Mr Speaker MacFarlane took the Chair at 10 am.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Future Power Needs of Darwin

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received from the honourable the Leader of the Opposition a proposal that a definite matter of public importance be debated, namely, the Northern Territory government's failure to present satisfactory plans for the future power needs of Darwin. Is the proposal supported? The proposal is supported. I call on the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ISAACS (Opposition Leader): On 24 April of this year the headline in the Northern Territory News read as follows: 'Major Power-Station Planned - Quick Start to Planning'. This resulted from a government statement in this Assembly that it would start immediate planning for a major new Darwin power-station fired by coal with an option for natural gas. The Chief Minister said in the debate that government planning was responsible. He said that it was working towards the deadline of 1986 and, if a new station was not phased in by then, Darwin people would not have electricity.

The headline in the NT News followed a statement in this Assembly by the Minister for Mines and Energy. He said at the time, and I quote from the Hansard: 'I believe that energy is perhaps the most crucial issue facing the Territory today. For 2 years, it has been the subject of exhaustive research and this government has refused to be stampeded into panic or half-thought-out decisions because the wrong decision perhaps would be disastrous for the Territory in the long term'. They are fine words indeed. After that 2-year program of research, the government announced its long-term plan for Darwin's power supply. The minister was unequivocal about the government's solution. He said: 'Initial planning will concentrate on the development of a 300 megawatt coal-fired steam power-station to be completed by 1993 with a first set being commissioned by 1986'.

The reason for raising this matter of public importance today in the terms set out - that is, the government's failure to present satisfactory plans for the future power needs of Darwin - is that, after making a firm commitment in principle in April of this year and after going to the people and receiving a mandate to build a coal-fired power-station, we now find the minister and the Chief Minister going overboard to push the nuclear power-station argument. The reason we have brought this matter on for debate today is to clear the air once and for all and to set the question of Darwin's power needs on a firm footing rather than up in the clouds or the heady heights of the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Chief Minister.

In the debate which followed the minister's statement in April this year, I pointed out that dependence on coal would have a number of problems. I said that the price of coal was increasing at virtually the same rate as oil and pointed to the fact that, over the previous 12 months, it had doubled in price. I also expressed concern over the availability of supply of coal from interstate sources and cited the problems that we would have with competition from overseas markets. For all these reasons, I said the government was making a great mistake in singling out coal as the major source of our future energy supply.

The Treasurer pointed out that the lead time in building a powerhouse was extensive. He said a powerhouse of the magnitude mentioned by the Minister for Mines and Energy could probably be built in about 4½ to 5 years at a considerable cost but normal lead time would put it into the 6-year bracket. The
Treasurer continued: 'Before starting to even design a powerhouse or select a site, one needs to know exactly, absolutely and firmly what sort of energy source one has for the powerhouse'. The Treasurer suggested that infrastructure costs for coal would not be that high for a single power-station or even a large one. This is an important point. It was obviously in response to our energy policy which we had released a couple of weeks before. I expressed concern about the extensive infrastructure costs of a coal-fired power-station.

The Treasurer said, and I quote from the record: 'We need unloading and storage facilities but the infrastructure costs of coal itself, the extraction from the mines, is already there and they are churning out millions and millions of tonnes for Australian export business'. He went on: 'The infrastructure costs are largely there; we are not paying for them to be installed just for our powerhouse'. Concluding the debate, the Minister for Mines and Energy said, and this is most important in light of what has been said recently: 'All energy has become expensive and will remain expensive. We must deal today with the facts of life, and the facts of life do not leave all that many options open to the Northern Territory. We have to live with the reality that we do not have gas and we do have coal'. The minister also said, and I bet he wants to forget it now: 'We do not have a big enough load base to even consider the concept of nuclear generation in the Northern Territory'. That is what the minister said 7 months ago: 'No nuclear power generation for the Territory'. In April, the government's commitment in principle was clear. It had decided on coal. It recognised the OPEC factor in the price of coal and also that very little could be done about it. It believed that infrastructure costs would not be too high and that a decision needed to be taken immediately.

Less than a month later, the Minister for Mines and Energy again said: 'Coal is the only alternative'. In a news release, he said: 'The construction of a $300m coal-fired power-station' - it had dropped $30m in its estimates at that stage - 'offered economies of scale and would enable the government to keep electricity prices at the lowest possible level'. In his policy speech 2 weeks later, the Chief Minister confirmed the government's commitment to coal: 'Queensland coal will be used to power the new $400m power-station in the Top End'. It had now gone up $100m. Nonetheless, the commitment to coal was there. With the election over and the government returned, coal was still the big energy source in September. On 3 September, while acting as Chief Minister, the Treasurer said that the government was committed to using coal and Territory gas and oil in its energy development program. He was responding to a pro-nuclear power statement from the Mines and Energy Department.

The Treasurer said in a news release: 'Nuclear power is very much a subject for the distant future. The short answer to the establishment of a nuclear power-station in the Territory was no'. That was in September but, a little over 2 months ago, the government managed a complete turnabout.

On Tuesday last, the energy minister made the following points in response to a question without notice: 'Due to circumstances outside our control, we will not be able to build a coal-fired power-station for less than $300m or $400m'. They are exactly the same figures which were quoted by himself and the Chief Minister before the Territory elections. There has been no change in the figures; they are still terribly rubbery. They are a reasonable approximation, give or take $100m. But suddenly the coal-fired station is being called into question. He pointed now to infrastructure costs as being considerably higher than originally anticipated - never mind what the Treasurer told us - but never gave even a hint of what these costs might be.
The Treasurer told us in April that infrastructure was not a problem: 'It is already built by and large. They are mining it - how is it going to cost us?'

Even optimistic. He was talking about getting coal out of the ground and onto the ships. As the minister knows, in terms of infrastructure, the major cost is getting it into the harbour, off the ship and then preparing it for use in Darwin. Infrastructure has gone from 'no problems', in the words of the Treasurer, to a problem significant enough to call the whole project into question.

Having raised the question of where does the minister go, he said: 'Only detailed studies will give us an opportunity to address ourselves to that problem'. What happened to the 2-years' exhaustive research upon which the government's initial firm decision was made? It has not costed the power-station to a figure better than $300m or $400m. It has not undertaken a study of infrastructure requirements or costs and yet it was able to say categorically to us in April: 'Coal is the only answer'.

The minister criticised the Labor Party for failing to cost its program. All of a sudden, the minister is enlightened on the cost implications of using coal as an energy source. He now says: 'Coal is increasing in price as fast as oil'. A shot from the blue out there. He is suddenly aware of what we have been saying and what he must have known for many months. So what do we do? Coal is out; we are going nuclear. The Territory is going to lead the way. Mr Speaker, its arithmetic on coal turned out to be pretty shoddy, pretty shaky, pretty rubbery. I wonder what its arithmetic on nuclear power is. If it is anything like that one, we had better scrap it immediately.

However, it goes on. On the ABC yesterday, the minister said: 'We now have to plan power-stations on a 20-30 year time frame'. Didn't we need to have that same kind of framework 5 months ago or has that changed as well? Didn't the 2 years of exhaustive research undertaken by it which the minister referred to in his April statement have just that point as a basic premise? Didn't it then have a 20-30 year time scale? The minister told his ABC interviewer that, in his view, a coal power-station would be built smaller than anticipated and only as a short-term answer. Apparently we would have a number - he did not say how many - of these gas turbine jet aircraft engines dotted around Darwin churning out juice. It is liquid gold. Yet that was going to be the solution to our power needs in the short term and he was ever hopeful that we would always have the nuclear option open to us. The minister went on in his interview: 'Truly, you cannot provide powerhouses in 5 or 19-year time frames'. That is despite the fact that he had just done so in relation to a small coal-fired power-station. He didn't tell us how big it will be or how long it will last us. He just says: 'Oh well, we have had a look at this; we are going to build a smaller one'.

The minister said: 'The nuclear power-station has not been finally costed but what has become obvious to everybody is that the only form of generating capacity that you have which can tie or restrict or limit the cost of fuel escalation at the powerhouse is nuclear'. There you are. He is at it again: a new power source for the Territory without any sort of costing except that, according to him, the cost of uranium will not increase. That is a rash statement - rash for one very good reason. Hasn't the minister reread the statement he made to the Assembly in April? Let me remind him of those words again in view of his statement now that the costs of uranium, of nuclear fuel, are not going to increase: 'Might I advise the honourable member' - that is me - 'that every energy base that is known to man today is in some way tied to the cost of oil from the Middle East. Coal is but one of them and uranium is
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another'. The minister said: 'Nuclear is great because you get a supply contract for 20 years at a fixed price. Coal means only a 10-year contract. Then we are to use his brilliant phrase: 'Flying by the seat of your pants'. Well, won't we be doing that in 20 years' time?

The Chief Minister pushed and encouraged from overseas. He went to Vienna, the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency, but could not get an appointment to see the people there. 'It was a public holiday', he said. I do not know when the Chief Minister arrived there. I would have thought that, given his willingness to get the Territory involved in the nuclear power cycle, he would have made it his business - and he should have made it his business - to see the people at the headquarters of IAEA. He says that the Australian Embassy did not want to help him. I would like to know what the Australian Embassy says about that. It would be very interesting to get an answer on whether it was saying that it would not help the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory to get an interview with the headquarters of IAEA. Frankly, I think it is preposterous. I do not believe it.

Mr B. Collins: They didn't know who he was.

Mr ISAACS: They knew who he was; they knew exactly who he was. I would think that any Australian Embassy, whether it be for the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition or anybody from the Northern Territory who wanted an interview with the IAEA in Vienna, would organise it. I just cannot believe the Chief Minister, who sends telexes around as if they are going out of style, was not able to impress upon the Embassy in Vienna the importance and urgency of his meeting with those people. I just do not believe the Chief Minister tried hard enough. Nonetheless, the government is pushing us into nuclear power. We heard this morning from the minister that it does not have a site picked out.

So there we have it. We have the Treasurer, when he was Acting Chief Minister, committed to a statement in principle by his own government in April. He said no to nuclear power in just September of this year. We have a situation where the government chops and changes its view about nuclear power. In April the minister said that nuclear costs, just like any other costs, are rising as oil prices rise. Now he tells the ABC: 'The great thing about nuclear power is its fixed price'. He admits that he does not know what it is going to cost. In answer to questions last week, it is obvious that the Territory government has not even talked to the federal government about costs. It does not know what it is going to cost. It has not sought authorisation from the federal government about nuclear power. Today we have the final answer: 'We do not have a site picked out'. Remember that our time scale is June 1981. We have all the contradictions, all the unanswered questions yet we have a perilous situation, it appears, where we have to make a decision by June of next year.

Mr Speaker, we have been urging the government to take up seriously the question of natural gas. I want to be brief on this. The Minister for Mines and Energy made the point in April that the coal-fired power-station in Darwin would have an option to convert to natural gas. That is a commonsense approach. We have coal and we can see the problems. If we can get onto natural gas, let us keep that option open for as long as we possibly can. Everybody knows that natural gas in the Bonaparte Gulf and onshore in the Keep River area will not just be used for Darwin. Its major supply will be to the export industry. When the minister talks about infrastructure costs being imposed on the people of Darwin, he knows that he is not telling the complete truth because he knows that the bulk of the infrastructure costs will be apportioned to the export market and the other offshoot industries that will come from it. It is
important that the government takes its head out of the clouds. It is impor-
tant that, once and for all, we put to rest this nonsense about our going
nuclear. It might assist a few zany editorialists but we are talking about
power for Darwin and power for Darwin's industries. I would ask the minister,
in his response to this matter of public importance, to bury once and for all
the garbage about nuclear power. They must get it out of their heads; it was
not an option in April and it certainly is not an option now.

Mr TUXWORTH (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest
to what the Leader of the Opposition had to say. I would like to begin by
saying that, if ever nonsense was being spoken, it was being spoken by the
Leader of the Opposition when he spoke about using gas that has not been found,
gas that does not have a cost and gas that cannot be delivered into a power-
station in Darwin for the benefit of cheap power for the people of the
Northern Territory. If you have a recipe to cook a pig, the first thing you
must do is catch the pig. I will just spend a moment on this preposterous gas
proposition because it is one of the most fraudulent propositions that any
politician has ever put to the people of the Northern Territory. It is fraudu-
lent in the sense that it is lulling people into a false sense of security and
into a belief that there is something cheap out there waiting to be brought in
and that it is only a matter of somebody with determination putting a hole in
the ground.

I wish that that was the point at issue because, if that is all that is
required, we could overcome that problem tomorrow. The problem is a little
harder than that. All we have off the north coast of the Northern Territory
is a gas find. That is all it is. The drillers put a hole down and gas came
out of it. Anybody in the exploration game would tell you that that is most
encouraging and a good reason to put another hole down but that is about all
we have. I too am very keen to see the use of gas in the Northern Territory
but there are a couple of hard, cold realities with which we have to deal.
The first is that, with today's costs of finding the gas and bringing it to
Darwin, it would not be possible to bring the gas for less cost than we are
putting oil through Stokes Hill. Given that we brought the gas in, I cannot
see the Commonwealth subsidising gas for the people of the Northern Territory
although it is committed to subsidising the oil. Given that the gas were
there and all we had to do was find it, we would need 7 years' hard work to
drill the holes and build the pipeline to the shore - 7 years that we
don't have - and then we would need to know how much of it we had and how we were
to pay for it.

Of all of the issues that I will canvass today, the most ridiculous
proposition that anybody can put forward is to fire a powerhouse with a feed-
stock that does not exist. It is as simple as that. What sort of irresponsible
people would be prepared to stand up and say: 'We told you so. If you had
used gas all along, it would not be a problem'. If we even consider gas at
this stage, there will be nothing but problems because we do not have any gas.
While I would be the first one to give consideration to the possibility of
using gas in a powerhouse if the price was right and if the supply was right,
that choice is not available to me and nor is it available to the Leader of
the Opposition nor the Australian Labor Party.

The reality is that, by 1986, we have to double the power supply to Darwin
and we have certain options open to us to achieve that end. The most likely
option is the establishment of a coal-fired station. I have never said that
the coal-fired station proposal has gone and that we will have a nuclear
plant. The Leader of the Opposition is carrying on as though we will have a
nuclear plant on every corner. I might be wrong in what I read into his
speech this morning but I think that his attack on the government's power

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policy is not so much an attack on the policy as the first shots in the Labor Party's anti-nuclear crusade.

Mr B. Collins: Not that again, Ian.

Mr TUXWORTH: Time will tell.

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with the issue of the power supply in Darwin by taking all the emotion out of the matter and examining the alleged contradictions and the quotations that have been used for various arguments. We need an expansion of the power supply in this community by 1986. We need to eliminate the subsidy because it is not a reasonable proposition that any community continue to be mendicant for its power source and survival. In that is embodied the need to get away from oil. As another parameter, we need to provide for the people of the Northern Territory, and Darwin in particular, an economic power source for which the consumer can afford to pay and which industry can afford to use. When I say 'industry', I am talking about all the support industries that would look at the Northern Territory as a potential place to develop and expand and those industries that might walk away from us simply because of the cost of our power. They are not necessarily the great giants in industry but there are many support industries that would immediately ask: 'What is the power source and what is the cost?'

Another matter that we need to take into consideration is the power needs for 1986 for the community as compared with the needs and the potential of the community in the year 2010 or 2020. A further parameter is the issue of local resources or feedstock source. The honourable member has mentioned the phantom gas supply. We would need to consider whether we have coal deposits and whether those deposits are of adequate grade and sufficient supply to provide us with feedstock for a powerhouse. Hydro is another option. Mr Speaker. Mount Nancar, the Katherine and Ord Rivers are just 3 sources of supply.

Given all of those parameters, we must take some decisions that will provide us with the power we need at the price we can afford to pay. I would like to say that I do not think that there is any future for the people of Darwin or the people of the Northern Territory as a whole building their growth and their future on the goodwill of anybody else in another place for their continued existence. What will happen in 1985 when the government of the day in Canberra says: 'Gentlemen, the subsidy is finished. We wish you well in your endeavours. If you have trouble funding your electricity operation, that is a bit of bad luck'.

Mr B. Collins: Grant Tambling will fix that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, this is quite serious and deserves more thought than the honourable member just gave it.

We have not only to build a power-station and a power supply sufficient for the next 20 or 30 years, we have to supply the power at a price which the community can afford to pay. The Department of Mines and Energy and the Northern Territory Electricity Commission are the 2 technical agencies that have been charged with the responsibility of bringing to the government's attention all the options that are open to it. Herein lies the problem. When the Department of Mines and Energy said that it was compiling advice on a nuclear station, it was alleged that something was being hidden from the people and from the press because the government was looking at it. When I say the government, I mean the government agencies. I knew they were looking at it. It is their job to advise the government on the options that are open to it.
It would be a dereliction of duty if they did not do it. These 2 organisations in the government, with all the worries and the criteria they have before them, have been building their planning around certain assessments and projections of infrastructure costs, feedstock costs, interest rates, inflation rates and a hundred other considerations. The proposals have been so complex that it has been necessary to computerise the program so that, with any one option, you can feed in the varying information to project 20 and 30 years down the line to predict where the people of the day will be if certain cost escalations continue at a given rate or if power is or is not available. The manpower to do that manually would be enormous. But with the use of the technology available to us today, it is able to be done relatively quickly.

In the compilation of all of these things, there is one thing that has come to the notice of the people working in that field: some options are now not as outlandish as was originally thought because of the changing situation in the world and there are some forecasts in the wind relating to future projection and supply and cost problems that would cause responsible people to think hard about some of the options that are open to them. One of the options that has been put by the technical people advising us is that the nuclear possibility is a little more real than we had originally thought. Because it was becoming a reality, I thought the logical thing to do if I wanted to be honest and open about it was to say that it is an option. With that view in mind, I was happy to sit down with my technical support advisers and go through the issues with the press so that they could be well briefed so that, if it broke, at least they would have a background knowledge of what was going on. I do not regret that. I think it was a good exercise because everybody learnt a lot from it.

The Leader of the Opposition, who is leading the anti-nuclear push on this occasion, is making the assumption in the public mind that there is automatically going to be a nuclear station simply because it has been floated and proposed as an option. I think that is totally irresponsible and possibly as preposterous as his gas proposition.

Another issue that I would like to come back to is the one of supply. As we are all aware, the oil situation has not improved at all. The demands now in the world by generating authorities for coal - which coal miners and governments of countries cannot supply - are absolutely enormous. Irrespective of the price of coal, I think we must have a good hard look at the capacity of the world, not just Australia, to supply the coal that is needed for energy.

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

Mr ROBERTSON: I move that the honourable member's time be extended.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition argued that, because so many various things have been said relating to the provision of power in the Northern Territory, the government is in conflict and does not really have a policy. It is just hopping from foot to foot. I would reject that wholeheartedly. Because I said that I had not considered any sites for a possible nuclear power-station, I am to be flogged in a public place. All I have done so far is to provide an option for the consideration of the community and the honourable members. It is an option that is becoming real because of the changing circumstances. When we - and I say 'we' as meaning the Department of Mines and Energy and NTEC - first considered nuclear power, our considerations were
based on the size of scale of a nuclear powerhouse to get efficiency - and you are looking at a minimum of 900 megawatts to get power down to 2 cents a unit which is what you would hope to get power for in the existing circumstances - and the capacity of technology to provide a small unit that would give you a similar cost rating. The truth is that technology and the small units cannot give us a comparative costing.

Mr Collins: It decreases with size.

Mr TUXWORTH: The honourable member says that, as the size decreases, the cost goes up. When you consider the cost proposed today in nuclear generating units is 6 cents a unit of kilowatt hours for the provision of power, it is a bit different to 16. It is not as good as 2 but at 6 we could live without subsidy and have the basis to encourage industry to come to the Northern Territory because the cost of power would be relatively comparable with other parts.

The honourable member also threw in some wild accusations about how the Minister for Mines and Energy said that we would have turbine stations like the one at Berrimah dotted all over Darwin to supply a nuclear station. If ever anybody was being loose with the truth, I guess the honourable member was in the way he portrayed that. Let me just touch on that particular point because it is very interesting just how economics and circumstances change. The Berrimah turbine was built primarily as a reserve for the power-station at Stokes Hill so that, in the event of weather damage whereby Stokes Hill was unable to provide for the northern suburbs, Berrimah could cut in. I accept that Berrimah power-station is a very expensive unit to run. We do not run it any longer than we have to for obvious reasons. But one of the interesting things to come out of this is that, since we have had the Berrimah station available to use as a backup that can cut in minutes after Stokes Hill goes off the board, we have been able to reduce the spinning reserve at Stokes Hill to the effect that we save $1.3m a year in fuel. In about 7 years, it will have paid for itself even if it never turns a wheel. We ought to give a little more consideration to some of the criticisms that are being tossed around.

I did say earlier, and I still think it is true, that all energy costs are relative. If oil goes, coal will follow, uranium will follow, they all follow. One of the things that I was criticised for by the honourable member was for suggesting that we could get an uranium contract for 20 years but that the price would not go up. Again, that is being a little loose with the spoken word and I would say to the honourable member that uranium, coal and gas in the year 2000 will all be related to the cost of fossil fuels. One of the things that is important is that, if we can get a contract now for our feedstocks at a fixed price, it does not matter what all the rest do in the next 10 years. We would have our contract and our price. But it is becoming increasingly more difficult to get long-term contracts for coal. You certainly cannot get a long-term contract for gas that you have not got. I still believe that, if you sign today or in 1985 for the uranium feedstock at a fixed price, in the year 2010 or 2015 it will still be the same price and it will be considerably less than signing for a contract in those later years.

I am rather interested in the attack that was brought on by the opposition because I think it is not a considered, reasoned approach to the problem. I do not think that Darwin power supply is a political problem; it is above politics. The power supply issue will be there when we are all dead and gone. It behoves all of us to work towards a solution that will provide the people over a 30 or 40-year period with the power supply they can afford. The opposition is not taking a constructive approach. It is a bucket-tipping
exercise. The Leader of the Opposition's gas proposal is incredibly naive in the sense that any reasonable person would know that you cannot use something that you do not have.

The Leader of the Opposition has already eliminated the coal option. I would just refer honourable members to the opposition's energy policy which was announced earlier this year. There is no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition discounted the coal option. He said: 'The proven natural gas reserves are already sufficient to meet the Territory's needs well into the next century'. Where are they? The opposition pretends to be self-righteous and responsible in this matter. In all the time I have been handling this portfolio, I cannot recall any correspondence from the opposition seeking clarification of any particular issue relating to the energy scene or the need to use one particular source over another. I understand that no request has been made of NTec. I cannot speak for the Department of Mines and Energy because I did not have a chance to ask them this morning.

You have heard the questions that are asked of me in this Assembly relating to this issue. They are not questions of concern which are searching for answers or alternatives. It is political one-up-manship all the way. No responsibility. We had a budget debate last week that went on for 3 days. My portfolio, one that is the most crucial item in the Northern Territory today, did not rate a mention. The member for Victoria River raised the question about the need to continue with consultants' fees for a coal-fired station. That was the only question that was raised.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the Minister for Mines and Energy has set me an impossible task this morning. I cannot really think of anything to reply to. If you could make any sense out of anything the honourable member said this morning, Mr Speaker, then you are a better man than I am. Apart from the predictable charge that the opposition was simply attacking nuclear power again, the minister did not address himself at all to any of the inconsistencies that had been pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition.

Before I get on with some specific matters, I would like to say this. There is a reason why the opposition has not, to date, raised any queries concerning the government's plans, if you can call them that, to solve the power needs for Darwin. The reason is that there has been a flood over the last couple of months both from the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy and from the honourable Chief Minister of totally and utterly contradictory statements concerning the power supply for Darwin. I can do no more than say this, Mr Speaker: I would ask members of the public who are seriously concerned with the power supply for Darwin to place all of the statements made in the Hansard by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy alongside their press statements and ABC interviews only as late as yesterday. What it adds up to is absolute nonsense. The Minister for Mines and Energy knows it and that is why he completely failed to address it during his reply to the Leader of the Opposition.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out - and I do not want to waste the time of the Assembly in going over it again - the Acting Chief Minister of the Northern Territory made a categorical statement in September this year that the short answer to a nuclear option for the power needs of the Northern Territory was no. Could you get a clearer answer than that? Only a totally one-eyed observer would deny, after examining the press releases of the minister and the Chief Minister over the last couple of months and particularly the ABC interview yesterday, that all options but nuclear appear to have been thrown out of the window completely.
The extraordinary part about this performance is that the minister says that they have not costed the nuclear power-station — although we on this side of the Assembly have a rough idea of how much these things cost — they have not looked at the siting of it and they have not discussed its feasibility or even its possibility with the federal government. They have not done any of these things and yet, during the interview that I heard the other day — and I have it taped — the minister said that he hoped to make a final decision on our options by June next year, 7 months away. That is an absolutely irresponsible statement which anyone in his right mind would discount immediately.

That brings us back to the fiasco where the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy could not tell the difference between natural gas and LPG. I still remember that it was most embarrassing for the government. We find them now in exactly the same kind of throw-away-line situation in which they are seriously proposing the expenditure of upwards of $1 billion. The minister knows full well that the setting up of a nuclear power-station does not just require power-station costs but all sorts of other costs as well. They have not studied its feasibility, they have not costed it, they have not initiated discussions with the federal government, they have not looked at sites and yet the minister said, in an interview just the other day, that he hoped to give a final decision on this option by June next year. That is a fairly extraordinary performance.

The opposition in this Assembly is a responsible opposition. Any responsible opposition would have to be a little bit concerned when we have 3 senior members of the government's front bench — the Chief Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Mines and Energy — in the space of 7 short months, making completely contradictory statements. I might add again, Mr Speaker, that the honourable minister is fully aware of what absolute nonsense those statements make when you line them up next to each other. That is the reason he failed to address any of them this morning in his reply.

I happen to know a little bit about one feasibility study that was carried out on the establishment of a nuclear power-station. I wonder if the minister is aware of it. Perhaps the federal government can give him some information on it. I know the Australian Atomic Energy Commission conducted a feasibility study on the establishment of a nuclear power-station in Sydney. In fact, the proposed site was Jervis Bay. They were investigating the feasibility of constructing a nuclear power-station which would feed into the largest electricity grid of Australia. It was thrown out of the window because it was an absolutely uneconomical proposition.

Mr Perron: How long ago?

Mr B. COLLINS: Obviously, the Treasurer must be aware of this study. I wonder if he would make the details of that study available to the public.

The Western Australian government employed an expert from the United States and honourable members may recall this gentleman being interviewed on ABC television last year. That gentleman visited Western Australia to examine the feasibility of establishing a nuclear power-station there. He discounted it. I remember some of the points which he made during his television interview. One of them was raised the other day by the Leader of the Opposition. As the minister knows full well, nuclear power-stations are designed to be most effective when they are plugged into a national grid. In the United States, the maximum efficiency that power-stations have reached is 50%. It is even less in other parts of the world. The minister should also be well aware that the larger a nuclear power-station becomes, the more efficient it becomes, and vice versa. The smaller the power-station is, the more the cost and the
inefficiency escalates. The minister knows full well that nuclear power-stations spend much of their time generating nothing except trouble. That has certainly been the track record in the United States and I have endless piles of information from the government accounting office which is rather worried about the economics. Perhaps the minister could have a look at the costs to the utility company when it had to buy its electricity, in the short term, from other utilities because of the Three Mile Island problem.

The minister knows that there are problems of waste disposal. That is an interesting point in itself. The minister said the other day that this problem has been solved in nuclear power-stations. I wish the minister would go to the United States and tell them that it has been solved because, at the moment they are going through a process of what they call consolidation in nuclear power-stations where they store their spent rods in ponds. They are now packing them closer together and there is a lot of arithmetic attached to this to avoid this thing called 'critical mass'. They are running out of space in these ponds so rapidly that they are having to move the rods closer together to make more room for them. As the minister knows full well, according to that body in the United States - a non-political body that goes from one government to the next, the government accounting office - the problems of solving waste disposal at nuclear power-stations are not solved by any means and, in fact, to quote again from that government accounting office document: 'They are not likely to be for at least the next 10 years'. So this throw-away line of the minister's that disposal problems at nuclear power-stations - what to do with the rods after they come out of the station - are solved is just absolutely palpable nonsense and the minister knows it. There are the cost problems associated with that.

There are the problems of buying the fuel stock. One of the comments that really amused me from the honourable minister the other day was that, because we produce the uranium in the Northern Territory, we are in a position to have some control over the price of our fuel stock. I would ask the honourable minister how much control has the Northern Territory government got over the price of bauxite and how much control has the Northern Territory government got over the cost of manganese. The multi-national companies that are producing this uranium will decide as they do now. It is the supply and demand on the world market that determines the cost. They will have news for the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy and it will be all bad.

The opposition in this Assembly did not seek to raise this matter for political reasons at all. We are worried, as many people are worried, about the totally inconsistent and contradictory statements of 3 members of the front bench over the last 7 months which, when you stand them side by side, add up to nonsense and the minister knows it. We failed to get an answer to those contradictions this morning. On the question of natural gas, we welcomed, as the minister would remember, his own option of having the Darwin powerhouse designed to use natural gas as an option. To quote again from what the honourable member said: 'The government carefully considered the possibility of an immediate commitment to the use of natural gas for electricity generation but an economic natural gas source for Darwin is yet to be proved. Natural gas resources in offshore sections of the Bonaparte Gulf Basin are possibly large enough to meet the anticipated demand for electrical energy in Darwin and the Top End for up to 70 years. However, much additional work needs to be done before a reasonably reliable calculation on reserves can be made ...'.

I would like to quote from another document. These pieces of information are the only things that the opposition has to go on. We occasionally get these little crumbs swept to us off the table of the government. This is from the Joint Northern Territory Electricity Commission Western Australia State
Electricity Commission Study into the Ord:

Section C - Gas Discoveries:

Since this economic feasibility study was commenced, a firm statement has been received by NTBC upon the availability of natural gas, particularly in the offshore Bonaparte Gulf area of Western Australia. The existence of the proposed Ord-Darwin transmission line with some spare capacity would facilitate transmission of this energy to Darwin. Proven plus possible reserves associated with Bonaparte 2 Well are sufficient to generate 17-megawatt hours for 9 years. Further exploration over the next 5 years may increase these reserves by a factor of 5 or more. The authorities intend to investigate the development of a generator plan based on this gas field. Preliminary estimates indicate a capital cost of $15m for a 30-megawatt turbine, a transmission line and a substation for connection to the Ord-Darwin transmission line. Petroleum permit holders have indicated a base price for gas that would lead to a cost of electrical energy of approximately 2 cents per kilowatt hour. The accelerated exploration program being undertaken by the permit holders indicates that energy from this gas field would be available by the time the proposed Ord-Darwin transmission line is constructed.

Mr Speaker, I would suggest that, when we have made available to us documents such as that, when we have statements made to us by the government that they themselves are going to ensure that the proposed Darwin power station has a natural gas option, it is perfectly proper and reasonable that the opposition should talk about natural gas. Although, as I pointed out before, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy do not seem to be able to tell the difference between that and LPG.

I am very disturbed that the government, which only 2 months ago in the person of the Acting Chief Minister, ruled out the possibility of nuclear power for the Northern Territory in a categorical statement, is now pushing it for all it is worth. That same government has admitted that it has not costed it, it has not looked at sites and it has not even initiated discussions with the federal government as to whether it is even going to be possible. That same government has indicated that it wishes to make a decision on this, quoting the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy, 'as early as June next year' - 7 months hence. I would say that we have a lot to be concerned about. I would ask that, if there are any more members from the opposite side who intend to speak in this debate, perhaps they could address themselves to the problem that was raised. It is not an anti-nuclear problem but a problem on which 3 members of the government have consistently contradicted each other over a short period of 7 months. I wonder if any other honourable member on the other side of the Assembly could address that problem because that is the problem the opposition raised this morning.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem made a point that the matter was not raised as an anti-uranium debate. Perhaps he should be liaising with his Leader of the Opposition a bit more closely because he finished with an appeal that we bury the very question of uranium. In fact, they have not said very much of substance in this entire debate this morning. It appears to be somewhat of a waste of time. We have heard a lot of the usual distortions that we have come to expect from the opposition. If it wanted an anti-uranium debate, then why did it not propose one? The debate is obviously just a political exercise.

The naivety of its thinking was summed up pretty neatly by a question from the member for Sanderson this morning who asked whether the Northern
Territory was considering off-peak rates. In a situation where we are generating electricity in the Territory 100% from oil, as most people would know, the more you generate, the more money you lose. It would be insane for a government to propose off-peak rates in that situation. Off-peak rates are quite clearly a way of getting more money for an electricity commission where it has spinning-reserve capacity and seeks to use it up during periods when electricity is not consumed to any great extent. In the Territory, of course, we need to turn off every generator we possibly can as soon as demand diminishes. That situation will stay as long as we are on oil.

The Leader of the Opposition rightly pointed out that the government had made a formal statement in this Assembly earlier this year on where it was proposing to go at least in the next few years as far as the future supply of electricity for the Northern Territory was concerned. The opposition's response to that statement was that it had another alternative - it is its right to put it forward - and that was gas. Whilst it feels that our statement may have been irresponsible, we claim that its statement was even more so because, as the Minister for Mines and Energy has pointed out, it still has not got the message even today that the gas has not been proven. I wonder if it has ever stopped to think, within its own policy, what it would do if the gas simply was not there. It has its fingers crossed. It says that we should build a gas-fired power-station because it is the only way to go. It hopes that there are sufficient reserves in the Bonaparte Gulf and anywhere else it could dig it up. We all hope that that is the case. But it just has not thought about what would happen if that was not the case. The opposition must remember, as has been admitted, that for any large-scale gas discoveries in the Northern Territory to be brought on tap would involve a substantial export industry. We would not be alone in that field of competition. We have the North-west Shelf to compete with. We have also Indonesia to compete with which has fairly substantial supplies of surplus gas from the enormous, by world standards, gas production in that country. The Northern Territory is to come in there within 6 years, first prove the reserves, extract them and then set up a great international export industry in gas so that we can obtain a bit on the side to generate electricity in the Northern Territory. That is the option that has been put forward. It is fairly unrealistic but not uncharacteristic.

Much has been made about a statement I made. I cannot think of the exact words but honourable members did read it out. I believe it was in answer to a question from a reporter. I was Acting Chief Minister and I sought to set the record straight by saying, and I stand by it now, that the government had not made a decision to build a nuclear power-station. It has been repeated here again today. I did not rule out the question in my response. I sought to put the matter in perspective because I felt that people may have misunderstood what the head of the Department of Mines and Energy was reported as saying. I am not sure whether he was reported correctly. I said that it was not an option in the short term and, by 1986, I still do not think that it would be an option. We would have to move fairly fast to have a nuclear power-station generating electricity by 1986. We are not that unrealistic. There obviously has to be an interim measure.

The Leader of the Opposition in the debate this morning - and I think it is part of the whole political ploy - stated that the Northern Territory government is now committed to nuclear power generation. That is not so. As he and others pointed out, there have not been any site investigations. We have not tabled information in this Assembly that is contrary to the earlier statement that was made. The opposition sought to draw all sorts of strings from press reports and say that we are committed but we have not done our homework properly. It is missing the point.
The member for Arnhem reminded us that he believes that they are a responsible opposition. I guess that we do have to be reminded that someone thinks that way. I am not sure of the timing - it would have to be 10 years or more ago - but there was an investigation in NSW into the potential of a nuclear power plant. We are talking about an area which has probably one of the world's largest coal reserves. That must create a disincentive for NSW to go nuclear. In addition, a study was undertaken at a time when I doubt that anyone in the world, except perhaps a few Arabs, could have foreseen the escalation of oil prices that was to occur. The situation is changing all the time but the NSW coal reserves are not changing significantly even though they are exporting coal.

This responsible opposition proposes a policy which, without considering the Northern Territory situation, absolutely rules out nuclear power. They will not consider it irrespective of what situation the Northern Territory is in yet they consider that to be a responsible policy. They do not even regard it as an option. It is these very policies which will not only keep the opposition in opposition for donkey's years but will stop them from being a credible force in Australia. Because they exclude uranium, they are stuck with a policy of having to scramble around for any other possible options irrespective of what price it will cost the community. They simply cannot consider what is likely to be, in the long term and on a large scale, the cheapest way the world has of producing electricity unless you have a geographical situation whereby a very large scale hydro scheme is available to you. That is certainly not the situation in the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition concluded his address and summed up the debate by a grandstanding plea for the Northern Territory government to leave the issue of nuclear power generation alone. To quote his words, he said: 'bury it'. He is obviously afraid of it. It may be the only option that we have in the long term but shallow thinking has led the opposition to oppose almost every important project in the Territory for the last few years. It began with self-government itself; it opposed that very strongly and still does from time to time. It opposes most of the initiatives of this government. It is an opposition which has stated that it will oppose for the sake of opposition. I recall that very clearly as one of the member for Sanderson's points in her maiden speech in this Assembly.

The opposition has taken a number of press releases over the last couple of months and has blown them up and distorted them to try to demonstrate that the government has some sort of conflict within its own ranks. That is not the case. It says that we are not only committed now but we are poorly committed because we have not selected a site for a nuclear station. This is the Leader of the Opposition's distorted interpretation, not ours. Forcing the issue of this debate today appears to me to be trying to stifle debate on the option of a nuclear power plant for the Northern Territory because, if it can get it wrapped up, signed and sealed with full stops on it that the government is not considering it is an option, well then it can rest easy because it will have the Northern Territory locked into that mindless ALP policy of not considering nuclear power under any circumstances. He will not get that satisfaction here today.

I have a small point but perhaps an important one. If the Leader of the Opposition cares to go through the statements made by the Chief Minister, to my recollection there was no statement in which he has ever indicated that the Northern Territory decided to go nuclear. In fact, he was reinforcing a point, as I understood it, that it was one of the options that should be very closely considered by the Territory. Indeed, it will be closely considered by the Northern Territory government.
DEBATES - Tuesday 25 November 1980

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 55)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill is designed to further the government's objective of satisfying housing demands in the Northern Territory by the early release of its residential lots. Section 323 of the Local Government Act prohibits the selling, offering for sale or leasing of subdivided land within a municipality for residential or business purposes at any time prior to the completion of roads and drainage works. This bill envisages that the prohibition should be retained and that a penalty of $1,000 and a maximum daily penalty of $100 be prescribed for breaches of the prohibition.

The bill also seeks to empower the Minister for Lands and Housing to give his consent to offering or pre-contracting for sale. The effect would be that the relevant minister would have power to grant partial exemption from the prohibition where he is satisfied that adequate safeguards exist. The necessity for private subdividers to be able to arrange sales of land as early as possible should be apparent to members of the Assembly. Public demand for residential allotments is high. This demand for land is really a demand for housing. The amendments proposed here seek to allow this demand to be satisfied in the shortest possible time. In achieving this aim, the amendments are drafted to ensure that no unnecessary risk is borne by intending purchasers or by the government which will guarantee the completion of works to the satisfaction of the relevant municipal council in the event of default by the developer. To this end, adequate securities will be required of the applicant developer.

The primary intention of section 323 has been preserved and, indeed, enhanced by the addition of a substantial penalty which protects the interests of municipal councils by ensuring that construction standards meet the predetermined criteria. Section 323 of the Local Government Act, in its present form, has proven to be an impediment to the forward contracting for the sale of residential land and the proposed amendment seeks only to remove this barrier.

This bill proposes to create a situation in the Northern Territory in which both sellers and buyers of land may carry out forward planning in confidence, a practice which is common elsewhere in Australia but which is leading to considerable difficulties in the Northern Territory as persons who wish to pre-contract for land which is being turned off, particularly in the northern suburbs of Darwin, are unable to do so lawfully. I believe that the government should move quickly to amend this situation and put us on a footing that is equal to that of the other states.

Debate adjourned.

PROHIBITED DRUGS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 52)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Health): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill will allow the use of heroin to relieve pain in those who are terminally ill when other pain killers are no longer effective. This change
to the legislation is in response to an Australia-wide pressure from the medical profession as it is well recognised that, where a patient is terminally ill and in extreme pain, heroin may provide the only relief. This bill restricts the use of heroin very carefully. The patient must be terminally ill and in extreme pain. Only the Chief Medical Officer may authorise the use of the drug in these circumstances and stocks of the drug for such patients will be controlled most carefully and may be acquired on the authority of the Chief Medical Officer.

The bill specifies that only diamorphine hydrochloride can be used and all other salts of diacetylmorphine are prohibited by existing legislation in any case. The bill will enable relief to be given in terminally ill cases such as those suffering from cancer. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1980-81
(Serial 25)

Continued from 20 November 1980.

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, it would seem as if the opposition, in addressing itself to the budget before it, has taken upon itself - as is its prerogative - to select 2 principal areas for attack. I suppose it is a problem for me in that both of them fall into my area of responsibility. Therefore, let us look at the merit of what the opposition has had to say and the realities under the Appropriation Bill. I would suggest that the reality and the opposition's version are miles apart.

The opposition dealt with 2 areas. The first area was that of education. Members of the public who would care to read the debates or the press coverage which was rather minimal - that is understandable having regard to the waffle spoken - would be under the impression that the cuts were in education rather than adjustments within very small areas. Mr Speaker, like most of the areas of the humanities for which government is responsible, there seems to be an underlying view held by the ALP that any area of education is a totally sacred cow. It feels that it is beyond the competence of any government, particularly a CLP government, to review, to weigh up and to evaluate in accordance with the merits of the circumstances of time in which government is dealing with these matters. Really what has happened is that this government - and the Dhupuma College exercise was an example of it - has, with the settling down after self-government, had a chance to look at where its money is being spent and to examine the merit of that expenditure.

If one does an analysis - and I do not intend to tire the Assembly by going back through data and details of figures because one can use data and figures for a multitude of purposes and a multitude of interpretations - one would see that that area of expenditure generally defined as division 2 or administrative expenses in the field of education has vastly outstripped the 2 essential components of budgetary planning; that is, inflation and growth. Mr Speaker, when that occurs, one must stop and start to take stock. We have a position where the administrative expenses at school level, and indeed across the whole range of my portfolio, have vastly outstripped what one would reasonably expect to be required for the purpose of those 2 essential components of budgetary planning. It would be an irresponsible government that did not take stock of that position and do what it could, as a government responsible to the taxpayer, to try to find out why. Within that administrative expenditure also are electricity and water.
It is our luck to be gifted with hindsight and there would not be a member in this Assembly who would not have seen tremendous wastage of the taxpayer's money on almost every urban school throughout the Northern Territory. We have all seen, as I have seen, sprinklers spraying water onto the grassed areas of schools during the heaviest periods of rainfall. My own area in Alice Springs is as guilty as anywhere else in this regard. All of this costs money.

We have heard from the honourable member for Arnhem that neither of these matters are within the competence of the school to control. They have never been within the power of a school to control because the schools have never been given a controlling function in respect of those 2 areas. We ask ourselves who is responsible for this shameless waste of the taxpayer's resources. Coupled with that, we have had, over the last few years, requests from some school councils to take over responsibility for, among other things, the physical management of their schools. I would like to see this encouraged and fostered. Who is in a better position to monitor the activities of a contractor for grounds maintenance or the utilisation of electricity within a school? Certainly people sitting in the T & G Building in Darwin are not and, most certainly, the people sitting in what my colleague might call the 'Mines and Energy House' in Gap Road Alice Springs are not either. Surely it is the school council which is in a position to observe this sort of waste. It is not a matter of imposing a liability. It is more a matter of going back to the school council and saying that, since it has expressed a desire to properly manage the finances of the school, what better way to do it than to include the elements of services in the appropriations of that school.

That was construed by the honourable member for Sanderson in particular and, oddly enough, taken up by the honourable member for Nightcliff as meaning that there were no sums of money set aside in this budget for those functions within schools. I find it extremely surprising that the person who has demonstrated in this Assembly, above all others on the opposition, that she does her homework very thoroughly, should be so prepared to totally mislead people who may have heard or read what she said. That really is quite different. The parents are not being asked to provide those funds at all. They are part of the school-based funding. The department looked at what the expenditure was last year. With a little bit of guesswork, we had to determine a reasonable level, having regard to the unit cost of those services in schools, to appropriate for 2 schools to be managed by themselves. If a school is able to save in those areas, it can apply those sums of money to other areas.

The extraordinary comment came from the honourable member for Arnhem that schools—and he did not say they 'should' but I am quite sure he implied they 'should'—carry on regardless and, when they run out of money, ask the minister to close the schools. That is not exactly what he said but it is what he was actively encouraging. Of course, we would have a shambles of the first order on our hands if the honourable member's solution to these sorts of problems were put into practice. What he is really encouraging—and of course he will deny that he was encouraging it but he certainly was by implication—is a complete defiance of this parliament, and therefore himself, in the passage of appropriation bills by individual administrative areas of government. If you would extend that argument, it would simply mean that the Department of Health or any other department and every division within a department could simply say: 'To hell with this place. We will spend at the rate that we consider appropriate. When the money runs out, we will ask the government to close the hospital'. I know the honourable member will take great and pious umbrage at my reflection upon him—and it is not an improper one—but that is what using those sorts of words encourages. What happens is that, at school level, people think the Shadow Minister for Education believes that no regard should be had to the budgetary limitations placed upon government activities.
by this Assembly.

In that area, let me say this. We have a wide variation in the appropriations for various schools, unlike the version put forward by the honourable member for Nightcliff by which we are led to expect that all schools were treated similarly or, as the honourable member for Sanderson would have us believe, they were not only treated similarly but received no money at all and the parents were asked to pay. The schools, which demonstrate by good management that in fact there is a shortfall in a reasonable level of expenditure, have the facility of the normal mid-year revised estimates. That is what we have that period of budgetary consideration for in this Assembly. There is nothing new about it. Those reasonable requirements at schools will be looked after. Nonetheless, I think there is a responsibility placed on all officers - and a principal of a school and his staff are officers of the public - to pay regard to the appropriations handed down in this place. I think it is quite mischievous to actively encourage any other attitude.

The fact is that the education budget was increased by some 14.5%. We had a series of statements from members opposite which sought to demonstrate that the government was on the wrong track in education. Some of them were based on a complete lack of information, some of them were a mischievous distortion of the facts and others were, of course, a result of absolutely no research whatsoever.

The question of school councils and associations being informed that the department will no longer be funding services has already been dealt with. The honourable member for Sanderson went on to say that the government proposes quite deliberately to downgrade the facilities which will be provided in new schools. At the same time, if ever a valid argument was presented to a legislature for the prevention in future of the extravagance which was seen under Commonwealth administration in the grand design of classrooms in schools, the honourable member put that to us herself. She indicated that, while she thought it was all very fine that her electorate was blessed with very sophisticated school buildings, she would not expect that to continue in the future. Let me make it quite clear that there is a difference between conversation pits set deep in the ground and ankle-deep carpet which really achieves nothing but developing the thigh muscles and the provision of educational facilities. Facilities are those things which pupils and teachers require for the purposes of learning and teaching. Those things are paramount in the consideration of this government's appropriations for schools and will be closely monitored.

It was suggested by the honourable member for Arnhem that a survey had been conducted by the Department of Education and that survey had established that some $30 more per pupil was required for basic educational facilities. He defied me to say it was not true because he knew it was true. We heard him also say that he knew of his own knowledge that a certain document was true. This is just another case. He may not be doing his homework or he is being deluded by someone and is foolishly accepting it or there is some other more mischievous intent. Of course, what he has said is completely untrue. No such document exists whatsoever. What he did was purport that a document circulated by the Anula School Association and a document explaining the difference between Aboriginal schools' per capita allocation and those urban schools were based on research by the department and stated that primary schools need $30 more per pupil. That is a complete and, I would suggest, mischievous distortion of the facts. He said that the survey done by the Department of Education was correct. Of course, it is not. I have both of those documents here, Mr Speaker. If anyone is in any doubt, I am quite prepared to table them. The honourable member took a school circular and a circular from the
Northern Division explaining per capita allocations and suggested they were official documents of the Department of Education based on research as to school needs. That was quite improper on the part of the honourable member.

The opposition is not there to say what is good about the budget; it is merely there to know it and, hopefully, in some cases, to be constructive. It has failed to mention the positive aspects of the budget. I have already covered the review. I mentioned earlier the variations which must occur in any budget from year to year and the trap we can get ourselves into by automatically assuming we need an increase over any appropriation from one year to the next. What this government has done over the last several budgets, and this is only the second one in education, is to follow the principle that it is best to identify those areas of need during any one fiscal year. That means the best part of 2 school years. That is exactly what this budget does. As a rapidly growing area, we are committed to a rapidly growing staffing bill. About $2m was required this year for formula staff and staff to support them. The Northern Territory Teaching Service obviously required an allocation this year in order that it would be established before the beginning of the next academic year and also for the interim commission to do the planning. That again represented another commitment.

We heard the honourable member for Port Darwin talk about the music program. What is not commonly known is the salaries for the additional part-time music instructors add up to about $149,000. For the first time, we have had the secondary correspondence scheme going full steam ahead. The cost increase to run that this year is $86,000. Included in the directorate allocation is an establishment fund. I suppose that next year, as a result of having set it up this year and there being no need to set it up again next year, we will have howls from the opposition side that we are cutting on the budget simply because the overall amount is decreased. It is a matter of how you establish a department and, having done so, determining what is reasonably required to maintain that level or improve on that level. It is not a matter of the led-by-the-ring-in-the-nose syndrome of the opposition that you must always increase the appropriation automatically. It simply does not work that way. While I would dread to think of the financial management of the Northern Territory being placed in their hands, I am quite sure members opposite know more about financial management than that.

Mr Speaker, this year, we have had a vast improvement in student assistance. The improvements to the scheme, which was originally introduced by this government in the last budget, have included such things as an increase in conveyance allowance to parents from 7c a kilometre to 11c, an increase in tertiary airfares from 2 to 3 per year and the extension of a scheme to all approved Territory students whose family home is in the Northern Territory, the introduction in 1981 of a tertiary assistance scheme by provision of an allowance to cover incidental costs and the introduction of a mid-term travel scheme which allows primary and secondary students boarding away from home in the Northern Territory to return home up to 9 times per year. That sort of policy was borne very much in mind by the government when it took the difficult decision to close Dhupuma College. 1981 will see the introduction of a means-tested secondary assistance scheme for students in years 8, 9 and 10 in Northern Territory schools. That is something that has never been done before, Sir, and I think you would agree that that is an extremely worth-while initiative. A scholarship scheme for students completing their matriculation in the Northern Territory secondary schools in 1980 will be introduced for the first time.

In Aboriginal adult education, we are proceeding with the $3.28m stage 2 of the Aboriginal Teacher Education College at Batchelor. That is a general
TAFE college in addition to that function. Three additional staff will be appointed to expand the on-site teacher training program at a cost of $57,000. There will be an increase in the intake of trainees at Batchelor at a cost of $50,000 and the upgrading of the library at Batchelor at a cost of $15,000. All of these were new initiatives which were clearly identified by the government as being of an essential nature. Increased funding was made available accordingly. A 44% increase in operational costs for TAFE is reflected in this year's budget. Again, the Community College of Central Australia, TAFE oriented, employment oriented, has received an overall increase of $354,000 representing a 44% increase. Coupled with the Schools Commission grant, the overall increase to independent schools this year is $839,251 of which $434,251 is the Northern Territory component.

We turn now to COGSO about which much play has been made during this sittings. May I say that I very much value and respect the advice of COGSO. What I would like to see is the executive of that organisation reflect the views of parents a little more accurately because its information is vastly different from mine on the public attitude to the question of the dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme. If the honourable member for Nightcliff has not found one person who is in favour of the scheme, I am staggered that people are so anxious to see it commence. It really does not make much sense in logic at all.

Mrs Lawrie: It certainly does not.

Mr Robertson: The words of the honourable member reinforce my own view that what she said does not make much sense at all and she agrees that it certainly does not. She can read the way that comes out in the printed Hansard.

There we have the function of education which I believe is going from strength to strength in the Northern Territory. We have many problems with it. It is a very expensive undertaking but let us never delude ourselves that the solution to education problems is to tip more money on them. It is a matter of 'how it is spent' and that is a quote from the honourable member for Arnhem 12 months ago.

Turning to land, what I indicated to the Assembly earlier was that we are considering not what has happened in the past but the Appropriation Bill that is currently before this Assembly. I do not think that any government in this continent has ever done more in a more positive way or committed greater resources than this government has to the solution of this problem which resulted from the very successful policies of this government in expanding the Territory. I agree with the honourable member for MacDonnell that, if anything will slow down the development of the Territory, it will be a lack of land. Let us look at the initiatives and what we are doing to resolve that problem. We did not hear a peep from the opposition, other than negative criticism, as to what it would do about it. We did not hear a peep about whether or not it considered that the private development system is contributing anything. It was simply a negative bash session which contributed absolutely zilch to knowledge and understanding but then, of course, those are 2 elements in which the opposition is rather deficient.

Let me briefly report to the Assembly what turn-off of land is occurring at the moment. We would all be aware that land means housing because you simply cannot have houses without land. It does not matter whether the houses are in the public sector or the private sector, land is the key. In Leanyer 1 subdivision, there are 236 lots being turned off. Most of these are actually starting to turn off now or have been for some weeks. In Leanyer 2, we have
330 allotments; in Leanyer 3, we have a total of 293; and, in Karama 1, we have a total of 371 lots. All of these are now being turned off and will roll off over the next 2 years. In Karama 2, we have a total of 143 lots being turned off and, in Brinkin, we have a total of 168 lots being turned off. Of those, a significant component from subdivisions, ranging from zero to about 40%, is being purchased back by the government for Housing Commission purposes.

In Alice Springs, we have 2 subdivisions being prepared by private enterprise at the moment, totalling 362 lots: one in Sadadeen and one in Araluen. In Katherine, we have the Transport and Works subdivision of which 14 lots were auctioned on 29 July and an additional 21 lots have been scheduled for auction on 3 December. In the Katherine east residential subdivision, we have 139 residential lots. The first will be turned off in May 1981. The turn-off of the Katherine east industrial subdivision is also due in June 1981.

In Tennant Creek, we have a similar position. I know the member for Arnhem, quite rightly, will ask about the figures for Arnhem. I have addressed myself repeatedly to the difficulties that we are facing there, not least of which is the non-availability of land upon which to develop. In Tennant Creek, the hobby farms are currently under construction and we also have 80 allotments in stage 1 of the Weaver Road subdivision which are due for completion on 3 July 1981. It can be clearly demonstrated that this government is doing more per capita within its resources than probably any other state or authority in this nation. Of course, that is only marginal compared with what we are doing and have been doing in the housing area. It is a fact that the Housing Commission, in terms of capital expenditure, is providing 28% more houses this financial year that it did last year, notwithstanding the increases in cost. That amount adds up to $70.8m.

If we turn to the Housing Commission waiting list, and this is not something of which we can be proud but, when we take account of the resources available to the government compared with measures available to the rest of the country, it is quite a commendable performance indeed. In the Northern Territory, the average waiting time - and this takes into account very long periods in some smaller areas - is 1.3 years. In Victoria it is 3 years; in New South Wales, 4 years; in South Australia, 4 years; and, in Western Australia, 4 years. In completions per population of 100,000 people, the Northern Territory this year will lead the rest of this country. In New South Wales, the completions per 100,000 is 0.58; in Victoria 0.48; in Queensland 0.28; in South Australia 1.4; in Western Australia 0.61; and in Tasmania 1.96. In 1978-79, the Northern Territory figure was 3.97 and, this year, it will be 4.05. Quite clearly, we are leading the completions of public homes in this country by a ratio of well over 4 to 1 in most cases and, certainly, the best state in the Commonwealth by about 3.5 to 1. That is notwithstanding that our cost per building on these completions is higher than anywhere else in Australia. Quite clearly, this government is doing all it can be reasonably expected to do to solve that problem and solve that problem it will.

Mr Speaker, in addition to this massive turn-off of land which we have facilitated through our initiative and this very inordinate level of public housing construction, we are running the Home Loans Scheme. What more does the opposition want? It says there is a problem. This government does not just say there is a problem; it does something about it. Since the introduction of the Home Loans Scheme on 1 October last year until the end of the last month, the Housing Commission approved 884 loans. The total value is $32.9m. That is in addition to the massive program which I have just outlined in this Assembly as a method of solving the problem. We are not just bellyaching about it; we are doing something about it.
By way of comparison, the honourable Leader of the Opposition addressed himself to the disparity between the Northern Territory Home Loans Scheme and that which can, admittedly, be reasonably offered by banks. I have noted his comments carefully. Of course, I will be looking into that matter shortly.

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I move that the Minister for Education be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the Assembly although I did not expect it. As I previously outlined, it is my view that only people who are responsible for the legislation before the Assembly should have their time extended.

To conclude what I was saying, the trading banks and savings banks in the Territory loaned $24m for housing in the 2 years to March 1980. The Leader of the Opposition has made a very valid point that, given the sort of Home Loans Scheme that the Northern Territory has introduced, there is little incentive to go to trading banks. Since a spokesman for the banks took it upon himself, as is his right, to pass some comments by way of a letter to the editor of the Centrallian Advocate, I must say that I fully accept that. The government in setting up the Home Loans Scheme wanted to give an impetus to home purchase and construction in the Northern Territory and, like any other policy, it is subject to some review.

What I objected to about the way the banks have gone about their business, and I am fully conscious that this is going into the public record, is the numerous people who come to me and explain the attitude of banks and their dealings with clients of many years standing. What it amounts to is not only unwillingness to lend money but advice to them as to how to go about getting it in a way that is totally to the advantage of the banks. Perhaps a person wants to consolidate various mortgages into a unit mortgage. That to me is the role of the bank: to debt restructure. These are the sorts of complaints I am receiving. Instead of the bank looking at it as a package and coming up with first mortgage finance on a house, which is low interest mortgage – 10.5% at the present time – the banks are saying they do not have money for that. 'We cannot give you $25,000 for that purpose but, given your income, I know that is all you will obtain from the Home Loans Scheme. But, it is $25,000 short of what you need. Therefore, you shall go to the Home Loans Scheme people and borrow $25,000 at government interest rates. We will lend you the balance on a second mortgage at the interest rate applying to that'. That is what upsets me. It is this sort of thing which, in addition to the very valid points made by the Leader of the Opposition, must force any government to review a policy which it entered into in good spirit and in good faith.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to be taken the wrong way by the banking institutions. I have friends in that field. It is the responsibility of the government to review these sorts of decisions. I do not blame the banks for it. After all, that is good business practice. It is not necessarily the sort of thing which gets people into homes in the Northern Territory at reasonable interest rates. There you have it. The Northern Territory government is applying more resources in these critical areas than any other similar government would be able to do in the Northern Territory. We are only able to do this by the careful husbanding of those resources available to us. We cannot achieve that by a blind following of the principles which seem to be held dear on the opposite side of this Assembly; that is, no matter what it is we are talking about, if it is in the interests of the humanities area, then we...
automatically must increase our allocation.

Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr TUXWORTH (Mines and Energy): I rise this afternoon to touch on several aspects of the budget. I believe that the impact of the budget in the rural areas, particularly in my own area, has been tremendous. Honourable members would know that Tennant Creek is no different from anywhere else in the Territory when it comes to a shortage of accommodation. I can only say that I am extremely pleased with the efforts made by the Housing Commission through its building program and through its Home Loans Scheme in the provision of accommodation in the town. I think its performance is all the more exemplary given the fact that it is contending with a growth rate that I think is far higher than anywhere else in the Territory.

As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, the meatworks which recently opened in Tennant Creek was designed to come into production at the rate of 120 animals a day. Within 9 months, that production level has been lifted to 400 a day and I believe that the meatworks are planning to kill next year with a starting figure of 700 animals a day. Consequently, the infrastructure required by the meatworks expanded incredibly and there was no way short of looking into a crystal ball that anybody could have foreshadowed the growth that would take place. When it first started off 12 months ago, the meatworks estimated that it would have 120 people on the payroll. It currently has 225 and looks like having more next year. That figure does not include the supporting industries such as the trucking organisations, Dalgety and the rest of the people who have come to town to support it.

On top of that, the Housing Commission, through the Home Loans Scheme, has tried to accommodate people who are moving in to support the smelter. As honourable members would be aware, the smelter is a project that will rise and fall with world prices. At the moment, it is up and the company is employing people at a great rate. It is expected that the workforce will increase by 400 to 600 people with the introduction of the smelter. Given the activities of the smelter, the meatworks and the normal growth of the town, I believe that the housing provisions and the land provisions are as good as can be expected with the efforts that are being made in that direction.

Borroloola is a place that has been out of the way for many years. It is rather like Lake Nash in that it is on the edge of everybody's mind and receives the minimum attention. Remote areas such as this are at last getting a measure of government attention. The 60 people in that community will be provided with basic facilities such as housing, electricity and water. They have never had these on a community basis before. I think the move in that direction is to be commended.

The only program that we can improve upon in the immediate future that will enhance industry generally and also the profitability of the cattle industry and the meatworks is upgraded road networks to allow people to clear animals from their properties to the meatworks. When I say 'clear' animals, I mean transport them in such a manner that they are not 50% bruised and a loss to the farmer. If we are to obtain the best benefit out of our cattle industry, we need improved roads. Certainly, a great start has been made this year in my electorate.

The area that I would particularly like to touch on this afternoon is health. The 1981 budget for health services is made up of $74m for salaries and payments in the nature of salaries. Administration and other services
have been allocated $2.3m. On the recurrent expenditure side, the $74m is split into 2 parts: one is for the operation of the Department of Health proper, with an allocation of $70.1m, and the other $4.1m is devoted to grants-in-aid for various community organisations, $50,000 for drug education and $6,000 for Australian encephalitis control.

During the budget debate, one of the honourable members opposite raised the issue of the amount of money apportioned to the various women's centres throughout the Northern Territory. The Dawn House facility in Darwin has been funded by the government. It has been funded because it can comply with the rules that the department has set down for funding organisations under the grants-in-aid scheme. Whatever honourable members may say, I am of the firm belief that, when we allocate money to an organisation, it is not unreasonable that the organisation account for every last cent of what it spends. Most certainly, that situation did not exist with some of the people who were benefiting from the hand-outs in previous years.

This year's allocation provides for 2 major items which did not appear in last year's budget. The first one is for the operation of the Casuarina Hospital for a full year and the second is for hospital maintenance services within the health system which were previously carried out by the Department of Transport and Works. It will be appreciated that, when these 2 major items are discounted, the overall increase of $9.2m in this year's budget compares favourably with the expenditure in 1979-80 and will represent a noticeable achievement in cost containment.

I should say that the per capita cost of health services in the Northern Territory has fallen serially over the past 3 years from $714 to $671 to $643. It is our endeavour to bring these costs down as low as possible in the interests of the taxpayer. The total increase in the Health Department's budget over the last year's expenditure was 13.5%. This is accounted for, in part, by an additional $3.26m for the running of Casuarina and Darwin Hospitals over the provision for last year and hospital maintenance adds a further $2.1m to the budget not provided for in 1979-80.

I should also like to point out that, of the total allocation, 64.2% is spent on personnel, salaries, overtime etc, 27% on administrative expenses, 3% on capital equipment and the remainder on miscellaneous items such as grants-in-aid. This section of the Health budget increased by 0.6%. $4.1m has been set aside for this purpose. The major recipient of this money is the St John Council for the Northern Territory. The Territory owes a great deal to St John personnel who give unselfishly of their time. I am very pleased that St John has willingly accepted the responsibility for ambulance services throughout the Territory. As you know, it is also involved in raising funds from the public to supplement our assistance. I am sure honourable members, Mr Speaker, will agree that the $1.56m provided by the government for this organisation is money well spent. The government also provides just under $1.4m to missions throughout the Territory to assist with capital and operating costs of their health services. Once again, the government is appreciative of the work being done by the missions in this health field and we are very pleased to be able to assist in every way.

The Australian Red Cross is a major recipient of Health funds. The Territory government provides 60% of the operating costs of the blood transfusion service and, in 1980-81, this sum will be $232,000.

A further major item is the allocation of $195,000 to Aboriginal community councils' capital and operating subsidies. The government has provided
financial assistance from Health funds to the Numbulwar, Croker Island, Oenpelli and Peppimenarti Councils. The Aputula Housing Association also benefits. The amounts range from $22,000 to Aputula to $44,000 to Croker.

The government has also provided $80,000 each to the Forster Foundation and to the Darwin and District Alcohol and Drug Dependency Foundation to these bodies in their battles against drug and alcohol addiction. Organisations interested in women's welfare, such as Dawn House, Family Planning, Pregnancy Help, Childbirth Education and the Aboriginal Women's Centre, will receive amounts totalling $119,000. Other groups receiving financial assistance are the Territory Spastics Association, the Salvation Army Sunrise Centre, the Aboriginal and Islander Medical Service, the Salvation Army Crisis Centre, the Child Accident Prevention Foundation and the Missionary Franciscan Sisters.

Turning to the capital works projects, $2,085,000 has been provided. An amount of $70,000 is allocated for the uplift of 2 demountables in Alice Springs. One of these has been given to the Women's Centre for its accommodation and the other one will be moved out to Gillen as accommodation for the Health Centre there. In Alice Springs, we are providing on campus accommodation for medical staff at a cost of $300,000. There is also $700,000 for on campus accommodation at Casuarina. In Alice Springs, the conversion of the Liebig and Sonder nurses quarters to self-contained 3-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 1-bedroom flats is also on the program at a cost of $580,000.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, could I state quite categorically that there is no question of financial or staff cuts in this budget and any talk of this would be quite wrong. However, what the Department of Health has to do is to seek higher levels of cost benefit and cost effectiveness so that we are able to improve and develop our health services through increased efficiency to obtain as great as possible a dividend for the community. We have the highest per capita outlay in Australia - $660 per year for every man, woman and child living in the Territory.

I am particularly encouraged with the progress that is being made within the Health Department to have its organisation operate as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. As honourable members would notice, the amount of money that has been set aside is a very sizeable proportion of the government's budget. Anything we can do to save money in this area and still provide for the community's health needs is something that I am very conscious of striving towards.
would not agree with the Sydney Morning Herald which I consider has adopted an extremely parochial attitude to the Northern Territory in the past. If its attitude to the Northern Territory is anything to judge it by, it is no wonder that it is having circulation difficulties and financial difficulties. The same applies to the Financial Review.

The fact is that people down south, not just newspapers but various learned institutes, commercial organisations and ordinary people in the street, will take an increasing interest in how their money is spent. The honourable member for Nightcliff keeps referring to the Northern Territory taxpayer with great respect yet the people who live in the Territory pay less than one tenth of the bill for running the Northern Territory every year. It is the Australian taxpayer who foots the bill and we must try to run as efficient a ship as possible so that we can keep convincing that Australian taxpayer, through the Australian government which reacts to the sort of criticism which we see in the papers about the Northern Territory as being a cosseted, hot-house economy, that we are bringing down budgets, spending money and obtaining the maximum value for the taxpayer's dollar here in the Northern Territory.

To take up one point earlier than I had intended, were we to ask for money to amortise a continuing subsidy on electricity - and this will become a bone of increasing contention between the Territory and Australia in the future - I think the Commonwealth would look at any reasonable proposition. It surprised me that the opposition brought that matter of so-called urgent public importance forward this morning because I referred to the Treasurer's speech on the budget and I see that there is a remark in the Treasurer's speech which refers to an amount of $700,000 which is budgeted for planning and investigations for the proposed coal-fired power-station for Darwin. You might have thought that the appropriate time for the opposition to take up the matter of a future power source for Darwin would have been in a budget debate but it significantly ignored that item last week; there was absolutely no comment on it. I take the view that the exercise this morning was purely political and I think that that is borne out by the fact that this significant item of not less than $700,000 has been completely ignored in the budget debate by the opposition.

Mr Speaker, the subject of electricity really causes me concern. I do not think that there is any subject that causes me greater concern. We can press for railways and obtain railways, we can start universities and we can get agricultural projects going. All these things can happen but, without electricity that we can generate and sell at costs comparable with elsewhere in Australia, then we are laughing at the moon if we think that we will attract industry to the Northern Territory. It is for that reason that a continuing debate goes on in the Northern Territory government, in the Northern Territory Cabinet, in the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy and in the Electricity Commission as to the future electricity options for the Top End especially. Are we to close off any of these options? I certainly would hope not because it is an active debate in Cabinet, in this Assembly and in the community that will help eventually to arrive at what may be a long-term resolution of the Northern Territory's energy problems. I take objection and issue with both the member for Arnhem and the honourable Leader of the Opposition that I have made any statement at all proposing a nuclear power plant. I have made statements as a result of my overseas visit and in the course of my overseas visit when interviewed.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): A point of order, Mr Speaker! We are talking about the budget. The subject alluded to by the honourable Chief Minister is in the context of the different debate this morning which was a matter of public importance and has nothing to do with the budget debate.
Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order!

Mr EVERINGHAM: I have made statements in the course of my overseas travels that what I have seen over there convinced me that the use of nuclear power to generate electricity results in safe, clean and cheap electricity. I totally reject statements made by members opposite that there have been any contradictory statements issued by me.

What are we looking for in the matter of electricity? We are looking for a very large source of electricity generation. The cost of generation today in the Territory I think runs at something like 13 cents. The cost of using coal we are told will not materially reduce that cost. What are the other options? We are told that we should be looking at gas and we certainly are looking at gas. We are looking at hydro, we have looked at tidal and we are looking at solar. Why shouldn't we look at nuclear? Obviously, it is the duty of the Northern Territory government, especially when we see what is happening overseas, to look at all of these things. We would be failing in our duty if we did otherwise. In France, for instance, electricity produced by nuclear means costs half as much as coal-fired power and significantly less than half as much as oil-fired power. Of course, France is in much the same position as the Northern Territory in terms of resources in that it does not have oil and it does not have extensive deposits of coal. For strategic purposes, it wants to keep that coal in the ground. The French are going all out for nuclear power despite what we have been told to the contrary. I might say that the British, who have been generating electricity by nuclear means for close to 30 years, have so far managed to accumulate enough nuclear waste to fill one average-sized suburban home.

Mr B. Collins: Why didn't you tell us all this this morning?

Mr EVERINGHAM: I am speaking to a relevant item in the budget debate. I have already made the point that the debate this morning was nothing more than unnecessary grandstanding. The opposition should have treated this item in the budget debate with the degree of respect that it apparently thinks it warrants; that is, if it had read the budget papers or listened to the Treasurer's speech.

We are told too that there are vast accumulations of rods. Those rods are accumulating solely because of a presidential political decision which precludes the reprocessing of these rods in the United States. In Britain and France, the rods are reprocessed and the remaining waste is stored. As I said, there have been power-stations pumping out electricity into the grid for almost 30 years and the English have managed to accumulate a very small number of tonnes of nuclear waste. Furthermore, the British and the French are quite convinced that vitrification is the solution to the waste problem. What is more, I do not believe that they consider it necessary to store it deep in the ground. I believe that it can be stored by more conventional means.

In any event, the sole burden of my argument this afternoon is to say that, where we are spending $700,000 on planning for this coal-fired power-station, I believe that the Territory will probably have to have the coal-fired power-station but no responsible government could ignore an alternative and that alternative is being discussed publicly. Once again, we find the opposition trying to stifle debate. It is trying to say that the Northern Territory government must not consider the nuclear option. If that is not trying to stifle debate, then what is? Mr Speaker, the same obnoxious tactic, the same mud-slinging is tried on whenever anyone wants to say something about the racial relations - for instance, there was an attempt to stifle you, Mr Speaker - that is contrary to the opposition's point of view. The mud-slinging
starts, the obnoxious stuff comes out and we are told we cannot consider this option.

Just before I leave the topic, I consider that - and I said it back in April - the honourable Leader of the Opposition, in putting forward the proposal that Darwin's power be generated by natural gas in the foreseeable future, is taking the most irresponsible attitude that I have ever seen taken by any political leader. As I said at that time, if we went for natural gas now, we would be kicked out all right because there would be no power, there would be no refrigerators, there would be no fans and there would be no air-conditioners. There would be no electricity because there is no proven natural gas. The honourable member for Arnhem said there is. He knows as well as I that the amount of natural gas that is available in Western Australia act as a booster for the proposed transmission line from the Ord to Darwin's, at the most optimistic estimate, a mere 30 megawatts. A more realistic estimate places it in the order of 10 megawatts. The honourable member for Arnhem knows that we are looking at something like 300 megawatts. That is the sort of twisted, distorted argument that is put forward. On the argument about Jervis Bay, the feasibility study was done 10 years ago and it was served up today as being accurate on point. How can one attach any credibility to the people who advance arguments of that sort at all? They certainly lose any credibility and respect with me when they continue to push these vehicles for the sake of cheap political gain. Why they are trying to create panic at this stage, one just would not know.

I thought I would say something about the police because there have been many fanciful stories passed around the countryside about the Northern Territory Police Force. We have been told that there are budgetary cutbacks and so on. I must say that, at a time when the budget is over $100m in excess this year of that appropriated last year, it is extraordinary that we are talking in terms of cutbacks. Only the illogical people with whom we are dealing could speak in those terms. I would say that, although we are not in a period of budget cuts, we are in a period of what we might call excessive bids. Whilst I certainly do not apply that to the police, I think that some people who had excessive bids which did not necessarily succeed have been talking in terms of budget cuts. We were told by the honourable member for Victoria River - I think it was in a public place - recently that police in outlying areas are concerned that a restriction on patrols to no more than 10 kilometres from their bases will cause inconvenience to both police and outback residents. The article also quoted an incident at Hayes Creek when police had advised that they could not assist because of the 10 kilometre travel restriction. The police did attend to the incident at Hayes Creek and at no time was the police action affected by the travel restriction. Currently, the police department has implemented a policy of patrol radius limitations for the purpose of controlling the use of official police vehicles.

I might say also that the Police Commissioner has adopted, perhaps more wholeheartedly than any other government instrumentality, the government's energy policy. We see detectives driving around in Toyota Coronas whereas previously they had squad cars. I might say that it has not always been easy but the Police Commissioner sincerely adopts the government's energy conservation policies and these instructions have been put out, in his words, 'for good housekeeping'.

The patrol radius limitations simply mean that, if members are required to perform routine patrols outside the respective limitation which applies to their district, then prior approval is to be obtained from the divisional offices. The policy is under constant review but its introduction does not,
under any circumstances, prevent any police officer from attending immediately to any emergency situation within or without his district requiring police attention.

I am firmly of the view that the police administration is efficient. The allocation to the police in the time that I have been responsible ministerially for the force has grown from $12m to in excess of $20m this year and that is a considerable growth in that time even allowing for inflation. I mentioned the other day that the force is about 100 men stronger than it was at the time that the Northern Territory executive first became responsible for it. If anyone wants to talk about resignations from the police force, I can remember one of the first days when I was Majority Leader. I used to have to approve police resignations for some obscure reason. There were 14 resignations in one day and they used to go through like the sands through that hourglass. The police have a difficult job. Morale will always be a problem in a police force that is spread over such a large area. They will always have problems and their problems are not assisted by the hectoring and other lecturing that they receive from some of the honourable members opposite from time to time. That will always affect their morale. You will have wives of policemen who are posted to remote areas who simply will not go. Men resign for that reason and for all sorts of reasons. Women resign for various reasons. However, I believe the morale of the police force at present is as good as it has ever been and I honestly believe that the Northern Territory Police Force could not have a better commissioner than it has.

We also heard some hope that the Conservation Commission would be able to continue to do something of a fairly minor order. At the time, I made a note of it but I have lost the note. I am quite sure that the Conservation Commission this year is pretty well provided for. Its recurrent expenditure is of the same order as last year's. I am pleased to have the support of the Leader of the Opposition; I was very glad that he was supporting the government thrust so completely because the government recognised the need to contain recurrent expenditure so that we can build up the infrastructure which the Leader of the Opposition so rightly says we must have. However, you cannot have your cake and eat it too. If you want the infrastructure, then you have to hold down the recurrent expenditure. For that reason, the Conservation Commission's total budget this year is up in the order of $3.5m. When you consider that its budget is in the order of $10m, that is quite a massive increase. That increase, of course, is very largely accounted for— I think $3m of it—in providing infrastructure for the Yulara Tourist Village at Ayers Rock. Those are the sorts of things that we should be doing and we will continue to do.

There is no doubt that many of the problems of the Northern Territory that are brought forward in this Assembly are legitimate problems. There is a lack of housing and a need to build more schools. These are problems of growth. All I can say is that I am thankful they are problems of growth and not problems of recession. This government will do everything it can to see that we continue to grow. Wherever you go, you find that growing communities experience growth pains. Who amongst us would have the temerity to say that he could have foreseen in 1976 or 1977 the extent of growth that has taken place in the Northern Territory in the last few years? The government cannot claim credit for all of it or even the major part of it. Certainly, we do everything we can to encourage growth. We have seen growth in mining, in fishing and in tourism.

The pastoral industry has got back onto its feet and so the Territory is on the go. We do not want to stop that; we want to underpin it. This government wants to underpin that growth by putting as much money as we possibly can towards the infrastructure that is necessary to see that it
continues - roads, harbour facilities, bridges etc.

That brings me of course to aerodromes. There was some criticism because funds are proposed to be devoted to the reconstruction of aerodromes in some Aboriginal communities. It was said, and I suppose it is a construction that one could put on it, that the Chief Minister has backed Northern Airlines' bad commercial decision to buy Metroliners with money to reconstruct these airstrips so that they can be used by Metroliners. All I can say is that airstrips have always been regarded as part of the essential services vote for Aboriginal communities in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs days. It is true that there is a considerable sum of money proposed to be devoted this year for the reconstruction of these aerodromes. If we asked them, I wonder how many of the communities affected would say to us, 'Do not proceed with the reconstruction of our airstrip'.

I have received representations from a considerable number of these communities over a period of years that they want a better air service. For that, they must have a better airstrip. The decision taken by Northern Airlines - and I have attempted to examine it as closely as I can - was an inevitable one. Its options were fairly limited. To provide the sort of air service that is wanted, it was required to purchase a turbo-prop-powered aircraft. There were 3 of those on the market and the performance of the Metroliner is the highest of the 3. Because it has the highest performance, it requires the best operating conditions. It is also a pressurised airliner and the other airliners that were available are unpressurised and cannot fly at the altitudes that are available to the Metroliner. It is quite all right to have the Metroliner on the Ayers Rock run but we are supposed to have a different sort of airliner on the Arnhem Land run. All I can say is that everyone knows - and Qantas is the finest example of this - if you want to run an economic fleet, you try to rationalise the number and type of aircraft that you have. If we want Northern Airlines to go down the drain, we will insist that it have 19 aircraft of different types, one for every different run. That would be just the sort of thing that honourable members opposite would be likely to suggest.

This is a growth budget. There is no doubt that the Territory is on the move. The complaints and the representations from the members opposite all indicate that and I have no hesitation in supporting this bill.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): I take the opportunity to touch on a number of points raised by various members in the second reading of the Appropriation Bill. The Leader of the Opposition said that we had the opportunity to do something constructive with this budget. He was referring particularly to employment, housing and welfare areas. However, he said we missed the boat. He described it as an 'anti-people budget' and said that crucial areas had not been given attention. I will look at a couple of the matters that he raised for particular attention and see how they turn out.

Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition said that the capital works program was insufficient and that it was only 14% of the total budget whereas last year it had been 17.6%. He is playing on figures to relate every budgetary allocation to the size of the budget itself. Budgets grow and sometimes shrink from time to time for various reasons. I think it is quite inappropriate to refer in these situations to a percentage of the budget. The Leader of the Opposition said that growth in cash was minimal in the capital works program. However, he chose to ignore the government policy which affected this year's capital works program inasmuch as this was the year that we have undertaken to have private subdividers turn off land for us in Darwin, and very successfully as well. This has meant that government funds did not have to be put towards this particular aspect. I am talking of some millions of dollars.
The repairs and maintenance program is, in fact, about $23m, excluding roads. That is a substantial amount. The entire Housing Commission construction and maintenance program was ignored in the Leader of the Opposition's figures, as was NTEC's capital works program. The government construction at Jabiru is allocated $10m this year - about 90% increase on last year. The Jabiru Town Development Authority received $1m last year for construction. Nevertheless, we are told that government funds are minimal this year and, as a result, there will be all sorts of trouble. His comments in that regard are quite off beam.

The Leader of the Opposition also made a rather odd statement. He said that, because unemployment grew in the Northern Territory over the last year, that was a demonstration that our job creation policies had failed. We would dispute that fact. The Northern Territory does have high levels of unemployment and we have never denied that. I believe it has always had a high level of unemployment. Unemployment is very fluid. Indeed, if the Territory was able to employ all the unemployed in the Territory tomorrow, I believe that, in 6 months or 12 months, we would be back with figures equalling the national average or even higher than the national average. It is the nature of unemployment in this country.

Mrs Lawrie: Who has been in charge of the country for the past few years?

Mr PERRON: Not the Northern Territory government.

Mrs Lawrie: No, your mates in Canberra.

Mr PERRON: Are we discussing the Northern Territory budget or otherwise?

Mrs Lawrie: We are discussing the Northern Territory budget and what you can do about unemployment locally. It seems to be precious little.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, nothing that the Leader of the Opposition or any other members in the opposition ranks say can take away from the fact that there have been thousands more people employed in the Northern Territory every year. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the numbers of employed persons in the Northern Territory show that, from July 1979 to June 1980, the workforce increased by 2,800 persons. The CES figures indicate that, from August 1979 to July 1980, another 12-month period, unemployment actually fell by a mere 24 persons. The figures demonstrate clearly that unemployment numbers are not a measure of economic viability. The Territory is getting on with economic development, is creating jobs and is maintaining a high unemployment level. I don't think that that factor is relative. As a matter of fact, the member for MacDonnell, again without proper instructions from his leader, admitted that unemployment in the Territory was largely imported. He also admitted that things were really happening.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we were only fiddling with payroll tax calculations and implied that we were insincere in this regard because it is a growth tax and we are still going to get substantial revenue from payroll tax. That attitude to tax cuts is simply astounding. Of course payroll tax is a growth tax. That is why it has been so difficult for the states to cut back on it. That is why it has been an attractive tax to always increase. The Leader of the Opposition simply dismissed a 10% across-the-board cut in payroll tax as fiddling. The Territory is the first in this country to take that sort of initiative and he says it has virtually no effect because the Northern Territory is not forgoing revenue. We are quite clearly forgoing revenue. I mentioned in the budget debate that we would be forgoing something like $1m,
possibly more. Admittedly, we are getting more in payroll tax than we did last year. That is the growth tax aspect of payroll tax. But it is absolute nonsense to try to dismiss it as merely an insincere attempt at dressing up a budget. Payroll tax is growing in the Northern Territory because jobs are growing, wages are growing, investment is growing, population is growing — every sector of enterprise in the Territory is growing. The Northern Territory's move in payroll tax in this regard is the most progressive that has been made by any government in Australia in order to further stimulate the private sector into creating more jobs and more growth.

I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition would suggest that a similar attitude should be taken to cuts in personal income tax or company tax. They are growth taxes as well. Would that be just fiddling and should governments not even bother making percentage reductions in those taxes because that would be insincere? Payroll tax and stamp duty are major indicators of economic activity. In the Territory, in both areas, it could be termed hyperactivity. In July 1980, monthly payroll tax receipts grew by 67% over the July 1979 collection. Stamp duty collected in the September quarter this year was 60.3% above the same period for last year. I doubt that any other area in this country could come anywhere near those growth figures. They are remarkable figures and it is a sign of the remarkable things that are happening in the Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition forecast last year when speaking to the budget that the Territory could not possibly keep that high level of spending on roads because we had put a substantial amount of money into it and that there simply had to be a crash in the road-contracting industry; it would simply collapse and it was an irresponsible move of the government. He quoted that our road spending has fallen 11.3% this year. I have had officers of Treasury try to almost twist the figures to work out how the Leader of the Opposition arrived at some of his figures but we cannot seem to come up with them. In fact, construction, repairs and maintenance on roads in the Territory — and they have to be lumped together, particularly if we are talking about the effect on the industry because the same contractors are doing repairs and maintenance as are constructing roads — came to $45m in 1979-80 and will be $47.5m in 1980-81. It is not a large increase but it is an increase. It is not an 11.3% reduction in spending on roads. The government is continuing its high-level commitment to roads and talk of contracting companies collapsing is absolute nonsense. If they do collapse, it certainly will not be a result of any short-fall in government funds allocated towards roads.

On the subject of housing, we were told last week that we should be condemned. We failed to address the emergency accommodation situation and ignored the low-cost accommodation sector. The Minister for Lands and Housing has given some figures on housing and I think I could best sum up by saying that this government spends more money per head of population on public housing than any state in Australia and I include Labor states, those people famous for looking after the person on low income — supposedly at the expense of the rest of the community.

I would also suggest that we spend a greater percentage of our budget on housing than any state. I accept that that is an argument that I said the Leader of the Opposition should not use — percentage of total budget. But we have, in fact, provided $8m more this year for housing than we did in the previous year — that is direct. On top of the disproportionate expenditure on public housing construction — as the Minister for Lands and Housing pointed out, we build at least twice the accommodation units of any state in Australia and the figure goes up to 14 times in the case of Queensland — we constructed government staff housing and funded the most generous home loans scheme in
Australia. Further than that, funds are directed towards accommodating persons in emergent circumstances through areas like the Department of Community Development which last year paid out $43,000 in grants to people who were in straitened circumstances.

Honourable members might say that it is fine for the Housing Commission but it is not addressing the situation of a low-income earner who is really in desperate need of accommodation. Well, 25% of all Housing Commission tenants are entitled and, in fact, are receiving housing rental rebates which enable them to pay as low as $7 a week rent for a quite comfortable standard of accommodation.

The Housing Commission has one of the shortest waiting lists for accommodation in Australia. It is not simply good enough to just dismiss those figures or to say: 'That is beside the point'. If your waiting list is one week old, then someone will have to wait a week for accommodation. If it is pouring rain and their children have the flu, that simply is not good enough. It is quite obvious that no government can possibly accept the responsibility to house every single person who chooses to come to the Northern Territory without making arrangements for accommodation. That seems to be the view that has been purveyed in the Territory for months and months over this emergency accommodation situation. In fact, a great deal is done. Organisations are funded all over the place to house people in emergent circumstances. Sure, we cannot meet all their needs. I do not believe that we ever will be able to, and I do not believe that it is the government's responsibility to meet every one of those person's needs.

We have put a lot of our resources into assisting the private sector - into home loans - to encourage people to buy houses or to have houses built. All of this relieves the pressure on Housing Commission accommodation which in turn can keep housing lists fairly short. In the 11 months from December 1979 to October 1980, 89 units of accommodation were allocated by the Housing Commission. At around about 2 or 3 persons per unit of accommodation - and I am putting that figure in myself because I do not have one - we are talking about housing possibly up to 6,000 persons per year through the Housing Commission. Admittedly, the Housing Commission is building about 600 new units each year which means there is a high turnover of persons in ordinary Housing Commission accommodation. That is no doubt reflected partly by people who are going into the private sector and buying their own homes and is a result in part of this government's initiatives. It is all helping to provide more and more accommodation for those persons who are unable to afford it elsewhere. There are still people without adequate accommodation as I am sure there are all over Australia. When you are in a situation where the population is growing at 5% or 6%, I do not see how you cannot expect some problems in the area of accommodation. We do far more already than anyone else in this country in this regard.

The Leader of the Opposition used some other interesting figures. He stated that, of loan approvals under the Northern Territory's Home Loans Scheme only 40% of them were catering to people on $260 per week income or less. Apart from that being wrong, I ask how the Northern Territory government is supposed to loan 100% of its loan approvals to persons in this very low income bracket if indeed they do not apply. You can only process applications that are made by individuals. If the figure happens to be 40% or 89%, provided those persons who are eligible are getting their loans approved - there is no shortage of funds as the government has undertaken that this loans scheme will be funded - then I do not know what we are supposed to do about turning 40% into 100%. In fact, the figures are that 72% of loans approved in 1979-80 were made to...
persons earning less than $260 per week. It is 72% and not 40% as we have been told by the Leader of the Opposition. In the period 1 July 1980 to 31 October 1980, the percentage of persons on $260 per week and less getting loans approved is 66% of the total. Again, where the 40% came from goodness knows. That figure was plucked out of the air. I guess we should not expect anything else; the opposition has been doing it for years. One just gets a little frustrated with it over a period.

The Leader of the Opposition had a few words to say about the welfare situation. He said that we should provide more details about where we have distributed the grants and subsidies of over $1m. I can provide that information if honourable members care to write to me or ask a question on notice. I do not have the information prepared in detail before me for the budget debate.

There was some criticism of the decision not to fund the Northern Territory Council of Social Services. The honourable Leader of the Opposition said that this organisation has had an excellent record since 1972. From his point of view and the ALP's point of view, it may well have. Let us just have a look at the list of those organisations who are members. The honourable member for Fannie Bay had a particular interest in this area. She supported the organisation and suggested that it should continue to be funded by the Northern Territory government. This worthy organisation which, no doubt, has done some valuable work in the past is primarily, although not exclusively, a coordination agency. It has as members the Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services, Aboriginal Resource Centre, Brown's Mart, Childbirth Education Association, Chirstchurch Cathedral, Corporation of the City of Darwin, Crisis Line, Darwin Family Centres, Dawn House Womens Shelter, Darwin Youth Refuge, Department of Community Development, Environment Council - I am not quite sure what the Environment Council has to do with NTCOSS's functions - Family Planning Association, Handicapped Persons Association, Health Department, Homemaker Service, Natural Family Planning Council, NT Council for the Ageing, Migrant Resource and Settlement Centre, Scouts Association, Somerville Homes, St Mary's Child Family and Welfare Services, the Toy Library, YWCA and YMCA. Mr Speaker, 20 out of the 25 organisations I just read out are being funded by the government to the tune of in excess of $1m and therefore we are contributing to the types of services that those organisations provide.

The member for Fannie Bay said that the Northern Territory government should help NTCOSS so it can support the government. I can only suggest that some of its support I can well do without. The honourable member for Fannie Bay also went on to some extent - in her support for NTCOSS and some of the work it has done in the past - about the survey that it had done in the Mall. It was a well-publicised survey seeking persons to register who felt they were in a homeless plight. Quite a number of people did go up to the desk and register that they were homeless. I am advised that, on the day of the survey, the Salvation Army had quite a number of empty beds in its emergency accommodation unit at that particular time. In fact, last weekend, 15 out of 25 beds in the Salvation Army emergency unit for accommodation were vacant. That was last weekend so I do not think that the situation is as bad as has been made out.

The Leader of the Opposition was concerned because he said we do not fund the Darwin Youth Refuge and that it was operating at $1,000 a month loss. The information I have indicates that we are funding the Darwin Youth Refuge to the tune of $52,000 per annum. If it is running at $1,000 per month loss on top of that, I do not have very good words for the management.
The Leader of the Opposition said there was a critical need for grants-in-aid to be increased. I would like to run through a list with the names of organisations that we are funding. I will not give details of the amounts funded - although I will respond to more detailed questions on notice - because some groups are funded from various sources in government. There are varying amounts for different reasons and they can be taken out of context. I would like to point out, in response to broad statements that the Northern Territory government is not putting sufficient funds towards grants-in-aid to help institutions which are working in the welfare area, that those people being funded this year - and most of them were funded last year - are: St Vincent de Paul, YWCA of Darwin, Catholic Church Alice Springs, St Mary's Child and Family Welfare Service Alice Springs, Somerville Homes, Darwin Family Centres, Salvation Army and Brown's Mart. The Aboriginal organisations which are being funded are: Yirrkala Danbul Community Association, Milingimi Community Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, and the Bamyili Community Council. Groups funded from the Department of Community Development Community Welfare Division are: Handicapped Persons Association of the NT, Northern Territory Association of Special Education, the Bindi Centre Alice Springs, Aged Persons, Australian Red Cross Old Timers Home Tennant Creek, Australian Inland Mission, Old Timers Home Alice Springs, Northern Territory Council for the Ageing, Northern Territory Pensioners Association, Tracy Lodge Aged Persons Hostel, Australian Red Cross Old Timers Home Katherine, Alice Springs Emergency Home Help Association, Australian Red Cross Darwin Branch, Home Help Service, Tennant Creek Pensioners Association, Crisis Line and YWCA on behalf of the Darwin Youth Refuge.

In addition to that, there are other groups funded by the Department of Health and my colleague, the Minister for Health, indicated some of those. To run through them quickly: Dawn House Womens Shelter, the Forster Foundation, the Darwin District Alcohol and Drug Dependence Foundation, Family Planning Association, Natural Family Planning, Pregnancy Help Incorporated, Childbirth Association, NT Spastics Association, Salvation Army Sunrise Centre, Aboriginal Womens Resource Centre and the Salvation Army Crisis Centre. These are just a few of those authorities. There are others that are funded by the Department of Health.

We were also advised during this second-reading debate that the government had done a nasty thing in that, after the elections, it had decided that its 50% airfare concession to pensioners every 2 years was a sneaky ploy. I notice that the ALP did not support our policy in this regard. Indeed, it never put up anything to parallel it. It chose to criticise the Northern Territory government which always has intended that the eligibility period would commence from July this year. It is mentioned in the budget debate. This government has moved quickly to introduce almost all of its election promises and some are still in the pipeline. We have nothing to hide whatsoever in regard to our commitment totally to assist pensioners to stay in the Territory as residents by allowing them government assistance to travel interstate from time to time. Whilst criticising the timing of the implementation of our scheme, the opposition does not even propose a similar scheme. Perhaps it does not want pensioners to stay in the Territory.

We are told that the 5-year plan to improve conditions and capital works on Aboriginal communities was not addressed properly in the budget. Members opposite just have not been reading the details. When the 5-year plan was tabled in this Assembly earlier in the previous Assembly, it was stated that it would cost $25m a year for 5 years and that special assistance from the Commonwealth would be sought. We are still talking to the Commonwealth but, to date, the answer has been no. This government has put in something like
$14m per annum for that program. We cannot pick up the entire amount; that is simply out of the question. Did we receive any support from the opposition in our bid to the Commonwealth or any calls for Commonwealth funding to address the needs on Aboriginal settlements? No, we simply have criticism in this Assembly. That is about all you could expect.

The Leader of the Opposition wanted an explanation why the Treasurer's Advance was lower as a percentage of total budget this year than it was last year. Again, I do not think that it is proper that we should set the TA in relation to the overall budget. It may relate from year to year but that is not how it is set. The Leader of the Opposition argued that we should probably have a smaller TA and use the usual transfer system which is available to us under the Financial Administration and Audit Act to transfer funds from one area to the other when we have circumstances that warrant the use of TA. This simply is not acceptable. In transferring funds from one area to another under those sections of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, you must have savings or you must curtail programs. The tabling of those transfers in this Assembly from time to time are where there have been savings and reallocations of funds. TA is largely designed to cover contingencies such as increases in fuel prices or wage indexation work value cases. One which may put pressure on TA this year is drought relief. We have not allocated any specific amount to any specific department. How can one estimate what demands on drought relief funds one will have? That is the type of funding.

The Leader of the Opposition said that, if we used the normal transfer system in lieu of TA, we would have the transfer funds tabled in the Assembly regularly and be given an opportunity to scrutinise them. I have been tabling transfer funds in this Assembly for nearly 3 years. I do not think anyone has scrutinised any of them yet. I do not think that that was a very good argument.

There was another suggestion that we should use Class A trust accounts. These do in fact represent the working balance of departments. Most of them have very large turnovers and working balances are used to fund the ongoing operations of organisations such as the Department of Transport and Works which spends in the vicinity of $150m a year. To think that when an emergency arises you can simply dip your hand into trust account working balances is simply an insane administrative practice. Government would grind to a halt from time to time if that practice was adopted. Where I referred to the New South Wales government going around all of its statutory authorities grabbing the amounts they had in accounts, I was referring specifically to reserves which had been set aside by those authorities over the years for various purposes. In fact, they had socked away quite a substantial amount. Rightly, the New South Wales government sought to get its hands on some when it needed it. That is a different thing to talking about working balances of trust accounts.

The sales tax on freight rebate scheme was questioned. By way of explanation, I will read a couple of comments on how the scheme is progressing. Advertisements were placed in Territory newspapers calling for registration of Territory wholesalers and correspondence has been entered into with registered wholesalers to obtain satisfactory evidence of the amount of sales tax paid each month and the percentage of this amount attributable to freight.

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

Mr EVERINGHAM: I move that the Treasurer be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.
Mr PERRON (Treasurer): As Treasurer, the percentage rebate to be applied to each named registered wholesaler will require my specific approval. Provision by each registered wholesaler each month of accepted evidence of payment of sales tax to the Australian Taxation Office will be required. Monitoring of the effects of the scheme by inspectors will be undertaken and a reassessment of percentages for rebate purposes annually or as applied for by the wholesalers concerned in changing circumstances will also be undertaken. By way of clarification, the scheme is not intended to cover sales tax on goods imported into Darwin.

The Leader of the Opposition did not propose a single alternative measure in the budget to that put forward by the government. He said that it was an 'anti-people' budget but he failed to tell us what the ALP would do other than one initiative to set up a state bank which would solve everyone's problems. He did not tell us where it would obtain money. Unfortunately, banks require money before they can disburse it to anyone at all.

The honourable member for MacDonnell spoke at some length about housing. He suggested, without being definitive, that the government institute some policy changes to overcome Housing Commission waiting times. He suggested 'a realistic commitment'. He did not quantify it. I do not know if he is suggesting we double or treble the Housing Commission's allocation. If he is, why did he not tell us where the funds are supposed to come from. He is probably not looking for solutions; he is simply looking to criticise.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay said that the information provided was completely inadequate. I do not know what we are supposed to provide. They are in opposition after all and, if they want complete access to the entire government so that they can do their homework, then they will have to work a little bit harder and obtain much more support from the electorate and maybe they can get into government.

Mrs O'Neil: What about the accounts committee you promised last year?

Mr PERRON: The honourable member mentions the accounts committee. The very same people who would be on an accounts committee or an expenditure committee are sitting in this very room supposedly having done their homework. Why does the opposition claim to need the entire Northern Territory Public Service to propose an alternative budget if is is supposedly an alternative government. Can it not propose tax cuts? It does not take a great brain to work out populations and the turnover of people and funds nor does it require the whole of the public service to decide whether you put more money into housing or less money into housing or whatever. It seems to me that it wants someone to do its work for it.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay was critical of the hit-and-run visit by the South Australian Symphony Orchestra. I do not know that there are many people who went to see them who would agree with her that we should do cost benefit studies before having such groups come to the Northern Territory. I thought it was very well supported. If we are to go to cost benefit studies in areas such as art funding, we probably would not have any such performances. I thought the idea was that the government was trying to have Territorians participate in some of the benefits that other Australians are able to have even if it is uneconomical.

The member for Nhulunbuy was critical of police allocations and the Chief Minister has dealt with that matter. He complained about housing in his electorate. If the member for Nhulunbuy really wants to do some good for his
community, he should start lobbying for an open town. Why should Nhulunbuy residents face poor competition in business because there is not enough land for businesses to establish and inadequate access to the rest of the Northern Territory? Second-rate land tenure and a tenuous right to enjoy beaches and recreation spots nearby is all they can have until the land tenure system changes. Surely the member for Nhulunbuy should be working to ensure that his constituents have the same opportunities across the board as other Territorians and not just stick with the old problem - which I admit is a problem - of housing in Nhulunbuy.

The member for Sanderson wanted swimming pools in schools. She did not tell us who was going to pay for them or run them, but then again that is one of the attractive parts of being in opposition: you have not responsibility to implement anything. What it costs does not really matter.

The Marriage Guidance Council is funded by the federal government to the tune of $54,500, a 20% increase over last year and, in fact, that is twice the increase that any other state in Australia received in funding from this source.

The honourable member for Nightcliff was saying that we were wasting our money printing little yellow books. I will review whether we will supply them in future if that is the way honourable members ...

Mrs Lawrie: Have a good look at exactly what I said.

Mr PERRON: I will. In particular, the honourable member for Nightcliff demonstrated that narrow attitude which people have who believe that all problems result from government action or inaction and that all solutions to all problems should be found by the government. The member for Nightcliff felt that I would be furious at the phrase used in the explanatory documents of the Department of Community Development under 'Welfare Services'. She quoted: 'Community Services seeks to act as a catalyst for community self-action'. She was quite beside herself because she believes, as many others do, that there is no possible self-action other than criticism of government. She thought I should have been enraged at that statement because that implies in her mind that my department is encouraging people to lobby against the government. It just did not even dawn on her - excuse the pun - that the self-activation of organisation may in fact mean that some of them should be assisted to stand on their own feet. It did not even dawn on her. She was just so blind to the other aspects of the meaning of self-activation. She said that I should move quickly to have it stricken from the record.

Mrs Lawrie: I did not.

Mr PERRON: Not at all. I think they should increase their endeavours in this regard.

In summing up, the financial arrangements which enabled this budget to be introduced provided a greater growth in available funds than is the case elsewhere in Australia and, in addition to that, we have instituted tax cuts in the Territory. Every indicator that we can find in the economy in the Territory indicates that it is moving ahead at a remarkable speed. There are, in fact, growing pains and steps are being overtaken to overcome the problems that confront us. Still, this budget will continue the high levels of government activity right across the board to assist Territorians generally to get on with the job with perhaps a little bit less attention to the handout mentality which we seem to have heard so much about in this Assembly and in the press over the last couple of months.
Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Appropriations for divisions 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 19:

Mr ISAACS: Mr Chairman, I asked in my second-reading speech if the Chief Minister could give an outline of the proposed expenditure for the Information Service. I would ask the Chief Minister to outline that expenditure?

Mr EVERINGHAM: As I said earlier, it was not a time of budget cuts but of excessive bids. The Information Service's bid for funds was $613,000. It is natural enough. Every department heard there was an extra $100m around to be split up this year and they think this year that they will realise all their dreams and so they put in for as much as possible. Ministers may trim this; departmental heads may trim it. In fact, it was trimmed to $490,000 before it went to Cabinet. One does not know what other departments are putting in so one can only trim it in a subjective fashion. Cabinet, in fact, cut the amount down to $390,000 from the original bid of $613,000 and it is made up as follows: Northern Territory shows and displays - $15,000; freelance journalists, photographers and graphic artists - $41,000; audio-visual productions and films including press kit materials - $40,000; purchase of photographic and audio-visual equipment - $10,000; printing and publications - a booklet on Government House - $15,000; pamphlet on Legislative Assembly members - $2,500; pamphlet on the ministry - $2,500; government directories - $10,000; new promotional book - Horizons - $15,000; and the Northern Territory Digest - $15,000. I might mention that the Northern Territory does not have, as far as I know, one hard-covered promotional book prepared by the government despite the fact that every state has. In an attempt to keep costs down, all of our promotional books, although they are of good quality as far as I am concerned, are nevertheless soft covered and have a limited number of colours. To continue: manual of information sheets - $10,000; stickers - $35,000; flat booklets for July - $10,000; insignia information folders - $7,500; book - Way of Life - $7,500; colour-slide press kits - $12,500; black and white press kits - $12,500; the 1980 self-government anniversary school kit - $74,000; VIP presentation folders - $10,000; and miscellaneous printing - $10,000. That sub-total comes to $249,000. Travel and subsistence is $25,000 and incidentals are $10,000. The total is $390,000.

Mr ISAACS: I am pleased that the school kit cost $74,000. The point of my question was that I was concerned that, since the Information Service has responsibility for publication and PR work and also each of the other departments sees that as part of its function as well, there should be no duplication. I would ask the Chief Minister what steps are taken, if any, to ensure that duplication does not exist in the various public relations areas?

Mr EVERINGHAM: As much as possible is done in this regard. The Information Service has the function of co-ordinating the dissemination of government information on policies, programs and the like. Of course, other departments do have requirements for their own publishing and information services. The Education Department and the Health Department, because of their specialised needs, have areas that prepare special educational publications and special health publications. The Department of Primary Production has a journalist who is responsible for the production of a journal for people in the rural areas. Recently, the Tourist Commission appointed a public relations officer but I think that appointment is justifiable. Certainly, the Conservation Commission has had from time to time a journalist seconded to it to prepare a special publication and do some other specialist work. As far as possible, I keep an eye on the duplication of any of these functions and we are very anxious to
Mrs LAWRIE: I address a couple of questions to the Chief Minister. Whilst I realise it is difficult for him with the variety of responsibilities he has to shoulder to answer all the queries raised in the debate, the second reading of the Appropriation Bill is a specific area where members can bring to the attention of the relative government ministers specific concerns which are expressed by them in many cases on behalf of their constituents and other people of the Northern Territory who live outside their constituency but prefer to approach that particular member. With the greatest goodwill, I advise the Chief Minister that I refuse to be misquoted by the honourable Chief Minister. I did not intimate that the money which was allocated within the Northern Territory government was solely the concern of the people of the Northern Territory inasmuch as they perhaps were the only people contributing. May I reiterate what I said in regard to the advice in committee to the particular clause dealing with the Chief Minister's Department: 'We are certainly not appearing to get the best use at the moment out of the dollar raised in the Territory and from other Australian sources'. Now, I would like that on record as the Chief Minister this afternoon has chosen to ignore my particular comment.

Mr Chairman, I would ask the Chief Minister to reply to the queries I raised in the second reading regarding the inscrutability of the Chief Minister's documents. I did say: 'In dealing with a sum of $746,000' - which I saw documented under sub-item 10 on page 23 of the explanatory booklet - 'there is a whole list of things under sub-item 10. We find "Minister, Members and Staff". I think that is it. I am talking about travel for honourable ministers - $746,000. I would like to see a little breakdown of that $746,000, getting close to $1m, and of course I shall be seeking the information on notice'. I went on to say that I could be wrong about whether or not that was the particular item in the budget covering ministerial travel. I would ask the Chief Minister to indicate to the Assembly whether I was correct or whether I was wrong and, if I was wrong, to indicate to me the item in the Department of the Chief Minister's allocations which covers ministerial travel both at home and abroad. There is some interest abroad, pardon the pun, in this particular item.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I do not think there is any secret that sub-item 10, division 12, 202 relates to funds for travel by ministers and their staff and the Leader of the Opposition and his staff. It includes fares, charters and travelling allowance. The sum allocated for that is $500,000. The rest of the sum, $246,000, making a total of $746,000, is made up as follows: electorate office expenses and rental, $90,000; telephones, $93,000; office machines, $20,000; service charges, $13,000; furniture and fittings, $20,000; and incidentals, $10,000.

Mrs LAWRIE: I thank the Chief Minister for the explanation. Could he also reply to my query about the $54,000 on page 22 which is allocated for consultancy. I did say that it would be nice to know where that is being spent and for what purpose the consultants are being engaged. I also said it was a fairly small amount given the other figures mentioned today. Nevertheless, I thought enough about it to bring it to the attention of the Assembly in the second reading and I would have welcomed a reply in the Chief Minister's speech.

Might I also ask for a little more information on the allocation of $1.5m for sub-item 9 on page 22: 'Ministerial Staff, Establishment - nil'. I do not
think the Chief Minister was present at the time and I do not make that statement as any kind of reflection upon him. The proceedings of this Assembly are broadcast and, from time to time, members have to leave the Chamber to attend to other duties but are still aware of what is being said. Honourable members opposite were interjecting whilst I was speaking and the point of their interjections was that those people do not appear because they are under contract and are not public servants. I did reply to the interjection which does not appear in Hansard. I said that it is still taxpayers' money being spent on the employment of these limited tenure or contract people. I would have appreciated some indication as to the areas in which they were allocated. It may be that that covers the staff who work for all honourable members as their electorate secretaries and who, by and large, do a magnificent job. However, the salaries for 19 members' electorate secretaries would not total $1.5m. It is quite clear that there are other people engaged and I seek an explanation as to the areas of their appointment and engagement. If the Chief Minister is not able to provide the information at the present time because his advisers have not brought it to his attention that the information was sought, I will certainly accept an assurance from him that that information will be tabled within the life of this sittings. I would welcome either his response immediately or his assurance that the information will be forthcoming.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I can certainly provide the information as to the consultants' fees immediately. I lost the drift of what the honourable member for Nightcliff was on about because of her long rambling question, but I think it could have been encapsulated in how many staff do the ministers and the Leader of the Opposition have working for them and what are their salaries. I think I have already provided the information for the Leader of the Opposition in answer to a question on notice. I cannot provide it in detail off the top of my head. Consultants fees are: cross-cultural communications project, $45,000; consulting anthropologists, $35,000; and a consultant for Aboriginal training needs, $15,000. This is a total of $95,000. These are the consultants fees.

As for ministerial staff, I will obtain information on the numbers and the salaries and I will provide it in writing to the member for Nightcliff.

Appropriations for divisions 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 19 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25:

Mr ISAACS: I did not give notice to the Chief Minister of this but could he provide, at a later date, the amount being paid to various consultants in the Department of Law. I know that there is one in relation to the consolidation of the criminal law code and I am aware of a number of other consultancy arrangements with the Department of Law in regard to specific projects. I would ask the Attorney-General to provide us with a list of those consultants.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I would not have any precise knowledge at the moment of the consultants presently employed by the Department of Law for the simple reason that within the terms of consultancies fall such items as counsels' fees. The Department of Law is retaining counsel somewhere in Australia, usually in Melbourne, Sydney or Canberra, almost every week and these fees, unfortunately, add up.

As to the consultant on the criminal code, Mr Connelly of Brisbane, I do not think he has been concerned with that since 1979. I doubt that there would be any fees for him included in this. I will obtain a list and send it to the Leader of the Opposition.
Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 30 to 38:

Mrs LAWRIE: I have a question of the Minister for Transport and Works regarding his budget allocation. Since the election of this present government, has the minister initiated any survey, inter-departmentally or otherwise, on whether it would save money to have a flat water charge for people, certainly in the urban area of Darwin, rather than the present system of levying a basic water rate plus excess charges plus reading meters plus a variety of billings being sent out?

Mr DONDAS: I have thought about it but that is as far as it has gone.

Mrs O'NEIL: I am interested under the section relating to transport to find out some details of the proposed Northern Territory government contribution for restoration of Mandorah Jetty - $275,000. I wonder if the minister can tell me who else is contributing to that restoration, when it is intended to proceed and any other details he might have.

Mr DONDAS: As far as I understand, the Commonwealth government is also contributing about $200,000.

Mrs O'NEIL: On page 17, Department of Community Development, there is reference to works in progress - $28,000 for an extension to Dundas House. The minister will be aware of this as the former Minister for Community Development. When I have gone to Dundas House, it has been pretty empty. I wonder if the minister can tell me the purpose of those extensions for which $28,000 is proposed to be expended?

Mr DONDAS: I think it is a bit much to expect me to be able to carry around in my head every capital works item programmed for other departments but I do remember the Dundas House operation because I was involved in its formulation in early Cabinet discussions on the capital works program. As I understand it, Dundas House is used for the training of various wayward children who would be kept at our institution at Malak. They would be brought into town and trained in various skills to enable them to find employment. As far as I am aware, the present Minister for Community Development has the same understanding that Dundas House will be used as a skills training centre for juveniles.

Mrs LAWRIE: I ask the Minister for Transport and Works if he can give us some indication of the reasons for the cost of $70,000 appearing on page 26, under proposed new works, for the uplifting of 2 demountables from Alice Springs Hospital. Perhaps the minister could indicate why the level of expenditure is seemingly inordinate and excessive.

Mr DONDAS: It depends on the size of the demountable. I can only give her an answer relating to an experience I have had with a community organisation with which I am involved. The organisation was successful in obtaining one of the demountables from the Darwin Hospital. I believe the cost to transport it from Myilly Terrace to Marrara, with volunteer labour, is some $20,000. I believe also that the Royal Australian Navy made an application also to the government for one of the hospital demountables and their cost to move a demountable from the hospital out to Coonawarra was $180,000. The $35,000 to uplift a demountable may not be excessive.

Mrs O'NEIL: I ask the minister a question relating to the Department of
Education expenditure and perhaps the Minister for Education can answer it if the Minister for Transport and Works cannot. There is an allocation of $64,500 for the provision of primary cyclone shelters at area schools in Darwin. I would be interested to know at which schools it is intended to provide those and how many shelters there will be.

Mr DONNAS: On behalf of the Minister for Education, I give the member for Fannie Bay an undertaking to provide her with that information.

Mrs LAWRIE: I address my query on the capital works program to the Minister for Transport and Works. It relates to the works in progress allocation for the Supreme Court building in Darwin for rehabilitation of air-conditioning and associated building works - stage 2. The allocation is over $0.5m. It is on page 30 of the capital works program. I ask if he could indicate if stage 2 includes the physical extension of the present buildings for which his department has funded 2 private architects - without apparently asking the advice of anybody other than themselves - who have produced a series of plans all of which have been scrapped. I ask the minister if he could indicate just what stage 2 means. Does it include the funding of the private people who have travelled around Australia being paid for by his department and who produced a series of plans none of which is being implemented or is that a stage 3 about which we wait to hear with bated breath?

Mr DONNAS: I am unable to provide the honourable member for Nightcliff with that information. However, it is not unusual for the department to retain local architects in the Darwin area for Darwin work and Alice Springs architects for Alice Springs work. I believe that there were special problems associated with the court house. Since the cyclone, I would hate to think how much money has been spent on it but nevertheless there are peculiar problems associated with the construction of the court house. I believe the Chief Minister would be in a far better position to advise the Assembly as to what the $560,000 relates. I am not aware at this stage of stage 3 funding or development.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I may be able to throw some light on the query of the honourable member for Nightcliff. Whilst what I say cannot be definitive because the Chief Justice must have some say in what happens to the Supreme Court building, I was involved in this matter from the very outset as President of the Law Society. It was originally proposed in Commonwealth times by the Chief Justice and the then Attorney-General's Department to extend the Supreme Court building over the area of open space opposite the Darwin Hotel. My understanding is that, since then, the Northern Territory government has agreed to the construction, in due course, of the lower courts building, the plans for which are being prepared. The immediate need for a second stage of the Supreme Court building has been obviated at least for the time being. I certainly am aware that plans were prepared, at least in a conceptual style, for a second stage of the Supreme Court. However, if anything has been done since then, it would be a matter of some surprise to me as Attorney-General.

Mrs O'NEIL: I ask the minister a question about the capital works program relating to the Department of Health. Last year, the Assembly allocated - and it was the Assembly which allocated it - $960,000 for the construction of a community health clinic at Dripstone. I wonder if the Minister for Transport and Works or the Minister for Health can explain why this does not appear as work in progress on the capital works program for this year?

Mr DONNAS: The member for Fannie Bay is quite right. It was included in last year's capital works program. In fact, it had got to the stage of the
contract being let regarding the construction of the centre. But, with the opening of the Casuarina Hospital and the proposed future development of the Sanderson Health Centre, a Cabinet decision was made to delete the Dripstone Health Centre from this year's capital works program.

Mrs O'NEIL: I also ask a question about an item that appeared on last year's program for the Nightcliff Primary School, stage 2. It has also disappeared and I understand that there has been some reference to it in the Assembly. I do not think most members know what has happened. I would like to know why that is not also in work in progress.

Mr DONDAS: I believe that the Minister for Education has had funds reallocated to those particular programs and it would be in order to place a question on notice to the Minister for Education regarding the Nightcliff Primary School.

Mrs O'NEIL: I now ask a question about the Department of Lands' section of the capital works. There is an allocation of $45,000 to relocate a Telecom conduit in my electorate at Parap. Can the minister explain this to me? Where is this going to happen and also why is it this government's responsibility to relocate a Commonwealth government facility?

Mr DONDAS: I find it very difficult to answer the question. In some cases, it is the responsibility of the Northern Territory government to relocate the Telecom cables by virtue of the fact that the land is being handed back to the Northern Territory government. I believe a question of that nature should be directed to me in writing and I will certainly follow it up.

Mrs O'NEIL: I am sure the minister is not suggesting that I should not use the only time that is available to ordinary members in the Assembly to find out details of proposed expenditures which we are being asked to vote upon very soon. The minister might be expecting a question about the Parap fire station for which money has been allocated for 2 years - $834,000. Is it the government's intention to proceed with that project?

Mr DONDAS: No, the government is not proceeding with the Parap fire station. It is coming off this year's capital works program. I believe it was included in the estimates by error. However, it has been now taken off the program and I believe that we will be providing additional funds to the Daly Street Fire Station. This particular decision was made following the recommendations of the Williamson Report which stated that the Daly Street Fire Station, the Berrimah Fire Station and the Casuarina Fire Station would certainly cover the areas of Darwin and the northern suburbs and it was no longer necessary for us to proceed with the fire station at Parap.

Mrs LAWRIE: I ask this question of the honourable Minister for Transport and Works and, if he cannot supply the information, perhaps the honourable Minister for Primary Production might be able to assist. There is an amount of $236,782 for the upgrading of the quarantine depot at Dinah Beach. Could the minister indicate the extent of the upgrading given that I thought we would have an entirely new quarantine facility?

Mr DONDAS: Just from memory, funds were committed last year in the capital works program for the construction of the quarantine station at Dinah Beach. I believe that the funds being expended this year are for associated works. However, I believe that the Minister for Primary Production might be able to provide the honourable member for Nightcliff with a bit more information.

Appropriations for divisions 30 to 38 agreed to.
Appropriations for divisions 39 to 43 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 45 to 49:

Mrs LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, the honourable member for Fannie Bay made reference to the stage 2 development, the phantom stage 2, of Nightcliff Primary School which was a high priority last year and which did not appear on the capital works program this year. The minister and other members by now will be aware that a sum of $780,000 has been allocated for a stage 2 rebuilding which has been examined by the members of the school council in concert with officers of his department. Could the minister assure the Assembly that that allocation of $780,000 will cover the proposals as put to us, with his permission, I assume, at the last council meeting which include the stage area and the covered way given Nightcliff Primary School's history of musical and dramatic presentation?

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, I find it somewhat difficult to comment on the last part of that question because I am not thoroughly familiar with the architectural solutions to the problem as envisaged by the school council. I am informed by my department - I think it is one of those times that a minister can say he was informed by the department because I was not at the meeting - that the departmental officers reached agreement with the school council members of the Nightcliff Primary School. That agreement in spirit and in fact will be carried out. The reality of these sorts of things is that one will find that, while that is the tender target and it is believed that all of the necessary stage 2 development can be achieved for that amount of money, the rise and fall fouls up one's sums at times. It certainly will not be a lesser expenditure. If we are going to have reasonable control of capital expenditure and know where we are going, I hope it is not higher.

Mrs O'NEIL: I refer to the funds being made available to independent schools which the papers tell us are determined on 20% of the average Northern Territory government school running cost per student. I would ask the minister if that 20% is determined on the average of all Northern Territory schools or the average per student of urban schools because I believe all the independent schools are in urban areas and we know that Aboriginal schools have a higher per capita expenditure.

Mr ROBERTSON: It is very good to hear a member of the opposition recognise that the per capita cost to Aboriginal schools and small schools is much higher in fact than that which relates to urban schools. This is the first time it has been admitted by the opposition particularly in debates pertaining to the dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme. The answer to the question is that it is based upon the average cost of educating a child in the Northern Territory and that is self-explanatory.

Mr B. COLLINS: I would like to refer to this problem of school-based funding which received some coverage in the debate. Before I get on to the specifics of that, I would like to correct the minister in a statement which he made earlier today which was just as inaccurate as the last one he made. Quite frankly, I could not be bothered making a personal explanation. The problem of schools having to pay their own bills is causing considerable concern whether the minister is prepared to admit that or not. He said this morning that I was encouraging school principals to be irresponsible and to work outside their school budgets. That, like so many of the things the minister says, was totally incorrect as he will find if he turns to what I did in fact say. I was referring specifically - and this brings me to the question I wish to ask the minister - to the problems schools have where they have been
asked to economise in their budgets, have requested the department to give them guidelines to assist them in doing this and have received absolutely no response from the department on the particular problem.

Mrs Lawrie: That's right.

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes, it is correct. I do not want to waste the Assembly's time by reading it out but it is in fact what I said. I referred to the problem of a principal - and this in fact happened - who was so enraged by the continued failure of the department to give him guidelines on economising with his budget that he did in fact say to the staff that he was so sick and tired of getting no response that, if the department did not respond, he would ask the staff to continue their school year with restraint. If they ran out of money and if the department was not prepared to help with these guidelines, then he was not prepared to implement them.

I would ask the minister, and it is obvious from his reaction that he is not aware of the answer, whether the department has responded by supplying schools with guidelines so they can work within their budgets and with suggestions to charges they can levy which they have not to my knowledge done so far.

Perhaps to save a little time, I will deliver these questions now for the minister to make a note of them. Has the $5,000 funding for musical instruments which was contained within the total budget appropriation to the schools been fixed or do schools have to spend that $5,000 out of their total budget allocation on musical instruments they may not want or need? I would also ask the minister for a reply on the question that I raised in my budget speech on the trade course at DCC. I would ask him that particularly in the context of the $1.5m which has been budgeted for the Industries Training Commission. Perhaps the minister could establish whether this is correct or not: I have been informed that the boilermaker-welding course at the Darwin Community College, which requires $27,000 to operate next year effectively and not reduce any of its courses, has in fact been supplied with $16,000. As I said in my budget speech, that is $11,000 short of that amount. Is this in fact correct? In view of the fact that $1.5m has been allocated to the Industries Training Commission, it is a little nonsensical if it is correct that up to 50 part-time students - and these are the people who will be affected if the courses are curtailed - will be denied the opportunity of doing that in the next year. Is that correct or not? If it is correct, would the minister take some action to encourage the Darwin Community College to redress that situation?

The third problem I want to raise with the minister only came up today when I received a copy of the guidelines that have been sent to schools in respect of the $500,000 allocated in the budget for dollar-for-dollar subsidies. As the minister would know, most school councils have had their final meetings for 1980 already. I know 2 schools in Darwin that last week had their final meetings for the year. Most school councils will not be meeting again until February next year when school goes back after the long break over Christmas. In the guidelines, any applications for allocations of this half a million dollars allocated for the dollar-for-dollar subsidy must be submitted by close of business on 20 February 1981. I would like to point out to the minister that, given that most of the school councils which will be submitting these applications have finished their business for the year and will not be meeting again until February next year, this may in fact cause them some difficulty.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, the honourable member started off by a little bit of a play on who said what. Let me make something quite clear in relation to my comment on his comments about school principals having no regard to the appropriations of this Assembly. If he looks at the words I used, he will find
that I said: 'By implication he could be seen to encourage it'. There is quite a difference.

I do thank the honourable member for his questions. He asked about the guidelines for the charging for school facilities. Once again, the honourable member was not entirely accurate in what he said. The charging of a nominal amount for school facilities has been happening in the Northern Territory for years. Indeed, on my understanding, circulars have been sent out for a period of 4 years. Guidelines have always been made available to schools. It would seem to me that there has been a break somewhere in the system and that is something I can track down. There is no question that this is an area in which the department has been involved in an advisory way for some years. I might point out that, in no circumstances, are these charges to be seen as being economic charges. By that, I mean a charge equivalent to the cost of using the facilities because that would act in direct defiance of the government's wish that communities use the facilities. I would not like to see school facilities denied to community groups.

The honourable member said that the $5,000 for musical instruments was contained in total school budgets. Again, this is incorrect. It was not although I do recognise that a circular sent out by the northern region could very well give that impression. For that reason, this matter has come somewhat unstuck. It is very difficult to be a minister and try to explain a matter like this without doing the almost unforgivable: being critical of officers. Nonetheless, the message was obviously received wrongly and the impression was gained that the $5,000 for musical instruments had something to do with school-based funding. It did not; it was never intended to. The funds for musical instruments were intended by me - and I accept responsibility for this coming unstuck - to be retained by the Department of Education as a sum pooled between the northern and southern regions and letters sent out to secondary schools which conducted significant music programs asking if they wanted any musical instruments to upgrade the standard of the instruments available.

Where this amount of money has been notionally provided to schools, I will arrange for a circular to be sent out to those schools and they may spend it in any manner in which they see fit. It is just a shame that a good system has come unglued. Those schools which do not run musical programs have been advised that, in their one-line allocation, they have this $5,000. It would be quite unfair of me to ask for the money back. I do not think that would be a very popular or sensible move.

I have no idea how much the Darwin Community College, in its wisdom and in accordance with its own priorities, has allocated to the boilermaking-welding course. I have an assurance in writing from the Principal of the Darwin Community College that that course will not be cut, cancelled or altered in any way. It will be held at last year's levels. The Darwin Community College has been at all times a most responsible organisation in its bids to government. As a result, its bids are respected by government. I think that its trade courses particularly are running as economically and as efficiently as possible. Certainly, in the revised estimates period for these essential careers-oriented trades courses, we cannot afford to have these courses suffer. Of course, this is one of the problems of a substantially independent statutory corporation such as the community college. That answers in part the question on the $1.5m devoted to the Industries Training Commission.

In relation to the dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme and the closure of applications by February, can I simply say that the honourable member has raised a very valid point. I will have it thoroughly checked out. I will ensure that no school council or school is disadvantaged as a result of its
Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I am not seeking in any way to be tedious about this but I am very aware of the fact that a great many teachers read the Hansard. Certainly, many school principals do. I would just like this pinned down a little more tightly. I understand that a number of schools have received advice from the department - I am not suggesting that it has been put in any dogmatic form - but the 'inference', to use one of the minister's favourite words, is there - that they should economise - and I support this - in areas such as electricity, water and so on. The minister is aware that some of the consumption of power is occasioned by the after hours use of the school by other bodies. From attending many meetings, I know that Casuarina High School is extensively utilised by all sorts of people after hours, as many other schools are. To the best of my knowledge, principals have been advised by the department that one of the ways in which they must make these economies is to charge these people for using lights and air-conditioning. This relates to what the minister said a minute ago because I feel that it needs to be spelt out if it is not to cause any problems between the schools and the department. The minister said a minute ago that he does not expect schools to make economic charges for power. It is my understanding that school principals have been told this is precisely what they must do and that is why they are seeking specific guidelines so that, if the boy scouts use air-conditioning, they are to be charged what it costs the school to supply that service. To avoid any confusion, I wonder if the minister could spell that out.

The other fascinating area that perhaps the minister could give some guidelines on was foreshadowed both in my second-reading speech and in that of the honourable member for Nightcliff. I would be interested in knowing just how the minister intends to differentiate between money raised in the dollar-for-dollar scheme by, as he terms it in his guidelines, 'voluntary school fees' and money which is raised in another manner such as a personal donation of cash to the school.

Mr ROBERTSON: Dealing with the last point first, I am not going to give an answer to that without considering it very carefully because what I say here as a definitive answer will stand. I want to give some consideration to that one. Usually, accepted voluntary fees or school fees - let us call a spade a spade if that is the way parents view them, and with some justification - are usually the result of a letter sent home saying, 'You owe $30 to school contributions'. It is patently clear to anyone what they are. I would like the opportunity to think this one through because both the member for Nightcliff and the member for Arnhem raise a very valid point. These sorts of things have a very bad habit of becoming unglued wherever there is confusion.

The normal term 'economic charge' relates to a charge having regard to everything contained in a building. The economic rent of a house includes the value of the house. The question of what it costs to use the basketball courts for 4 hours with 12,000 watts of light going is very easy to work out. I do not think it is so easy to work out the realistic cost for the person using the hall of an air-conditioned school and you must turn the air-conditioning on for the entire wing in order to turn the hall on. That is a far more difficult calculation. It is a matter of guidelines. I do not believe that it is practical to say that all costs must be recovered. I do not think it is physically possible to even calculate them. Therefore, it would be my view that these charges should remain of a token nature but still have regard to a realistic inflationary component over those nominal fees which are charged now. Certainly, my personal view - and it was the same when I was Minister for Community Development - is that schools belong to the community and the public should not be denied, through a financial vehicle, the use of schools for community purposes.
Mrs LAWRIE: The Minister for Education made a couple of comments today which seem at variance with the comments he made the other day. He will be aware that I listen most closely when anyone mentions school fees which, of course, do not exist. The other day the honourable minister, by way of interjection, recognised that so-called school fees were no more than the parents' voluntary contributions. Once we used to contribute by way of plant stalls and fetes, but now many people have pressure put upon them by the various schools to pay a levy. This is an attempt to deny the parents an option. I feel very strongly about this because I feel it is proper now, in consideration of the Education Department's budget, for the minister to state whether an adequate education is free and available to the children of the Northern Territory in government schools. If it is, then what is called a 'school fee' has to be recognised, not only by the people and by the members of this Assembly but, most importantly, by the hierarchy of the schools, as no more than a request for a contribution. The reason I ask for this assurance is because children whose parents, for one reason or another - and I could produce a hundred - have not paid the contribution have tremendous pressure put upon them by principals of schools. The degree of pressure depends on the attitude and the goodwill of the principal concerned. A letter which might be sent from one school, such as the one read out by the member for Arnhem the other day, may not necessarily be sent by another school. I think this is grossly unfair. Do our children have sections of their educational program withheld upon threat if their parents have not paid their fees?

Mr ROBERTSON: I do not want it taken the wrong way but it seemed to me that the honourable member was making a speech rather than seeking the answer to a question. It did not sound much like a question at all. The question of what is a level of funding such as would provide a basic, free education to children is an extremely vexed one. The department is conducting currently through schools, through the auspices of 2 officers, a survey to try - I think in vain - to define just what that is. It is something I do not think anyone has really addressed his mind to: just what is the amount needed. What is certain, however, is that it would not matter how much the government provided, schools, as is their right, would always seek more. The so-called school fees are a voluntary contribution. That is the legal position as I understand it.

I suppose, with a financial ability to pay and having regard to the methodology developed over many years by schools right throughout our system and I dare say world-wide, it is probably in a way a compulsory voluntary contribution. But it certainly is not, on my legal advice, enforceable at law. In other words, you cannot sue for it. The reality is that it would not matter how much the government provided, school councils would always want to do that little bit extra. By what vehicle they do it is up to them. In order to discourage the use of the school fee system, the government is encouraging - to use the term I used in the press release - people to roll their sleeves up
and do the work by way of normally accepted community fund-raising activities which I find far more desirable and far less dangerous than the practice of sending out circulars saying that you have to pay school fees. Should I stop a school from using this method when its own council is determining the method? Should a minister be involved in saying, 'You can't do it'? What the minister can do is say, 'You shall not recover it in a court of law'. He does that by simply not sponsoring legislation in this place to make it enforceable. But it comes down to a question of how autonomous should school councils be in matters relating to the non-provision of education and courses. It is a very dicey subject as the honourable member recognises. I think I will simply have a look at what she had to say and give it serious consideration.

Appropriations for divisions 45 to 49 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 50 to 53:

Mr ISAACS: Mr Chairman, I will put the 2 questions I have to the Treasurer together. The first is in relation to a public accounts committee. Will the government be sponsoring a public accounts committee in the life of this parliament? If that is not the case, when would we expect the government to sponsor its establishment? Secondly, I have a question in regard to a number of loans taken over from the Commonwealth and in particular the loan relating to the meatworks at Katherine. Could the Treasurer inform the Assembly what the position of that particular loan is and what steps are being taken with regard to repayments?

Mr PERRON: All I can say on the question of a parliamentary accounts committee is that the government is not looking at it at this time. The loan to the Katherine meatworks was inherited by the Northern Territory government and, as I understand it, repayments would be paid to the Northern Territory government. However, I have sought recently quite a lot of information from the Territory Development Corporation on outstanding loans. If the Leader of the Opposition writes to me, I can provide information to him on the subject because I certainly do not have it here with me. As I understand it, it is a debt owed to the Northern Territory.

Appropriations for divisions 50 to 53 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 55 and 56:

Mrs LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I rise to raise with the Minister for Lands and Housing a question which I first mentioned in the second-reading debate. It is the problem which is exacerbating the critical housing shortage, in Darwin in particular, and that is bond money and rent in advance. The Treasurer was frantically scribbling notes whilst I spoke and yet no mention was made of this by any member opposite in the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I am asking the honourable Minister for Lands and Housing if, given the housing shortage which was acknowledged here today by both sides of the Assembly as a symptom of growth and a variety of other things, he can give an indication as to whether he will move to introduce legislation which will significantly alter the necessity for bond money and rent in advance so that people can get into private accommodation which they can afford once they are there? I make the point - and I think the honourable members for Sanderson and Fannie Bay have made it in the past - that they cannot afford to get into the flats or the units. If they were able to get in without this payment in advance and this deposit of bond money, then they would not be in the desperate circumstances in which they presently find themselves.

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The Treasurer, who seems to have a hankering for his old portfolio of housing, was at great pains today to castigate members of this side of the Assembly for, as he so glibly put it, apparently wanting the government to house everybody. No one expects that. It is in some ways desirable that society should be ultimately responsible for the housing of all members but it is not feasible in our modern world. But what we do appreciate is the need for a variety of forms of assistance to people for housing and the government knows this. It has offered a diverse program of housing schemes and loans. But the one problem which I see as the key to an immediate alleviation of the housing shortage - not the unit shortage but the inability of people to get into the units - is the barrier which exists to their getting into premises: the bond money and the rent in advance. I would hope that the minister would not say they should go and borrow it because these people are not in a position to offer security to lending institutions. If fact, the Chief Minister has been fairly critical of the lending propensities of banks in recent times. If they did have that ability, they would not be worrying about going on the housing list. Can the minister give some indication to the Assembly as to his government's feelings on this subject?

Mr Robertson: Mr Chairman, I suppose the best way to handle the thing would be to refer it to the responsible minister. It certainly is not in my portfolio. The Tenancy Act is is the portfolio of the Treasurer. I think there was something odd about what the honourable member said. She makes the assumption that there are spare private flats and housing units available for these people who cannot afford to get into them. That is not the real position at all. I think the honourable member's argument would be valid if there were a lot of vacant flats and houses around. Of course, what she is saying is that they are unable to compete when one comes up. People who are in that financial position are really, by and large, a responsibility of the government. They are not normally the sort of people one would expect to see in $100-plus a week private accommodation units. The question of the legal position on that is one for my colleague and not myself.

Mrs Lawrie: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for his response. I advise him that some of these people are awaiting an allocation of Housing Commission accommodation which takes, at the present time, 18 months. They are prepared to await their allocation for 18 months. They do not wish to apply for emergency housing. They can afford $100 a week. They cannot afford the $500 and $600 to get into the premises to pay the $100. That was the point I was making.

Mr Everingham: A point of order, Mr Chairman! We are in committee to consider items of expenditure. We are at the present time - as I understand it - debating philosophy in respect of bond money.

Mrs Lawrie: The point of order raised by the Chief Minister was that we are debating funds allocated under the portfolio of the Minister for Lands and Housing. That is quite correct and the minister has a finite amount of money under the allocation to the Northern Territory Housing Commission which appears there as division number 61. My debate was on alleviating the problems of housing people by the Northern Territory Housing Commission. That was the point of my observations. If the Chief Minister does not like it, that is his problem, but I hardly see it as a point of order.

Mr Robertson: Mr Chairman, may I briefly respond to what the honourable member was saying. It will be recalled by those honourable members who were here at the time that I was the minister responsible for the introduction of the Tenancy Act. I made it clear in this Assembly and in public statements that the government would be closely monitoring the activities of the private rental
sector in its operations under that act. I am quite sure that responsible officers within the government service will note the comments the honourable member for Nightcliff has just made and undertake the appropriate investigations. I would use the opportunity again to warn the private sector that, while I am a great believer in the lack of government controls over their activities — and I believe that the removal of rent control has been significantly successful in the tremendous number of private flat developments we have seen come into Darwin since the repeal of that repressive legislation — I would repeat my warning of 2½ years ago that they should not think that that is a carte blanche to rip people off.

Mrs O'NEIL: I believe that last year the member for Sanderson pointed out to the committee the excellent example which the Northern Territory Housing Commission set in the detail it provided in its explanation to its appropriation. I once again point that out to the minister and other members and congratulate the Housing Commission for the fine set of explanations it has provided to this allocation of $50m. I wish that other departments and commissions would take its example.

Appropriations for divisions 55 and 56 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 60 and 61 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 62 and 63:

Mrs O'NEIL: I ask the minister about an item on page 51, an allocation to the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia. It is $3,500, not a large sum. Nevertheless, this is a new allocation. I ask the minister if this organisation is active in the Northern Territory and what it intends to do with the money.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia has recently established itself in the Northern Territory. It sought the support of the Northern Territory government financially in this move. I might add that the establishment of this particular organisation received a great deal of support from the medical fraternity who believe that it plays a great role in the prevention of accidents among children which in turn is reflected in hospital costs and charges to the community in looking after children who are harmed. In view of the enormous costs that we have in looking after children in Northern Territory hospitals, I was of the view that an establishment grant of $3,500 this year was quite reasonable.

Mrs O'NEIL: I would also like to ask the minister for some details about the administrative expenses in the Health Department. There is a sum of $4m under 'Hospitals Administrative Expenses' entitled 'General Services' and another $5.3m under 'Operational Expenses'. Can the minister give us a brief outline of the difference between those two?

While he is on his feet, there are 2 allocations, 'Department of Health Administrative Expenses, Hospitals' and 'Department of Health Administrative Expenses, Health Services'. Under 'Health Services', there is $758,000 for payroll tax but there is no such breakdown under 'Hospitals'. I wonder if there is a reason for that.

Mr TUXWORTH: I dealt with some of the points the member raised earlier this afternoon in my second-reading speech. The $4m relates to grants-in-aid but I cannot give an answer on the $5m. I would have to take up the issue of the payroll tax with the departmental people and obtain a specific explanation for the honourable member. As everyone is aware, we have a principle of
charging payroll tax because it is shown as a Northern Territory earning for federal compensation benefits. If we have done it in one section, it is almost certain that we have done it in others.

Mrs LAWRIE: As the Sanderson Community Health Centre does not appear on the capital works program and the Outpatients clinic is demonstrably not adequately servicing the needs of people in the far northern suburbs, what measures is his department taking to provide outpatients facilities and immediate treatment for people seeking assistance from his department?

Mr TUXWORTH: I received a question yesterday about this particular issue. While I do not have an answer for the honourable member at the moment, I expect to have a reply for the Assembly tomorrow on the issue of outpatients services at the Casuarina Hospital.

Appropriations for divisions 62 and 63 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 65 and 66:

Mrs O'NEIL: I wonder if the minister can inform me how much money is being spent on books and equipment for the Library Service. We used to have a breakdown on this.

Mr PERRON: In amongst this material provided to me by the Department of Community Development, there is a breakdown of expenditure on library services. I would be quite happy to extract it and provide it to the honourable member for Fannie Bay but I cannot provide it at this time.

Mrs O'NEIL: I thank the minister and I look forward to obtaining that information. I will also be asking him for details on the allocations of $6m and upwards to local governments. I presume that he does not have the information with him and I appreciate that he will obtain it for me. However, I point out to the Minister for Health that we are being asked to vote for or against these allocations now, not after we obtain information from ministers later.

Mr PERRON: To expect detailed information on costings considering the range of portfolio responsibilities of ministers is quite unreasonable. Honourable members have had the opportunity to peruse these explanatory documents for a couple of months. As a matter of fact, that in itself has been the subject of some criticism. In that time, they could have collated their questions on detail and asked them through other channels. To expect ministers to have every conceivable breakdown here in front of them is totally unrealistic.

Mrs O'NEIL: I thank the minister. There are 2 answers to that. One is that, if the information was provided for us in the yellow book as, for example, the Housing Commission provided it, we would not need to ask the questions. Secondly, it is the role of the committee of the whole to examine the budget. I will vote for or against it when I have sufficient information in front of me. Frequently I do not have sufficient information in front of me to make a reasonable decision on behalf of my constituents.

Appropriations for divisions 65 and 66 agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.
PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 26)

Continued from 21 August 1980.

Mr ISAACS (Opposition Leader): This bill does 2 things: it increases the threshold again by 10% at a time when employers become subject to payroll tax and, secondly, it clears up some doubt as to whether benevolent institutions are liable to payroll tax. Certainly, we support the measure whereby the threshold is raised because this will ensure that the employers are not penalised as a result of inflation acting upon their wages bill.

However, the point that I made in the budget speech is still valid: it simply tinkers with the system. Although I support wholeheartedly the views of the Treasurer in seeking to abolish payroll tax, it is pie in the sky when you consider it on a nationwide basis. It simply means that we are talking about a tax in Territory terms of something like $21m but, in national terms, we are talking about a tax raised by the various state governments in excess of $2 billion. If we are to abolish it, as we would all like to because it does work in a regressive way, what will happen is that somebody will have to pick up the tab. I do not see it as a matter which will be accomplished.

Mr Speaker, as I say, certainly we welcome the increase of the threshold which is to ensure that employers are not penalised by the effect of inflation on their payroll. That is all it does. It will keep pace with what we understand to be the rate of inflation for the next 12 months.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has missed a fundamental point that was raised in the debate on the Appropriation Bill: we have not touched the threshold. In the past, this government has twice extended the sum, called the threshold, beyond which employers are liable for paying payroll tax. This bill will reduce by 10% across the board the total payroll tax bill of any employer in the Northern Territory. That is very significant because the concept of pushing back a threshold is to relieve every small employer from paying payroll tax at all, although there is an area where there is a gradient scale and payroll tax is imposed. In this move, which is unprecedented in Australia, what we will effectively do is reduce payroll tax from 5% of payrolls to 4.5% of payrolls right across the board. It is a very innovative measure, certainly a leader in this country as far as payroll tax is concerned, and I am very disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition who usually follows this type of thing closely has missed that point altogether and is still speaking of a 10% increase in threshold which, in itself, certainly would not result in the forgoing of $1m in payroll tax alone. It would be a far smaller sum than that and certainly far less effective as far as an incentive to employers to invest in the Territory as distinct from elsewhere in Australia.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

New clause 4A:

Mr PERRON: I move amendment 3.1.

This inserts a new clause after clause 4. This clause provides for the making of applications for a refund of tax under section 20A of the principal
act which deals with refunds in respect of prescribed services, localities or classes of employees. Regulations have been prepared to prescribe apprentices as a class of employees for which tax will be refunded. The present amendment to the act is to ensure that the necessary information is made available to the Commissioner of Taxes so that any refund under section 20A can be made as soon as possible after the end of each financial year.

New clause 4A agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Continued from 21 August 1980.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to take part in the debate on the Address in Reply to the Administrator's speech. As the Minister for Transport and Works, I am looking forward to the challenging and definitely exciting period over the next 4 years. I fully endorse the comments made by His Honour the Administrator in regard to the role played by growth and development in the Territory. I firmly believe that my department plays a special role in those areas and I would like to outline some of the many activities we will be pursuing during the next 4 years. We are all aware of the importance of transport to the Territory and His Honour the Administrator has already identified a number of important initiatives which will be pursued in the next 4 years.

In roadworks, we are all aware of the development and the upgrading that is taking place on the Stuart Highway, especially between Elliott and Tennant Creek. There are roadworks with bridges at Attack and Morphett Creeks. There are works on the Victoria Highway and a possible realignment. Discussions are taking place with the Western Australian Transport Department regarding an alignment of the future Victoria Highway from Western Australia to the Northern Territory with Katherine being the point of meeting. There is the $9m program to upgrade the Barkly Highway over the next 3 years. I believe that that will be a significant part of the development of the Northern Territory. We will have better access to South Australia, Queensland and the other eastern seaboard states. Most members will be aware that stage 1 has been completed and tenders are being called for stage 2. Hopefully, by 1982, stage 3 will be constructed and there will be an all-weather, sealed road from Alice Springs to Ayers Rock which will certainly help the development of tourism in that area, particularly the Yulara Tourist Village.

Unfortunately, the member for MacDonnell is not here this afternoon but I am quite sure that he would be happy to know that the Jay Creek-Glen Helen Road has been sealed all the way up to the gorge. The tourist traffic in that area will also appreciate it. Mr Speaker, you have placed quite a lot of pressure on me in the last few months to ensure that the Department of Transport and Works places some emphasis on the Edith Falls Road. As you know, we hope to be able to provide some financial assistance to upgrade that road. The Plenty Highway will go into stage 2 this financial year and we hope to be able to continue to commit funds in that area for the continuation of the road to the Queensland border. There is also the Tanami Road. Tenders closed on 20 November for the Mainoru Road to Bamyili. That will certainly make that area and the Katherine area much better.

Regarding urban roads, members will be aware of the construction, and I might say the speedy construction, that has taken place at the corner of Bagot
Road and the Stuart Highway. I believe that the contractor there is really moving along well and is taking into consideration that we do not want to inconvenience our general motoring public. I believe that that will be finished in about 18 months and it will certainly make it much better for everybody concerned. Most of us are aware that the Frances Bay connector road is almost completed. It is in the final stages of its sealing. That will certainly take some of the traffic off the Stuart Highway, especially towards the port area.

Air transport is a very important facet of the Territory way of life. In regard to Northern Airlines, the new regional airline, I am not saying that we have not had teething problems. I believe that these will continue for some time but I also believe that, in the long term, Northern Airlines will play a major part in the development of all the isolated Territory centres. I believe that we, as a body of elected people, have to be a little bit more patient with Northern Airlines' operations. It has taken over an organisation which received a large subsidy from the federal government and the Northern Territory government has indicated to Northern Airlines that it will not be receiving any subsidy from us. We all have a responsibility to try to work together to ensure that we do eventually get this regional airline off the ground. The Aviation Act has passed through this Assembly and gives the Northern Territory full responsibility as far as aviation matters are concerned. I believe that that will be a very important part of the development of the aviation industry, particularly the legislation on charter licences. In the future, the government will be looking at making more charter licences available to people in areas that have a need for them. That will ensure a greater development of those areas.

We are all aware of the tremendous amount of work that our Chief Minister has done over the last 3 months in convincing the federal government that we should have our Alice Springs-Darwin rail link. We have that commitment and we can only look forward to the construction of that rail link in the next 7 or 8 years which of course will provide more benefits and a great deal of enthusiasm to people wishing to come to the Territory. In the long term, it will serve the development of the Northern Territory to a degree that people in the Territory require.

We have also a need to maintain shipping links. Negotiations are still being carried out with the Australian National Line to maintain an eastern seaboard-Darwin sea link. In some areas, we do have problems with the Australian National Line and I will be discussing those problems with the officials of ANL and the federal government later on this year. I believe that State Ships of Western Australia is putting on another 2 ships to service the Fremantle-Darwin run. I believe that, over the last 40 years, State Ships has certainly played a very important part in the development of Darwin. The 2 ships will be converted to carry cement and the company has now negotiated an area of land with the Port Authority for the establishment of another cement company. That company from Western Australia is called Cockburn Cement. It will be transporting cement to Dampier and to Darwin. With the ship that is already on the link now, the 2 ships will certainly serve us well, especially in the wet season. However, we must make some definite arrangements with ANL in the next few months to ensure that the east coast-Darwin shipping link is maintained.

My department has the responsibility for the motor vehicle registry. The Motor Vehicle Registry, especially in the last couple of years, has certainly excelled itself in its performance. I can remember the delays that took place at Goyder Road previously. The Motor Vehicle Registry has moved into automation and information regarding drivers' licences and other things relating
to motor vehicles is quite readily available at very short notice. There are other areas that we have to examine regarding improving the facilities there. I have asked my department to look at the feasibility of issuing identification licences through the Motor Vehicle Registry. There are many other programs in that area. I have not had a complaint regarding the operation of the Motor Vehicle Registry for at least 2 years and I do not think other members have had too many complaints either.

The duplication of a water main between Darwin River Dam and Darwin is being built. The Water Division is carrying out proper investigation into future water supply sources for Darwin and Katherine. The water will be available in 1982. In Tennant Creek, plans are being made to augment the existing water supply. The member for Barkly will be interested to know that he will not have any water in Tennant Creek for a couple of days while they connect a new supply. Water restrictions will be applied. Nevertheless, it is part of the program to upgrade the water supply to Tennant Creek and other areas. The existing water supply for Alice Springs will be augmented. We have discussed earlier in the sittings the recreational lake in Alice Springs. The Water Division has played a pretty important role within the department in providing proper services to people living in the Northern Territory.

In the Transport and Works Division, we have the land-backed wharf and the construction of the small ships facility is in its mid-term stage. I believe that a contractor will be handing over part of stage 1 very shortly and the other section will not be long. It has gone to tender now and contracts will be determined soon.

The museum and art gallery is about 60% to 65% completed and it will be opened in about May or June next year. The structure will provide a fine service for people in the Darwin area. We had discussions regarding the marina complex during the sittings. I hope that, by the end of the month, stage 2 of the marina complex report will be ready and we will make a final decision on whether to go ahead with the marina development in the selected location.

Another service provided by the Department of Transport and Works is the Government Printing Office which moved into its new building since the cyclone. It has performed admirably. It provides a very valuable service to this Assembly and to other government departments. At the moment, discussions are taking place between the Government Printer and private enterprise whereby, in some cases, the Government Printer may make some equipment available to private enterprise so that companies do not have to tie up very large sums of money in capital equipment. This is an example of a government instrumentality working with private enterprise in a small community.

The fire brigade is not without its problems but these are being resolved at the moment. The federal minister for Industrial Relations has agreed to allow Sir John Moore to appoint a chairman for the Fire Brigade Arbitral Tribunal. A first meeting should occur next year. We have had some problems in relation to rank structure and it is the government's intention, generally, to accept the recommendations of the Williamson Report. The Bush Fires Council has requested the Chief Minister to make arrangements to transfer it from the Department of Transport and Works to the Conservation Commission. In light of the Williamson Report, the government will have to review that particular proposal. The Chief Minister will be having discussions with the Bush Fires Council very shortly.

The Road Safety Council is another responsibility of the Department of Transport and Works. The Road Safety Council has embarked on a new promotion
program. I was asked a question by the member for Sanderson last week in relation to the expenditure on the program and how long it would run. I believe that we have a responsibility for maintaining such a program. In the long term, the Road Safety Council will certainly play its part in the reduction of accidents on roads. Our death toll is not decreasing at the moment and that is very unfortunate. If you compare the figures for this time last year to this year, you will see that they have risen. Overall, the general accident rate has decreased and the Road Safety Council has played a role in the reduction of the accident rate.

In terms of the future, we must strive for value for money. The Treasurer, the Chief Minister and other members on this side have stated that, during the term of this government, we will strive for value for money. We must pull together and strive to ensure a stable sea link, whether it be from the east coast or the west coast or even from overseas. Road programs must continue, not only for the tourist industry but also for the mining industry and the pastoral industry. With continued expenditure in those areas - and we will have our rail link by 1987 or 1988 - I believe that good foundations for the development of a very prosperous Northern Territory are being laid.

Airport facilities have always been a problem not only in the Darwin area but also in Alice Springs. Within the next few years, we should strive for far better facilities. As most of you would be aware, discussions are taking place at the moment between the Commonwealth Department of Transport and the Northern Territory government on the location of the airport terminal. These discussions are proceeding in a reasonable manner. Unfortunately, I am unable to tell the Assembly what stage these particular discussions have reached but, once a commitment is made by the Commonwealth for the siting of the airport, Darwin will gain airport facilities of which we can be proud. We must push the federal Department of Transport for a better airport in Alice Springs. While Alice Springs only has 17,000 people, the daily traffic that commutes through that airport is increasing weekly. Unless we take positive steps now to force the Commonwealth to provide better facilities there, we could be in trouble.

I also believe that we must press the Commonwealth to support better communications, especially in isolated areas. I believe the satellite that it intends putting up in the next couple of years will certainly help people in isolated areas. Whilst we are waiting for the federal government to put up the satellite, we should be pressing it for better communications at Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt and the other Territory centres. The member for Barkly can be trusted to apply pressure for better communications in the Borroloola area.

Mr Speaker, in replying to the Administrator's speech, I feel very privileged to rise today and would certainly pass on my regards to the Administrator. He will be retiring very shortly and I would convey my kindest regards to him.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to represent in this Assembly the only electorate named after an opera singer. Her name was Fannie Carandini. Not only was she an opera singer but she was also the daughter of an Italian count, Count Jerome Carandini. He was the tenth Marquis of Seranzo. He came to Hobart in the 1840s and married Mary Burgess. That lady was a singer and they had several daughters, one of whom was Fannie who also became a singer. The Carandinis were holding concerts in Adelaide the month before the South Australian Surveyor-General, George Coyder, and his party set out in 1868 to found present day Darwin. It was clearly with fond memories of this delightful lady, Fannie Carandini, that the members of Coyder's
party set out. When they arrived here, they named Fannie Bay after her.

It is not quite the same as being called after a part of the Netherlands or after other explorers, but I do think it is a little different. Ever since Fannie Bay had that rather unusual start with its nomenclature, it has played an important role in the history of the Northern Territory. Although it is now a very different place from the rain forest covered shores and cliffs that Goyder's party found, it has always played an important part in Territory history. It was the site of the famous or infamous Fannie Bay Gaol, the original Darwin airstrip where so many fliers landed and the Chinese market gardens at Parap which did a marvellous job of feeding citizens of Darwin until the then Health Department closed them down because they used that excellent Chinese fertiliser, night soil, to do the job. Of course, it played a role in the defence of Australia during World Wars 1 and 2. People can still see the gun emplacements at East Point. Today, Fannie Bay is the microcosm of Australia's oldest inner city suburbs despite our tiny size. It has some of Darwin's most affluent citizens and some of its least advantaged. It has some fine houses on large allotments and some very small Housing Commission flats to which we have referred earlier in this sittings. It has also some of its newest residents - the Vietnamese refugees who are living in the former Baptist Hostel which has been renamed Tamarind House - as well as some very old Northern Territory residents. It has some excellent public facilities and some very neglected ones.

In Fannie Bay, we not only have an image of something that happens in all Australian cities but we have also repeated the problems and mistakes which have taken place in other cities. We have, for example, built the Kurringal Flats, a version of Sydney and Melbourne Housing Commission tower blocks, without any of the justification that those cities had - the shortage of land and the need to replace slum dwellings. We have also the connector road which creates hazards for inner-city dwellers in order to provide more ready access from outer suburbs to the city. There are problems with this road and I am certainly hoping the Minister for Transport and Works will look at redesigning the intersection of the connector road with Ross Smith Avenue and Phillip Street where there are already serious problems and accidents occurring.

We also have further problems - once again, typical of inner-city suburbs - in incompatible land uses and the existence of nightclubs and noisy hotels in residential areas. It is little wonder that town planning advertisements are probably better read in Fannie Bay than anywhere else in the Northern Territory. I believe this community spirit, this feeling of local identity and this desire to maintain what is best in the area, is something which is very desirable and to be encouraged and not denigrated as sometimes happens. If people choose to do their best and work to maintain a pleasant place to live, then this is to be commended and I am proud to represent those residents in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, along with the Minister for Transport and Works, I would like, in speaking to this Address in Reply, to express some sorrow not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of the opposition at the imminent departure of the present Administrator, Mr England, and also Mrs Polly England. They have graced the position. They have done the people of the Northern Territory proud. They have always acted with dignity, certainly with hard work and an overwhelming sense of duty. We have been pleased to have them in the Territory and we are sorry to see them go.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in reply I too would like to place on record the appreciation of the government for the services of His
Honour the Administrator and Mrs England. I suppose the career of the Administrator could be encapsulated in 3 words: farmer, soldier, parliamentarian. But what a breadth of experience of life those 3 words convey and how many people indeed have the good fortune, if one may term it that, to gain that breadth of experience.

His Honour came to the Northern Territory as Administrator late in life when his active career had terminated - obviously at his own instigation. He had retired from the federal parliament where he had been the member for Calare for many years. He represented that seat ably in the federal parliament. Before that, he served in the Australian military forces both in Australia and overseas during the Second World War. Both before and after the Second World War, I understand, he farmed in the Grenfell district of New South Wales, although he was born in Brisbane and lived part of his early life at least in the northern rivers district of New South Wales. So His Honour has quite some experience of different types of country in Australia.

He was appointed Administrator of the Northern Territory in mid-1976 at a time of particular significance for the Northern Territory when anyone taking on that task would be faced with considerable difficulties presaged by the expected constitutional development that had first of all been instituted in terms of the fully-elected Legislative Assembly in 1974, then the reports of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and everything that that entailed. In coming into this job, His Honour knew that he was certainly not taking on an easy task and he has, I believe, discharged that task with distinction. It certainly must not have been easy to be dealing with younger people with very fixed ideas who believed that they knew what was best for the Northern Territory when one could look back on life from all the years that His Honour had passed through with his breadth of experience. Nevertheless, relations have always been good and His Honour has certainly made himself widely accepted in the Northern Territory community and he has been ably supported by Mrs Polly England who, with her friendly manner, I believe has endeared herself to many people. His Honour's work was recognised by Her Majesty with the Order of the Commander of St Michael and St George in the 1979 New Year Honours List and I think that this is a relatively small - with great respect - recognition of the long years of service that His Honour has given to the people of Australia as a soldier, as a parliamentarian and finally, to cap off his career, as Administrator of the Northern Territory. I am sure, Mr Speaker, that all members on this side of the House join me in recording our very sincere thanks to John and Polly England for a job well done and our best wishes for the future.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 24)

Continued from 18 November 1980.

Mr TUXWORTH (Mines and Energy): As a result of the motion the other day, I move that the bill be recommitted to the committee of the whole for further consideration of original clause 5.

Motion agreed to.

In committee:

Clause 5:

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, by some stroke of mismanagement the other day, we finished up with 2 clause 5s. I now seek the support of the committee in
defeating the original clause 5.

Original clause 5 negatived.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

DANGEROUS GOODS BILL
(Serial 9)

Continued from 21 August 1980.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the opposition, I support this particular bill. There has been some discussion, as I am sure the honourable minister will be aware, among some sectors of the community as to what this bill attempts to do. Some people are worried that there will be unnecessarily restrictive provisions as to the carriage and storage of dangerous goods and some have even alleged that industry would come to a standstill if we passed this bill. I suppose in a way these fears arise simply because there is no indication in the bill as to what type or range of goods will be prescribed as being dangerous. However, we on this side of the House accept the minister's assurance that the goods that are to be prescribed by this bill will be in accordance with the internationally accepted standards which have been developed by, amongst other bodies, the United Nations.

I think that this bill is fairly timely in that it takes up the question of the control over conveyance by all forms of transport and the storage of materials which are commonly used in industry which may be dangerous not only to human beings but also to plants, soil, watercourses and so on. In more industrialised communities, we do find that occasionally one reads about the dangerous situation that arises where there are spillages of chemicals or where there are materials that are highly flammable with which insufficient care was taken. These sorts of incidents have often caused loss of life and extensive damage to the immediate vicinity in which they have occurred. Certainly, we commend the provisions of this bill whilst accepting the assurance of the minister that in all respects the classifications will be as prescribed by the international organisations that he has mentioned.

There is of course one category of materials which will not be so classified - radioactive materials for which we have in the Territory a separate act altogether which covers the carriage and storage of that material. Because of the increasing industrialisation of the Territory, I think that it is incumbent on us to make provision for the safe carriage and storage of materials which are useful in industry but can nevertheless be dangerous.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 15.1.

Mr Chairman, this clause is drafted too widely and it has some doubtful constitutional validity. The amendment takes care of that.

Amendment agreed to.
Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.
Clauses 8 to 10 agreed to.
Clause 11:
Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendments 15.2 and 15.3.
These are drafting amendments.
Amendments agreed to.
Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.
Clauses 12 to 18 agreed to.
Clause 19:
Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 15.4.
This affects clause 19 which makes it an offence to both sell and purchase dangerous goods in certain circumstances. The defence available under subclause (4) should be a defence in respect of both actions. Its application to purchasing was inadvertently omitted and the amendment is to correct this omission.
Amendment agreed to.
Clause 19, as amended, agreed to.
Clauses 20 to 28 agreed to.
Clause 29:
Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 15.5.
Again, it is a drafting amendment to make the wording in clause 29(1) consistent with clause 28.
Amendment agreed to.
Ms D'ROZARIO: Mr Chairman, this particular clause relates to the dumping of dangerous goods. One hopes that there will be some well-defined areas - as a matter of fact, this bill requires that areas be gazetted - that are chosen and that they will be suitable for the purpose. In the recent past, we had a sulphur dump in the rural area. Whilst I am certainly not suggesting that sulphur is as dangerous as some of the goods that we are proposing to control by this bill, I think that that particular incident did highlight the question of the suitability of the areas that are chosen to dump these goods. We have also already enacted a section which relates to a person abandoning goods. If we require them to refrain from abandoning dangerous goods in order to protect the immediate facility or indeed to protect humans who might inhabit the area, then we must ensure that they are well-defined and suitable sites at which people who responsibly wish to dispose of these goods can do so.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the member for Sanderson touches on 2 points and I think they are quite distinct. The first one relates to the dumping. In this particular instance, we are referring to the provision of dumping as it
would apply to abandoning and clauses 27 and 28 of the bill take care of that in the sense that dumps can be established by notice in the Gazette. Again, there are approved areas and specific directions that relate to dumping. Again, I think this is a little different to the issue of storing such things as sulphur.

Clause 29, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 30 agreed to.

Clause 31:

Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 15.6. Again, this is a drafting amendment. Amendment agreed to.

Clause 31, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

LEPROSY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 6)

Continued from 20 August 1980.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, this is a very simple bill. It merely removes the prohibition on people being within 400 yards of a leprosarium. This matter has received much comment in the Assembly and has had the general support of all members on previous occasions. In effect, it will allow the public to use the East Arm Road, the boat ramp at the end of that road and the waterways beyond the boat ramp. The opposition supports the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, in rising to support this bill today, I would like to pass some remarks regarding the incidence of leprosy in the Northern Territory. I think everybody is aware after reading the report on the control of leprosy in the Northern Territory that the Northern Territory has the highest incidence in Australia.

I would like to comment now on one of the world's foremost authorities on leprosy, Dr John Hargrave. He is employed by the Department of Health in the Northern Territory. He has extensive knowledge of leprosy. To my knowledge, he has lived here for about 20 years and, during that time, he has worked consistently for the control of leprosy. He has travelled extensively to other parts of the world and I think he has done work in India and also in the south of the United States. He is a personal friend of mine so I know quite a bit about his work in the Northern Territory. I would like to comment today on his gentle and understanding approach to the people in whom the disease of leprosy has been found. Due in no small part to his work, there is a much lower incidence of leprosy in the Northern Territory now than there was in 1951. This is due to his compassionate understanding of the disease and of the unfortunate people who contract leprosy. It is a fact that it is mostly Aboriginal people who contract leprosy in the Northern Territory. I have heard of the respect and love that his former patients have for him because of his comprehensive understanding of not only the disease of leprosy but also his added interest in Aboriginals and their way of life.

One of the worst parts of the disease of leprosy is the disfigurement which it brings. All of our media laud beauty and youth. Everyone tries to
stay young and beautiful and the older you get, the harder it gets. If you are not young and you do contract leprosy, you are doubly cursed in our society. The Aboriginals treat leprosy differently to Europeans and they also treat the aged differently. In an Aboriginal community, age is respected and acknowledged in a down-to-earth manner. The same philosophical approach is held towards people who have leprosy or who are disfigured. These people are not shunned like they tend to be in European society. They are helped in their community.

There is a much more sensible approach to the disease of leprosy these days than there has been in the past. I think this is very heartening for those unfortunate people who have it. Luckily, there are not many of them in the community. I think this stems in no small part from our Christian upbringing and from our reading of the Bible because, in the Bible, unfortunately lepers were treated with utter contempt and with utter disregard. They were put into complete isolation and I think that, in times long ago, leprosy must have been confused with a lot of other things - namely, things like eczema, ringworms, scabies, syphilis, yaws, tinea, melanosis or even birthmarks. It is a known fact that the great incidence of leprosy occurs in dry countries where, due to unavoidably bad personal hygiene, there is not much chance of keeping clean. These diseases then spread more than they would in other places.

I would like to comment also on a certain section in the principal act which places a practically impossible responsibility on police officers. I refer to section 30 which says that a police officer can detain and take into custody people suffering from leprosy. On the surface, this might seem pretty ordinary because police are asked to have knowledge about other matters in the community but it would make it very difficult for the police to be certain if a person had leprosy. I have obtained some information from Dr Hargrave because my knowledge was not extensive. To detain a person who has leprosy, people must have quite extensive knowledge. This will be found in people of the medical profession, both doctors and nurses. For the information of members, a police officer must be able to distinguish whether a person has leprosy or ringworms, birthmarks ...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We do appear to be getting a long way from the boat ramp; a lot further than 400 yards, I would suggest.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will confine her remarks to the amendment.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, as everybody seems to know the hard work that police officers have to do in the community with leprosy patients, I will turn to the amendment.

I would like to bring to the notice of honourable members that this may have been brought about by somebody who lives in my electorate. It was brought to my attention and I publicised it in the media. The Catalina boat ramp at East Arm could not be used even though it was a perfectly good capital investment some years ago. It was going to waste because it was within a certain distance from the East Arm Leprosarium. I am very pleased to see that this amendment has been introduced because it is a more sensible approach to the disease of leprosy and it will help amateur fishermen in the Northern Territory.

Mr DOOLAN: Mr Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment which is perhaps not applicable to the bill, but it is applicable to the disease of leprosy. Most Australians agree that the banana republic of Queensland is somewhere back in the middle ages in many respects yet the word 'leprosy' has not been used in Queensland for at least 4 decades. All references to leprosy
in Queensland were deleted in the 1940s and the words 'Hansen's disease' were substituted. The nearest we get to leprosy is that the hospitals where these patients are confined in Queensland are still sometimes referred to as leprosaria.

The very word 'leprosy' conjures up pictures of disfigured and dreadfully maimed people and there is an awful stigma attached to it. It gives rise to feelings of revulsion and fear and yet it is a disease which is not contagious to any marked degree. It is really extremely hard to contract, despite close association with sufferers. Many people do not realise that, even in this century, leprosy is pretty prevalent in Europe and it is a world-wide disease. As the member for Tiwi said, biblical stories tell us of sufferers ringing bells and shouting out 'unclean' to let the populace get out of the road when they came through. In fact, there was no need for it. As she said, it was often other diseases. Tertiary syphilis causes great disfigurement and was often mistaken for Hansen's disease. There is no doubt that this disease can cause dreadful disfigurement but nowadays there are few people in this advanced condition in the Northern Territory.

For anyone who is not aware of the symptoms, many sufferers are really hard to detect. No doubt, you have seen plenty of them and some of them are not disfigured at all. They have nodules on their forehead and a thickening of the eyebrows like scar tissue. As the disease advances they have a leonine expression and arthritic fingers but they are not terribly disfigured. We do not see many people like that nowadays. It will not doubt be said that the disease will always be called leprosy, but I do not agree. The public may be slow to change but, just as it did in Queensland, 'leprosy' will gradually disappear from our vocabulary and be replaced by 'Hansen's disease'. Neither the medical profession or lay people in Queensland now refer to leprosy any more.

I spoke to Dr John Hargrave about this today and, whilst he said that he does not have any particularly strong feelings about it, he certainly has no objections to it. Dr Hargrave told me that what he does object to very strongly is the word 'leper'. Hargrave also asked that I bring to the notice of the public that East Arm is no longer referred to as the leprosarium. It is East Arm Hospital and it provides treatment mainly for disabled persons. He said that there are hardly any active patients in the Territory at all and most Hansen's disease sufferers are now cured. Finally, in case some members are not aware of it, there have been quite a few European Territorians in East Arm from time to time. Some of them are still living with us. I would therefore ask the Minister for Health to give some serious consideration to having the word 'leprosy' deleted and 'Hansen's disease' substituted. It is an archaic word which is no longer used in many places.

Motion agreed to: bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment to schedule agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 16)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 17)
CONTROL OF ROADS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 18)

Continued from 20 August 1980.

Mr ISAACS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the amendments will enable councils, within the meaning of the Local Government Act, to control and administer the air space above public roads and malls by vesting in the councils title to that air space as registered proprietors. Councils may make application to government for titles as registered proprietors to land underneath the road or mall. Title is duly granted to the council to the air space above and the ground space below to a specified height or depth as granted by the minister. Fee simple title to the councils of the air space to a certain height means that the council becomes the registered proprietor to the air space and thus requires entitlement to develop and use that space.

As a corollary to this ability to utilise air space above public roads and roads within the designation of sections 306 and 307, the amendments provide for the leasing of such air space to developers on the approval of the minister. The bills will enable the utilisation of the air space above any public road or mall when the council in question has acquired title to that air space.

Specifically, the legislative changes were proposed to enable the utilisation of air space above a lane in Darwin City as a multi-storey car-park. The Corporation of the City of Darwin will also be empowered to hand the job of air space utilisation to a developer or private company. The bills are therefore proposed with application to a specific project. However, the bills will enable like ownership and utilisation of air space above any road or mall of which a council is a registered proprietor.

I am informed that the bills have precedents in South Australia and New South Wales, where local authorities have been given the power to lease space over public thoroughfares. The necessity to use air space over public roads arises out of a shortage of serviced, developed space for such functions as car-parking. The same situation has developed in Darwin where space for large-scale inner-city parking was found to be at a premium or simply not available. The proposal and intention to provide more inner-city car-parking space in Darwin will help to sustain in the central business district small businesses which believe their livelihood may be threatened with the advent of more suburban shopping centres. The West Lane multi-storey structure will have to comply with all the normal building regulations and, hopefully, will be designed to cause minimal visual intrusion upon the Darwin skyline and above-ground total design. Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, the main reason for these bills is to enable the Corporation of the City of Darwin to develop a high-rise car-park. Of course, the bills also open up a number of doors to a number of other development options. I will deal with those later.

I would like first of all to touch on the matter of parking which was the reason for the introduction of these bills into the Assembly. Parking has always been a problem and I guess it will remain that way for many years unless adequate planning provisions are made. The problem has been of concern to aldermen, to residents, to shoppers and to property owners in any developing area. Unless provision has been made in the initial planning stages, there will be problems relating to vehicles. It may be in the provision of roads to have vehicles moved from point A to point B or it may be in the provision of
parking facilities once those vehicles have arrived at their destination.

There are very few major growth areas that have not experienced similar problems to those that we are experiencing today. Of course, Darwin's problems are magnified somewhat because the business area is built on a peninsula. The office accommodation, which plays a vital part in the whole viability of the central business district, is also situated close to the retail outlets. Figures that have been produced indicate that between 10% and 15% of the total population of Darwin moves to the central business district each working day. The traders are indeed fortunate in having this captive audience. I have mentioned that on other occasions. It is perhaps one of the few pluses that the central business district trader has going for him at the present time.

It is ironical, however, that the office worker, who provides much of the retailer's income, is the one causing the parking problems for the casual shopper. There are no easy answers to the problem; certainly, decentralisation cannot be considered. To do so, in my opinion, would destroy the central business district. It is the highest rated area in the Northern Territory and many millions of dollars have been spent in the provision of office accommodation and various commercial and retail outlets. We have also tried to educate the public to use public transport. Unfortunately, we have not been successful in this regard. Nevertheless, we must continue to try to make the public aware of our public transport system and try to encourage the public to use it.

Another complication has been to identify the parking requirements. These requirements vary considerably. We must provide parking to satisfy the office worker, the shop assistants and the general staff members. In most cases, these people require all-day parking. We must also provide for those people who come into the city to service the business from outside the main central business district. Finally, and most importantly, we must provide parking facilities for the casual shopper - the person who wishes to shop during normal business hours. It is this last parking requirement that concerns me the most because, if we are not able to provide a similar parking package to the people who use the central business district as is provided in the suburbs, then the central business district trader is definitely at a disadvantage. I refer here to the type of parking that we all wish we had plenty of and that is free parking. In all of the other shopping areas outside the central business district, customers are provided with free parking in close proximity to the shops that they wish to visit. To be fair and realistic, we must look at providing a combination of free parking areas and paid parking areas in the central business district.

When looking at providing parking facilities, one must do more than just agree that we have a problem in this particular area. There are hundreds of cars which need parking space and it is the council's responsibility to provide parking areas to meet all needs and that includes those of the casual shopper. It must look particularly to the effects that the various forms of parking will have on people in the areas that are under consideration. If a trader is disadvantaged and closes his doors because the customers cannot find suitable parking, then it is no good to anyone. That form of parking requirement will disappear altogether. I realise that someone must pay for the provision of parking facilities such as the multi-storey car-park that is to be built.

However, there are a number of options open which will enable revenue to be raised for this purpose and still allow for limited free parking areas to be provided. I wish to touch on 2 of those options about which many people commented to me. The first point is to do with parking meters. I feel that,
because of the limited time available whereby revenue will be required to come back into the council and also because of the uncertainty of the whole parking package, parking meters should not be introduced at this particular stage. It would be a pointless exercise to have parking meters installed and then, after a very short period of time, have them removed for one reason or another. I will not go into detail but there are many methods whereby councils are able to receive money for on-street parking without installing parking meters.

The second point I would like to raise relates to the council's proposal to have retail outlets on the ground floor of the proposed parking station. We have here a situation where more shops will be provided in the central business district, not because there is a demand for more shops but because it is a means of raising revenue. Free enterprise to a large extent works on supply and demand. If we start to fiddle with that principle, then many people will be hurt. I am not against the council moving into this area of revenue raising - it is an accepted revenue raising area in other parts of Australia - but I believe we must be consistent with the world around us. If there is a demand, then I have no objections at all. I think that the people of Darwin would prefer to see a facility such as a library positioned on the ground floor of this parking station.

The only other point I would like to comment on as far as parking is concerned is the question of from what section of the community should revenue be raised for the building of this particular facility. Should revenue be raised from the shoppers, from the people who use the car-park, from the property owners or should it be raised by increases in council rates right across the board? The answer lies in a combination of the options that I have just mentioned. The property owners in the central business district have indicated to me that they are quite prepared to contribute but what we must be careful of here is to make sure that the rate of contribution is based on a formula which in some way relates to the parking requirements of each particular property.

There is a very strong argument that the council should levy right across the board. I am very pleased to see that the central business district is at last being recognised. It was poorly done by for a number of years. The future of the whole area was threatened on occasions, particularly by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission when it considered the decentralisation of the government offices from the central business district out to the northern suburbs. There was also the very real threat to the central business district of the lack of acceptable parking. I am very pleased to see at long last that we will have a facility provided here that will cater for another form of parking.

I mentioned at the start that other development options could be considered once this amendment has been passed. I refer here to companies, such as the company which owns the Darwin Plaza, which own properties on either side of a lane. These companies, with the agreement of the council and the approval of the responsible minister will be able to develop the air space above that particular area. I feel that, as the city grows and further development takes place, the council will have other occasions when it will be asked if the developers could use the air space above the roads. These amendments to the principal act, I believe, could solve many of our problems.

The only other matter I would like to raise is the timing of this particular debate. I mentioned in the debate on the Mall bills that perhaps priorities to business could have been looked at more closely which would have enabled the installation of a high-rise parking facility to be debated before the laws were changed. I support these bills. The amendments are in line with modern
development needs and they also make sure that access is retained by the public.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Speaker, in rising to support these bills, I intend to be very brief because the last 2 speakers covered the main points. They will allow the council to apply to the Minister for Lands and Housing to have a certain mall or road vested in them in fee simple. This will then allow the council of its own volition, in partnership with a company, or a company on its own to build in the air space above a road. There is a provision that the road cannot be cut off and that vehicular traffic could still proceed along that road. This is a very necessary part of these bills. Also there is protection for private landowners who own land on either side of any road or mall which is vested in fee simple in the council.

Alice Springs is a growing town. I hate to think that the day will come when we will have high-rise parking facilities. I hope that it will be a long time before it comes. These bills provide for the opportunity to build in the air space in the future. At the moment, the traders in the Todd Street semi-mall are complaining about the lack of parking facilities for their customers. They feel as though they are losing out badly to people who are shopping in other areas where parking is provided to a much greater extent. It may be a long time off before any thought is given to building a high-rise parking facility. I certainly hope it will be a long time but this does lead to other possibilities. There may be times when it may be desirable to use the air space across a road or mall. I commend and support these bills.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 16)

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr ROBERTSON: I move the amendment 13.1.

The purpose of the amendment is simply to improve the wording and to place it in the principal act in a more precise way.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr ROBERTSON: I move amendment 13.2.

It was not the government's intention to have such an amendment as this inserted in the principal act. However, it has been found that the documents prepared by the Darwin City Council and upon which the tender has been based indicate several pillars in the middle of the road. These become extremely difficult gadgets to run into and they also pose certain traffic difficulties. It is now proposed to take the southern half of the road which will be under a cantilever and which will be permanently open to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The northern half of the roadway abuts the ramp going up the proposed parking station and it is necessary to close off ramps from time to time, particularly when parking stations are full, otherwise we would have cars bumper to bumper all the way up the roadway. This causes the difficulty. The amendment will allow this construction to go ahead by approval from the minister. I would indicate to honourable members that it will not be my
intention while I am minister responsible for this area to so approve again. Nonetheless, in all of the circumstances and having regard to West Lane, I do not think any great inconvenience will be caused to the public. Of course, I would not want the councillors to think that any previous application under this section would be entertained with any degree of approval.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 17)

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

CONTROL OF ROADS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 18)

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr DONNAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Earlier today, I was asked a question by the honourable member for Sanderson regarding the bus service to the old Darwin Hospital. The reason for the alteration to the bus service relates to the opening of the new hospital at Casuarina and the closure of the intersection at Smith Street and Lambell Terrace during intersection reconstruction. During the roadworks, a partial service was provided by route 6. As the roadworks have now been completed, all route 6 buses will service the hospital. This service will be supplemented by route 4 which will be re-routed past the hospital commencing next Monday. I am confident that this will provide adequate service for the Darwin Hospital.

Mr ISAACS (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, on Thursday of last week, a very fine person and a person who has contributed greatly to the Northern Territory died. I refer to Mr Doug Scott who died in Sydney. Doug was born in Narrandera in New South Wales. He was a very fine sportsman as a young man and he played first-grade rugby league for the Penrith club in Sydney. He has almost a life-long association with Aboriginal affairs in terms of commitment and, in Sydney, prior to his coming to the Northern Territory, he was the Manager of the Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs.

He came to the Northern Territory in the middle of 1975 and held various positions within the community. He was the Manager of the Central Australian Aboriginal Medical Service, the Director of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, the Regional Manager of both Darwin and Alice Springs for the Aboriginal Hostels Group Limited and an executive member of the Aboriginal Publications Foundation and he represented the Northern Territory on that foundation. He was a member of the Housing Needs Committee under the auspices of the NT Housing Commission and, at one stage, treasurer of the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service.
Doug Scott was a reserved man who had integrity and great commitment. He was an Aboriginal man who devoted his life to the most pressing problems of Aboriginal people, that is, health, housing, legal rights and education. He was a very great man. His death is a very great loss to his cause. He is survived by his wife, Georgette, and his son, Clarke, to whom I extend my sincerest condolences.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the funeral is tomorrow and, under normal circumstances, I would have attended that funeral but the sittings of the Assembly have precluded that. However, because of the contribution made by Doug Scott to Aboriginal people, and especially Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, I have asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who had a very close relationship with the late Doug Scott, to represent me at the funeral tomorrow.

Mr MacFARLANE (Elsey): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to add my condolences too to those of the honourable Leader of the Opposition. I did not know Doug Scott well but I met him quite a few times in Katherine and I found him to be very sincere chap. It was a shock to me when he died.

The words 'Aboriginal' and 'alcohol' seem to touch the Leader of the Opposition on the raw. Aboriginal alcoholism has been the subject of 26 debates and I understood that the member for MacDonnell, the member for Victoria River and the member for Arnhem were going to start another practical committee to do something about it but that seems to have fallen by the wayside. The fact is that these are 2 of the problems that touch very greatly on the police force, particularly in Katherine. Katherine has 28 or 30 policemen. That is more than Mt Isa which has 6 or 8 times the population of Katherine.

What I wish to speak about today is the remarks about racism and racial rot in the Katherine Informer, that well-known Katherine paper. It was about this time last year that the honourable member for Victoria River called me a racist when I mentioned the trouble in Katherine. I do not think that I am a racist and I used to shy away when people called me a racist. I remember rising on each of the first 2 days, I was really roasted in the NT News because the editor was Jim Bowditch. It took a bit of guts to get up on the third day and the only reason I did it was that I knew I was right. On the third day, Mr Bowditch gave me a good press and we had a pretty fair relationship from then on.

Racism takes many forms. A good friend of mine in Katherine, Sylvia Wolfe, came out to Australia because she was a Jewess and her family would not let her marry the man she eventually did marry. They kicked her out 12 years ago. She has never heard of them or seen them since. That is one kind. I remember being on TV with my old friend Smiler Major and another old friend, Charlie Perkins. It was Charlie's show and he gave us a pretty good rubbishing. At the end, I nailed him. I said, 'Mr Perkins, are you a racist?' He said: 'Well, I put my people first but I am not a racist'.

We should start putting Australia first. We have the most divisive, discriminatory legislation - the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act - that ever came out of a communist doctrine. I have copies of another document. This 'Full Human Rights for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders' is a program adopted by the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of Australia in June 1967. It says:

For such a policy to become a reality, Aborigines and Islanders should have inalienable possession of their remaining tribal areas, of the land now set aside as government or mission settlements or
a better land where these are unsuitable, ownership of mineral and other natural wealth located on their lands and economic aid to enable them to develop rapidly as modern communities. Preservation and development of their own cultural heritage is a necessary condition for the progress of any community of people. The belief that will develop forms of organisation, ways of doing things, languages, family and community relationships should be determined by the Aboriginal and Islander people themselves.

There is another form of racism and it is strange that the ALP should bring these things up. This shows the black power flag on the ALP election poster for Mr Maged Aboutaleb. We are talking about racism. It is a one-sided argument. We see the magazine Bunji - a recent publication - with a white machine operator out in the uranium country driving over Aboriginal children. I did not hear any cries of racism about that. The offending article in the NT News was reproduced in the Darwin Star. I did not hear any outraged comments about that. You would think once would have been enough; they would not have wanted to have it again. Racism is something that is being dragged across the track to protect what is happening in the Northern Territory.

I am not a racist; I am a realist. What is happening in Katherine is bad. I have said this before and I will say it again. You have people with no motivation wandering around. They get drunk, sober, and then get drunk again. They throw cans anywhere and lie anywhere. On Saturday afternoon, I drove past the Crossways and I saw a fight start. The gentlemen kicked off their thongs and they sparred around for a while. When I came back after going around the median strip, they had stopped. Down the other end, there were 2 Aboriginals asleep on the median strip. I put it to you people straight from the shoulder, racism or not, this is not good for the Northern Territory. I put it to you that this is disgraceful. I put it to you that, if these people were white, they would be locked up - that is racism.

What is happening on all the Aboriginal communities around Katherine, apart from Bamyili and Beswick, is that they have declared their areas dry. All these people are confirmed drinkers. They come to Katherine and Mataranka and that is where they have their binge. That is quite sensible I suppose. But I believe that the towns belong to the people who live in them just as I believe that, if I go to Roper River or Hooker Creek - if I get a permit - I must behave as they want me to behave. I can't make my own rules there and I don't see why I should. That is their place. What are we on about? Are we just proceeding blindly along? Are we just 2 political parties, one with a policy as divisive as the illustration on the cover of the report of the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs splitting Australians into 6 when we should be combined? We should be united; it should be Australia Fair first. It should be Australia first because we are Australians. Instead of that, we have land rights splitting this country straight up the middle. I think it is very bad indeed.

The impact of royalties on Aboriginals will show you that, in the year 2000, Aboriginals will be getting the equivalent of the 1974 figure of $900m per annum. This is what land rights is doing. The jealousy created by this is apparent. White people say: 'Why, what's so special about them that our government is giving them this land over us? If you work hard, you are taxed. If you work harder, you are taxed more. But if you don't work at all, you get money for nothing. They give you money. What a crazy system'. I have suggested time and time again that we take a good close look at where we are going because a quarter of our population is going nowhere at all. And if that is racism, well I am racist.
Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Deputy Speaker, this afternoon I would like to comment on something which I hope does not occur in the Northern Territory in the future. I have an interest in agricultural education as it applies to rural schools for post-primary school students. The minister has stated that there will be a rural school established at the Experimental Farm in Katherine. When I heard this, I was very pleased to know that something definite had been decided on. I hope there is a continuation of the good work done by the Katherine Rural Education College when it moves onto this land. What I hope does not occur is that this school, which I hope starts out as a post-primary school, goes on to try for better academic qualifications for the students who go there.

I would like to read from a Karmel Committee Report of 1978 in which comment was made about the educational disease of the 1970s, the academic creep. The Karmel Committee said: 'In recommending guidelines for tertiary education in the next triennium, attention must be drawn to trends seen during the 1970s resulting from the pressure on the educational system for higher qualifications. The response of the educational institutions has been to lengthen courses and lift the academic level of courses at the expense of adequate provision of opportunities for education at the lower end of the educational spectrum'.

As I see it, this rural school should cater for those students who do not wish to have higher tertiary academic qualifications. It should permanently cater for those students who wish to know something in the practical field about earning their living in the rural scene. I think that not enough attention is being paid to this in other places. In the Territory, we have seen the importance of agriculture and we are doing something about it. However, there are 3 things that militate against agricultural education. The first one is the relatively high cost of agricultural education, especially in the practical field when we consider the land that must be used and worked to provide an education for these students. The second thing is that there are fewer agriculturally sympathetic ears in the legislature. I do not have exact figures but the figures for the members in the House of Representatives in 1974 as compared to members in the House of Representatives at present indicate that a greatly reduced number of those people are concerned with primary industry and in agriculture in Australia.

A third factor encouraging this academic creep in agricultural education is the continuing debate on academic or practical agriculture in the changing role of agricultural colleges because these colleges seek always to grant higher academic qualifications to the students because it enhances their status in the community. I have not heard it said so much lately but, in the past, it used to be said that, if a child could not work as a welder, as a builder or as a carpenter, then put him on the land. That is the only place he is good for. Put him among the horses, the cows and the pigs or have him growing a bit of wheat or something. Unfortunately, in the back of many people's minds, this very old-fashioned view still holds good and it is to be greatly deprecated.

The Organising Committee for the Conference on Agricultural Education in South Australia in 1979 found that there were 3 principal streams of use for agricultural education. One was farmers and farm managers, one was those employed in primary industry servicing these farmers and one was those involved in research and development associated with research. I will ignore the last one because that implies a tertiary qualification. It is most important that our rural education caters for farmers and for those people who will service the farmers. We must do this by sensible, down-to-earth rural education.

I think another factor also to be considered is that agricultural education must not only apply to those students engaged full time in it -
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namely, the young people - but it must also take into account the training of current farmers and people currently in the service industries associated with agriculture. In instituting short courses for these people to keep them up to date, the current trends are towards practical agriculture.

Another point of interest is that large sums of money are being directed into projects associated with Aboriginal aid programs in Australia. But to my knowledge, not many of these, if any, are concerned with agricultural enterprises. I would like to see our rural education in the Northern Territory not aimed specifically at one section of the community. I would like to see full cooperation and help extended to Aboriginal people in the community, especially those people who come from outlying settlements. I can only speak for my electorate but there is a great deal of interest in agricultural projects on Bathurst and Melville Islands. If practical down-to-earth teaching is offered to the young people, they can go back to their communities - the same as other young people can go back to their farms - and put to good use what they have learned at these schools.

The second point on which I would like to touch this afternoon concerns a very young concerned mother who rang me last night. It has been mentioned in the Assembly that we have a problem of nits in people's hair in the Northern Territory. I would like to preface my remarks by saying that what hurt most of all was the fact that this child, who had the nits in his hair, is a fourth generation Northern Territorian. The child brought home a letter. He did not know what was in the letter. Obviously, he had been inspected by the sisters and he knew that he had nits. When the mother opened the letter, she found that it was in Portuguese and she took great umbrage at this because she said: 'Here am I trying to bring up my children, trying to teach them English. Here am I sending them to an English-speaking school. What do I do with this?' I said: 'How do you know it is Portuguese and how do you know it is about the nits?' She said: 'I put two and two together and assumed it was Portuguese because it looked as though it was Portuguese and it was about nits because the child said he had nits'.

That is the state of affairs. I may be commenting facetiously on it but I think it highlights what I hope does not occur in the future: division in the community. We are supposed to be one community and we speak English in this community.

Mr B. Collins: Not all of us Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We all live in Australia which is an English-speaking country. Some of us may not have it as our mother tongue but we come here to live and it is an English-speaking country.

The third subject on which I would like to comment is something in which I have had an interest for some time. It is the subject of titles. I am not referring to the titles that the Queen gives people, those grand titles which are probably alien to our way of life as some people would say, but titles that we all have in the community. Many years ago, these used to refer either to our position in the community or our occupation in the community. Some of these titles have become people's names. For example, the names Cooper, Smith or Farmer referred to occupations.

I come next to the titles of men and women. Men have the same title all their life and they are called 'Misters'. When a woman marries, it has been considered socially correct for her to change her title. I know this is not the case all the time and I heartily congratulate anyone who only answers to a
title which relates to her as an individual and not to the man with whom she lives. I do not think referring to a female person as 'Ms', which is the corruption of 'Mrs' or 'Miss', goes the whole distance. I would like to see people use the old English title. Perhaps those women in the community who would like to think they have reached a certain age or a certain standing in the community would like people to regard them in a certain way. I refer to the interesting old title of 'Mistress'. I think it is a shame that this has been corrupted over the years to the 2 titles that single women and married women use. Now all women use the title of 'Ms' if they consider themselves liberated. Personally, I answer to everything, depending on the company, but I think the old-fashioned title also has some interesting modern overtones to it.

Mr DOOLAN (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, much as I would like to comment on some of the remarks from the honourable member for Elsey, I will restrain myself. However, I would like to make a very brief comment on this interesting little communist booklet which he has circulated and which I certainly will not read. I am fascinated by the signature on the top right hand corner. It is the signature of God's gift to the Aboriginal race, one Harold Christian Giese, and it is the kind of garbage that I would imagine Harry Giese would disseminate. I have worked for him for more years than I would like to remember.

On Wednesday of last week, in answer to a question from the honourable member for Tiwi concerning Bali cattle experiments, the Minister for Primary Production and Tourism replied: 'The program will be terminated after some 17 years of research requiring considerable resources. The results achieved are inconclusive. A scientific opinion both inside and outside the department is quite diverse about the commercial use of this particular cross-bred animal. I am advised that, while the department was successful in breeding 2 fertile Brahman-Bali-cross bulls, at the most optimistic estimate, a further 10 or 15 years of breeding and selecting from a large population would be required to enable the department to assess their commercial value'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my information is that the answer supplied by the honourable minister is only partly correct. The honourable minister says that the experimentation has been going on for 17 years. I think if he checks he will find that the cattle were mustered 17 years ago and, in fact, the formal experimentation resulting in cross-breeding did not actually commence until 1968 and then by accident. It was not experimental controlled breeding. It was a sort of accidental breeding and a Brahman-Bali-cross calf was produced in 1968. In fact, the experiment has only been going on for 12 years. Any expert on cattle breeding would know and admit that it is not possible to evolve a new breed of cattle inside 20 years. There has been a problem of first and second cross male infertility but the project has just reached a stage where it has been successful in producing proven fertile cross-bred bulls which is undoubtedly a major breakthrough.

It is also true to say that the Bali cattle project has been slowed down and plagued by things like poor nutrition due to various management factors. This is partly due to pressures on the Department of Primary Production due to a high rate of staff turnover, to lack of resident technical staff and to lack of money available for the Coastal Plains Research Station. These factors have been recognised and it is my information that they have been overcome. The Bali cattle project is probably one of the most crucial projects of all to the well-being of cattle production in north Australia and associated areas of South-east Asia and elsewhere because it aims to improve the major deficiency which is low fertility in cattle. Bali cows have achieved close to 100% conception. To translate that to the number of calves weaned is largely a matter of management expertise. Cross-breeds could be expected to have both improved conception
ability and an improved weaning rate over other cattle. The cost-benefit analysis of this research work is potentially the most favourable of any project because genetic improvement is permanent and has no maintenance costs. The project is now at the stage where great benefits may be expected to flow, given good management by the department in conjunction with selected interested producers.

These cattle have other exceptional abilities, not the least of which is an ability to maintain body weight on low-quality pastures which have little nutritional value. Since a group of cross-bred cows was transferred to Tortilla Flats earlier this year, they have made remarkable progress and have impressed many informed observers.

The Bali cattle project is a Territory project and it should stay in the Territory. The minister says scientific opinion both inside and outside his department is quite diverse with regard to the commercial value of these animals. I have had no feedback from expert opinions without the department but I have sought expert opinion from within his department. The people to whom I have spoken have been most favourably disposed towards continuing the project. Some practical farmers with whom I have spoken believe that to abandon the project at this stage when it is beginning to come to fruition is nothing short of an act of lunacy. The cattle will probably be handed over to James Cook University or somewhere to let them reap the benefits of all the hard work and spade work done by the Territory Department of Primary Production. Is it any wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the minister's department is seething with discontent and frustration and is having such a heavy turnover in staff?

It is a tragedy if all the efforts of dedicated officers of the Department of Primary Production have been in vain. This new breed of animal shows such great potential considering our harsh climatic conditions and the low nutritional value of the natural feed available on which this beast can still maintain its body weight whilst other breeds are unable to do so. It would be a tragedy if they were lost to the Territory. I would ask the minister to seriously consider rescinding his decision to abandon this project which I and many other people feel would be of inestimable value to the Territory.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been mentioned many times before in this Assembly that we have a remarkably cosmopolitan population in the Northern Territory. I remember from past debates that the number of nationalities represented in Darwin alone is in excess of 40. That is quite remarkable. There has been a great deal of comment made in previous debates in commending the efforts of organisations such as the Electoral Office to communicate with people in their own tongue so that they can understand what people are trying to tell them. That is a proposition that received support generally from both sides of the Assembly.

I was unaware that the Department of Education had taken on the job of communicating to the parents of the pupils in Northern Territory schools advice about the serious problem of head lice - and the Chief Minister, amongst others, has taken a close personal interest in this - in languages they can understand so that they can do something about the problem. I know full well that the honourable member for Tiwi would be well aware that 100% of the letters that were sent out were not written in Portuguese. Obviously, an administrative error has been made in one particular case and I am sure that the honourable member is simply nit-picking. I would like to commend the Department of Education for undertaking the not inconsiderable effort of attempting to overcome this problem by communicating with people in a language they can understand. I know that there have been auspicious people in the Northern Territory in the past who have made errors of this kind, including the honourable Leader of the Opposition. I remember that,
Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to say vale to Dhupuma College. The reason I am prompted to do this is that I heard a news item on the ABC just the other day that the Lions Club at Nhulunbuy will assist the government by selling up the movable items at Dhupuma. Since the final moves are being made in that direction, it is appropriate to have a look at what has happened to the pupils who attended Dhupuma College. The honourable Minister for Education said today that, when ministers make statements in the Assembly, they tend to be definitive. Unfortunately, that could not be applied to the minister's statement on Dhupuma College.

Many funny things have happened about the closure of Dhupuma College which showed the degree of non-planning that went into it. I refer to silly, expensive and annoying little things such as teaching staff being sent out to the college on transfer with all their goods and chattels one week before the college closed. A 30-KVA generator was purchased and then shipped at not inconsiderable expense to Nhulunbuy to be used at Dhupuma College just a few months before it was closed. It was then shipped back to Darwin again. We heard today from the Minister for Transport and Works about the costs of transporting demountables. We had a demountable classroom moved from Yirrkala to Dhupuma then back again to Yirrkala 5 months afterwards because of the closure. It was fairly obvious to everybody that a great deal of planning had gone into the closure.

More importantly, it would be of some interest at this time for members to have a look at what has happened to the kids. There were 9 pupils at Dhupuma from Lake Evella. Parents in the community felt so strongly about sending their children to Kormilda that they did not allow any of them to attend. The honourable minister will recall that it was this kind of attitude by Aboriginal parents that caused Dhupuma College to be built in the first place: dissatisfaction with sending their children to Darwin. Thus, 9 children were lost immediately. There were 8 children from Umbakumba and, because Kormilda would not accept a house-parent from Umbakumba, no students attended. There were 15 kids from Elcho Island. They originally refused to allow their children to attend Kormilda but, after visits from the Department of Education and the Principal of Kormilda College, they sent their children to Kormilda. As a result, an undertaking has been made by the department to have an Elcho Island house-parent at Kormilda College. This was not done in the case of the other communities. Eleven of those children are currently attending. Maningrida originally refused to allow the children to attend Kormilda. There is now a house-parent and 2 children have dropped out. Milingimbi had 10 children at Dhupuma College and they all started at Kormilda College despite the fact that the community was demonstrably very unhappy about it.

One year, 10 students from Nhulunbuy were placed in year 11 at Kormilda. There were 28 children from Roper River. After an initial inspection of Kormilda by community members and an assurance given that the girls' dormitories would be made more secure within 2 weeks after the children commenced at the college, all the students were allowed to attend Kormilda. It is very interesting that, despite those assurances, the girls' dormitory has still not been completed. Rumangining had 6 children at Dhupuma College, all of whom attended Kormilda believing that they would be allowed to have a house-parent from their community at Kormilda. This did not eventuate. The Numbulwar community did not and still will not allow any of its children to attend Kormilda.
To sum up, out of the 106 students who were attending Dhupuma on its final day in what everybody acknowledged was the very best year it had ever had, 58 have now dropped out of secondary education. Of the Dhupuma students who were attending Nhulunbuy High School, none now attends the high school. I believe that it is probably appropriate at this time to record that information in Hansard.

I would like to turn to an answer which I received from the Minister for Health this morning. I asked if he was aware that large numbers of people are travelling considerable distances to Casuarina Hospital only to find, when they get there, that they cannot receive medical attention. I asked if it was true that medical practitioners were not available to outpatients until 1 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The answer was that he did not know but he would find out.

Ministers have a lot of work to do, and certainly a great deal passes across their desks. If this question had never been asked before, we could possibly excuse the Minister for Health for being out of touch with the Casuarina Hospital. As we all know, that question and that problem has been raised incessantly in this Assembly by a number of honourable members. The last time it was raised was by the honourable member for Sanderson when she asked the minister on Wednesday 20 August 1980: 'Is it the policy of the Department of Health to discourage attendance by the public at Casuarina Hospital's Casualty clinic and, if not, upon whose authority are physicians who attend at that clinic informing patients that they should not attend that clinic, but seek the services of a private practitioner instead?' The honourable minister replied: 'I have absolutely no knowledge of any practice by the department...'. That is the same answer that I received and the same answer the honourable member for Fannie Bay has received on previous occasions.

The facts are that the honourable minister knows full well what is happening at Casuarina Hospital but he just will not come clean. The people for whom he will not come clean are members of the public who are being inconvenienced by this particular situation and hospital staff who are becoming a little bit sick of the friction that it causes them. A few days ago, I had a gentleman in my office complaining bitterly of the treatment that he had received at Casuarina Hospital. He had been injured at work - he works for NTEC - and he had been sent to Casuarina Hospital to have his injury attended to. He was treated and then told by the doctor concerned that, if his injury had not improved, he should come back to the hospital and have it examined again on the following Monday. Because his injury was not any better, he went back to Casuarina Hospital. When he arrived at the hospital, he was told that he would not be treated because he was a non-emergency patient and there would not be a doctor available to treat him unless he wanted to wait - and this was early in the morning - until 1 o'clock in the afternoon because there were no doctors available for outpatient care until 1 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The gentleman concerned was a bit agitated about this because he had been told the previous week by the doctor who treated him to come back at that particular time. After a fair amount of agitation, he was seen by a doctor. In fact, I understand a rather senior doctor treated him. I have no bones at all with the hospital for acting in that matter. The gentleman concerned protested vehemently at the time to the hospital staff present and said: 'Why don't you tell us that these situations are in force? Why don't you put some public notices in the papers where we can see them? Let us know that we were travelling all this distance for nothing!' The reply that he received was very interesting. He was told that people at the hospital had been instructed that they were not to make such public comment - very interesting indeed - and I
understand from talking to some hospital staff that they are not very happy about it. In fact, at one stage, the dreadful word 'politics' was used.

In view of the fact that we have been receiving no answers to this relatively simple question for a long time now, I ask the minister, for the benefit of the public and the hospital staff who are sick and tired of justifiably angry people, would he please spend a little bit of the government's money that we have been hearing about today and cause some prominent notices to be placed in the media advising people in Darwin of the services available and not available to them at Casuarina Hospital and other health facilities around Darwin. We need a comprehensive statement that people can pin up on their walls. That is what they want, and I understand that is what many of the medical staff at the hospital would like also. It may also be of some interest, in relation to the question asked by the honourable member for Sanderson as to whether people are actively being discouraged from getting care at the hospital, that the people who attend at the hospital for outpatient care are actually being given a duplicated set of the names and addresses of private practitioners in Darwin. It is being handed out at the Casuarina Hospital. I have a copy of this assistance you get from the hospital. I know perfectly well that the minister is either totally out of touch with his department or he is simply not wanting to come clean on it. It has to be one or the other. When people go for outpatient care at the Casuarina Hospital, not only are they told that they cannot get it but they are given a duplicated list of private practitioners with names and addresses and told: 'We are not allowed to recommend any one of these people but this is a list of all of them. You take your pick and get your own medical care'.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order! The honourable member for Arnhem's time has expired.

Mrs Lawrie (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Arnhem has pinched my speech but I am still going to put on record how deeply I feel about this question of the evasion by the Minister for Health, which we see day by day in this Assembly, of the honourable member for Fannie Bay in particular who has been asking questions for some time about the treatment of outpatients at Casuarina Hospital. The questions go back months. As the honourable member for Arnhem stated, on Wednesday 20 August the honourable member for Sanderson asked a particular question of the Minister for Health and his reply was that he did not know but he would find out. Now he has had some months to find out and yet this morning, when the honourable member for Arnhem asked a question that I think a few of us were going to ask about the apparent lack of staff to service the clinic at Casuarina Hospital, the minister said he had no knowledge of what was going on but he would find out.

We have had some debates this sittings about the value of question time. Of course, members of the opposition, whether they be in the ALP or without a party, and government backbenchers are well aware of the fact that question time is the one time members of parliament can expose to the public scrutiny the actions of executive government. In fact, the Minister for Education has stated that he supports the supremacy of the parliament over the executive. But the one government minister who consistently fails to reply to simple, straightforward and reasonable questions at question time - not curly ones, not ones needing a great deal of detail - is the Minister for Health and for Mines and Energy. I call upon him to resign that health portfolio.

On 21 August 1980, the member for Fannie Bay was similarly waxy on this. The honourable member for Fannie Bay, in castigating the minister for the lack of information he provides, stated: 'I am sick and tired of this Assembly
seeing me and other members address questions to the Minister for Health and he not answering them. I hope the next time we assemble, or even before, he has the courage to say what his policies are'.

That was also on the provision of facilities at Casuarina Hospital. In the intervening months, the minister has not bothered to inquire what is the practice at the hospital or he does not have a policy or, if he does have a policy, he is hoping to God that no one will question it and ask him what it is. Mr Deputy Speaker, the interesting thing is that members of the public attend a very expensive hospital and they naturally attend in the expectation that they will receive a service. We must remember too that the Sanderson Community Health Clinic is not on the capital works program for this year and people who would be wanting to attend that clinic in its rebuilt form are attending Casuarina Hospital with its larger facilities. When they get there, they are being told there is no doctor on duty until a certain hour: 'If you want to wait, you can. That is your prerogative. But if you do not want to wait, I suggest you see a private practitioner'.

That sounds all very glib but let us look at the practicalities. The people who have come to me distressed at the sequence of events have been, by and large, parents with young children needing attention. Particularly in a tropical area, young children continually present a variety of symptoms in the wet season which, if diagnosed and treated early, cause no great problem but, if left unattended, cause horrendous problems in the future, particularly middle ear infections and tropical ear. If one has, say, 3 young children and does not live in an air-conditioned environment with controlled humidity, and allows the children to swim to keep cool in the backyard pools or elsewhere, one certainly finds the necessity to visit for primary health attention a facility which one would expect to find at the Casuarina Hospital. I am aware that some people in the northern suburbs have found it more convenient to travel to Casuarina Hospital but there are large numbers of people living in Parap and Darwin City proper who take the trouble to go out to Casuarina and then find that it was all for nought. They say that, if the policy - and they do not like it - is not to have the facilities available, why does someone not say so?

It is not up to the staff to be put in this invidious position of trying to apologise for a non-policy of the non-minister. However, that is what they are expected to do. They are being put in a dreadful position. Members of the public are aware of what is going on and are quietly furious. The Minister for Health seems to be the one person in the Territory who does not know. He has not known for months. He still does not know - has not taken the trouble to find out - and I suggest that his portfolio could well be reallocated to one of the other government ministers whose portfolios do not appear to be extremely onerous. There are 2 there. One is the Minister for Transport and Works - a civil works program runs itself - and the other is the minister for cows and tourists. Mr Deputy Speaker, tourism needs some government incentive but, by and large, it is private enterprise that is the backbone of the tourist industry so that is not a particularly onerous part - in fact, I am sure it is quite pleasurable - of the honourable minister's duties. I believe he is going overseas to further his knowledge of tourism. As for his other portfolio, the interesting part of fisheries has been snaffled by the Chief Minister. All we have left of fisheries is the bones of the fisheries department.

The reason I mention these 2 gentlemen being able to take on the portfolio is that at least they do try to answer questions. In fact, they have been most forthcoming and have anticipated questions which are likely to be asked from honourable members on this side of the Assembly. They have done their best to
provide the answers, if not immediately, at least within the sitting time of the Assembly - a policy which is not followed by the Minister for Health and for Mines and Energy. The Chief Minister, the Treasurer, the Minister for Education and for Lands and Housing certainly have enough to do at present. Some might be so unwise as to suggest that the Chief Minister has almost too much. But there are 2 government ministers who could take on a portfolio which is of great importance to the people of the Territory - health care. It ranks with education as being basic. I will repeat that the honourable minister presently holding the portfolio should relinquish it. His is the poorest performance of any government minister in this Assembly and in the preceding Assembly. As it is the same government, I make no apology for alluding to the affairs of the previous Assembly.

In conclusion, may I say there is only one other comment I want to make and that was also covered by the member for Arnhem. It is delightful to learn that the Departments of Health and Education are taking the time and the trouble to approach in their own language people who have recently come to live in Darwin to appraise them of problems which arise. Federal government agencies have been doing this for some considerable time. The use of a variety of languages is actively encouraged by the present federal government and it is distasteful to hear that a member of this government finds that it is wrong in some ways for these people to be addressed in their first tongue. Prior to my entering into politics, I worked for a group of doctors as their receptionist. I am aware of the distress of people approaching doctors when they cannot really understand the reply the doctor has given.

The Department of Health in the Northern Territory years ago produced a range of multi-lingual booklets for the use of mothers who were about to give birth. The support it gave those people to have someone on hand to ask them questions in their own language and to understand their replies was delightful and a credit to the people sponsoring the programs. I condemn the member for Tiwi for her remarks which called into question the wisdom of conducting such a program. The more the program is developed, the better it will be. Of course, as people develop fluency in English such programs may not be needed but, until that fluency is reached, the programs must not only continue but be encouraged and expanded.

Mr VALE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are 2 points I briefly want to raise tonight. The first one concerns a headline in the Northern Territory News of 22 November. It is headlined 'Pastoralist accused'. The newspaper article relates to comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who indicated that he in fact had sent telegrams to 2 pastoral properties in Central Australia, one in the Stuart electorate and one in the Barkly electorate. The one in the Stuart electorate is the one I want to comment on. He indicated that the owners of the property refused to accept a telegram that he sent to that property. I spoke to them during the weekend and I would like to present their story on their behalf.

There are a large number of Aboriginal people living at Napperby Station and, over many years, the pastoralists who own that property have developed a close personal and working relationship with those people and, over a period of time, have accepted radio-telephone calls and telegrams for them. The telegrams are from various government departments and sometimes from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. These extend to sometimes in excess of 200 words per telegram. It is my belief that telegrams are used only in emergency situations and, because of the cost, you keep them short.

Mrs Chishols, the wife of the owner of Napperby Station, said that she did refuse to accept the telegram verbatim. She took the general gist of it and,
because she was ill and there was no one else at the property that day, she asked for it to be put in the mailbag and sent out. She then relayed the basic text of that telegram to the intended recipient. By way of explanation, telegrams there do not go out by radio but by radio-telephone. On many occasions, the radio-telephone service in Central Australia is limited by the operators and the bad reception. She did what I believe any other person would have done under the circumstances.

I would also point out that the entire costs of the rental and the repair costs of that telephone are borne by the property owners. They don't question that; they never have in the past and I don't think they will in the future. For pastoralists in Central Australia or anywhere else in the Northern Territory to pick up newspapers and find themselves accused and unjustifiably attacked by fellows like Neville Perkins is unfair. They are remote from anywhere else and unable to reply to unfair attacks such as this. I would suggest that the honourable member for MacDonnell owes a public apology at least to Napperby Station.

I would like to explain the activities and organisation of a Central Australian society of which I am chairman. I refer to the Ghan Preservation Society which was formed late in 1979. With the formation of a steering committee, we applied to the Northern Territory government for a grant to employ the services of an engineer to prepare for us a feasibility study into the reconstruction of certain sections of the line and the economics of running it as a tourist attraction and as a tribute to our pioneers. I refer to that section of line from the MacDonnell siding south of Alice Springs to a point 68 kilometres south of MacDonnell siding at Deep Well. We obtained from the Northern Territory government a cheque for $3,000 and we employed the services of an engineer who is based in Adelaide. We are still waiting on that report and, hopefully, within a few weeks we will have it in our hands.

In the meantime, the steering committee has applied to the federal government for a peppercorn rental over the line, rolling stock and certain equipment from the MacDonnell siding to Deep Well 68 kilometres south of Alice Springs. We are not optimistic of getting that line, so we may be queuing up to ask the Chief Minister to help us. If he can get lines built, maybe his power of persuasion can encourage the federal government to give the Ghan Preservation Committee a peppercorn rental over that line. If we obtain that, we propose to launch a national appeal for the restoration funds and call a general public meeting in Central Australia to form a Ghan Preservation Society similar to the societies that operate in other parts of Australia.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Deputy Speaker, recently, along with the honourable member for Tiwi, I had the privilege of going to Queensland to see a couple of agricultural colleges that they have at Burdekin and Emerald. These are 2 of 4 colleges that have been set up under Queensland act number 45 of 1965. These colleges are extremely successful and I would like to see something along similar lines considered for the Territory.

To give you a very brief rundown on how these are organised, the Minister for Education appoints the board to a particular college and this board is made up of successful farmers, graziers and agricultural people. The principal of the college is a member of that board and is employed by the board. The staff for the college is appointed by the board. They are chosen on their particular skills which are essential for the program taught in the college. It is interesting to note that very few of the staff are actually trained teachers. They rely upon teaching skills which these people will learn as they teach the children. They improve upon the teaching side of their skills and upon the way of getting the message across.
The conditions of employment are extremely interesting. Not everybody may agree. They are on a salary for a start. In a farming community, with harvests and sowing and so forth, they may have to work very long hours just like they would have to do if they were farming for a living and aiming to do the best by it. Also the people who are employed are on 3-weeks notice. If things do not work out, they can be given notice. One might think this would be an unhappy situation but I have found that the staff were obviously very content in their work. For many people without teaching qualifications, the salaries offered are extremely good. They appreciate that. Free housing is thrown in and, all in all, staff turnover is extremely low. The way the houses are looked after by the people on these particular colleges is a credit to the people and indicates again their contentment.

The courses which are offered are of 2 years' duration and concern 3 parts. The first part involves the teaching of skills such as welding, carpentry, lathe work, bricklaying, concreting, farm construction and mechanics. At the Burdekin College in particular, many of the outbuildings were actually constructed by the students under the supervision of the teachers there. They had one particular thing on the mechanics side which impressed me very much. They had 10 old Holden motors. They have frames for these motors to sit in and each student had to completely strip a motor and then put the motor back together again and make it work. There is a real emphasis then on the skills which can be useful side-lines to farming.

Then, of course, there is the practical farming side. That is emphasised to a high degree. I need not go into all the bits and pieces but they are well covered. The third section is the farm theory. It deals with bookkeeping, the keeping of taxation records and cash flow methods so that the farmer at any stage knows exactly how much money he has on hand and what his bills are and so forth.

The aim of these colleges is to provide the basis for scholars to go on and become farm managers. In other words, there are some real incentives. The colleges are funded initially by a debenture scheme which I am not particularly keen on and neither are some of the principals of the colleges. Each student pays fees of about $600 a term which is about $3,600 for 2 years. Then there is the sale of products. The thing that really impressed me in particular about Burdekin was that the sale of products, along with the fees, were just about enabling these colleges to pay their own way. They have a contract for supplying a certain amount of rice and sugar. Last year, they raised about $0.5m in fees and raised about $0.25m from sales. If it had not been for the interest payments on the debentures, they would have just about been self-sufficient.

How successful are the colleges? We have been assured that no student has any trouble whatsoever in finding good employment. There is a long waiting list of people trying to get into the colleges. If the honourable members are interested, I have a pictorial record which I would be prepared to show them at my office in the Nelson Building. I believe that a college along these lines should be considered for the Territory. I believe that agriculture would be greatly helped by such a college.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.