I have done this, but I think I can get into the air'. He duly
started up and the plane took off with a load of terrified passengers. I
understand that, when the incident came to the attention of the Department
of Civil Aviation, it was not as disposed to see the humorous aspects as a
number of other people were. I am not quite sure whether it is a true or an
apocryphal story ...

Mr Vale: It is true.
Mr BELL: ... but it says a great deal about the spirit of the man, which is one of the reasons I feel it is important to place on the record of the Assembly the contribution that he made to the Territory as an aviator, a pastoralist and a family man.

The other person, whose contribution in the Centre has been more controversial in a way was Helmut Pararoultja. I hesitate to mention his name, but I think that the restrictions about the use of the names of people who have passed away, which Helmut himself would have felt very strongly about, need to be qualified for the sake of the record of in this Assembly.

I knew Helmut for 15 years. He died violently, and before his time, and his death was a tragedy for his family and for the community in which he lived. I believe that his death is a very sad loss for many people because Helmut had a clear vision of the possibilities of his family. I am not sure that there will be somebody who will step into his shoes. He leaves behind his mother, and his family who live at Kulpijarra. They have lived at Kulpijarra and Undaruna, and his name and his work will be known to many government ministers here. Helmut would not have been a supporter of mine in a political sense, but I certainly had a deep respect for his contribution in the Centre.

It is appropriate to mention in this context the treatment of his passing in the media. I received representations from his family about the use of pictures of him in the press after his passing. I found the use of those pictures a little shocking and that has certainly been the view of some Aboriginal people in the Centre. Outside the context of the passing of an individual, we need to consider what is an appropriate way of dealing with material of that kind in the press.

The death of Helmut Pararoultja and the other member of his family in such tragic circumstances made the funeral of the 2 men a particularly sad occasion. I hope that the communities at Kulpijarra and Undaruna, and at Hermannsburg itself, in the absence of Helmut, will be able to develop a direction and a purpose to control the rapid change that is happening in the lives of those people and to do so in the productive way that Helmut himself envisaged.

I believe it is important to place on record the achievements of the people I have spoken about tonight, people who came from very different backgrounds and who had very different experiences but who, each in his own way, contributed magnificently in the Territory context.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I had planned to speak in the adjournment debate during the course of the sittings to pay tribute to Jim Gallacher. As the member for MacDonnell spoke about him tonight, I would like to ensure that our tributes appear in the Hansard record of this debate. I would like to pay tribute to the work of Jim Gallacher, particularly as I am the minister responsible for education, the arts and cultural affairs. Jim Gallacher, of course, was involved in education for a very long time. I was deeply saddened at the passing of a man who had served the Territory in so many ways: as a public servant, as a prominent sportsman, as a dedicated member of Legacy, and as an educator for 40 years. In particular, Jim Gallacher will be remembered for his great service to the cause of Aboriginal education and to the Aboriginal community generally.

Mr Gallacher's teaching career in the Territory began when he and his new bride settled into a tin shed at Areyonga in 1950. In 1953, he became
head teacher at the bungalow at the old Telegraph Station at Alice Springs. From 1956 to 1966, whilst serving as District Education Officer in both Alice Springs and Darwin, he travelled widely throughout the Territory supporting and advising teachers, and supervising the building of new schools at Warrabri, now Ali Curung, Amoonguna and Papunya. Many of his former colleagues will especially remember the Watts/Gallacher Report which he played a key role in preparing during that time. The report provided the foundation for Aboriginal education policy in the Territory for a generation, and much of it is still relevant today.

Through Jim Gallacher's long and wide experience of Aboriginal culture, supported by study as a Churchill Fellow, he developed the insight and expertise that led him to become a highly-respected administrator and innovator in the field of Aboriginal education. Among his almost countless contributions, he encouraged significant Aboriginal participation in wider community activities, ranging from sporting events to eisteddfods, and he initiated the use of mobile and demountable school buildings to provide an accelerated response to community needs. His commitment to the principle of involving Aboriginal people in the development of their own education programs led at first to the initiation of short-term and then 1-year training courses for Aboriginal assistant teachers and, ultimately, to the establishment of Batchelor College which, as honourable members would appreciate, is now a national leader in the field of Aboriginal education.

In 1970, Jim Gallacher became Director of Aboriginal Education in the Commonwealth Welfare Division, which administered Aboriginal schools. The task of writing the first curriculum, specially designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal students in Northern Territory communities, was begun. When the separate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education systems were merged in the Territory, he was appointed Assistant Director of Special Projects and, immediately after Cyclone Tracy, Acting Director of Education. Many honourable members will recall his work during the turbulent period that followed the cyclone, when the quality of his leadership proved a crucial factor in getting a devastated education system back on its feet.

Following self-government, in 1979, Mr Gallacher joined the Chief Minister's Department as Director of the Aboriginal Liaison Unit. Although he officially retired in 1985, he remained active as Chairman of Batchelor Council until last year and was, at the time of his death, the Northern Territory member of the Grants Commission.

I was personally honoured to have been associated with someone like Jim Gallacher, who made such a great contribution to the Territory and to the lives and education of so many Territorians. He will indeed be missed.

I would like to take the opportunity also to pay tribute to a man who died in tragic circumstances just before the last sittings. I think all honourable members will recall the horrific train smash on the Hawkesbury River. The person I refer to is, of course, Professor John Ward of the University of Sydney. I first met Professor Ward after becoming the Minister for Education. At that time, we were looking at developing our own free-standing university in Darwin, and I met with Professor Ward at the University of Sydney. We were also in the process of finalising arrangements to establish the Menzies School of Health Research. You yourself, Mr Speaker, were involved in that exercise.

At the age of 70, John Ward was not a young man. However, he still had a lot to offer and he will be missed. John Ward's wife and daughter were also killed in the accident. A disaster of this nature is always difficult
for the community to cope with but, having known John Ward since 1984 and having had regular contact with him during that period, it has been even more difficult to accept.

I was fortunate in being able to attend the memorial service for John Ward at the University of Sydney. Many tributes were paid to this man, who had done so much in his life. I place on the record my respect for the man and also offer to the University of Sydney and Professor Ward’s close friends my deepest sympathy for the tragic passing of a man who left his mark on higher education.

Before closing, I would like to refer to the proposed transfer of the therapists from the Department of Education to the Department of Health and Community Services. This matter was raised by the member for Stuart. The reason for the proposed transfer of therapists to the Department of Health and Community Services is that it would provide them with better career opportunities and better access for students. When I initially discussed the matter with the Minister for Health and Community Services, I was concerned that there were many people in communities outside Darwin who needed access to therapists on a regular basis and that this access was not possible under the existing system. We were looking at improving the service. As I had indicated to a number of groups and organisations and, indeed, to the therapists who were working within the Department of Education, the matter would have to be considered at a later time unless I could be assured that the services on offer would continue. As the honourable member has mentioned, the present situation is that the positions are to remain with the Department of Education. However, the matter will be considered from time to time. Any responsible government must look at the career structure of officers and the services which are delivered. We considered the matter in that context and decided that, for the time being, the positions will remain within the Department of Education.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to comment on 2 matters. The first relates to the Mulholland inquiry and an answer given by the Chief Minister this morning in question time. The Chief Minister stated that Mr Mulholland QC was engaged to oversee certain police investigations. Subsequently, Mr Speaker, you allowed me to ask a question on this matter. I asked the Chief Minister about the actual role which Mr Mulholland was playing in these inquiries. I asked whether Mr Mulholland was directing his own inquiries with his own investigators and reviewing earlier inquiries or whether he was, in fact, overseeing work which had already been done or was being done by the Northern Territory Police Force. I gathered from the Chief Minister’s response that he thought that I was being obtuse and difficult. I really was not.

There is a very distinct difference between the 2 roles which I have described. When the Mulholland inquiry was set up, I believe that the community was given a very clear impression that Mr Mulholland would be investigating the content of the allegations made on the 7.30 Report and conducting a review of the investigations that had taken place in relation to those matters. Like many other people in the community, I felt quite at ease with Mr Mulholland undertaking this task and, like others, I have been waiting to see what his findings would be.

As a result of the Chief Minister’s comments this morning, it would appear that Mr Mulholland is not in fact conducting any inquiry at all and that he is not independently reviewing the work that has previously been done. In fact, it would appear that we now have another police investigation or review of work that was done before, with Mr Mulholland
overseeing this process and reviewing it. Mr Speaker, you can paint it any shade of grey you like but, at the end of the day, the matter is still grey and Mr Mulholland is not carrying out the inquiry. He is, in fact, just supervising it in a titular sense.

I would ask whether, at some time tomorrow, the Chief Minister could clarify exactly how the inquiries are being conducted by Mr Mulholland and whether he is in fact supervising and managing, using his own staff to carry out the inquiries, or whether the inquiries are being conducted by Northern Territory police who send the results of their investigations to Mr Mulholland in his office in Brisbane. I think that it is fair to say that, if the latter is the case and Territory police are conducting a review of earlier investigations and seeking Mr Mulholland's imprimatur on such a review, Territory people would be alarmed at such a prospect. If, in fact, Mr Mulholland is conducting the review himself, using his staff and making his own decisions about whom he questions and what questions he asks, I believe that Territorians will be well satisfied. I can say to the Chief Minister with some conviction and some support from the community that any indication that Mr Mulholland was being used to give a stamp of approval to internal reviews of earlier investigations would be regarded very poorly by the Territory community. I would ask the Chief Minister to consider this matter and to make some comments on it tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the second matter I wish to comment on tonight, I would like to refer to the contribution which Helmut Pararoultja made to the development of the oil and gas industry in the Northern Territory. I think it is fair to say that, without Mr Pararoultja's contribution, the oil and gas industry and the mining industry would be much less developed than it is today. I would like to record the fact that, for many years, the then member for Stuart had been urging me and others to ensure that oil and gas production started in central Australia at the Magellan and Mereenie fields. The introduction of the Lands Rights Act by the Fraser government held up any potential development. It was not until self-government that a real opportunity arose for the extraction and development of those resources.

As the responsible minister, I made many trips to Hermannsburg to speak with the traditional owners, particularly Helmut Pararoultja, who was a leader and spokesman for the group. Nothing ever seemed to happen. It was rather like talking to a wall. Eventually, we convened a big meeting at Hermannsburg. The traditional owners came into a room about a quarter the size of this Chamber. I was there with advisers. I recall that Creed Lovegrove was there and that Ross Howie from the Central Land Council was in attendance. We put to the traditional owners the desperate need to get on with developing the resources. We put to the traditional owners the desperate need to get on with developing the resources. When we finished pleading our case, there was a long silence followed by much discussion in the local Aboriginal dialect. Then there was further silence. Suddenly Mr Pararoultja stood up and came over to us. He said: 'We are sick of all of you white blokes coming down here holding meetings and telling us to do this and that. We want to see the oil and gas pumped out of the ground. Why aren't you doing it?' He really gave us the rounds of the kitchen.

That was the first occasion in a long time that I had been at close quarters with a very aggravated Aboriginal person. It appeared to me that Mr Pararoultja was looking to give somebody a good swipe in the process of getting the matter off his chest. Eventually, we said to him: 'Hang on. We have a ream of correspondence here that we would like to have answered by you people. We never get a response from Mr Howie at the land council'. With that, Helmut Pararoultja went for Ross Howie in a way which I would
never have believed possible. The matter was really resolved that afternoon. The Aboriginal owners gave instructions to the Central Land Council there and then. They said that they wanted the agreement signed and that they wanted things to proceed from that day. To be fair, the Central Land Council and the lawyers for the company and the government progressed their negotiations to a point at which, ultimately, gas was pumped into the Alice Springs power station and the first commercial use of that gas occurred.

I often look back on that day at Hermannsburg and I think about the role played by Helmut Pararoultja. If it had not been for his decisiveness, aggression and determination, I often wonder whether we would ever have got the oil and the gas out of the ground. Whatever contribution Mr Pararoultja made to the community that he lived in and the family that he looked after, and to the people of his area, he also made an enormous contribution to the economy of the Northern Territory in ensuring that, ultimately, gas and oil were pumped from the Mereenie and Palm Valley fields.

The results of that day will go down in the history of the Northern Territory. They may not be carved in stone or written up in great history books, but I believe that it is important that his role be recorded in the Hansard record of today, particularly at this time, because the people of central Australia to which he belonged have a man of whom they can be justly proud.

Mr Vale: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.