



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

18 October 1989

Wednesday, 18 October 1989

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Prowse) took the chair at 10.30 am and read the prayer.

NOTICE OF MOTION WITHDRAWN

MR STEFANIAK (10.30): Private members' business notice No. 1 was put before the house prior to there being any government policy in relation to stamp duty exemptions for first home buyers. I am pleased to see, and indeed I have made some comments to the press, that the Government now does have a policy in relation to exemptions for first home buyers. There are some questions which I intend taking up with Mrs Grassby in relation to exactly how best this can be done, but my initial motion, I think, has now largely been superseded by events. Accordingly, I withdraw it, Mr Speaker, and intend perhaps pursuing a different motion at a different time if the need arises.

WATER SUPPLY (CHEMICAL TREATMENT) BILL 1989

MR KAINE (Leader of the Opposition) (10.32): Mr Speaker, I present the Water Supply (Chemical Treatment) Bill 1989. I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, three weeks ago the Assembly adopted a Bill submitted by you which had the effect of removing fluoride from the water supply not only for the people of the Australian Capital Territory but for the people of Queanbeyan, which depends on us for its water supply as well. There has been a public response to the passing of that Bill and its enactment as law by the Chief Minister. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I agree with the Chief Minister that she had no option but to sign the Bill into law, it having passed through this Assembly. It is quite clear that the 17 members of the Assembly made an error when we passed that Bill and thereby required the Chief Minister - - -

Ms Follett: Twelve members.

MR KAINE: I repeat, Mr Speaker, the Assembly was in error when it passed that Bill which thereby required the Chief Minister to sign it into law. In this respect, I would like to assure the proponent of the Bill and those who strongly supported it that I am not debating the question of whether it is proper and correct to remove fluoride from

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the water or to leave it in. That is a matter that has to be determined in the future, and arrangements are in place for that determination to be made. Our error lies not in the question that was inherent in that Bill but in the process by which we enacted it.

In retrospect, we neglected the fact that this Bill directly affects not only the 270,000-odd people who live in Canberra but also other people who are beyond the jurisdiction of this Assembly and who under no circumstances could have had any input to the decision. So I believe it is time for the Assembly to take stock, to accept the fact that an error was made, to allow a proper inquiry into this matter to take place, and to allow technical evidence both for and against the question of fluoride to be presented and be properly considered over a reasonable period of time. Finally, the 270,000-odd residents in Canberra should be given an opportunity to express their view as to whether they want fluoride to remain in the water or not.

It is too significant a matter to be decided by the members of this Assembly, either in totality or in part. Without that proper investigation and that proper consultation with the community as to what their wishes are, it may well be that we will need to put a report date on Mr Wood's committee, which is a consequential measure to the Bill that I am now putting to the house. At the moment, it is an open reference with no report date. We will need to follow up and set a report date. When Mr Wood's committee reports, I expect that this house will then have all of the information that it needs to make a reasoned and proper decision on the technical and medical aspects of the subject, and it will allow members of the community to express their views. Up until now, we have denied them the opportunity to do so.

I do not think that anything more needs to be said on this subject. In summary, we made an error in putting this Bill into effect so quickly. We made an error in doing it without consulting the people who are directly concerned by it. I think it is proper that we reverse that decision and we put into place this Bill, which will have the effect of suspending the operation of our previous Bill for a reasonable period of time to allow a proper inquiry to be conducted. I commend the Bill to the house.

I seek leave to present the explanatory memorandum to the Bill.

Leave granted.

Declaration of Urgency

MR WHALAN (Deputy Chief Minister) (10.37): I declare the Water Supply (Chemical Treatment) Bill 1989 an urgent Bill.

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MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jensen): Standing order 192 requires the question to be put forthwith.

Question put:

That this Bill be declared an urgent Bill.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 10

NOES, 7

Mr Berry
Ms Follett
Mrs Grassby
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Dr Kinloch
Mrs Nolan
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whalan
Mr Wood

Mr Collaery
Mr Duby
Mr Jensen
Ms Maher
Mr Moore
Mr Prowse
Mr Stevenson

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Allotment of Time Suspension of Standing and Temporary Orders

Motion (by **Mr Whalan**) proposed:

That -

- (1) temporary order 34, relating to the automatic adjournment, be suspended for this sitting;
- (2) so much of the standing and temporary orders be suspended as would enable the order of the day for the resumption of the debate on the Water Supply (Chemical Treatment) Bill 1989 to be called on at a later hour this day; and
- (3) the following times be allotted for consideration of the Water Supply (Chemical Treatment) Bill 1989:
 - (a) for the agreement in principle stage - until 5.00 pm this day;
 - (b) for the remaining stages - until 5.15 pm this day.

MR STEVENSON (10.41): What this motion would, in effect, do is rush the matter through today. The Labor Party members spoke rather strongly on a similar matter not too long ago, and now they try to do a similar thing, but different, to the degree that they try to move the Bill through in one day. Let me correct a misrepresentation that has been presented to the people of Canberra. That misrepresentation is that the Assembly was in error, or that the Assembly made a mistake. The majority of people in this Assembly when this Bill was passed were not in error. Some perhaps were, but they were in the minority.

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Let us have a look at the track record of fluoride in Canberra. The suggestion in certain media outlets was that debate was not allowed; that the people who were affected by this matter were not given the opportunity to discuss it. But let us have a look at the truth and let me take you back 25 years ago to just before fluoride was forced into the water supply in Canberra. There was debate and there were calls for the matter to be put to referendum. Instead of the matter being put to the people of Canberra, instead of it being allowed to be put to referendum, Doug Anthony made an administrative decision through the week-end to introduce fluoride to the water supply of Canberra. That is how it got here.

The people were not given the chance to talk about the matter. The ACT Pure Water Association, I am well aware, has been trying to have this matter brought before the people who are concerned by it for approximately two years, with fairly scant result in the media, unfortunately.

Then we had a Bill presented in the house by Mr Prowse. The presentation speech was read at that time by Mr Prowse and then the matter lay on the table for one month. During the time that that matter lay on the table for a month there were great attempts to get this matter fully reported in the media. At that time it was discussed with various members. Information, books, et cetera, were given to all members in this Assembly on the matter of fluoride. There was great discussion. The Australian Dental Association hired a lobbyist or a lobbying company for, I believe, some tens of thousands of dollars, and they went to work lobbying various members in this Assembly and people elsewhere.

The people who were concerned about the truth of the matter coming out also invited people up from Melbourne and they had the opportunity to speak to members of this Assembly. Some took that opportunity and others did not. After a month, when there was plenty of time to discuss the matter, it was brought up in this Assembly. It was debated all day. The members of the Labor Party made the suggestion, which was not correct, that there had been no allowance for public debate. There had been allowance; unfortunately, the public were not necessarily given the opportunity to have the debate they wanted.

I think it is atrocious that this Bill should be forced through in this manner. It is absolutely not okay that debate not be allowed because, as you are well aware, there are people who wish to debate the matter.

DR KINLOCH (10.46): I voted yes on the matter of the urgency because I believe that the people of Canberra regard this as an urgent matter. That does not presuppose any particular judgment. I just believe that it is a crucial matter for the Territory.

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MR PROWSE (10.47): There is no urgency. It is rubbish. Fluoride is a toxic, cumulative poison and it has been taken out of the water supply. If we were putting it in, it would be a different story. We have taken it out. Those who have made these statements do not understand, nor do they wish to understand, the fact that fluoride is a cumulative toxin. It takes up to eight years for the body to eliminate the toxin once it is stored in the long bones. Where is your urgency? That is rubbish. There is a complete lack of understanding by those who have moved this Bill. The only urgency that is presented to this house is that they cannot stand the heat. They took a decision because they had not read the Bill and did not investigate the facts before the event.

The Bill lay on the table for a month. That was the time when the Government should have moved to have a public inquiry, and if it had so started this inquiry the Bill would have been delayed. It would not have been put before the house. But they did nothing - not a thing. They did not appreciate the significance of this Bill. I put it to you that it was the other party, the Liberal Party, that vacillated in the first place. They did not know the facts, they are not prepared to listen to the facts and now they cannot stand the heat. There is urgency all right, because they are frying.

The point is that you need to look carefully at this issue because you cannot please everybody. Of course there is debate. The community has always divided on this issue. It is a world-renowned fact that the community will be divided. Unfortunately, the Liberal Party, which moved this motion, is going to lose by both sides of this 50 per cent. Those for and against will now see Liberal members as not being able to stand the heat. It was a brave decision that was taken by this Assembly. It is a duty incumbent on a new government to right the wrong of a previous government as soon as practicable, and that is what happened here. We did it, and it was taken out of the water. If you want to put it back in, you must have a referendum first; there must be a referendum. You cannot drug the people without every responsible voter having a chance to have his say. Therein lies the issue.

This Assembly will now have to accept total legal responsibility for putting fluoride in the water if it so happens as a result of this debate today. I put it to you that there is no urgency. Let the committee establish the rights and wrongs of the fluoride debate in the time allocated to it and as a result of that we can make a decision.

I would comment further that today I heard, on a particular program, that the chairman of this committee is worried that he will not be able to be objective and that the members of this Assembly will not be objective. I was offended by that statement. Every committee of this house has members on it who have preconceived ideas; they have a

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party platform. When the chairman of that committee says on a national program that he is worried about objectivity, I challenge him to look to himself and the other members.

Mr Wood: I said I was worried about my objectivity.

MR PROWSE: And the other members'. So the point is that here we have a statement on fluoride and on committees in this Assembly which has brought the Assembly into disrepute. It is not acceptable to use fluoride, once again, as a political football; I object to it strongly. Please understand that this is not a debate on fluoride; it is a debate on political masterminding.

I put it to you that there is no urgency. The elimination process of the body takes eight years as a minimum to resolve the accumulation of this poison in the body. If a few months go past, we will not have decay rates as promised by those who are pro-fluoride. There will be no difference in the children's teeth if we do not get this committee report in for six months - none whatsoever. Therefore, there is no urgency. I plead with members to show some sense in this issue.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: There being no further speakers, the question is that the motion moved by the Minister relating to the suspension of standing and temporary orders and the allotment of time for the Water Supply (Chemical Treatment) Bill 1989 be agreed to.

Question put.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 10

Mr Berry
Ms Follett
Mrs Grassby
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Dr Kinloch
Mrs Nolan
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whalan
Mr Wood

NOES, 7

Mr Collaery
Mr DUBY
Mr Jensen
Ms Maher
Mr Moore
Mr Prowse
Mr Stevenson

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister) (10.56): I rise to indicate that the Government supports the Bill that has been introduced by Mr Kaine. I do not want to unnecessarily delay the Assembly this morning, but I do think that there are a couple of points which ought to be made. The passage of the Bill today, if it is passed, will return the situation to the point the Labor members of this Assembly argued for three weeks ago. I believe that the non-Labor members have learned a very valuable lesson during the past three weeks.

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Mr Stevenson: And the population.

MS FOLLETT: Both they and the Canberra community, as Mr Stevenson says, have seen that the decisions taken here in this Assembly have a real and immediate effect on the lives of people in the Canberra community, and I believe that we all ought to remember that it is best to consider very carefully the implications of our actions in this Assembly and to listen when other members try to offer reasoned advice.

I believe it is hard to forget the indecent haste with which the original fluoride Bill was passed. On two occasions on that day we witnessed the name-calling and the abuse of Government members who attempted to point out the need for a calm and considered approach to the scientific evidence about fluoride. The so-called evidence which was presented to Assembly members prior to our last debate was one-sided, to say the least, and I am sure that all members would agree that there is more to that story than many members here are prepared to admit.

Mr Stevenson: Highlight some points.

MS FOLLETT: The National Health and Medical Research Council, which is Australia's foremost authority on health matters has consistently advocated the addition of fluoride to community water supplies to protect the community from high levels of dental caries. The NHMRC has said that it will re-examine the evidence which was apparently brought forward by opponents of fluoridation. Any reasonable person would have waited for the council's report before making a decision which affected the health of two cities.

Just to conclude, I would like to make a comment about the objectivity of the Social Policy Committee and the objectivity that will be required of that committee in considering the evidence and particularly the opinions of medical authorities on the issue of fluoridation. I have absolutely total confidence in the ability of the chairman of that committee, Mr Bill Wood, to maintain his objectivity throughout that consideration. I believe that Mr Wood is amongst the hardest working, most dedicated and most fair-minded members of this Assembly. I have total confidence that he will bring to the deliberations of that committee his usual reasoned, calm and objective approach to matters.

I believe that it is up to all of the members of that committee to adopt a similar approach and to put aside their personal views on this issue, to put aside their personal biases and to listen and attend to the evidence that is presented. I think only in that way can we get from the committee in due course a report which does truly reflect the scientific and medical evidence and the community's opinion on this matter. As I say, I am grateful that it is Mr Wood who is chairing that committee

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because I have every confidence that he will perform that function as well as he has performed every other function in this Assembly.

MR HUMPHRIES (11.00): I think it will be easy to rehash in this place now the arguments concerning fluoride itself, but I do not propose to do that. I think it is beyond that stage, at least for some months, and I am content to let that happen in the Social Policy Committee and not in this chamber for that period. But I do believe that this Bill, presented by the Leader of the Opposition, indicates fairly clearly a desire on our part to establish the procedure by which fluoride is to be debated and, more particularly, whether fluoride ought to remain in the water supply of Canberra until such time as this issue has been resolved by the Social Policy Committee.

The Assembly was embroiled, in the last few weeks, in considerable debate in the aftermath of this original Bill's passage to become the Electricity and Water Act, and I think that there is every case for saying that that whole process brought the Assembly into some disrepute. I regret very much what happened over this Bill. I believe that the outcome of that was to, in many ways, denigrate and debase the achievements of this Assembly over the last five months since its establishment and I am deeply saddened that the headway I believe we had made over those five months against those people who argued that we should never have had self-government was, to a large extent, lost by the way in which the fluoride debate was handled and subsequently resolved.

As a result, I intend to support this Bill as it will restore what I see as the status quo. I think it is appropriate that we consider what, in the words of Dr Kinloch, is the level playing field on which debate of this kind should be conducted. It is quite clear to my way of thinking that the status quo of the last quarter-century ought to be retained until such time as we decide that fluoride should or should not be removed from the water supply.

To take fluoride out now is, clearly, an acceptance of one side of the argument. I believe that, if we do so, we assume that it should be removed, we assume it is toxic, we assume it is harmful, and that is a debate which is, as far as I am concerned, far from concluded at this stage.

I want to make final reference to a couple of comments made by Mr Prowse. He said the Liberal Party was vacillating on this subject. I suppose that would be a respectable point of view if one felt that it was wrong for differing views to be expressed within a party and for those views, similarly, to come out into the open and to be expressed publicly. But my view is that my party was, to some extent, courageous to say to itself, "We don't believe that our opinions have yet been determined on this subject". There is a difference of view in our party room about this

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issue, as I understand there is in other parties in this place. As a result, rather than coming into this Assembly and assuming that we are united in a particular point of view without having seen much evidence on the subject, we decided to come into this place and vote as our consciences or our current thinking on this subject saw fit. That was the first time, to my knowledge, this had happened in the Assembly. It may also, as far as my party is concerned at least, be the last.

Quite clearly, the response of the general public, the media and some other parties in this place to that point of view was very damaging to us. We believe that we reflected very well, better than any other party in this Assembly, the current state of thinking of the Canberra community on fluoride because we were evenly split - two-all - and that, we have to say, is a reflection of the current view of the Canberra community. We were not content to force members of our party who had differing views into a particular mould.

Mr Prowse: What are you doing now?

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, Mr Prowse, what we are doing now is restoring the status quo until this debate has been concluded. I know that a couple of centuries ago Edmund Burke expressed the view that a member of parliament, once elected, was responsible only to his own conscience, and strongly refuted the view that the members were in any way responsible to their electorates. That view has not entirely been superseded, members might care to know. There are some members of parliament in many places who still hold that view. It is not a fashionable view and it is certainly not a view that members generally express on platforms when they are talking to their electors.

Mr Doby: Or their preselection committees.

MR HUMPHRIES: Or preselection committees. It is still a view which I think members, to some extent, do and should hold to. My party will continue to look to its conscience first and foremost. When Mr Prowse says that we are frying on the subject of fluoride, he may have a point, but I also think it is worth noting that the Liberal Party's decision to restore fluoride to the water supply of Canberra has come at some cost to itself.

It is quite clear from what has already been said in the Assembly today that the relationship of my party with some members of this Assembly will be severely strained because we support this Bill and we put up this Bill. We accept that. I maintain we do so because we believe, on principle, that this Bill ought to be passed. I regret that this should happen, but I would always say that it is my hope that my party takes a position based on principle rather than on what friends it might make by passing or rejecting particular legislation.

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DR KINLOCH (11.06): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I welcome the reference to Edmund Burke, that splendid Irishman from long ago and one of the greatest parliamentary speakers of all time. One obvious overall question on every issue in this Assembly is a simple one: What is in the best interests of the citizens of the ACT? It is that theme which is contained within our daily prayer at the beginning of each of our sessions: "for the true welfare of the people of the Australian Capital Territory".

A related and subsidiary question, no less important, is: what is in the best interests of the nation at large? What Canberra does, other people observe - and that includes, of course, our friends and neighbours in New South Wales, especially our friends across the border in Queanbeyan. These days, as we would all surely agree, there is an even larger question about what is best for the earth at large; that is, the environment at large. An ultimate question, indeed the final question of conscience - to come back to Edmund Burke, and we have not discussed this before - is: what is our spiritual or, if you prefer, our rational and intellectual and conscience-filled duty? That last question would be too much to debate here. That is a matter for each individual member.

Given those questions, the matter of fluoride is very complex and, I believe, deserving of much more time than we have had to give it. The question is, of course, at one level, a matter of dental health. There is very little real doubt about the efficacy of fluoride, howsoever delivered, in cutting down on dental caries. I recognise, as most of us do, the advances made in the past 30 years as a result of the application of fluoride, whether in a city such as Brisbane where it is done one way - that is, by various direct applications of fluoride to the teeth, supported by other health measures - or in a city like Canberra where it is done in another way, including fluoridation of the water supply.

At yet another level, it is a greater question of public health on other issues not necessarily related to teeth. Here, I think, we will need to look at the Scandinavian evidence, the evidence from Holland and other countries. I am not sure that dental science alone can help us answer those questions and, at the level of the nation, the earth and our environment, there are scientific questions about the effect of chemical substances, not merely in municipal water supplies but in our river and lake systems, our world ecosystem.

All those questions need to be addressed. I believe that, where there are such serious questions, the substance under investigation should be suspended from operation while necessary evidence is examined. Consider in the past, for example, such substances as lead, asbestos and chemical pesticides. For that reason, and for that reason alone, I will continue to argue that there should be a cessation, for the moment, in the delivery of fluoride through the

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day-to-day water system. I will therefore vote against the motion as before, but for that reason, let it be understood.

I think there are also civil liberties arguments, and our committee will also address those. I repeat that I voted yes on the question of urgency because I believe it is a matter of urgency for the people of Queanbeyan and Canberra that that matter be resolved. I am trying to act as impartially and objectively as possible. I am no way departing from my Residents Rally colleagues, as you will see when I vote later. I do not dissent from my previous vote on the matter, but I would not want that vote to be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

I am not voting in some simple-minded way against fluoride, a naturally occurring substance with proven value in some respects at certain safe levels of delivery. I am voting - and I want to stress this - as a member of the Social Policy Committee who wishes it to be known that I am in no way prejudging the issue of what that committee will decide is the very best thing to do for Canberrans, for New South Welshpersons, and for Australians in connection with fluoride.

I respect the cautious comments made this morning on the ABC by the chairman of the committee, Mr Bill Wood. He was in a difficult position, as anyone is when faced with an interviewer. The tenor of his remarks is to say to the people of Canberra and of the nation that he will be trying to be as objective as possible on such a complex issue. He refrained from referring to other members of the committee except by a passing reference which was not identified.

He will be voting today to keep fluoride in the water. I respect his right to vote that way and I do not determine from Bill's vote that he will or will not conclude to recommend the same by the middle of next year. I respect Bill, his chairmanship and his determination to be as objective as possible. Similarly, in voting today for what I now regard as an immediate status quo, I am not saying what will be the conclusions of that committee next year. That remains to be seen. We are looking for the most excellent support of scientific evidence around the country and, if necessary, elsewhere. Similarly, I wish to promise that I will join him in a profound determination to be as objective as possible on all the issues before us. We will, I know, seek the best possible and the most competent advice obtainable both from within and, if necessary, from outside Australia, and I refer again to Scandinavia and Holland.

It is too important a matter to do otherwise and I would particularly hope - I lay this before the Assembly and ask for support in this matter - that we appoint to the Social Policy Committee at least one impartial public servant with expertise in scientific method. I do not mean a chemist necessarily but at least one person who, above all, is there to help us in these difficult technical matters.

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Now, if it turns out to be the best possible thing to double the fluoride in the water, to double the level, we will recommend that. If it turns out that it should be halved or put in at some level - one-quarter, three-quarters - we will recommend that. If it turns out that it should be removed, we will recommend that.

And, please, let me stress that there may well be outcomes that we have not yet considered. I think that is particularly true in connection with the environment. We will consider all those questions fairly and objectively. I join with the Chief Minister and Mr Wood in taking it that all members of the Social Policy Committee will join in this important process. I thank the house for allowing me this rather long comment, and I ask that we deal with this question as carefully and thoughtfully as possible, not just today but over the next year.

MRS GRASSBY (Minister for Housing and Urban Services) (11.14): Mr Speaker, I would like it to be known and made very clear that five members on this side of the house voted against taking fluoride out of the water and voted to have it sent to a committee because we did not have the facts of the matter. This was not part of our platform, and thus we did not have a party line on it. So it was decided that we should have the experts from both sides of the fence tell us exactly what were the facts about fluoride. Now, I think I am smarter than the average bear, but when it comes to something as important as this I feel I need to ask the experts. I feel that I owe it to the voters to know both sides of the question.

Mr Stevenson talked about certain books. I have read those books, but I have also read Mein Kampf. Although I would not put those books in the same bookcase as I put Mein Kampf, I still think there are three sides to the question: your side, my side - - -

Mr Stevenson: That is an atrocious correlation.

MRS GRASSBY: I said I would not put it in the same class, Mr Stevenson.

Mr Stevenson: Why mention it?

MRS GRASSBY: As I say, books can also be subjected to the view that they may not be exactly right. Therefore, I want to see both sides of the question. Only by sending it to a committee would I be able to see both sides of the question, because we all know there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. It is only then, when it is put to a committee, that we are able to see both sides of the question. I voted to send the matter to a committee before we take it out. I think this is the only way to go. Then the voters of the ACT, to whom we owe this, will know the facts.

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As Mr Humphries and Dr Kinloch talked about the status of politicians, may I repeat something the Chief Minister told me about the other day. A certain Italian senator once said to the people, "Please don't tell my mother I am a member of parliament. She thinks I'm a piano player in a brothel". So, all I would like to say is that I would like to see this matter sent to a committee before it is taken out because I would like to see both sides of the question and have them explained to me. Then I can vote on it, knowing that I know all about fluoride, whether it is good or whether it is bad. So I support Mr Kaine's Bill, the effect of which is that this be sent to a committee and fluoride be left in the water until we have the facts.

MR DUBY (11.17): I think the question at issue here in this debate has been ably pointed out by Dr Kinloch in his speech. The fact of the matter is that we have to look at why, in heaven's name, we have a committee inquiring into whether fluoride should go into the water or not, in the first place.

The reason why we have that committee is that there are many eminent scientific persons who have expressed doubt as to whether fluoride is safe for ingestion. Now, with that thought in mind, to me it is eminently sensible that, if we are going to have a committee looking at whether something is safe or whether it is not safe, the logical thing to do is not to allow that particular practice to be pursued until the committee has decided one way or the other.

If a substance is not safe, it should not be allowed to go into the water; fluoride should not be there. What happens if in six months' time the committee comes down and says, "My goodness gracious, look at the dreadful mistake we have made. This stuff is shocking. It should never have been allowed in the first place."? Imagine how the members who vote for this Bill today are going to feel, to think that they will have affected the health of the citizens of Canberra.

A lot has been made about the fact that the NHMRC is currently doing a review of fluoride and that we should simply slavishly follow the opinions put out by that eminent body. I feel the suggestion has even been made that we should not be inquiring into this matter at all and that we should just simply adopt their recommendations.

It might be worth while remembering that, 20 or 30 years ago, bodies like the NHMRC were telling people that compulsory X-rays were quite acceptable and that governments throughout this nation were legislating to have people who refused to have compulsory X-rays taken fined and taken to court for these matters when they said, "We think there is a bit of doubt about it and it may be injurious to our health".

Did people listen in those days? No, they did not. They did exactly the sort of thing that is happening now. They

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passed legislation that affected the people. Of course, in hindsight we know that those practices were dangerous and that there probably were alternative methods for removing TB and other similar afflictions from the general population. I think we are in much the same position today. Once again, I will refer to the words of Dr Kinloch as they have stuck in my mind - "a return to the level playing field". As a matter of fact, I think Mr Kaine, in discussions today or prior to today, has used that expression, "a return to the level playing field".

Well, if a "level playing field" is a situation where a substance is being added to the water, that is clearly not consistent. We should have a situation where the material is not in the water, the way God intended it to be. That is a level playing field.

Mr Kaine: Which includes fluoride.

MR DUBY: At levels that the good Lord intended. I have no objections to that. One of the speakers today said, "I have no objections to fluoride being added to the water until the committee decides what is going to be done". Well, I would not have any objections either if I had water purifiers on my taps. So I suppose the thing has to be looked at in that regard.

It is clearly nonsense to suggest that people are being disadvantaged by having the fluoride removed from the water for the short amount of time it is going to take for this committee to make its recommendations. When the committee does make its recommendations, I, like every other member of this Assembly, will accept them. I think a six-month timespan is being looked at. I do not see why it has got to take that long, to be honest, but we have been advised by folk that harm will not be done to people's teeth. There will not be an increase in caries or dental decay because of a six-month lapse in the addition of fluoride to the water and, of course, in that interim, there are other provisions available for people to be able to ingest the substance. I do not need to go into them but there are fluoride tablets available and the Government is supposed to be looking at whether it is feasible and practicable to provide fluoride washes or tablets for that portion of the population who require them.

There are commercially available preparations and, of course, there is the old stand-by of a capful of fluoride toothpaste every morning. So, all in all, I think this motion today can only be described as political grandstanding of the worst order. For any logical, reasoned debate, the situation that currently exists, where the fluoride has been removed and the committee is going to sensibly examine the situation to determine whether it should be permanently out of the water or replaced at a different level in a matter of months, poses no problems. Therefore, I join with the other enlightened members of the house in opposing this motion.

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MR STEFANIAK (11.23): I start out by saying that this particular issue has probably caused me more concern individually than any other that has come before the Assembly, mainly because like Mrs Grassby - - -

Mr Stevenson: Even move-on powers?

MR STEFANIAK: No, that was no problem at all, Dennis, and I will come to that shortly. Like Mrs Grassby - I don't know whether I am smarter than the average bear; I am probably as big as some bears - I am no expert, and on matters like this one I have to rely on experts.

A number of figures have been bandied about. A lot of those figures have been queried by one side or the other, depending on whom you believe. This caused me concern because, unlike a lot of issues that come before this Assembly where I have a fixed view, such as move-on powers, and where I am convinced one way or the other of the rightness or wrongness of it, this is the sort of issue where I think you do have to listen to experts and you have to look at a lot of evidence before you can really make up your mind one way or the other.

It is like a jury in court, which often has to look at detailed, scientific evidence and bring its everyday, commonsense approach to sifting through evidence and making a decision but it has to look at that evidence and it has to study that in detail. That is something, I think, that this Assembly has to do. This committee has to do that because there certainly is a lot of evidence that will be put before this committee for both sides.

I have looked at the evidence. I will tell you all, I felt like walking out of this Assembly and abstaining when we had the debate because I simply did not really know. I was impressed by Mr Prowse's figures from Brisbane. Since then, there seem to be about three different areas which query even those.

However, it has caused me great concern and I can quite safely say that we all made errors that day and I, personally, probably made several errors. I have thought a lot about the matter - thought long and hard about it - and I certainly feel that this matter should be looked at and should have gone to a committee from day one. In that respect, the Government certainly was correct.

I might say, though, that there were a number of errors made and, indeed, there still appear to be a few problems with this Bill which perhaps the Government should be aware of as well. Perhaps these will not even be dealt with today. They amount to some changes, which I think Mr Collaery picked up, which perhaps should have been picked up and brought to the Assembly's attention by the Government. Be that as it may, errors were made on this Bill, and I am sure the Assembly will be very wary to ensure that they are not made again.

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In relation to the substantive issue, I find it very difficult not to accept that fluoride is beneficial for teeth. I have studied a welter of material over the last four or five weeks in relation to this and I find that I have grave problems in not accepting that, if it is taken out of the water supply, there will be an increase in dental caries. I have also talked to a number of people and got a number of statements from people who do appear to be allergic to it, and I also accept that indeed some people are allergic to fluoride. It will certainly be interesting to see what is put before the committee in relation to these matters.

I was interested in some figures I was given in relation to a study taken in Wick, Scotland, where fluoride was taken out of the water in 1979 and a study was done some six years later which indicated a 40 per cent increase in five- and six-year-olds in terms of dental caries. The area had become a richer area. Diet problems, so I am told, were very similar to Australia's.

When organisations like the AMA, the Dental Association and the Pharmacy Association all indicate that fluoride is good for your teeth, I have trouble seeing any great conspiracy there. It seems somewhat illogical. As I said, I also accept that there are people who are affected adversely by fluoride.

Dr Kinloch has talked about such things as doubling, halving, taking it out, leaving it in at exactly the same level. That is, obviously, a very important issue for the committee to look at, and there are a number of studies coming down shortly which will be put before this committee, no doubt. There are large numbers of people in the Canberra community - professional people in the areas of dentistry, medicine and pharmacy, individuals and bodies - who will put a contrary view for the committee to carefully consider. I personally will be following with a lot of interest the evidence that is put before the committee. There has been some talk today of a level playing field. I think one area where we were wrong as an Assembly was in establishing a committee after fluoride was taken out, because when a situation has existed for 25 years there is a status quo. When you consider whether you do one thing or the other to alter that status quo, while you are considering what you are to do the status quo remains.

There has been a lot of media hysteria engendered over this debate, but I think one consistent, solid and very justifiable criticism that has come through in relation to the Assembly's handling of this issue is: for goodness sake, why didn't you leave the fluoride in there while the issue was looked at by a committee, then make a decision, and either leave it in, alter it or take it out? I think the logic is irrefutable, I accept it, and that is the rationale behind this Bill which Mr Kaine has put forward.

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On 30 June next year, if the evidence indicates that fluoride should be removed, I would imagine this Assembly would recommend that that be the case and that Mr Prowse's Bill be reactivated. If the evidence indicates that fluoride should stay, in whatever dosage, then the necessary alterations can be made to Mr Prowse's Bill to ensure that that occurs. But when this Assembly has sent such legislation as my move-on Bill and smaller items such as consideration of big bins to committees, I think the criticism that has come through loudly and clearly is that issues such as this should be looked at as a level playing field, which is the status quo.

Accordingly, I look forward to seeing what comes before this committee. I think all members of the Assembly will be further enlightened as a result of various studies that are currently occurring that will come down and various pieces of evidence that will be put forward to the committee by organisations and individuals. I commend this Bill.

MR STEVENSON (11.30): This debate is not about tooth decay: it is about truth decay. What we have is a situation where the Assembly voted to return the situation to a level playing field. The Assembly voted to give the people of Canberra the right that they should have had all along. The suggestion that this should have been put to this Assembly in the form of a Bill in the first place is not particularly valid. It was turned on in the night; it should have been turned off in the day in the same manner. The level playing field should have been brought about immediately.

The Liberal Party members made it happen. Mr Stefaniak says that he had difficulty in looking at the situation, but I suggest that, as someone trained in the legal area, he should consider himself an expert, because the definition of "expert", and let us look at it, is "a person who has much skill or who knows a great deal about some special things; an authority; a specialist". Is he not a specialist in people's rights? Does he not understand the basic laws of our society that would prevent people's bodies being interfered with without their consent? That is what fluoridation is; that is what is happening.

Let us look at the narrow definition of "democracy". Some people feel we have democracy in this country, yet they debate - and this is a political debate; this is not a medical debate - whether or not the people of Canberra, every man, woman, child, every animal and plant, should be medicated, on the dubious suggestion that young children, perhaps up to the age of 12, will benefit.

Mr Duby made the logical legal point - and I challenge any lawyer in this Assembly to refute it legally - that the suggestion that we need an inquiry means that there is doubt. What is the doubt? There is doubt about the

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efficacy and the possible dangers of fluoride in the water. If there is doubt, as Mr Jensen mentioned during the initial Bill's debate, leave it out, and that is the correct, honest, logical, moral and legal stance to take.

If fluoride is forced back down the throats of the people of Canberra, those people who so make that decision in this Assembly, without waiting for the committee of inquiry, will bear the responsibility. If they are not aware of the scientific evidence that has proven - and I do not mean suggested, but proven - harm by this subject, that is their responsibility to have read the data, to have researched the data.

If they feel it is a medical decision, if they do not know enough to make a decision for the rights of the people of Canberra, what on earth are we coming to when the Liberal Party, a party that has some of the best policies ever produced by a party in Australia when it comes to individual freedoms, when it comes to making decisions for the family, would force fluoride down the throats of the population of Canberra?

Let me quote from a book which we were recently all informed came into the Assembly library. This is a quote from *Your Health Rights*. It is a Choice handbook from the Australian Consumers Association. It is endorsed by Dr Neal Blewett - not a medical doctor - the Federal Minister for Community Services and Health. These are some selected quotes but they are relevant and they are not taken out of context:

Doctors are experts but they are not infallible -

No-one here would debate that; it is an obvious statement. We all well know many cases where mistakes have been made, recently and early on in the piece -

doctors may disagree with each other over the best treatment for particular problems. The final decision is ours -

not the politicians', not the medicos', not the dentists' -

We need not submit to their [the doctors'] treatments unless we so choose. It is up to all of us to stand up for what we regard as our rights.

And mark what I say; this will happen in Canberra. The people will stand up for their rights. In Australia check the referendum results if you do not know them.

In any fluoride debate, where perhaps some 10 per cent of the truth has been allowed to filter through the misrepresentation, the people overwhelmingly vote against fluoride. So will they in Canberra. The tide is turning. It is our right to live our lives free from unwanted bodily

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interference. Once again I quote from Your Health Rights, endorsed by Neal Blewett. The New South Wales Department of Health has developed the following list of patients' rights:

Before any treatment ... is carried out, the doctor ... should give you a clear explanation ... any risks associated ... should also be explained. This explanation should include an outline of any after-effects, side-effects or adverse outcomes.

You cannot put it more simply than that. Your consent is required before treatment begins. I repeat: before treatment begins. That was not done in Canberra. We have an opportunity to make sure the people of Canberra have that opportunity. And what will we do about it? We have the opportunity in this Assembly today, but we have a problem. We have a decay of integrity. Like the problems of dental decay in teeth, it starts slowly, and some who are not aware, who do not look, who do not have an expert understanding of the rights of people, do not detect early on the problems associated with this decay.

And so is it true with the decay we see to do with fluoride in this country. After a while, as the teeth go darker or the subject becomes more obvious and more people - more scientific, dental and medical researchers - speak out against it, the holes become apparent. At that time people need the integrity to stand up and make an honest decision, not a political decision.

Prior to the debate, when we were trying to get community debate on the subject, with little success, I forwarded information to all members. Judging from some members' statements today, it apparently has not been read. It certainly has not taken effect. I intend to put it in the record. The subject is "Fluoridation - Panacea or Poison". It was a paper that was printed in the Simply Living magazine, volume 3, No. 6.

Mr Berry: Who wrote that?

MR STEVENSON: I did. It reads:

The story of fluoridation compares with any of history's greatest medical controversies. Hailed as a tooth-saving wonder drug by promoters, and mass-medication with an ineffective and dangerous poison by opponents, both sides accuse the other of being emotional, unscientific and irresponsible.

With less than two per cent of the world population fluoridated and more than 70 per cent Australians fluoridated, all Australians should be aware of the facts.

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This article answers the questions, "What is fluoridation and its history", "What does it do", and "What is the truth behind the controversy".

What is fluoridation?

Fluoridation means the adjustment of 1 part per million (ppm) of fluoride to the water supply. This is claimed to reduce the number of dental caries (decay) for children. Adults do not benefit, as by age 12 teeth have been formed.

Before fluoridation, fluoride was used as a rodenticide and insecticide (a rat and cockroach poison) for some 40 years.

Since fluorine was identified 100 years ago and until the 1940s, it was always something to keep out of the environment.

From 1900 to the early 1940s widespread stock and crop poisoning by industrial fluorine wastes resulted in damage payouts of millions of dollars. The Aluminium Corporation of America (ALCOA) alone faced annual legal claims for millions.

The Amazing Events Leading to Fluoridation

In 1931 the connection between fluorine and mottling (the first visible sign of dental fluorosis - fluoride poisoning) was confirmed by Dr H.V. Churchill, Chief Laboratory chemist of ALCOA and reported to the US Public Health Service (PHS) which had to recognise fluorine as a POTENTIAL HEALTH HAZARD.

The PHS at the time was controlled by the Treasury whose chief was Andrew Mellon, owner of ALCOA.

In 1933 the PHS hired Dr H. Trendley Dean to survey those areas of the US where endemic fluorosis was common. In 1935 Dean reported that an amount that caused less than 10 per cent mottling (fluoride poisoning) of teeth was acceptable. He determined this amount to be 1 ppm, but by 1938 he had discovered that just over 1 ppm could cause mottling in 25-30 per cent of children.

In 1939 Dr Gerald Cox, a scientist, was hired by The Mellon Institute (Founded and controlled by the family of Andrew Mellon who owned ALCOA and controlled the Public Health Service) to look for a market for industrial fluoride wastes.

Dr Cox then proposed artificial water fluoridation as a means of reducing tooth decay. What better way to solve the huge and costly problem of

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disposing of toxic fluoride waste from Aluminium manufacture than getting paid to put it in the drinking water. What an incredible coincidence - ALCOA and the original fluoridation proposal.

In 1942, mainly as a result of Dean's work, the US PHS set 1 ppm as the maximum allowable concentration of fluoride in public waters. (The important thing to note is that this was not fluoridation, but a law preventing poisonous contamination of drinking water.)

Also in 1942, a British Medical Journal, Lancet, reported a study which showed not only could severe dental fluorosis occur in areas with natural fluoride concentrations of 1 ppm or less, but also appeared to show associated skeletal defects in children with poor nutrition. (Extension of time granted)

In 1944, an Attorney, Oscar Ewing was put on the payroll of ALCOA for an annual salary of \$750,000. Some months later Oscar Ewing joined the Public Service to become Federal Security Administrator which made him head of the US Public Health Service on a salary of about \$120,000. Another amazing coincidence, an ex-ALCOA employee taking a yearly salary cut of \$630,000 to head the Health Department determining fluoridation.

In October 1944 the Journal of the American Medical Association published an editorial saying, "... the use of drinking water containing as little as 1.2 to 3 parts per million of fluorine will cause such developmental disturbances in bones as osteosclerosis, spondylosis and osteopetrosis, as well as goitre (enlargement of the thyroid gland causing a swelling in the front of neck)".

In 1945 the world's first proposed ten year artificial fluoridation experiment began in Grand Rapids, USA, with unfluoridated town of Muskegon being used as a control.

In 1949 the sugar industry, under strong criticism by the American Dental Association over the role of sugar in tooth decay, paid for research "to find out how tooth decay may be controlled effectively without restriction of sugar intake". Thereafter the sugar industry became a major supporter of fluoridation.

In June 1950 only half-way through the Grand Rapids Experiment, the US PHS under its chief, Oscar Ewing, "endorsed" artificial fluoridation as safe and effective, and encouraged its immediate adoption throughout the US. ALCOA would now have

a home for its poisonous industrial waste, fluoride, in the drinking water.

In 1951 the keynote speaker at the US State Dental Director's Conference was Francis Bull. Bull told his dental colleagues how to sell fluoridation and dispose of opposition. Were the minutes of this meeting not available his statements would be unbelievable. He suggested they use the term "egg-shell white teeth" for mottled (fluoride poisoned) teeth; and to use "fluoride" instead of sodium fluoride, because the compound was widely known as a rat poison. Bull continued, "The question of TOXICITY ... lay off it altogether ... just pass it over ... If you can, keep them from going to a referendum ... these fellows can just take the statements of the American Dental Association or the Public Health Service or the Deans of the Dental Schools or Research Workers and they can prove to you that we are absolutely crazy for even thinking about fluoridation".

In commenting on the total lack of supportive evidence for artificial fluoridation, Bull suggested, "Speak of fluoridation as a great success, and recommend the pre-fluoridation surveys be made at State level, but not really to find out if fluoridation works. NO, WE HAVE TOLD THE PUBLIC THAT IT WORKS, SO WE CAN'T GO BACK ON THAT".

In 1951, Oscar Ewing persuaded the Congress to give \$2 million (a huge sum in 1951) to promote artificial fluoridation.

If you are starting to think there is a great deal more to the fluoridation story than the Australian Dental Association and our Government ever let you know about, read on.

In 1953 the American Dental Association issued an official booklet which was circulated widely throughout the US. Under the title, Downgrading the Public Image of Opponents of Fluoridation dentists were advised to label opponents into certain categories: drugless healers, members of religious groups, those with vested political or financial reasons, and obscure scientists. Denigrating opponents in advance effectively silenced all but the brave. For who would now speak against fluoridating in the face of professional ridicule.

The ADA's booklet told dentists not to defend themselves at public meetings but to refute objections by saying they are: out of date, obtained from little-known lay magazines or encyclopaedias, based on incorrect and ill-chosen

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terminology, partial quotes, hasty conclusions drawn from research work, completely unsubstantiated statements made by obscure scientists. The ADA said special care should be taken to prevent the people voting on fluoridation.

Not once did the ADA booklet suggest an honest and scientific evaluation of evidence demonstrating fluoridation harm or ineffectiveness. Nor did it, or Dr Bull's presentation, include any scientific evidence supporting fluoridation.

This incredible series of events ends in Australia in 1953, where the National Health and Medical Research Council, without any scientific or medical research experiments having been conducted in Australia, and by mainly using the US information, added its name to the growing list of important sounding groups promoting fluoridation.

MR BERRY (Minister for Community Services and Health) (11.53): I think it is very interesting to ponder how the various groups in this Assembly developed their fluoride policy and the purposes for which they developed it. It seems to me that the evidence is clear that single-issue parties are very keen to seize upon the issue of fluoride because it would assist them in becoming elected to this place and in pursuing their policies, whatever they might be in the hidden agenda - - -

Mr Stevenson: My agenda was not hidden; it was to abolish it.

MR BERRY: In the same way as we witnessed in the lead-up to the election for members to take their places in this Assembly - and I still recall the "A for Abolish" jingle - - -

Mr Stevenson: Sing it!

MR BERRY: You can always tell the billygoats by the way they butt in. The Government has indicated that it will support this Bill which has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition and it will take us back to the level playing field. The Government's position was clearly made out when the move to remove fluoride from the water was first introduced.

As my colleague Mrs Grassby has said, the Labor Government's vote was consistent throughout the debate. We consistently supported the placement of that issue before a committee so that there would be full disclosure to the people of the ACT.

It has also been said that the Labor Party did not have a position on fluoride. Those members with whom I discussed the issue in the period during which the Bill lay on the

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table would agree, if they were putting the position clearly and honestly, that I was about full disclosure, and I approached all of the parties who were to participate in the debate. But it became pretty clear during my discussion of the issue with the members who were to be involved in the debate that this was to be a numbers issue. It was not to be about commonsense, about the people of Canberra or what they wanted, or about politics. It was to be a subjective decision on an issue and it was to be railroaded through, and that is what happened.

The pleas for full disclosure have now been shown to be a responsible and honourable position for this Assembly to take. I am sure that at the conclusion of this debate the media will applaud the responsible and honourable decision which will be taken by this Assembly in relation to the examination and full disclosure of all of the issues concerning fluoride. There has been some misleading and subjective discussion of the issues surrounding fluoride.

Mr Moore: Well, Labor has not put any up.

MR BERRY: We were prepared to listen to the recommendations of an inquiry, Mr Moore, and I seem to recall in recent days seeing a piece of paper where you would have supported that view at one point in time. Many of the issues that were raised have been raised without regard to all of the facts. We heard a few moments ago much discussion about the toxicity of fluoride and how it was imposed on people in their daily lives and how wrong that was. Some people have all of a sudden found some warmth for civil liberties and now argue that it is a civil liberties issue, but I wonder whether those people consider that one of the most toxic gases that humankind is subjected to, carbon monoxide, is the result of cranking up their respective motor vehicles in the morning and polluting the air.

Of course, that is politics. We allow that to happen in our society and we allow the people of the ACT, and indeed the world, to be subjected to the inhalation of carbon monoxide and the dreadful effects that that has on our bodies.

Mr Moore: We are doing something about the lead in it.

MR BERRY: As we have done with lead, Mr Moore, when we decide that that will no longer occur, then it will be the body politic of the day that will decide that that will no longer occur. That will be the issue in relation to fluoride. It is an issue of public health. In the past it has been accepted, on the basis of expert advice, that it was a satisfactory addition to water supply in the interests of public health. The fluoride dosage which has been applied in the ACT has been recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council, and I think it is fair to say that it is also recommended by the World Health Organisation as an effective measure in reducing the incidence - - -

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Mr Duby: WHO?

MR BERRY: The World Health Organisation. It and others argue that it is not enough to rely on regular dosing by parents with fluoride tablets. Of course, there are others in the community who argue that we should not have fluoride at all. But the fact is that there needs to be a debate about that and a disclosure of all of the facts that are relevant to the fluoride debate. But, most importantly, the lower socioeconomic groups are the most likely to lapse in the maintenance of treatment where topical application is recommended. I think it is important to repeat that the Labor Government's position is that the Bill should never have been passed into law without the disclosure which I have talked about before.

The National Health and Medical Research Council, which the Chief Minister mentioned earlier, has indicated that it would examine the claims of Dr Diesendorf and make a new report. With indecent haste, as has already been said, this Assembly moved to head off any proper disclosure of the issues as they would affect the people of the ACT.

There are other chemicals that are accepted as additives to food and water in the interests of public health. I refer in particular to iodine. It has long been recognised that the addition of iodine is a remedy for goitre problems. Then some people would argue that chlorine should be the next on the list. Chlorine is a well-known toxic product, but it has been seen to be the most economical way of providing potable water for the people of the world. I suggest that, if there were an alternative which could provide purer water for the people of the world, then that would be used; but right now there is not one. People who talk about the removal of chlorine are just plain kidding themselves.

Basically, what it boils down to is that public health authorities and governments are in a position to ensure that public health is safeguarded. If dental caries is at a high level in any area, then the public health system has a duty to ensure that all measures are taken to combat tooth decay. If that involves acceptance of fluoride as an appropriate measure, then that should be the case. But it will be a decision that is made on the basis of proper disclosure and a decision by the body politic which is in place. It will not be made on the basis of rhetoric and asides.

I mention one that was used in the debate by the leader of the Residents Rally party. He went on to say, "We do not know that the Health Commission" - the ACT Health Commission he was referring to - "has in the past examined claims for compensation for fluorosis, for injuries to residents, and we expect that, when the debate is properly presented by the Minister for Health, he will detail any incidents where the ACT Health Commission has ever settled

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a claim by any ACT resident for fluorosis. I wonder whether the Minister for Health is prepared to give us some advice today on the topic".

Basically, what I think the leader of the Residents Rally was up to was introducing a little bit more emotion into the debate. It was in line with particular performances of the Rally in the past where they have demonstrated a certain affinity for those sorts of innuendos. It may have been seen that that emotion might have assisted them in their support of the removal of fluoride, but it was an aside and it was not based on any fact.

In my preliminary investigation of the matter, I might tell Mr Collaery, there have not been - and I can see that he is not surprised - any claims for compensation. I am sure that the committee members when they are inquiring into the matter will examine any claims which are alleged to have been made. They might also examine any claims about the effect of high temperatures on children's teeth and how that might be confused with the effect of fluoride. They might also examine how the effect of certain antibiotics may be confused with the effect of fluoride on teeth.

Mr Prowse: There are 95 reasons if you list them all.

MR BERRY: Well, what I am prepared to do, Mr Prowse, is to sit down and listen to all of the disclosures and not bully issues through this Assembly. I want to hear both sides of the argument and I would hope that the media reports both sides of the argument.

Members interjected.

Mr Kaine: Would you calm them down, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to maintain some decorum during the proceedings when the Minister is speaking.

MR BERRY: One of the issues that was raised in the course of the debate was the comparison of dental caries between Brisbane people and people in other cities in Australia. Had the Assembly been prepared at that stage to stop, listen and take a bit of time to think about the matter, I think that we would have found that the oft-quoted statement, that Brisbane children drinking unfluoridated water have no more caries than children in Canberra, is untrue.

Mr Prowse: Careful.

MR BERRY: I have been careful all along, Mr Prowse, to make sure that I put the very clear view to you that this matter ought to go to an unbiased committee where all the issues should be disclosed.

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Mr Prowse: I could not agree more; wonderful idea.

MR BERRY: I refer to the lecture by Professor Graham Craig in which he produced evidence from the 1987-88 Australian national oral health survey which shows a massive difference in the dental health in the two cities. I am sure that the inquiry will look at that and make an objective assessment of all of the issues. (Extension of time granted)

I close by just saying again that it is in the interests of this Government and it is in the interests of all members of this Assembly that we maintain the credibility of this house as a government for the people of the ACT.

Mr Stevenson: That's good news.

MR BERRY: The interjection from the "A for Abolish" member, as usual, does not have much regard for proper government, but the fact of the matter is that this Assembly is bound to provide responsible government for the people of the ACT. As a follow-up of the election, where we were proving the credibility of the Government, there have been many during the fluoride debate who have been wandering around shaking their heads and mumbling again about self-government. This is principally because of the way that the fluoride legislation was bullied through this house. A great lesson has been learnt by members of the Assembly, and I would hope that in the future the credibility of this house can be enhanced by responsible decision making.

MR WHALAN (Minister for Industry, Employment and Education) (12.10): Mr Speaker, this Bill today seeks to temporarily - and I must emphasise, of course, temporarily - reverse a decision in the form of legislation in relation to fluoride which has held up to national ridicule this Assembly, the ACT, and specifically the concept of self-government. We must realise that the two principal advocates of this legislation, Mr Stevenson and Mr Prowse, have no compunction whatsoever about the concept of self-government being held up to ridicule. What surprises me, however, is the extent of support that they received in their campaign, when people were warned about the inevitable consequence of that decision, and that was that this self-government for the ACT would indeed be held up to ridicule. One has only to look at a sample of some of the media coverage of that decision to realise the extent of the damage which has been done.

Today's decision will be beneficial in relation to the health of the children who will benefit for the six months or eight months that today's Bill will be in force. It will be beneficial to those children, and hopefully the correct decision will be made eventually, which will be to restore fluoride permanently to the water supply. But nothing can be done to repair the damage done to the reputation of the ACT, the reputation of this house of Assembly and to the whole concept of self-government.

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When you look at some of the newspaper comments, you realise the opportunity that was given to national commentators to hold us up to ridicule. Probably a fairly good example was an article in the Financial Review of 5 October. It was quite an extraordinary article, but you must bear in mind the stature of this particular newspaper. It was not the Mirror or Truth that produced this particular article; it was the Financial Review, one of the most respected newspapers in the country. This article on page 16 had the heading, "Setting a city-State's teeth on edge", and it started off:

It is preposterous, runs a certain logic, that a city the size of Newcastle has not yet been made a State. What Newcastle needs in order to be taken seriously is a fully fledged government of its own, not a mere city council. It needs a Chief Minister, it needs a Cabinet, it needs at least 17 full-time members of an Assembly. Perhaps then it will be taken sufficiently seriously to merit being awarded a naval contract or three.

The article goes on in this sort of vein, misrepresenting the concept of self-government, but the justification for it, the opportunity, was provided by that earlier decision. Let me quote again from the same article:

The Canberra Government -

which of course is not correct -

consists of four Liberals, five Labor Party members, four members of the Residents Rally -

It describes the Residents Rally as a suburban greenie NIMBY. Do you know what a NIMBY is?

A member: No.

MR WHALAN: Well, I will tell you. NIMBY stands for "Not In My Back Yard". So the Residents Rally is described as a suburban greenie NIMBY group. It continues:

... three members of the No Self Government Party, and a single representative of the Abolish Self Government Coalition, who has been associated with the extreme right-wing League of Rights.

The article then builds around fluoride:

This has come to a head, of course, with the scandalous decision to remove fluoride from the city's water supply, imperilling the dental health not only of Canberra's 270,000 inhabitants but of the 30,000 residents of nearby Queanbeyan.

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It goes on then to canvass the options which are available to the Commonwealth - again not very accurately - and the opportunities provided by the occasion:

Canberra Government has opened up 17 full-time jobs for politicians. Admittedly, an extraordinary number went first around to eccentric groups -

I am not quite sure which they are -

(itself an indication of the Canberra voters' disdain for the new structure) - but it has not taken long for the Abolish Self Government Coalition and the No Self Government Party to get their feet under the desks, and rather to enjoy it. And the Politician's Union, a voluntary closed shop, would be loath to see jobs so newly acquired, lost.

And, of course, again none of these comments is necessarily endorsed:

Ultimately, however, Canberra must be seen as a city that does not in truth exist primarily for its permanent residents. It is there for others: for parliamentarians, for diplomats, for the Australian Defence Forces, and for the thousands who dance attendance on these three groups.

Let me quote from an article in the Bulletin on 10 October written by David Barnett:

Nobody knew that either the Residents Rally, the No Self-Government Party or the Anti Self Government Coalition wanted to remove fluoride from the water supply. They thought the Residents Rally wanted to preserve trees and possums and stop a casino being built ... they thought voting for the other lot was a good way of registering their resentment -

Again holding us up to ridicule.

An article in the Australian on 11 October, written by Richard Farmer, starts off by saying:

Okay, I admit it, I made a mistake. I voted for an independent in the ACT election. I succumbed to the temptation of wishing a pox on both major parties and made a protest vote. And here I am today feeling acute embarrassment because so many other people followed the same course, with the result that Canberra's local government today is a laughing stock.

Further on it says:

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A vote for one of the motley assortment of independents was a way of expressing that resentment.

And finally:

Yes, laugh all you like about the Canberra experience, where eight weeks of debate has still not resolved the question of whether we should have big or small garbage bins.

So again there is the connection between the time spent on the garbage debate and - - -

Mr Moore: Are you saying that the matter should go to a committee or that it should not?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Mr Moore, please address your remarks through the Chair.

MR WHALAN: Your people voted to deny it going to the committee, you voted against it going to a committee, so let us get it quite clear. On 3 October, the Daily News again holds up to ridicule one of the great parties in this Assembly. It says:

The ACT Liberals, who have never opposed fluoride use in water, apparently supported the Bill for no other reason than political expediency. Their Federal counterparts have condemned the move with the Opposition Health spokesman, Peter Shack, saying the benefits of fluoride are proved in Australia.

And, of course, the local press did not spare us either. The Canberra Times on 4 October had the heading, "Collaery red faced on fluoride". That article discusses the leader of the Residents Rally and says:

Bernard Collaery said yesterday that as a lawyer he was more embarrassed than anyone in the Assembly over the fluoride controversy, "As a senior lawyer the buck stops with me". Mr Collaery said the Residents Rally had a legal review sub-committee made up of four lawyers including himself. He did not know why the committee had not scrutinised the Bill.

Again elements within the Assembly were being held up to ridicule because of the inadequacies of the legislation rather than the inappropriateness of the whole concept of removing the fluoride from the water. The Canberra Times of 7 October highlighted the very proper concern of the Queanbeyan City Council. I quote from the Queanbeyan Mayor, Dr David Madew, who was our kind host last week at a function. The paper quotes him as saying, "But we use the same water and we would like to be consulted". Again, the consultation process which was denied the entire community was there.

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In the Canberra Times on 11 October again that great party within this Assembly, the Liberal Party, was held up to ridicule by the tensions created by this issue:

The ACT's four Liberals were silent yesterday over their decision on fluoride. After what is believed to have been a fiery lunchtime meeting, the members refused to speak on the decision, although one had been made yesterday afternoon. The four MLA's were seen leaving the Assembly building after the meeting at about 1.30 and had not returned for the early afternoon session of the estimates committee.

And, finally, the Canberra Times on 12 October took the same line.

This has been a tragic episode in the very short life of this Assembly. The opportunity was there to avoid these circumstances, and that opportunity was rejected outright by the majority of members of this Assembly. People were cautioned as to the consequences of refusing to take that opportunity. That was the opportunity to consult with the community, to consult with the community of Queanbeyan, and to take advice before the drastic action that followed. It is with a certain disappointment that I find we have been forced into this position today of effectively rescinding the decision made on the last occasion and of having been in this Assembly when a course of action was taken that exposed us to the ridicule which has been demonstrated here.

MR MOORE (12.24): The Residents Rally originally decided to put the removal of fluoride into its policy because it thought it would find a way to maximise the benefits and minimise the harm of fluoride. We have never in this debate at any stage argued along the lines, as some others have, of fluoride being a poison or any of those sorts of lines. There are people who wish to argue that way, and they certainly are entitled to, but it has not been our process. We have recognised the scientific evidence that has illustrated some great benefits of fluoride, to children's teeth in particular, and that is recognised in our party policy by suggesting that there should be methods of making fluoride available to people should they wish to use it.

It is very interesting that the Deputy Chief Minister should finish his speech on a note involving the consultation process. The debate about the consultation process was whether we should carry out our consultation on a level ground or maintain the status quo.

The Residents Rally had solidarity on its view that it should be on level ground. The Labor Party then decided that it would be politically opportunistic about this whole issue, and it was that party's opportunistic push that brought this Assembly into the disrepute that the Chief Minister spoke of in his quotations from articles.

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The consultation process is in place, it can stay in place, and the Residents Rally has indicated that it will be prepared to reconsider its policy. The four Residents Rally members of this Assembly have agreed that they will abide by the evidence Dr Kinloch takes in the Assembly committee and they will bring back to their own membership the evidence that Dr Kinloch finds and, if necessary, seek to have the membership change their policy. We do not believe that will happen, but we are prepared and we are open-minded enough to say that, if that is the case, then that is what we will do.

When that policy was put into the Residents Rally platform we had some new evidence. We had statistical evidence that indicated that fluoride in the water was not achieving the goal that it had set out to do. We had evidence of harm, which has been presented to you; and we also had very new evidence that rinsing with fluoride, without swallowing, without ingestion, delivered the benefits of fluoride without delivering any of the harm. It was in that light that we considered it was appropriate for us to try to find a way to maximise the benefits and minimise the harm.

The evidence from Brisbane was particularly interesting. I notice that Mr Berry has compared Brisbane and Canberra and said, "Well, there you are, Brisbane has no fluoride, Canberra does have fluoride, that is the end of it". Had he gone and looked a little further, and had the people who presented that view been a little more honest, they would have presented for this Assembly comparative figures for Brisbane and all the other major capital cities in Australia. On that evidence, when you compare it particularly to Melbourne, because that is the one that is closest, there appears to be very little difference.

We are not on about banning fluoride. We are on about delivering it in a way that maximises the benefits and minimises the harm. The Brisbane experience indicates that something strange is going on about fluoride being in the water. We are about fluoride delivery to our children. We are talking about the delivery of fluoride to the mouths of the citizens of the ACT.

How is it then, I have been asking myself for several months, that the benefits of fluoride appear to be getting to the people of Brisbane, even though it is not in the water? Along this line, I phoned Dr Selinger, following his excellent article in the Canberra Times, and said to him, "When I read on my toothpaste tube that it contains 0.75 per cent per weight of monosodium fluorophosphate, how does that relate in parts per million to fluoride in the water?". He said that it was an interesting question, that he had come up with the same question himself a week earlier and had decided to look into it. Because of the nature of the combination of the chemicals and because of a series of other factors, it took him much longer to work out than he expected, but he felt that it related to

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approximately 1,000 parts per million in a tube of toothpaste.

So we are told on the one hand that it is unsafe or we start to run into problems if fluoride is introduced into the water above five parts per million, yet it is in our toothpaste at 1,000 parts per million. Most of us are aware that it is quite difficult to buy a tube of toothpaste without fluoride. All the toothpaste that is readily available has fluoride in it, and it is being delivered at 1,000 parts per million. By the time you have rinsed your mouth out with water and so forth, no doubt that is reduced significantly, perhaps even down to 100 parts per million, maybe down to 10 parts per million, but the point is it would appear that fluoride is being delivered to mouths through toothpaste. That is one possibility.

I hope that the Social Policy Committee, when it looks at this, will look very carefully at that delivery of fluoride in a voluntary way to our children, about whom we are particularly concerned. We have not said, as the Labor Party has said, that this is only about looking after our children and we are only concerned about looking after our children.

Mr Berry: We did not say that.

MR MOORE: The Chief Minister did, after coming to this debate with barely a shred of evidence. If fluoride is being delivered in our toothpaste at 1,000 parts per million and if it is dangerous above five or 10 parts per million, the Social Policy Committee will need to look carefully at the combination of fluoride toothpaste and fluoride in the water.

With that in mind, I recommend - because I have looked at the way the numbers are going today and I suspect that Labor and Liberal will carry this through - that they, and the Chief Minister in particular, take note of what the National Health and Medical Research Council says about levels and make an administrative decision, if fluoride is to stay in the water, to halve the amount of fluoride that is being delivered.

Mr Stevenson: It is not in; it is out.

MR MOORE: If this motion is carried. Let us pay particular attention to some of the other factors. The Conservation Council has written to me, and I presume to others in the Assembly, suggesting that one of the areas that has not been considered is the environment; that fluoride in our water goes through to the rest of the environment and it affects animals and plant life around us. Remember that the percentage of water that is actually consumed by humans is a minimal part of that water supply.

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Let us also be aware that the community, like the Liberals, is split on this. The several polls that we have seen - and I imagine there will be more - have pointed to this split, and the community is divided. When the Deputy Chief Minister talks about this Assembly being brought into disrepute and ridicule - and I have suggested that a great deal of that is through their politicking - he ought also to realise that in passing the Bill that we have before us we can expect to come in for more ridicule. People will now say, "The ACT Government can't even make up its own mind". They will not take into account that it is a very different system, that we have a minority government and that that is part and parcel of the nature of our particular makeup. But if members do support this, we will be in for more ridicule.

Let me emphasise again that I would like the Government to consider, as an administrative matter, that it may be for the benefit of the people of Canberra to take account of the levels of fluoride that are being delivered to people and to consider, at the very least, reducing the level of fluoride going into our water.

I am delighted to see that the Deputy Chief Minister has now decided, on this very important, very urgent Bill, to attend this sitting, apart from the time that he was present to deliver his own speech. I am particularly delighted that he is able to be here to listen to me.

The consultation process has been part and parcel of what is going on already; it is already in place. It is not necessary to change, because the debate is about changing it from what we have now, a level ground debate, to return to what you refer to as status quo. The fact that we have to return makes it circular, because it is no longer the status quo. However, that seems to be what a combination of Labor and Liberal parties is going to give us.

Finally, I would just like to go back to the Deputy Chief Minister's comments. He quoted, as I recall, from the Financial Times, and referred to the word "NIMBY". I have just had a little bit of thinking about "LABOR", which could be "Living Alongside Bumptious Old Ratbags" - and I wonder who they are - it could be a "Loose Association for Bulldozing Our Residents"; it could be "Lost Alliance" - or Last Alliance perhaps - "for Bothering Our Residents". So we could all play those sort of games, as indeed the Financial Times did. On that note, let me point out that we do have a consultation process already going. Let us stick with what we have got. Let us not put ourselves up to further ridicule.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.37 to 2.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Printing Industry

MR KAINE: I direct a question to the Minister for Industry, Employment and Education. Minister, in light of this morning's announcement that the Commonwealth intends to divest itself of about 200 workers at the printing works of the Australian Government Publishing Service, could you tell us when you expect the report of your strategic study of the ACT printing industry to be brought down, so that we can know whether the 200 people are likely to be given jobs in the local industry?

MR WHALAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this question. The issue of employment in the printing industry is one that is of concern to us, because printing is one of our largest manufacturing processes, and I think we usually describe it as the largest employer in the manufacturing sector in the ACT. It is for that reason that we are concerned at the announcement by the Federal Government in relation to employment.

We do not have a reporting date yet for the report on the printing industry, but the progress that we have undertaken there and the information which has been accumulated as a result of our study into the printing industry will be of considerable assistance to us in possibly assisting the relocation of workers who are affected as a result of today's announcement.

Tuggeranong Community Centre

MR JENSEN: I refer the Chief Minister to her written answer to a question I asked on 28 September, which she tabled yesterday. I refer particularly to the note at the bottom of that answer which says:

The \$2m referred to in the budget papers does not relate to the Tuggeranong Community Centre but refers to visual arts facilities.

On page 22 of budget paper No. 5 is the following statement:

An amount of \$2m is allocated from the Community Development Fund for construction of the Tuggeranong Community Centre in 1989-90. This funding was carried over from 1988-89.

My question is: can the Chief Minister please tell the Assembly what is the difference between the visual arts facility and the Tuggeranong Community Centre, or are they one and the same thing?

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MS FOLLETT: I thank Mr Jensen for that question. Mr Speaker, I do not have with me either of the documents to which Mr Jensen has referred. I suspect that what he is referring to is a question of wording and an attempted explanation of the wording. I would prefer to take that on notice and give the Assembly an explanation tomorrow.

Children's Services Legislation

MR DUBY: My question is directed to the Minister for Community Services and Health. I read with concern in the Canberra Times last Saturday of a four-year-old Canberra girl who was returned to her intellectually disabled mother, against the wishes of local welfare authorities. This was able to happen due to an inadequacy in the ACT children's services laws. The article went on to say that moves were afoot to amend the Act to prevent this situation happening in the future. I ask the Minister whether he can comment on that and when we may expect to see the legislation regarding this matter.

MR BERRY: I am aware of the report to which Mr Duby refers, but I am unable to reply in any detail to the question that he has put. I would prefer to take that on notice and respond more fully at some time in the future.

ACT Ambulance Service

MRS NOLAN: My question also is directed to the Minister for Community Services and Health. When will the Canberra community be advised of administrative arrangements to refund those who have already paid 12-month ambulance subscriptions, given that, as of 1 January, new collection arrangements for ambulance subscriptions will be in place for those who have private medical benefits? Are people still expected to pay for a 12-month ambulance cover, even though they require cover only to 1 January if they have private health benefits?

MR BERRY: Of course, the tax on health fund contributors for the ambulance levy will increase the revenue base for the ACT ambulance service and provide broader ambulance insurance cover than the scheme it replaces. It provides an automatic additional benefit for people who have hospital insurance cover and simplifies arrangements for subscribing to the ambulance services. As you might be aware, pensioners, of course, are exempt from the levy and they will not be charged for the ambulance services. The administrative arrangements, as far as I am aware, have not been settled as to how people to whom you refer might get refunds, but I can look into that. I am afraid I missed the second question.

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MRS NOLAN: The second part of my question was: are people still expected to pay for a 12-month ambulance cover even though those who have private health fund cover require cover only through to 1 January?

MR BERRY: Nobody will be expected to pay double for ambulance cover.

Mrs Nolan: I am sorry, but I would like some clarification, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Do you wish to ask a supplementary question, Mrs Nolan?

MRS NOLAN: Yes, please. So, as of now, people are still expected to pay for 12 months cover?

MR BERRY: If you want to maintain your ambulance cover, you will be required to keep your payments up to date, but nobody will be required to pay twice.

Casino

MR COLLAERY: My question is directed to the Attorney-General. I refer to a report in the Canberra Times of 18 October 1989. Is the casino surveillance authority to be involved in assessing the final list of interested companies before or after this list is forwarded to the Minister and Cabinet? Secondly, have the members of the casino surveillance authority been appointed? If so, who are they? If not, when will they be appointed? What consultative procedures will be used to select those members, excluding the statutory requirement for the chairperson? Will the Chief Minister assure the Assembly that the casino surveillance authority will have sufficient resources, particularly time, to undertake the investigations it is required to conduct?

MS FOLLETT: I thank Mr Collaery for the question, which is rather long and detailed. I hope I do not miss any aspects of it. To take the last part of it first, the casino control authority has not been appointed, and that is something that the Government has not yet considered. I am aware that there has been some recent media speculation about the parties interested in the possible casino project. Members, I think, should know that the Government has taken the position that we do not wish to be made aware of the numbers or the names of participants in the selection process until such time as there is a short list of finalists. That short list will be presented to the Government for its consideration. So the short list would already have been approved by an independent expert assessment panel relating to design and finance and would have been cleared by the casino surveillance authority in accordance with the criteria under the Casino Control Act.

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There is no intention at this stage to release names or numbers of participants, as it is desired that each proposal be assessed on its own merits without the assessment panels having to suffer a media or a lobbying campaign. It is a confidential process that was followed in the past by the Parliament House Construction Authority and the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority. Mr Speaker, you would be aware - I think all members would be aware - that the Government has indicated its desire to obtain the very best possible project without accusations of pressure or bias, and that is the process that we will be following.

MR COLLAERY: I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, it was a long question, but did you answer the question as to when the casino authority appointment process will commence?

MS FOLLETT: Mr Speaker, may I defer to the Minister for Industry, Employment and Education on that particular question?

MR SPEAKER: Yes.

MR WHALAN: There will not be any appointments to the casino surveillance authority until after the initial processing of the expressions of interest, and that is designed to avoid the involvement in the surveillance authority of anyone who may have some interest in one or other of the expressions of interest.

Assembly Budget

MR HUMPHRIES: My question also is to the Chief Minister. I refer her to the television interview she gave the day after her budget was delivered, from which I quoted at question time yesterday. I quote again from that interview, this time in reference to the budget for the Assembly. She said:

That \$4.5m is the cost of the Assembly itself rather than of the Government, and the Assembly arranges its own budget. It's not up to the Government to set the Assembly's budget.

I repeat that: "It's not up to the Government to set the Assembly's budget".

I ask the Chief Minister: is the process for determining the Assembly's budget not precisely the same as it is for every other area of the Administration? Does the Speaker of this Assembly not make bids for funds in the same fashion as department heads? If it is not up to the Government to set the Assembly's budget, who is it up to?

MS FOLLETT: I thank Mr Humphries for that question. The context in which I answered that question is important

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because the questioner, I think - and I am speaking from memory - was under the impression that it was the whole operation of the Government rather than of the Assembly itself that was subject to the Assembly's budget - the \$4.5m that was referred to.

Mr Speaker, you would certainly appreciate that the Assembly's budget was devised very much in consultation between you, the Speaker, and me and my Treasury officials. The administration of the Assembly's budget is, of course, a matter for the Speaker. So there is a slightly different process there from the whole of the budget package.

Mr Humphries: How? How is it different?

MS FOLLETT: Mr Humphries asks: how is it different? For example, in the estimates process that we have just been through Mr Speaker, I believe, attended that Estimates Committee to talk about the Assembly's budget; I did not, as Treasurer. He took the questions on that.

Mr Humphries: Who sets the final amount?

MS FOLLETT: The final amount was decided in negotiation between the Speaker and me.

Youth Housing

MR STEFANIAK: My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. I see in yesterday's Chronicle that Mrs Grassby was quoted as saying, as we know, that up to 30 houses will be allocated to groups of people over 16. She then went on to say that many of the houses will be linked to an existing network of supervision provided by community groups and that houses will then be graded up to a point where there is a graduate house with minimum supervision. I would like to ask her: firstly, how many of those 30 houses will be linked to an existing network of supervision; secondly, what type of supervision is envisaged, and what does she mean by "minimum supervision"?

MRS GRASSBY: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak. At the moment we do not know how many. It depends on how many people come forward in the community from groups such as the Rotary clubs and the Lions clubs. As Mr Kaine already knows, one is being run by the Lions on the southside. It depends on just how many people come forward and how many apply to be supervised.

In cases where they need to be supervised, as I said to you before, there would be no way we would be putting 16-year-olds into houses without supervision. So we do not know the number. We have put that number of houses by at the moment, hoping that we will get quite a few of the community groups out there, such as churches, the Salvation Army, Rotary clubs, Lions clubs and organisations like that

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which would be happy to supervise a house. It would then depend on the age group.

If you have a group of 16-year-olds they would need full supervision all the time in the house. If you have a 16-year-old, a 29-year-old, a 30-year-old and a 60-year-old who is on a pension, you would not need anywhere near as much supervision. Probably the 60-year-old would be responsible for the 16-year-old.

So, at the moment, this is what we are looking at, but we will be taking very great care to see that nothing like what happened at Bowman House will happen again. That was not done by our Government, but unfortunately it was set in a place where it should never have been set, among many hotels, without any supervision, but now, leased to the Department of Education, it is working extremely well.

Building Safety

MS MAHER: My question is directed to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. I refer to an article in the Canberra Times of Saturday, 14 October, concerning the safety of the Legal and General building in Barry Drive, Civic. Is the Minister aware of discussions being held between the Commonwealth and the building's owners? Is the Government involved in these discussions? Are there any ACT government employees working in the building? Can the Minister give an undertaking as to the safe working environment within the building? Is the Minister aware of any other buildings in Canberra about which questions have been raised as to their structural soundness, apart from the Silverton building in Civic?

MRS GRASSBY: Thank you, Ms Maher. Yes, I do know about that. The building controller was advised on 19 September that the floor was sagging. An assessment by the building controller shows the floor, as designed, is structurally safe. The sagging, however, may affect the tenants' use of the floor. I understand the Minister for tourism - I am not quite sure - was considering renting space in this building.

The building controller has been investigating the matter but at this stage does not propose any restrictions on the building. He will continue to monitor the situation. I asked questions about it. I understand that when a building is being built pillars are put under each floor, and they then build onto the next floor, where the same thing is done. Unfortunately, in a hurry, they sometimes take the pillars out and the floor then sags. But, because of the steel in the floor, I understand there is no danger to anybody. We have just heard, very sadly, about what happened in San Francisco. There is no reason, I understand from the building controller, for the building to fall down or anything terrible like that. So we do have

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them looking at this, and my department is looking very closely at it.

The other building that has similar problems is the Silverton building, and I understand that that is being checked out very, very carefully. I also understand that no union will have any of its employees working in any of these buildings unless they are completely safe and until a report goes into the union. In the Silverton building, I understand, the Department of Social Security was renting, but it will not be moving in unless it knows that the building is completely safe.

Gifted Children

MR MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Industry, Employment and Education. I refer to articles in the Canberra Times last week about special programs for academically gifted children. I ask the Minister: what provisions are being made to assist these students to realise their full potential within the ACT education system as academically gifted children?

MR WHALAN: One of the features of our education system, Mr Speaker, is the broad range of programs that is available for children with a whole range of levels of ability. The need for special educational facilities for children with learning difficulties has long been recognised, and we do have quite a comprehensive range of programs, not the least of which is the recent, much publicised reading recovery program in primary schools for people with learning difficulties or special disabilities, such as intellectual disability, and efforts have been concentrated on that. But the debate continues on the extent to which particularly gifted children should be allowed to develop, and that is not yet completed.

Asbestos Removal

MR DUBY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. At present, only licensed asbestos removalists are permitted under the ACT building code to handle and remove asbestos sheeting, or what we know as fibro, from Canberra residences undergoing renovation or extension. There is no such restriction placed on New South Wales builders when removing asbestos sheeting from residential properties. Canberra residents who wish to have asbestos sheeting removed prior to work being completed are forced to use the services of a few licensed asbestos removalists. Can the Minister advise as to why licensed ACT builders should not be permitted to remove asbestos sheeting by following approved removal procedures and observing the necessary safety precautions, as occurs in New South Wales?

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MRS GRASSBY: Thank you, Mr DUBY. I will endeavour to answer that but, if you are not satisfied with the answer, I will get some more details on it. As it has been explained to me, the conditions under which we remove asbestos sheeting in the ACT are the safest in the world. These conditions were decided by the union and the asbestos industry; they came to an agreement on it. I understand that you are allowed to remove so much without having a licence, but for anything beyond that you have to have a licence to remove it. The reason for this is safety. If you are not happy with the answer, I will get some more detail on that.

Traffic Safety

MRS NOLAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. Is the ACT Government proposing to carry out a program of minor traffic and safety improvements in Fyshwick? Can the Minister tell me how the closure of access between Canberra Avenue and Geelong Street, Fyshwick, can be an improvement in safety, traffic flow or convenience? Is the Minister aware of how the proposed road closure will impact on business in that area?

MRS GRASSBY: Thank you, Mrs Nolan. I will have to get back to you with an answer because I do not have the details on the closure of that road.

Casino

MR COLLAERY: My question is directed to the Attorney-General. The Deputy Chief Minister just responded partly to a question by indicating that there would be some pre-screening of the expressions of interest for the casino development. Chief Minister, I know you desperately need a solicitor-general, but may I draw your attention to the legislation that says that, in approving a company as developer, the Minister shall have regard to any recommendations made by the casino surveillance authority. Indeed, the casino surveillance authority, under the Act, is set up, amongst other things, to advise on the appointment of a developer, on the selection of a developer.

Chief Minister, may I ask why an extraordinary procedure is being developed now of pre-screening the applications? That is the first question. Secondly, will we be told, particularly, the identity of those pre-screened out and whether any of those applicants have been previously excluded from being involved with casinos at Darling Harbour or anywhere else in the world?

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MS FOLLETT: Mr Speaker, the question of a casino is primarily the responsibility of Mr Whalan. I will defer to him.

MR WHALAN: Mr Speaker, the selection process is a three- stage process which is conducted under the supervision of an interdepartmental committee which is chaired by the secretary to the Chief Minister's Department. In the first stage, expressions of interest were invited, and that involved an assessment of the proponents' financial and development capacity and experience, and the nomination of all key personnel, including the proposed casino licensee.

The second stage of the selection process was restricted to those who satisfy the stage one selection criteria, and this stage involves submission and assessment of detailed design drawings and statements of site premiums. These submissions will be assessed by independent expert panels; one will examine the merits of design, and the other the merits of the financial proposals. The third stage, the final stage of assessment, involves the short-listing of proponents which will be submitted then to the casino surveillance authority for clearance in accordance with the criteria established in the ACT Casino Control Act of 1988. The final selection is then made by Cabinet, having regard to the assessments of the expert panels of the recommendations of the casino surveillance authority.

MR COLLAERY: I wish to ask a supplementary question. I address it again to the Attorney-General, and she may pass it on. Minister, have you secured competent legal advice in relation to the legality of the procedures that the Deputy Chief Minister has just outlined, it being the role of the casino surveillance authority to choose the people?

MS FOLLETT: Mr Speaker, the Government has the advantage of the advice and the constant hard and, I believe, very good work of the Government Law Office. I am advised that all of the procedures that the Deputy Chief Minister has just outlined have been drawn up in consultation with the Government Law Office.

Burnie Court Flats

MR KAINE: I would like to address a question to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. Minister, I refer to a media release that you put out on 15 August, now 10 weeks ago, in which you said that you had asked the ACT Housing Trust to examine ways of improving living conditions at some of Canberra's public housing flat complexes, and that included Burnie Court. Have you had any response from that examination yet? If so, could we be informed of what you intend to do? If you have not had any response yet, is there any date by which you expect to have the result from this examination?

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MRS GRASSBY: Thank you, Mr Kaine. No, I have not had any results yet. I am getting a report done on it, and as soon as the report is available I would be very happy for you to have a look at it.

MR KAINE: I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Could you tell me when that is likely to be? This was a response to some public criticism, and I hope it was nothing more than that. I would just like to know when we can expect to have some of the results.

MRS GRASSBY: After the proceedings today, I will ask my department how much longer it will be and tell you at question time tomorrow.

Murrumbidgee River Corridor

MR JENSEN: Mr Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister for Housing and Urban Services. I refer the Minister to a draft management plan for the Murrumbidgee River corridor which was dated February 1988. Just for the Minister's information, it is a white-covered document with red writing on the front. Can the Minister advise what the current status is of this plan, particularly as groups which submitted comments on the draft plan have yet to be advised of the results of their participation?

MRS GRASSBY: The draft plan was released in June 1988. Fifty-seven submissions were received. These have been incorporated into a plan, and the final plan will be reviewed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Consultative Committee, which is shortly to be reappointed. It will then be considered by the Government before being tabled in the Assembly in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act.

MR JENSEN: I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Are the details of that final plan, to which the Minister just referred, to be provided to the people who participated in it at any stage?

MRS GRASSBY: Not until it is tabled under, I understand, the conservation Act.

Education Department - Salaries

DR KINLOCH: Mr Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Industry, Employment and Education. There was an understandable worry expressed during an Estimates Committee meeting last week about the salaries of the senior executives of the Department of Education. That worry was only in passing; it was semi-jocular, and they were not griping or anything. The worry was whether we would be able to retain some of our ablest people, given

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the new levels of salaries of the New South Wales education authority, which were recently advertised - a whole lot of them, not one or two, at \$120,000 per annum for senior posts.

My question is not to do with the salaries, which are properly the concern of a remuneration tribunal, but could the Minister say whether there are any measures under way, and what kinds of measures, to ensure our continued competitiveness in this crucial area of retaining senior staff?

MR WHALAN: I thank Dr Kinloch for the question. I think that one of the many advantages that came out of the Estimates Committee hearings was the opportunity that so many members of the Assembly were given to assess the qualities, the very high qualities, the excellent qualities, of the senior staff of the ACT Administration. I must say that the staff of the Schools Authority - the chief education officer, Dr Willmot, and his three senior executive officers - are people in whom I have the greatest confidence. I have a great deal of admiration for their skills and ability. What came out very clearly was their willingness to cooperate with government last week and their openness before the Estimates Committee. Their grasp of detail was most apparent. I think that we would be very disappointed indeed to lose any of them, because they would leave a gap in quite important organisations.

We at this stage, of course, are limited in our approach to the offering of executive salaries. We know that the New South Wales Government has made a radical departure from the previous policies as they related to senior executive salaries. There is a limit to which one can follow those sorts of movements. We are still subject to certain constraints of the Commonwealth public service in relation to salary levels. While there have been some movements in the Commonwealth in relation to the salaries of statutory office holders, there is still no indication of a move toward changing the employment conditions of permanent heads of departments. I think one of the best bits of insurance that we have for our senior officers is to make their work as rewarding and their work environment as attractive as possible.

Children's Services Legislation

MR BERRY: I now have some information in front of me in relation to a question that was raised by Mr DUBY earlier in question time about the Children's Services Act, and in particular in relation to the four-year-old Canberra girl who was returned to her disabled mother against the wishes of the local welfare authorities. I think the first and most important issue is that the Assembly needs to be assured that the welfare of the child in question has not been compromised. Officers of my department are monitoring

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her situation and are able to invoke the emergency provisions of the legislation should this be necessary.

The issue, as members may be aware from the article, arose when a magistrate dismissed the youth advocate's application for a declaration that the child was in need of care. That dismissal rested on a particular interpretation of the legislation, and the subsequent Supreme Court ruling by Mr Justice Kelly upheld the magistrate's interpretation. As this interpretation is inconsistent with the philosophy of the Act, my department is in the process of advising me on an appropriate amendment. Of course, that is a matter that will find its way into this Assembly in due course.

Cosmetics Manufacturer

MR WHALAN: I would like to provide information in response to a question from Mr Collaery yesterday in relation to the Revlon corporation. I would like to add this information to the material which was given in response to yesterday's question. Mr Collaery asked specifically had there been any discussions with Revlon. In response to the specific question on discussions I have had with Revlon Manufacturing Ltd, I can say that I have attended one meeting with the company, which was held in November last year, before self-government came into existence. That meeting was convened by Senator Bob McMullan and involved Senator McMullan, myself, senior representatives from Revlon in Australia and overseas, Mr Keith Lyon and Mr Roger Smeed from the Office of Industry and Development, and Mr Paul Perkins from ACTEW.

The purpose of that meeting was to impress on Revlon the Government's support for locating its operations in the ACT. There was no explicit discussion of details on any agreement. Attention focused on Canberra as a possible location vis-a-vis other interstate alternative locations which Revlon was considering at that time. In particular, we discussed the ways in which development could occur in the ACT under the leasehold system as an alternative to freehold opportunities in New South Wales, with which Revlon, particularly its overseas representatives, was more familiar. In essence, the meeting was very much a familiarisation and marketing exercise.

I am delighted today to provide details of the agreement with the Revlon Manufacturing group to undertake a major expansion of its Canberra operation. I see the group's expansion and transfer to Canberra as a major strategic success for the Government in its important task of expanding and diversifying private sector employment in the ACT in key industries.

The background is that the company first applied to the Canberra Development Board for the direct purchase of a site in August 1988 to establish a manufacturing, storage

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and distribution plant, consolidating Canberra operations and relocating operations from Rydalmere in Sydney. Formal offers, on blocks 47 and 50 of section 5, Hume, were made to the company in February 1989, and agreement was finalised on 7 July 1989. I am happy to table the lease documents on blocks 47 and 50, section 5, Hume, and I seek leave to table those. The deed of agreement, which was referred to in Mr Collaery's question yesterday, is a commercial-in-confidence document which I am not prepared to table in the Assembly. However, I would be happy for any member of the Assembly to read that document on an in-confidence basis in my office.

In essence, the agreement between the Government and Revlon Manufacturing is that the term of the lease is 99 years. That is a term which applies to 70 per cent of the non-residential urban leases in the ACT. The 30 per cent that are not 99-year leases include the rural leases which make up a substantial proportion. The two blocks of land are provided at an agreed annual rent which is convertible to full purchase by the company. The ACT Government may reimburse up to \$200,000 to the company in respect of approved staff relocation and training, and equipment relocation, costs directly associated with the expansion.

There have been ongoing discussions and negotiations between ACTEW and Revlon over standards of effluent acceptable for transfer into the Canberra sewerage system. ACTEW has made it clear to Revlon that its discharges must conform with the Canberra sewerage and water supply regulations, these being: in relation to biochemical oxygen demand, 600 parts per million maximum; in relation to suspended solids, 600 parts per million maximum; in relation to oil and grease, 200 parts per million maximum; sulphate, 100 parts per million maximum; ammonia, 50 parts per million maximum; and with a pH reading in the range of 6.5 to 10 per cent.

Mr Moore: And fluoride?

MR WHALAN: And no fluoride. Revlon was advised that, to meet these standards, it would probably have to install a pre-treatment plant for its waste at Hume, similar to the plant which it has in its existing factory at Rydalmere in New South Wales. ACTEW also offered some suggested improvements for Revlon's pre-treatment plant and is involved in providing ongoing advice on these requirements. In addition, ACTEW has been involved in discussions with Revlon concerning the supply and installation of electricity equipment.

Revlon's operations will span a total of 6.7 hectares. The nature of Revlon's operations involves bulk toiletry and cosmetic manufacture, the production of packaging, warehousing for a national and international market, and transport facilities. As such, the company requires a large operational area. In addition, Revlon has the capacity for further expansion of its manufacturing operations on site over time.

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The \$10m project, which has commenced construction, will result in a national distribution facility at Hume, integrating Revlon's Canberra operation and selected manufacturing and distribution operations currently in Sydney. Revlon's employment in Canberra will increase to over 100 and, when multiplier effects are added, will increase overall employment in the ACT by some 300 workers.

The main reasons that the company chose to expand its Canberra base were the proven benefits and success of its existing Canberra operations and the undoubted cost advantages of Canberra over Sydney in terms of initial set-up costs and distribution costs.

I see this type of light manufacturing and distribution activity to be one of the most important strategic targets in our industry development policy. It is important not only in attracting new investment but also in providing new, lower-skilled jobs. This is vital in the Government's efforts to diversify our economy and to provide social justice through new job opportunities for all workers.

I believe that attracting Revlon to Canberra is a major coup. Revlon is a company of international repute and an international market leader. It has over 30 years' experience in Australia and 60 years' internationally. The company will distribute cosmetics and toiletries Australia-wide and export into the Pacific-Far East markets.

The ACT will now have a major international producer and distributor in the manufacturing sector, in addition to the Wang computer plant at Bruce. By attracting Revlon we can demonstrate in our interstate marketing, particularly in Sydney, that Canberra is a competitive and highly attractive place in which to invest and establish new business activities.

It shows that this city can present itself professionally and market itself in the national and international business scene. With the Revlon development and other projects, such as the Civic Square redevelopment, Canberra is becoming a significant investment centre. As a further example, this week my department was host to some 60 Japanese businessmen connected with the Sanwa Banking Corporation.

Revlon is a strong demonstration case, and this Government is delighted that it has selected Canberra as its base for both distribution and certain manufacturing activities. I present the following papers:

City Area Leases Act - Leases granted on 7 July 1989 to Revlon Manufacturing Limited (Australian Branch) -

Block 47, Section 5, Division of Hume
Block 50, Section 5, Division of Hume.

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Childers Street Theatre

MS FOLLETT: Mr Speaker, I have a reply here to a question Dr Kinloch asked me on 17 October. Dr Kinloch asked for background on the decision of the ACT Administration to take back management of the Childers Street Theatre from the ANU Arts Centre and to call a public meeting to discuss future management of the venue.

Mr Speaker, my answer is: the Childers Street Theatre is owned by the ACT Government and has been managed by the ANU Arts Centre on an ad hoc, no-rent basis for a number of years. The ACT Arts Bureau has for some time received complaints from the arts community regarding the management and condition of the venue.

On 26 May this year the ACT Cultural Industries Council wrote to me expressing its concern that the theatre ought to be refurbished and made available to a more sympathetic management. I responded to that letter, explaining that the theatre was being withdrawn from the control of the ANU, that there would be consultation over its management and that an amount of \$100,000 had been allocated in the 1989 budget towards the theatre's most pressing refurbishment needs.

The Government has been negotiating with the ANU over its use of the Childers, Hutton and Kingsley Streets sites and regularising the ANU lease boundary. The ANU agreed to relinquish the theatre to the ACT Administration, and the Administration took possession on 30 September. The meeting being called by the ACT Arts Bureau, with the assistance of the ACT Cultural Industries Council, on 19 October is part of the consultative process.

The arts community is being consulted on the best means of managing the venue, and I am aware that a number of groups are interested. A key item to be discussed at the public meeting is the obligation of the new managers to honour all existing bookings and to work cooperatively with other venue managers in Canberra.

I understand that the future use of venues such as that in Childers Street will be examined as part of the work of the Assembly's Select Committee on Cultural Activities and Facilities. It is important that we have available a range of cultural facilities for the performing arts and that these are part of a network. In the past, the Childers Street Theatre was not managed to fulfil its potential in this network.

Mowing Equipment

MRS GRASSBY: Mr Speaker, yesterday Mr Stefaniak asked the following question:

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During the Estimates Committee hearing, your department provided me with an answer in relation to five Hustler mowers being bought from Albury. I asked you a question in relation to why they were being bought when contractors could supply them more cheaply. Your reply was that the saving to the Government by owning a Hustler mower and not paying a contractor was between \$1,500 and \$2,700 per annum. My question to you is: how is that figure calculated? I would like a detailed answer, including all overheads.

My answer to the question is: the Hustler mowers available for hire to City Parks Section range in price from \$28.43 to \$34.12 per hour. They are hired from least expensive to most expensive, depending upon how many are required each year. In most years the average cost of Hustlers hired is between \$29.50 and \$32 per hour. Hustlers owned by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service are charged to operational work at a rate of \$7 per hour. This cost includes maintenance, parts, fuel and depreciation. Each machine is manned by a gardener, whose time is costed at \$19.47 - - -

Mr Humphries: Personed by a gardener.

MRS GRASSBY: I am sorry; I mean a garden person, at \$19.47 per hour. This cost includes overhead costs incurred by Parks and Conservation in employing the gardener. The total charge of owning and operating a government-owned machine is \$26.47 per hour. Assuming that both types of machines operate for 500 hours per year, the savings for a government-owned machine are between \$1,500 and \$2,700 per year.

MULTIFUNCTION POLIS CONCEPT Ministerial Statement and Papers

MR WHALAN (Minister for Industry, Employment and Education), by leave: I would like to raise in the Assembly today the multifunction polis concept, which is a major project in which the ACT Government is actively involved. It addresses precisely the issues which face the ACT in determining its future development and highlights those areas which constitute the ACT's major strengths.

The multifunction polis proposal was first put to the Australian Government by the Japanese Minister for International Trade and Industry in January 1987. It is a proposal for establishing an international centre in Australia where the impact of new technologies on future business opportunities and lifestyles could be explored and implemented.

The feasibility study into the MFP proposal began in late 1988 and will finish in early 1990. Its purpose is to

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determine what elements would comprise an MFP, its form and location, and its economic viability. The study has identified seven technologies and industries which are the key to establishing the MFP, elements of which will almost certainly be "networked" within Australia and abroad. These elements are education, information, health, leisure, media and entertainment, environment and agriculture, construction and design, and advanced transport services.

These international linkages have the potential to significantly increase Australia's international market access. This represents a major "window of opportunity" for the Australian private sector, and this was recognised in the terms of the study, which includes the requirement that the project be, essentially, private sector driven. Currently, over 70 major Australian firms are involved in the study, together with a similar number in Japan. Companies in Europe, the United States and South-East Asia have also expressed strong interest.

The ACT, together with the other Australian States and the Northern Territory, has been actively involved in the project from its inception. ACT involvement has ensured that the interests of the Territory are fully considered in the study. This has included extensive liaison between my department and the NSW Department of State Development on coordinating submissions to the national study team investigating the MFP, particularly on MFP linkages between the ACT and NSW in education and other areas.

The ACT has submitted its own vision of the MFP to the MFP study team and I table that paper for the information of the Assembly. This concept has the endorsement of the ACT Government, as well as support from major educational-research institutions in the ACT, and private sector organisations such as the Canberra Association for Regional Development. It has been developed in close cooperation with the NSW Government.

The ACT concept of the MFP is built around the strong geographic and cultural linkages between the ACT and Sydney, including rapid transport proposals such as the VFT, and hinges on the crucial importance of education and human capital to the high-value, brain based activities anticipated to underpin the MFP.

The ACT has unique attributes in education, research and quality of life as well as in its built and natural environment with ready coastal and alpine access which make it an essential part of the MFP project. It is also the seat of national government and was established as a "neutral forum" for issues involving the States, something very important for this project.

The ACT is also headquarters for a growing number of national organisations and it has state-of-the-art telecommunications and extensive international linkages through government and other networks. The ACT is already

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an "information and communications city" and as close to being an MFP as anywhere in the world. The MFP concept draws on these strengths in the ACT, particularly education and research, and on those of Sydney in services, finance, industry and commerce, entertainment, as well as the broad range of lifestyle options available in the Sydney-Canberra corridor, to attract the high calibre MFP participants necessary. Telecommunication and rapid transport links to remote MFP elements, both interstate and international, are an integral part of the ACT concept.

The MFP study is of immense importance. For the ACT and Australia, it is about identifying future international trends and opportunities and the means to take advantage of them. The areas in which the ACT is strong - "brain-based" and intellectual value-added activities - are internationally recognised as the essential resources of the industries of the future. The MFP provides the ACT with an unparalleled opportunity to link into world demand for these services.

To enable the private sector to develop the opportunities presented by the ACT Vision, the Office of Industry and Development in collaboration with CARD will be organising shortly a seminar on the MFP. There is already great interest in this project across Australia as well as in the ACT and this interest is growing. I include in this some members of the Assembly who have approached me to ensure that the ACT is participating in this project. I commend the ACT Vision to the members of the Assembly and I would urge each member to support our vision of the MFP. I present the following papers:

Multifunction Polis Concept -
Canberra - A Multifunction Polis Site - The ACT Vision.
Ministerial statement, 18 October 1989.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Kaine**) adjourned.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE Alteration of Reporting Date

MR JENSEN (3.25): I move:

That paragraph 4 of the resolution appointing an Estimates Committee be amended by omitting "19 October 1989" and substituting "2 November 1989".

Mr Speaker, in moving this motion on behalf of the Estimates Committee I am seeking an extension of the reporting date to 2 November 1989. As members are aware,

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the committee has gone through a full week of public hearings at which nearly 1,000 pages of evidence were taken, together with hundreds of pages of additional information sought by members during the hearings.

It is obvious that the committee could not, in the time given by the Assembly, undertake the extensive examination required in order to present to the Assembly a worthwhile report. Given the time and effort that members, Ministers and public servants - particularly those on the committee staff - have devoted to this historic first Estimates Committee, I am sure that members will support this motion.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

WATER SUPPLY (CHEMICAL TREATMENT) BILL 1989

Debate resumed.

MR COLLAERY (3.26): I think the speakers who have preceded me have adequately indicated the chastened circumstances in which the Assembly finds itself on this subject and, to a greater or lesser extent, all of the Assembly. I have indicated privately to the Chief Minister that one very good process that has been accelerated out of this problem has been the Chief Minister's proposal for there to be a Bills scrutiny committee, which is on the notice paper today. Also it is the view of the Rally that the Chief Minister should appoint as soon as possible a solicitor-general to aid her in the, as it were, politico-legal aspects of her legislative program. That, of course, would be an aid to the rest of the Assembly as well because it would ensure that the Chief Minister in particular was aware, in the case of a private member's Bill, of any aspects that were not drawn out in the explanatory memorandum. As we know, that is the responsibility of the private member bringing the Bill. So, some good has come out of this.

I do want to address a couple of points. I agree for once with Deputy Chief Minister Whalan, that we have suffered out of this, but I do say that it is not merely the workings of this side of the house that have brought that about. The Hansard debates on 27 September indicate that the Government either gave up or simply had no contribution to make at the detail stage. There are only 10 or 11 lines from the Deputy Chief Minister who was speaking first and last in the detail stage. The Hansard tapes upstairs make fascinating listening and I invite all members to listen to the comments of the Chief Minister on the Hansard tape at the juncture when the Deputy Speaker moved clause 3 - that is the substantive part of the Bill - at the detail stage. I believe that the Chief Minister herself was surprised that we had gone rushing through the detail stage so quickly. Her comments on the tape bear that out.

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The question of consultation is one that the Rally has to face up to because we are a party born out of that ethos. I think that adequate recognitions have been made in other places as to the misfortune that befell the Rally in this exercise, in that really we fell prey to our own keenness to have our enunciated policy - a long-established policy that was enunciated officially on 31 January 1989 and was the subject of a press release thereafter - put into effect, pursuant to the mandate we believed we had received. But we underestimated the reaction of the community. When I say "reaction of the community" I am very warmed to note, as probably other members of the Assembly are, that the community, in fact, has not walked away from this Assembly - half the community, or perhaps even more; the silent majority may well support this - the problems being in the process rather than in the substance of this Bill.

I specifically want to put on record refutation of the claims in the national press that some fly-by-night group of knee-jerk decision makers came to a sudden decision. We all knew in this Assembly that fluoride was on the agenda, it was going to come on sooner or later, and we knew from 23 August up until 27 September when the act was done that the Bill was on the floor. So we all bear some responsibility for that - but not to shake that responsibility.

A very strong reason why the Assembly tends, in the cut and thrust of debate, to move Bills very quickly into law is that we do not have second reading speeches. We do not get the chance to reconsider which our colleagues on the other hill get - they do not get the advantage of public reaction - and, of course, we have paid the penalty. The Rally particularly has paid the penalty in that regard, but we are not going to resile from our position on the substantive issue. We do not support this Bill simply because we are convinced that freedom of choice is the ultimate ethic in this issue and two breaches should not compound the problem.

During the fuss afterwards the Chief Minister issued a press release deploring the criticism of the legislative draftsman by the opposition parties. I want to put on record that I was present with the draftsman and my colleagues Mr Kaine, Mr Duby and Mr Prowse, when both Mr Kaine and I made it clear to the draftsman that we accepted that he had carried out to the letter, as we understood it, the instructions of the mover of the Bill, Mr Prowse. At no time did I ever criticise the parliamentary draftsman and I have no recollection of hearing Mr Kaine or any member of his party make any similar criticism. I think that that press release by the Minister was a fairly cheap shot at us when we were already suffering on that issue.

On the subject of cheap shots, I think that we have got to recognise that the Labor Party had our policies during the negotiating stage early in May and their lack of a policy

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on fluoride was not drawn to our attention. In fact I was informed by the Chief Minister that she found very little to disagree with in our policies. I do not wish to score points off that. I simply observe the fact that there were no warning bells ringing from the Labor Party on this issue, just some confusion on the question of the type of consultation we should go into. The Rally, of course, adopted the idea that it should be removed first and then be subjected to consultation.

Finally, on the subject of consultation, we have seen daylight saving brought in without consultation with the Queanbeyan residents; we have seen a tax imposed on X-rated videos - a matter of wide public interest - without consultation; and we have seen the forcible removal of teachers who have served more than 14 years, dedicated teachers across the system in the ACT. More than 77 teachers are affected by that move, 30 of whom attended a protest meeting, four of whom saw Dr Willmot, but no action was taken to directly consult with them at a political level. So we all fall prey to lack of consultation. It was just too bad that fluoride found itself listed, with the able assistance of the Deputy Chief Minister, on a day that meant that we rushed into moving it to law.

Now I refer to a speech by the Chief Minister on 27 September. The Chief Minister said:

As I said before, I do not agree with the way in which fluoride was introduced to the water supply in the first place. Nobody would. It was done, in my view, without an adequate, open and consistent assessment of all of the issues at the time.

I draw to the attention of the Chief Minister the current state of the law. In the Electricity and Water Act 1988, section 62 states that where the Minister responsible - who of course is Mrs Grassby, but ultimately she is responsible to the Chief Minister - has reasonable grounds for believing that the supply of water is, or is about to be, so affected that there is, or is likely to be, a danger to public health, the Minister may, by notice published in the Gazette, declare that an emergency exists in relation to the supply of water.

I did inform the Chief Minister on Friday that she should get further legal advice on this issue. The fact is that ACTEW is obliged as one of its functions to ensure, as in section 6 of its empowerments, to "research, evaluate and participate in research activities with respect to matters arising out of or incidental to its functions". Other enunciated functions are to participate in setting the enforcement standards relating to water.

The costs of the experts that my colleague Dr Kinloch referred to - or was it my colleague Mr Moore - as aiding the current Social Policy Committee's review should not, in

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my view, come out of the Assembly vote. Clearly, the onus is on ACTEW to fund that research and to prepare the relevant research data. Given the fact that fluoride was on the agenda for months in this Assembly, that research data should have been prepared and presented by Minister Grassby. It is no excuse to blame fledgling political parties for their alleged ineptness.

When you have government you are obliged to act under the laws. You have an Act of parliament, the Federal Parliament originally, which set out very clearly the functions of ACTEW. ACTEW knew well that fluoride was an issue because very early in self-government, in the first few weeks, I attended a briefing with Mr Prowse and with the chairman of ACTEW, Mr McGrath, where we discussed fluoride. Whilst I am sure Mr McGrath requires more concrete direction, the fact is that there is a high level of failure on the part - and I say this with regret - of the relevant Minister responsible. You cannot just sit back and allow - if your proposition is correct - a bunch of people you criticise to take fluoride out. You should have been prepared with cogent arguments; you should have been there ready, pursuant to your legal obligations, to rectify and process and evaluate the claims being made, particularly those made by Mr Prowse and Mr Stevenson.

Mr Stevenson: They are not here, Bernard.

MR COLLAERY: Yes, I note for the record that, of course, the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister responsible for the matters I am referring to are not present in the Assembly.

Mr Wood: Well, if you are not here at any time, I will indicate that, too.

MR COLLAERY: Clearly, the leader of the Rally was going to stand up here and either do a mea culpa or transfer the blame. So, either way, I would have been there to see it, Mr Wood. Obviously, it is not an interesting debate and most of - - -

Mr Prowse: This is supposed to be a matter of urgency, too.

MR COLLAERY: That, of course, typifies the problems in the Assembly at the moment. It is a fact that laws can be created in a few minutes in this Assembly. We do not have second reading speeches and, as I said to the Chief Minister, she must appoint a solicitor-general at an early date. The onus should not lie particularly upon the legally qualified and practising members of this Assembly. That is not the appropriate thing. It puts considerable strain on us. We have already seen what happened this week with the necessity to close the proceedings early yesterday simply because we had a mass of questions on the Bills program. I am sure that will get better. I applaud the Chief Minister's initiatives to get a Bills committee going.

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Finally, the fluoride issue was very successfully exploited by those who want to bring down our new party. I assure the Assembly that they will not succeed. The Rally stands firm on this issue, as it does on every other issue, and the fact that we squirm publicly sometimes is just a symptom of the evolution of government in this Territory.

MR WOOD (3.40): One of the most frequent introductions to a speech in any parliament goes something like this: "Mr Speaker, I was not going to speak in this debate" - and I was not.

Mr Kaine: Well said, Bill. Sit down.

MR WOOD: All right. Indeed, for three weeks since this was last debated, I have not referred publicly to the issue of fluoride. Let me be quite precise. I think, since the day of that last debate or, to be extra careful, at least the day after that, I have said nothing about the issue on the basis that, as a member of that committee, it was incumbent upon me to remove preconceived ideas from my mind and to refrain from a debate. So I am not going to enter into the debate today on issues. I am only going to talk about objectivity, since that matter has been raised today.

It is interesting for me, perhaps not for you, but for many years I have been interested in language and its use and abuse. It probably stems from my days when I did some philosophical study. At that time the study of language was considered highly important, and for a couple of years I laboured away at that and it did create in me quite a considerable interest in the subject. I have an interest in the use of language, the use of words, the meaning of words, the understanding of words and whether what I say is what you understand or vice versa. Quite a deal of discussion on language is always of interest to me.

That has led to a further interest, a long-standing one, in the concept of that word "objectivity" and it is interesting that it has arisen today. For something like 38 years I have been a member of the Australian Labor Party. I joined from a very young age, and that brings, as I am sure many of you now know, some criticism. On many occasions I have been told, "How can I listen to you? What notice can I take of you? You are biased". That is a frequent comment, or, "You are politically prejudiced", or, "You have got preconceived ideas". Such comments come to me often and it hurts, I might say, because I have often focused on the matter of objectivity and for all my political partisanship I have worked very hard over the years to retain objectivity. It is not always easy, of course, and especially so when you are in the political realm.

I intend to do all I can to see that my objectivity is carried through into this inquiry. This was queried today, and I debated earlier in a radio broadcast the question

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that objectivity is difficult to attain. For three weeks I have said nothing and I do not intend to. The issue was quite correctly and accurately raised in the Canberra Times today when a report said:

Labor MLA Bill Wood (who voted to retain fluoride) has expressed concerns about the likelihood of an objective inquiry.

I certainly did say that but I said it three weeks ago.

Mr Prowse: Shame!

MR WOOD: Mr Prowse, you say "Shame", but you were nevertheless quite anxious to join our committee for the time of that deliberation, so let us be objective about this. That report in the Canberra Times is quite accurate but it was a statement of mine three weeks ago. Based on that report, today I was contacted by Pru Goward and asked to appear on her program to discuss the objectivity of the committee. I went there and I set out to be very circumspect and to be most careful in all that I said. I have read the transcript, and indeed I was careful.

I am quite satisfied with what I said. It was not in any way reflecting on my committee members and it was not in any way commenting on our ability to be objective, other than to say that it is hard to be objective and it is more difficult when we are passionately interested in some things. So I have no worry at all with what I said today. Let us hope that the committee can be objective.

Our committee has two challenges: firstly, to examine a very difficult and complex issue and, secondly, to do so thoroughly and honestly and objectively. I believe that the committee can do that, and do it in such a way that we will have as much confidence in the report that we will ultimately bring down as we have in the report on the ageing that we will table tomorrow.

MR PROWSE (3.45): It has been disheartening to see that members of the Government departed during this debate. This is supposed to be one of the most thrilling debates we have had. The reason is that it is very urgent and we still have the Deputy Chief Minister missing. If it is so urgent and of such public importance, why are other things more pressing?

I come back to the situation with Mr Kaine. Labor Party members are hysterical in their applause for what you are doing. May I suggest that this action by your party may even cost a Liberal Federal seat because you are going to please no-one. You started off by taking the position that you are fair-minded and you allowed a conscience vote. Because a little bit of heat was turned on you, you have now backed away, and that is unfortunate because we are talking about confidence motions. Who in their right mind would look at this leadership that you are presenting with

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confidence? You are not doing the party justice, and it is a sad day to see a reneging - in this circumstance, due to pressure.

Surely you have seen the results of the public opinion poll. Fifty per cent of the people out there were supportive of your move; in fact, more so, because you are the only party leader who allowed a conscience vote. You were applauded for that action, and now what has happened? You are pulling your party down because you are retracting that situation - - -

Mr Kaine: I will be applauded again tomorrow for being sensible.

MR PROWSE: You will be by the Labor press, I can assure you, because they are applauding your actions. It is a wonderful statement, "You have taken it away". You have taken the difficult duty that they had to perform and that is wonderful. They are applauding you high and low in this community. The Labor Party and the Chief Minister think you are wonderful, and it is a sad day.

I come back to the Chief Minister's statement when she made comments that it was one-sided information that was presented to this Assembly during the period of non-consultation. I cannot understand the logic of that statement. One minute she tells us we have one-sided consultation and the next she says there was none. The point is that debate was able to be carried out if the Government so desired, and that is the problem. Government members did not so desire because they did not understand the importance of this Bill. They thought it was something they could quickly rally around with numbers and push aside. That is not the fact. They misjudged the issue.

I will make another statement, too. The Chief Minister asked why we went ahead when we knew that an NHMRC investigation into Dr Diesendorf's report was imminent. We did not know that the NHMRC was going to investigate Diesendorf's report. In fact it may not have done so, had it not been for the vote of this Assembly. And there is the truth of the matter. So to say that we were hasty in pre-empting the results of the NHMRC report is absolute rubbish. No-one knew. They did not make this common knowledge that they were going to investigate the report.

I look to Mr Humphries' statement. He is telling us that we cannot upset the status quo. That is exactly what this Bill is going to do. You cannot go back in time. It is a situation of status quo of two weeks. There is no logic in the statement. As a member trained in the law, you well know that under the law you are now perpetrating fluoridation of the public in this community, without consultation and against the will of a number of them. So on this Assembly will fall the legal responsibility for any action taken against this house by people who do not want to be fluoridated.

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So there you have it. We were courageous. We were courageous the other day. A decision was taken - a courageous decision, because we had the situation where, as I have said before, it is incumbent on a new government to overturn the incorrect decisions taken by a previous government as quickly as practicable. We did that, and now you are going to pieces. You can no longer stand up and face this community with pride.

I go to Dr Kinloch's statements. He mentioned dental health, general health, pollution and so on; he covered a broad range of aspects. But of course we have dental health. No-one is saying that fluoride does not affect teeth or dental caries. Of course it does. It is a very reactive antibacterial agent. There are a number of them. We could use arsenic. We could use a number of others. Of course they affect the bacteria in the mouth and therefore will have an effect on dental caries. No-one denies that. However, do we need to drink it? The point is, we can have it in the toothpaste, and therein lies the tale.

I will put to you the pollution aspect. Here is the Labor Government making statements on how it is for the green vote. I measured the pollution coming from the tailings - the outflow from the lower Molonglo water treatment plant - the day before the fluoride was switched off. I sent that water to a Melbourne firm for analysis and, would you believe, the fluoride in the water discharging from the lower Molonglo system is one part per million? If you had looked at the flow on that day, as I did, you would have found the natural flow in the Murrumbidgee was about equivalent to the water flow coming out from our plant, one part per million. Can you tell me what that does to the fish, the wildlife, et cetera, downstream? It is a cumulative toxin. It goes into the mud. It binds with the mud, et cetera. So there is the situation where we are now responsible for pollution. We could blame the Feds before. For 25 years we could blame others. But now, if this goes ahead, we, the Assembly, will take the blame.

Social justice is another issue. Will this Assembly, will Mr Kaine, recommend to the Government to supply to those members of our community who do not want fluoride in their water non-fluoridated water or the means to remove fluoride from the water? Can he now offer this to the 50 per cent or more of the community who do not want fluoride in the water? Where is your offer to them? This is social justice. The poor and disadvantaged cannot afford to purchase purifiers for themselves. Dr Kinloch also made a statement on the safe level of fluoride, reducing it to half, et cetera. There is no safe level for a cumulative toxin. I do not care whether it is 0.00001 parts per million; it is cumulative, and therefore there is no safe level.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Mr Prowse, would you resume your seat, please, for a moment. There is a little

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too much noise in relation to the debate going on. There is one speaker on his feet. Mr Wood and Mrs Grassby, I would appreciate it if you would allow Mr Prowse to continue untroubled.

MR PROWSE: Dr Kinloch has referred to the difficult technical matters associated with fluoridation. That is hype. The technicalities do not need to be understood. Are you telling me that the Minister for Urban Services has to know how to drive a bulldozer? Do you tell me that the Minister for Health has to be able to carry out brain surgery? The point is that there is no difficulty in understanding freedom of choice. There is no difficulty in understanding that some people react adversely to all sorts of substances, and fluoride is one of them. There is no difficulty in that. You do not need to consult experts on those issues. They are obvious. You have to stand up as leaders in this community and take decisions. That is what this is all about. It is about leadership.

Unfortunately, I see across the floor from me at the moment a group of people who are not prepared to take decisions. They have to send everything to a committee in case somebody blames them for taking a decision that they do not like. And, of course, we have seen the Liberal leader now give in to this pressure. He looked good for a while but, as soon as the pressure was applied, he dropped the ball. Minister Grassby made statements that a committee of inquiry should be held and that those voting as they did the other day were opposed to this committee of inquiry. That is not so. We have always said that a committee of inquiry needs to be set up.

We have also said that a referendum to judge the people's desires on the issue needs to be held. So anybody who stands on the floor of this chamber and says that we did not welcome a committee obviously was not listening. Maybe they were not here on that day either.

Mr DUBY has made the statement that the NHMRC was involved in this issue. It is an august body. The members are specialists. There are some wonderful, clever, scientific brains within that body. However, I challenge the dental lobby because they are pro-fluoridists. They find it very difficult to be objective because they have been pushing the pro-fluoride articles and ideas for 25 years. Now, if Mr Wood thinks he has difficulty, how much difficulty do you think they have in being objective?

I just might make another comment too. Mr DUBY was putting the notion that it was a six months' delay. It is an eight months' delay that has been asked for. I also make an observation on the cost of fluoride tablets. Minister BERRY made a statement to this house on the cost of fluoride tablets. There was a gross exaggeration in that statement that he made. I have contacted the Albert Shire Council and the City Council of the Gold Coast of Queensland where the population tallies 260,000. They give

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free fluoride tablets to the population in that area, and the cost per annum is \$3,500 - a little different from the \$2.5m that was suggested by the Minister. What an exaggeration!

Mr Berry: What was the figure?

MR PROWSE: Three and a half thousand dollars, and that information came directly from the clerks of those councils involved.

I will tackle Mr Stefaniak next. No-one is saying that fluoride does not affect teeth. I did not say that; no-one has said it. There is proof that it affects teeth. What we are saying is: are the side effects worse? That is the question. He mentioned Wick in Scotland - a very interesting one. That is part of the pro-fluoride lobby information. Unfortunately, it is incorrect. The Wick statement was initiated by one dentist three years earlier than this statement from the **Glasgow Herald** of 20 August 1988. I would like to table this. It declared that a nationally coordinated exercise involving all of Scotland's 15 health boards - I repeat, not one dentist but all of Scotland's 15 health boards - was welcomed by the Scottish Health Minister, Mr Michael Forsyth. It states:

The Minister said that in 1983 only 24% of five year olds across the whole of Scotland had no cavities or fillings.

Further in this article it says that it improved by 20 per cent in 1987; it improved to 44 per cent. I will wait for Mr Duby to finish so that I can get this message to the Minister for Health because he is not open to these ideas normally.

Mr Duby: I am seeking further information.

MR PROWSE: Thank you, Mr Duby. So here we have a statement by the Minister for Health in Scotland that there was an improvement of 20 per cent in 1987 over the 1983 figures, which gave 44 per cent of five-year-olds across Scotland as having no cavities or fillings. That is interesting because fluoride was switched off in Scotland in 1979. That statement can be challenged, I suggest, because it is not written in the dental journal, but are we saying that we cannot rely on any information other than that provided by the dentists? There is the statement, and I put it to Mr Stefaniak to please check his facts. If you are going to enter this debate, please check your facts; otherwise you will make a fool of yourself.

The next thing I would like to table is a letter from Abbott Laboratories, Scientific Divisions, North Chicago, Illinois, dated 18 June 1963. We have been challenged in that, because this is from 1963, obviously it is outdated. Fluoride has not changed; neither have the people. This is current information. I would like to table this letter from Abbott Laboratories.

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MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, Mr Prowse but are you seeking leave to have those two documents tabled?

MR PROWSE: I am.

Leave granted.

MR PROWSE: (Extension of time granted) I would also like to table the original report that has been quoted in the Abbott Laboratories letter.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you seeking leave to table that as well, Mr Prowse?

MR PROWSE: Yes, I seek leave.

Leave granted.

MR PROWSE: This report is from volume 16, No. 4 of the Journal of Dental Medicine. Note that it is from the Journal of Dental Medicine. Here we have a document that even the pro-fluoridists acclaim as being the epitome of scientific research and therefore not to be challenged. I would agree with that. It is from the Journal of Dental Medicine, October 1961, and the name of the report is "Prenatal and Postnatal Ingestion of Fluorides - Fourteen Years of Investigation - Final Report" by Reuben Feltman, DDS, and George Kosel, BS, MS.

I will not read the whole of it, but this is a pro-fluoride report. It supports the statement that fluoride crosses the placental barrier; they looked at embryos; they did a very intensive research over 14 years. Let me read to you one of the statements in this:

One per cent of our cases reacted adversely to the fluoride.

I repeat that one per cent of the cases reacted adversely to fluoride. It continues:

By the use of placebos, it was definitely established that the fluoride and not the binder was the causative agent.

I repeat that by the use of placebos it was established that fluoride, not the binder, was the causative agent. Further, it states:

These reactions, occurring in gravid women and in children of all ages in the study group affected the dermatologic, gastro-intestinal and neurological systems. Eczema, atopic dermatitis, urticaria, epigastric distress, emesis, and headache have all occurred with the use of fluoride and disappeared upon the use of placebo tablets, only to recur when the fluoride tablet

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was, unknowingly to the patient, given again. When adverse reactions occur, the therapy can be readily discontinued and the patient or parent advised of the fact that sensitivity exists and the element is to be avoided as much as possible.

Here we have the proof for which people have been looking - it has been proved by a dental research group over 14 years - that fluoride affects people, and that is what I come back to again and again. For goodness sake, please understand that it affects teeth but that it also affects people. People have reported to me with serious side effects. I will not give the full names of these people. A Miss Fran, I will call her, has swollen glands. Every time she drinks fluoridated water the glands in the throat swell, but when she goes on to purified water the glands return to normal. Jennifer, who came from Canada to this area, had RSI which was alleviated by drinking fluoride-free water. We cannot say that all RSI cases are caused by fluoride, but some people react in this manner.

I have the names of three people here who have fluorosis. A particular lady has a three-year-old whose teeth break off if she just bumps them because they have been affected by fluorosis. That is fluoride poisoning of this child. An 80-year-old was virtually housebound because of dizziness and arthritic pain until he started to drink non-fluoridated water. Diarrhoea and other massive effects on the general health of people have been reported. These people would offer their bodies for research to be carried out by our medical profession. I suggest, again, that if the Minister for Health is at all interested in this he might ask for these people to present to his hospital staff and they can do some tests. Let us prove this; let us do it properly.

Mr Stevenson has had a work on fluoride published, but the fact that he had written it was met by derision. I am amazed at the narrow-minded outlook of some of the people in this Assembly. Of all the pro-fluoridationists to whom you have spoken around this town, have any had a report published? Once a report is published it is open to public scrutiny and legal challenge if it is incorrect. Mr Stevenson's document has not been challenged legally. Therefore I put it to you that derision is the last thing that should have been levelled at him.

Minister Berry claimed that there is a hidden agenda. Hidden agenda by whom, I would ask. The committee is welcome; the investigation into this aspect is welcome. As well as toxicity and civil liberties, he brought in iodine, chlorine and Epsom salts, I think. He brought in everything that he could think of because he had little to say on fluoride. Red herrings! They had nothing to do with the issue. We know lower socioeconomic groups are going to be affected. They have to put up with the inconvenience of ill health as a result of fluoridation of the water, particularly if they cannot afford to buy purifiers.

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Then I come to Mr Whalan, who finds this not to his liking. He does not want to know about fluoride; it is not in his portfolio, I suggest. With bluff and bravado he presented newspaper cuttings again. It demeans his considerable talent every time he does this. It has been noticed that whenever he cannot put forward his own argument, because he is unsure of himself, he pulls out the paper reports. If that is the level of debate to which this Assembly sinks, I am appalled. Surely to goodness, he can come up with an original thought or read some literature on the subject. If not, for goodness sake, he should sit down. There is the challenge to him. Referring to paper cuttings at all times when he is in doubt and just bluffing his way through, really, as I said before, demeans his considerable talent.

The damage done to this Assembly was not done by those who stood up and fought for an issue. Courage can never be the reason for derision. It certainly can be when we have people number counting and bringing in their Federal colleagues, and I will put that again: the Labor Party members have brought in their Federal colleagues; they have a petition being pushed around town by a person with no, or little, knowledge on the fluoride issue. It is a political ploy. If there is any derision to be levelled at this house it was pulled on by Mr Whalan and his group of supporters.

To say that consultation was denied to Queanbeyan people is rubbish. That was not the case. We had a number of sessions with those people. I called those sessions, and the people of Queanbeyan had the right to be informed by their mayor, who attended those hearings. The people who did not call for the consultation are the members of the Labor Government. It was their duty to do that, but they have shirked it. Now they are ashamed of it, and they are trying to put it onto others.

MR BERRY (Minister for Community Services and Health): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented, Mr Berry?

MR BERRY: Yes, sir, on three counts. The first one was in relation to an issue that was raised about the Albert Shire Council and costs. Mr Prowse suggested that I committed a gross exaggeration in my costing of the provision of an alternative dosage of fluoride. As members who have been involved in any discussion with me on the issue will recall, the \$2.5m which was quoted was calculated to dose the entire 270,000 people in the ACT - - -

Mr Stevenson: Atrocious statement!

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MR BERRY: Whether you like the calculation or not, that is how it was made. You may not like it, but that is the way it was made. They were being dosed with fluoride for a cost of \$150,000. The \$3,500 quoted in this case by the Albert Shire Council suggests the lack of success that that type of application of fluoride has in relation to the application of the substance - - -

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Mr Berry, I think you are now debating the issue and taking it further.

MR BERRY: With the deepest respect, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I am pointing out the areas in which I have been misrepresented, and I think it most appropriate that I fill you in, in relation to all of the facts, so that all of the members here are fully aware of the misrepresentation which has occurred, at least as I allege.

The second point is that it was suggested that I was not open to ideas. I heard what Mr Prowse said about the Health Minister in Scotland. I suggest, as I have always done, that the most appropriate course for this sort of information is for it to be placed before the committee which has been established. That has been my position throughout this entire issue, so that there can be wide publicity and consultation and, of course, access by all people in the ACT to the committee.

The third count was in relation to my lack of interest in the issue of some people who are alleged to have some sort of illness effected by fluoride. As I always will be, I am interested in anybody who is ill in the Territory, particularly where that illness arises from the sorts of allegations which are made in relation to fluoride. I must say to Mr Prowse that he can certainly invite any of those people of whom he is aware and who he alleges are suffering from some sort of fluoride poisoning to present at any of the public hospitals and seek a service in relation to the illness that they claim they have, because they will certainly receive an appropriate service from the hospital system in the ACT.

MR KAINE (Leader of the Opposition) (4.13), in reply: I do not intend to take up too much more time of the house, but there are one or two things that have emerged over the last three or four hours of debate that I think are worthy of comment before we close the debate. I would say from the outset that I do not think that those last three or four hours of debate have added one iota of valuable comment.

The anti-fluoride case has again been passionately put, and in great detail, but we have already been through that, and no doubt the committee will go through it again over a long period. Despite the heat of the claim that the public view should prevail - and that comes from the anti-fluoride people - it is quite obvious that that is not what they mean. They do not want the public view to prevail; they want their view to prevail and, quite clearly, without any public debate.

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Mr Prowse: Rubbish!

MR Kaine: Mr Prowse just said that he does not want any community consultation; he wants a decision; he wants a decision now.

Mr Prowse: That was to take it out, not to put it back in.

MR Kaine: Yes, exactly. As long as the decision is in your favour you want the decision now, but if the final decision is not going to be in your favour you do not want the community consulted because it might express a contrary view.

Mr Prowse: On a point of order - - -

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Kaine, would you resume your seat.

Mr Prowse: I claim to have been misrepresented in that statement.

Mr Kaine: Can he present that after the debate is over, Mr Speaker?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand, Mr Prowse, that you can address this matter after Mr Kaine has finished speaking.

Mr Prowse: Is there one rule for Ministers and another for other members of the Assembly? We have already had a point of order.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Prowse, would you resume your seat. Mr Kaine, please continue.

MR Kaine: I repeat, Mr Speaker, that what the anti-fluoride people want is a decision now, only because they are afraid that if we go into the lengthy community consultation process that we are now proposing the decision may well run against them because the community may disagree with them.

Mr Stevenson: Call a referendum.

MR Kaine: Now we want a referendum. We do not want a decision now; now we want a referendum. That was the other point that I was going to make, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. We want a referendum on some issues; we do not want the Assembly or the Government taking decisions. But on this issue we do not want a referendum; we do not want the community input; we want to take the decision now. So I submit that we should seriously think about that and ask ourselves why it is that the anti-fluoride group does not want this community consultation process for which this Bill will provide. I ask myself the question, and I would like to know the answer. The two polls that have been

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taken - one by the Canberra Times and one by a television channel - in the last few days showed that the community is fairly evenly divided on this question.

Mr Stevenson: What about the 56 per cent in the Chronicle?

MR KAINE: What about the 55 per cent that came out of the Channel 10 poll the other night? It all depends on whom you want to quote. But the fact is that the numbers are around 50 per cent, give or take a bit. Fifty per cent of people in the main seem to want fluoride; 50 per cent do not. I was criticised a little while ago by Mr Prowse, who was saying that I would get no applause for taking what I believe to be a reasonable view, but he is dead wrong because 50 per cent of the population will applaud this step. On top of that, there will be an increasing percentage of people who see the sense in being reasonable instead of unreasonable. So I would submit, Mr Prowse, that you are dead wrong. I will probably get about an 85 per cent popularity rating tomorrow, and that will be the reciprocal of yours.

Mrs Grassby: Trevor, you couldn't be any more popular.

MR KAINE: No, I know, and it will be the reciprocal of Mr Prowse's; that is the point that I wanted to make. There were some suggestions during the debate that this was a political issue. The facts of the matter simply disprove that assertion. If I, as the leader of the Liberals, had wanted to turn this into a political issue, I would have stuck with the non-fluoriders, had a majority in this house and could probably be taking government tomorrow. So much for your accusation of making political gain out of it! The other thing that I could have done, if I had really wanted to use political clout, if that is what you are on about, was join with the Labor Party and support the repeal Bill, and the issue would have been dead. I did neither of those things.

Mr Stevenson: Not dead. It would have been repealed, granted.

MR KAINE: Yes, and your issue would have been dead because your Bill would have been out the door. I did neither of those things. I am taking a course that allows you to present your case over a long period, produce your technical evidence, medical evidence, and community view and, if it supports you, your case is won. Yet you sit there and accuse me of trying to make some political gain - absolutely absurd, and I throw your words back at you to demonstrate that that is true.

They are not content with taking the political line. We then get down to personalities. Why we cannot have a debate on the floor of this house without getting down to a question of personalities, why we do not address the issues, is beyond me. Mr Prowse raised the question of courage. Courage is a very worthwhile attribute. Mr

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Prowse is an ex-military man, as I am, and there are other people in this chamber who are ex-military people. We understand the value of courage, but mindless courage is discouraged in the military and it is discouraged everywhere else. By all means be courageous, but do not enter into mindless courage. It gets you nowhere, except maybe it gets your head shot off. I submit that we have to have courage, but we have to allow a bit of reason to prevail on that.

I have listened to the argument over a long period and I have listened to it again today, but, as of today, as an individual I am quite satisfied that there is ample evidence to show that fluoride has beneficial effects on dental health; I am unconvinced by the evidence that suggests that fluoride has adverse effects on health. It may be dead right but, as of today, I am unconvinced that that is the case. I would like to be convinced. I would like to know that the allegations that are being made are correct. I would like to be able to say in a few months that Mr Prowse and Mr Stevenson were absolutely right when they made these assertions about the deleterious effects of fluoride on the human body. I am prepared to have the evidence presented; I am prepared to study that evidence after it has been presented, and if the weight of opinion is in favour of taking fluoride out of the water in Canberra I will accept that view. But I will not accept without debate, study, research and community input that I should accept some view put forward by any particular side of the argument. I do not and will not accept it.

I submit that Dr Kinloch very succinctly summarised the issues in this debate. I think everybody should have listened very carefully while Dr Kinloch was speaking because he put his finger right on the things that need to be looked at. I submit we should now let the committee members get on with the job; let them go away and examine it; let them come back with an objective report, and I have no doubt whatsoever that they will. There is no question in my mind whatsoever about the personal integrity of any of the members of that committee. They will do the job just as they have done it in relation to other matters on which they have undertaken studies, just as all of the members of this Assembly, other than the four Ministers, do when they sit on committees.

The four Ministers do not sit on committees, but the rest of us do. To suggest that any of us goes about that business in a biased and subjective way is quite wrong. The members of this committee are no different from the rest of us. I submit: let us get on with it; put the Bill into effect; get on with the study; and let not only the community but also the 17 members of this Assembly be satisfied that we have done the right thing.

Question put:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

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The Assembly voted -

AYES, 9

Mr Berry
Ms Follett
Mrs Grassby
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Mrs Nolan
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whalan
Mr Wood

NOES, 8

Mr Collaery
Mr Duby
Mr Jensen
Dr Kinloch
Ms Maher
Mr Moore
Mr Prowse
Mr Stevenson

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail Stage

Clauses 1 and 2, by leave, taken together, and agreed to.

Clause 3 (Suspension of operation of part VIIIA of Principal Act)

MR STEVENSON (4.25): I move:

Page 1, line 11, omit "the commencement of this Act", substitute "11 November 1989".

What this would do if the Bill passes is hold back the commencement for approximately three weeks. I request this because I have challenged the president of the Australian Medical Association, ACT branch, Dr John Donovan, to a public debate. That debate is scheduled to occur on the evening of Friday, 27 October, in the Albert Hall. Dr Donovan has to confirm that yet; the hall is booked. At that time the public will be able to see presumably Dr Donovan present for the Medical Association the pro-fluoride scientific case, and I will present the other side of the scientific case.

It is interesting that that will be a rare debate because debates are usually not allowed by the ADA, the AMA and the NHMRC. I give you an example. Australia's senior scientific conference is the ANZAAS conference which is held each year. That is the peak group. In 1985 in Melbourne one of the subjects discussed at that conference was fluoridation. Some months before that time people on both sides of the debate - scientific members of the community, dentists and doctors - were contacted to have three people appear on each side of that debate, months before.

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There was not one doctor in Australia, not one dentist in Australia, not one scientist in Australia who was prepared to debate the pro-fluoridation side - not one. It is an interesting question as to why were they not prepared to be there in Australia's senior scientific debate. Gary Humphries mentioned that if we take fluoride out of the water it means that it is harmful. Well, Gary, we have already taken it out; we know it is harmful. All we are talking about is the possibility of putting it back in.

I suggest that it is not sound legal advice that just because we take it out it means it is harmful. What it can mean is that it might be harmful. We have already proven that because we are having an inquiry to look at whether or not it is harmful. That would be, I suggest, the sound legal debate. If that is not correct, tell me; you have had legal training. I have had training in commonsense.

A member: Where did you have it?

MR STEVENSON: I will let you know after, quietly, so other people do not find out that you want to go. When Mr Prowse said that my paper had been published, Mr Kaine said, "Perhaps nobody's read it". I ask the question, Trevor: have you read it?

Mr Humphries: I have.

MR STEVENSON: Thank you, but I wonder whether Trevor has. I was told by the national advertising manager of the magazine *Simply Living*, Mr Rhodes, that in the many years of publication of that magazine that article received more requests for reprint than any other article it has printed - an interesting comment.

So I ask for the time that the Labor Party members have suggested we did not allow - some time for the public to have a look at the issue. Allow me to debate the president of the Australian Medical Association. Come along, listen in and see the truth presented. He can present what he considers is the valid argument, and I will present what my research has shown.

Before, I was putting my article into Hansard, and I now continue. This is the article that Mr Kaine wondered whether anybody had read. In case you have not, I continue:

Also in 1953 fluoridation began in Australia in Tasmania -

Mr Kaine: On a point of order, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker - - -

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Kaine. I was about to do that. Mr Stevenson, will you resume your seat, please.

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MR STEVENSON: Is it on the point of order?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. My understanding is, Mr Stevenson, that you are required to keep your speech relevant to the reason why you are seeking to amend the Bill. So would you please keep to that particular area. Keep it relevant to the clause, Mr Stevenson.

MR STEVENSON: Yes. The reason is that it gives us an opportunity to have some public debate. Public debate is important because fluoride is dangerous. It is a dangerous product. Mr Moore mentioned earlier that some people say it is a poison. No, some people do not say it is a poison. There is the poisons schedule or poisons Act of Western Australia. It is a poison; there is no question about that. Some people do not say that, but that is what it is. It is dangerous to put this in the water supply. Granted that it had been there for 25 years, but that does not take away from the point that if this Assembly votes this Bill through today it will force fluoride back into the water supply. When you look at the medical situation, you see that that is not a good thing to do.

In my article I list various medical references. These are the reasons why we should not force it through but allow the matter to be held over until the 11th, until after the debate:

Australia is the most highly fluoridated nation in the world. Does this mean that we are more enlightened or more easily controlled?

It asks: what in 1988 is the true state of the nations? We see "Argentina, no fluoridation - discontinued"; and "Austria, no fluoridation - will not be carried out".

Mr Kaine: I rise on a point of order, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, I rule in exactly the same way as I did before. Will you please keep your remarks relevant to your amendment to the Bill and to the particular clause that you are amending, which is clause 3.

MR STEVENSON: The reason why many countries have removed fluoride from the water supply or have never introduced fluoride in the first place is that it is harmful. In countries like Holland it has been proven to be harmful. For us to go on and force this back down the throats of the people of Canberra is absolutely not okay. There are many examples of fluoride poisoning.

Mr Kaine: I take a point of order, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. Mr Stevenson is talking very much in general terms when in fact all he is seeking is that it be deferred until 11 November. All I want to hear is what the relevance is of the period between now and 11 November. As far as I am concerned, everything else is irrelevant.

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MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, I think you take the point. Would you please continue in accordance with my instructions?

MR STEVENSON: Indeed. Once again, it will allow time for the debate. We have spent a lot of time in this Assembly talking about public consultation and so on. What I am asking for is for the Act not to commence for three weeks in order to allow some public debate on that which has been so strongly put in this Assembly. It would not make a great difference in the time, so I suggest that we allow some time for public debate.

MR HUMPHRIES (4.35): I have to indicate that we will not be supporting this amendment. I am at a loss to understand, as my colleague Mr Kaine has indicated, why it is that this amendment needs to be carried to provide for public debate to occur. I am all in favour of public debate. The Bill we have just agreed to in principle provides for public debate to occur over the next seven or eight months and, as far as I am concerned, the debate which Mr Stevenson has referred to and which I hope I will be able to attend - on 10 November, was it?

Mr Stevenson: It is on 27 October.

MR HUMPHRIES: This will allow for a great deal of public debate to occur and I look forward to taking part in that and watching what occurs, but I am afraid that I cannot see how it is necessary to delay the commencement of this Bill to achieve that. Incidentally, I am also authorised to say on behalf of Mr Kaine that he has read your paper but does not accept it as an authoritative source of information on this subject.

DR KINLOCH (4.36): I commend Mr Stevenson both for his passion and for his courage when he believes strongly in an issue, and I am sure all 17 of us would want to do that about any issue we feel that way about. I also acknowledge and support Mr Stevenson's right to free speech and I do not think any unfortunate comparison should be made with books or things in the past. He has every right to it, and it cannot be easy for him to get up and do and say these things. But, as he knows, I have some difficulty with his argument on this amendment. I will also join Mr Humphries - provided the diary is free on 27 October - for that debate. I went the other night to a presentation by Professor Craig at the meeting of the Dental Association. I think all five of us on the committee will want to go to all sorts of things in this connection.

But I do have a difficulty. The vote is already nine to eight and in any case I am not going to be influenced by one debate no matter how fascinating it will be, as no doubt it will be. We have a long haul ahead of us, have we not, Mr Wood? We have a long haul of looking at all sorts of evidence over a period of time, and here I am trying to

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be realistic and helpful, Dennis. You are putting yourself, may I argue, in the difficult situation of being perceived not to be an objective member of the committee if you push this matter too far. That is, you are going publicly to debate a group of doctors and dentists from one side of the issue. I can quite see you feel you have the right to do that, but perhaps you equally have a right then and a responsibility to debate another group on the other side of the issue; that is, if you like, to turn it into a debating matter.

I think that the committee of five needs now in the public eye to be not only objective, but to be seen to be objective. We must be very careful in the coming months to do the very best we can. I do not doubt your goodwill in this matter, and we have had good talks about it, as you know. So, Dennis, all praise to your courage and determination but I do feel that on this one it is a brick wall you are trying to plunge through and I urge you to withdraw your motion.

MR PROWSE (4.39): I agree that I cannot see the logic presented by Mr Stevenson on this matter as far as his debate is concerned. It will go ahead whether the fluoride is in the water or not. I really am at a loss to see his logic. However, I propose that we vote for his amendment on the basis that what we have at the moment is a situation where those who abreact to fluoride and all other members of this community are at the moment going through an elimination process of that toxin. Whenever there is a substance, be it milk or be it any other substance that we find an abreaction to, we eliminate it for several weeks after the substance has ceased to be given internally. So we have an elimination of fluoride going on at a rapid rate in all members of the community, but particularly amongst those who abreact to it. What I seek is time for this elimination process to proceed so that the symptoms displayed by those who do abreact will disappear. The urticaria, the skin itch, the other problems associated with fluoride poisoning will leave these people. Of course, when we switch the fluoride back on again - - -

Mr Stevenson: They will reappear.

MR PROWSE: They will reappear. They will return, and in most cases they will come back with an intensity that is abnormal. This is the way we test for abreactions. So what I am suggesting is that, if we give sufficient time for these people to eliminate then hit them with this poison again, they will report to the medical profession with this as a symptom. It will be recognised, particularly if the Government does the right thing this time and advises the people that there are possible abreactions within the community and they notify the health care people, particularly the doctors who are not trained to look for - I will just wait till Mr Berry finishes.

Mr Berry: You are wasting your time if you wait.

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MR PROWSE: I appeal to you, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not believe that the members are interrupting proceedings, Mr Prowse.

MR PROWSE: All right; I will refer you to standing orders but I will proceed. The point is that if the Minister for Health had any interest in this subject whatsoever he would listen. But, as he has displayed in the past, he has none. I request the Minister for Health to put out a notice to medical practitioners, particularly in the public health area, asking them to look for symptoms associated with the re-poisoning of the population. And for this reason I ask again that he put this information out, because the medical profession have not been trained - I emphasise that - in the issue of identification of poisoning due to fluoride. Their training on this issue is minimal. They have been told there are no side effects; therefore they do not seek them out.

So I appeal, on Mr Berry's behalf, to give him time to do the right thing. Here we have an opportunity in this community to be ready for the abreaction results. I think it would be a wonderful exercise to present the findings of those doctors so alerted to the committee of inquiry. Therefore, again I make the point that an extra three weeks will have the effect of giving time for this elimination; we will see the abreaction present itself when the fluoride comes back into the water supply and we should be ready to identify these abreactions. Therefore I appeal to members that there is a logical reason to withhold it for another three weeks. No-one's teeth are going to fall out in that short time. I can assure you they will not. They have their fluoride toothpaste. There will be no effect on the community if you win your applause now because you put it back in. So be it. The point is that I am asking for that extra time for this elimination process. So please give us that much courtesy in allowing an investigation into this. If the Minister would only carry out these wishes of mine and particularly of those members of the public who will react to this, he might gain some applause on this issue as well.

MR BERRY (Minister for Community Services and Health) (4.44): Ever willing to demonstrate my concern about public health in the ACT, I rise to speak very briefly on the issue of this amendment. I think the first thing I should say is that it strikes me as only a desperate move to try to delay the introduction of the Bill that the Leader of the Opposition has put before the Assembly today.

Mr Stevenson: Not delay it; stop the whole thing.

MR BERRY: Or stall it, perhaps. I, like Dr Kinloch, believe that the matter of the public debate between Dr Donovan of the AMA and Mr Stevenson need not get in the way of the proper consultation which will proceed as a matter

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of course arising from other decisions of the Assembly. But what I think needs to be put down is the reckless assertion that the amount of public interest in the debate between Dr Donovan and Mr Stevenson - which I think is somewhat doubtful anyway - in some way represents the sort of formal consultation that ought to take place in relation to the functions that this Assembly can perform. The proper way to have this consultation proceeded with is of course by way of the relevant committee which will deal with the matter in due course.

I think that I agree with Dr Kinloch that Mr Stevenson has further damaged his credibility in relation to this matter and the likely objectivity that we can expect from him in relation to consideration of the matter. I am sure that Dr Donovan of the AMA - - -

Mr Stevenson: On a point of order; Mr Berry is talking about the likely objectivities but it is simply because I have been objective in the matter for some period of time that I have looked at suggesting that there might be a problem. It is absolutely not okay in this Assembly.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would suggest, Mr Stevenson, it is appropriate to raise that as a personal explanation at the end of Mr Berry's discussion.

MR BERRY: To close off, I think it is just a stalling tactic that will do nothing for the debate and I think it is most appropriate that the Assembly move on to pass the Bill that has been put before us as a matter of course and to get on with the real and proper public consultation which will occur as soon as that Bill comes into law.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 4

Mr Duby
Ms Maher
Mr Prowse
Mr Stevenson

NOES, 13

Mr Berry
Mr Collaery
Ms Follett
Mrs Grassby
Mr Humphries
Mr Jensen
Mr Kaine
Dr Kinloch
Mr Moore
Mrs Nolan
Mr Stefaniak
Mr Whalan
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the negative.

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Original question resolved in the affirmative.

Clause agreed to.

Remainder of Bill, by leave, taken as a whole, and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

SOCIAL POLICY - STANDING COMMITTEE
Reporting Date

MR HUMPHRIES (4.52): I seek leave to move a motion relating to the inquiry into fluoride by the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Leave granted.

MR HUMPHRIES: I move:

That the resolution referring the matter of fluoride in relation to public health to the Standing Committee on Social Policy for consideration and report be amended by adding at the end of the resolution:

"(3) the committee to report to the Assembly by 31 May 1990."

This motion simply provides for the insertion of a reporting date for that inquiry. This, of course, meshes in with the Bill which we have just passed, which provides that the suspension of the Electricity and Water Act part VIII will cease on 30 June next year. Accordingly, I think it is appropriate for the Assembly to set some kind of time limit on the inquiry of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. In this motion I have provided for one month between the reporting date of the committee and the ceasing of operation of this particular Bill so that it will be possible for public debate and response to this report to be assessed and for the Assembly to decide what it wishes to do on a more permanent basis about the addition of fluoride to the water supply. I commend the amendment to the house.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 4.53 pm