



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

19 March 1991

Tuesday, 19 March 1991

Distinguished visitor	969
Questions without notice:	
Financial accounts	969
Government expenditure	969
Quality of teaching and learning	970
Kingston foreshore redevelopment	971
Canberra Day - trading hours	972
Portfolio expenditures	973
Parking inspectors	974
Financial accounts	974
Seniors card	975
Portfolio expenditures	975
House building approvals	977
Bruce Stadium	978
Casino project	979
Mental health legislation	980
Government expenditure	981
Belconnen Remand Centre	982
TAFE programs	982
Subordinate legislation	983
Civic Square redevelopment project (Ministerial statement)	984
Literacy - International Year (Ministerial statement)	985
Health and community services - Weston Creek (Matter of public importance)	989
Casino project	1009
Stock Bill 1991	1009
Forward estimates 1991-92 to 1993-94	1015
Social Policy - standing committee	1036
Adjournment:	
Weapons legislation	1040
Weapons legislation	1042
Canberra Festival	1042
Canberra Festival	1043
Canberra Festival	1044

Tuesday, 19 March 1991

MR SPEAKER (Mr Prowse) took the chair at 2.30 pm and read the prayer.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

MR SPEAKER: I wish to inform members of the presence in the gallery of Mr Henry Asugar, who is the Chief Clerk of the Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia. On behalf of all members, I bid him a warm welcome.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Financial Accounts

MS FOLLETT: My question is to Mr Kaine in his role as Treasurer. Mr Kaine, have the 1989-90 financial accounts for the Treasury been completed and submitted to the Auditor-General for audit, and, if not, why not?

MR KAINE: I am not certain of the status of the 1989-90 accounts, Mr Speaker; but I will take that question on notice and give a comprehensive reply.

Government Expenditure

MR BERRY: My question is directed to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you inform the Assembly whether overall government expenditure for the first half of this financial year was in line with budget estimates?

MR KAINE: Yes, as I understand it, budget performance until the end of February shows that the budget is generally in line with the estimates in terms of total revenues and total expenditures. We expect that the budget will remain so right through to the end of the year, when we will bring our budget in pretty well as we estimated it to be when it was produced a year ago.

MR BERRY: I have a supplementary question. As you seem to have this information, why have you failed to publish the December quarterly financial statement when it is 2 months after the end of the quarter?

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, as far as I am concerned, the reports that I get from the Treasury on the status of my management are not necessarily a matter of public record.

19 March 1991

Mr Berry: Why have you not published them?

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR KAINÉ: They were not published by the previous Government when they came out monthly, and I have simply followed that procedure.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

MRS NOLAN: My question is to Mr Humphries in his capacity as Minister for Education. Is the ACT involved in the national project on the quality of teaching and learning? If so, what does it hope to achieve?

MR HUMPHRIES: I thank Mrs Nolan for that question. Yes, the ministry is actively involved in this important project. Our representative on the governing board of 24 members of that national project is Mr Max Sawatzki, a deputy secretary for education. Incidentally, the governing board comprises two Federal Government representatives; eight government school employer representatives from the States and Territories; two national Catholic and independent school peak organisation representatives; and 12 union representatives, two from the ACTU, eight from the Australian Teachers Union - that is, from each of the States and Territories - and two from the Independent Teachers Federation.

The project is a cooperative venture of the key parties involved in the teaching profession. It represents a national first in the education industry, bringing together representatives from teachers and from employers. It will focus on key policy and procedural issues designed to improve the quality of teaching and optimise learning outcomes for students across the nation. The inaugural meeting was held last month, on 19 February, at Parliament House in Canberra, and working parties were established to commence investigation of two key areas. I will just briefly mention what they were. The first and probably the most important - - -

Mr Connolly: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We seem to be listening to a ministerial statement here, rather than a concise answer to a question.

MR HUMPHRIES: Do you want the information or not?

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Humphries, please speak to the point. Please proceed.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, there are two important things relating to Mrs Nolan's question about the national project. Mrs Nolan asked about our involvement in that project; I am just indicating what our involvement is. First of all, there will be work on an investigation into current work organisation in schools. It will include an analysis of teaching and other tasks performed by teachers. There could be consideration of alternative forms of work organisation and the training, career paths and rewards related to them. The potential outcomes of this working party, of course, are very significant for our ACT education system, among others. The second working party will consider options for a nationally consistent framework for teachers' qualifications, examining, in particular, national accreditation and professional standards.

Kingston Foreshore Redevelopment

MR STEVENSON: My question is to the Chief Minister, Trevor Kaine, and concerns the redevelopment of the Kingston foreshore area. On 14 February 1991, Mr Geoffrey Campbell, Chief Territory Planner of the Interim Territory Planning Authority, decided to introduce draft land use variations for the Kingston area in four weeks' time. It would appear that that has not yet been done. Now that the ACT has a fully fledged Planning Authority, what progress has been made regarding the preparation of land variation policies, and when will the authority be publishing this information in the government *Gazette* and making copies of the draft plan for Kingston available?

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, I will take the particular points that Mr Stevenson has asked me on notice and get a comprehensive response, rather than giving him half a reply. I think that Mr Stevenson would know, as do other members of this Assembly, that the Government is in support of a redevelopment of that area. It is badly in need of redevelopment. But I am sure that Mr Stevenson would also know that there are very significant problems, in that not all of that land is Territory land. Much of it is Commonwealth land and much of it is designated land for planning purposes. So it is not simply a matter of this Government making up its mind what it intends to do. It has to work in concert with the Commonwealth. To put forward a comprehensive redevelopment proposal for that site would require a great deal of work, and it will obviously take a long time to get all the threads brought together. But I will take the specific questions on notice and give you a response, Mr Stevenson.

Canberra Day - Trading Hours

MS MAHER: My question is also to the Chief Minister. Can the Chief Minister inform the Assembly as to why Canberra stores did not open on the Canberra Day public holiday, taking into consideration the numbers of ACT residents that went over to Queanbeyan to go shopping?

MR KAINE: I am interested in making some comments on that matter, Mr Speaker. First of all, it is well known that the Trading Hours Act allows shops selling exempt goods to trade at any time anyway. They do not need specific approval from this Assembly or anywhere else to open, and the exemptions apply to the sale of items of food, hardware, books and souvenirs, amongst many others. In fact, there was no request from any trader, or from any local organisation representing traders, for the shops to be open in Canberra on Canberra Day, which is rather interesting. I would have thought that we would have had a request from somebody; but no request was made, and so the matter was not considered.

I think it is worth noting that there are significant differences of opinion amongst local traders on whether there should be unrestricted trading on public holidays. If you asked a dozen traders, half of them would say that they would like to open and the other half would say that because they are family businesses, or for some other reason, it is very difficult for them to open on public holidays and they do not want to.

Because of those differences of opinion, Mr Speaker, the Government has engaged a consultant to examine and provide advice on issues relating to trading hours in the ACT. I am confident that the ultimate result will be a more satisfactory trading hours arrangement, and it will include settled conditions for trading on public holidays throughout the year, including Canberra Day, in the future.

Mr Berry: That should keep it buried until the next election.

MR KAINE: After the next election, I will be here, Mr Berry; but I do not know about you. So, the Government is mindful of the problems - - -

Mr Collaery: What did you say when we stopped it on Australia Day?

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR KAINE: They did not like it at all. The Government is mindful of the problem, Mr Speaker, as to whether we should allow unrestricted trading, except perhaps on one or two particularly significant holidays in the year; but, because there is such divided opinion on it, I think that we need to be sure that we have all of the facts, not only those from some of the vested interests. For that reason we are having a full study done.

Portfolio Expenditures

MR CONNOLLY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, have you ever given an instruction to your Ministers that they must keep their portfolio expenditures within the level appropriated by law?

MR KAINE: I do not know that I have given them a specific instruction, Mr Speaker, but I am quite sure that my Ministers are just as well aware as Mr Connolly that there is a legal requirement for them to do so. They can only spend money that has been properly appropriated by this Assembly, and my view about proper fiscal management is well known, not only amongst my Ministers but in ACT Administration as well.

I have made it quite clear that I expect people to manage the resources that they have been given at all levels, and I expect them to confine their expenditures to the amounts of money that have been properly set aside. That applies equally to Ministers and to managers in the ACT Government Service.

MR CONNOLLY: Just by way of a supplementary question: You said that you were not sure that you had ever given such an instruction. Can we take it that you have now directed your Ministers, particularly, perhaps, Mr Collaery and Mr Humphries, not to exceed their expenditure levels?

MR KAINE: No, you may not. I am quite sure that my Ministers fully understand their responsibilities as Ministers. They fully understand their accountability. You may not quite understand it, and if you are ever a Minister you may require a specific direction as to what your duties and responsibilities are. I do not find that with my present Ministers. They do know; they do understand what their obligations and responsibilities are, and they do not need a specific direction from me to be aware of them.

Parking Inspectors

MR STEFANIAK: My question is to Mr Duby, the Minister for Urban Services. Mr Duby, I refer you to an article in the Sydney *Sun-Herald* on 10 March this year that alleged that New South Wales parking inspectors have been told to issue at least 10 parking tickets every day or face dismissal. Mr Duby, I hope that the ACT does not have any similar type of quota system. I wonder whether you would comment on that.

MR DUBY: Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Stefaniak for the question. The short answer is yes, I am aware of the article that Mr Stefaniak referred to. In it, it was alleged that parking inspectors in Sydney, anyway, were instructed to write at least 10 tickets a day or face the sack. I would like to say quite categorically that that situation simply does not exist in the ACT. ACT parking inspectors do not have any quotas to meet, and tickets are actually issued only in relation to allegedly illegally parked vehicles. There is no quota at all.

The role of ACT parking inspectors is to keep our streets safe by deterring illegal parking, even at 2 am, and to ensure that all motorists get a fair chance to utilise parking resources. More infringement notices, of course, are issued in areas of high parking demand than in less congested areas, because that is where more motorists wish to park illegally. So, of course, that is where the resources of the parking inspection unit are concentrated. But I would like to repeat that there is no quota system whatsoever. Inspectors are not carpeted if they have not been able to produce a certain quota of tickets per week or per day, and, indeed, I know that I speak for the rest of the Government when I say that I would hate to see a system such as that ever introduced into the ACT.

Financial Accounts

MRS GRASSBY: My question is to the Chief Minister. When will the 1989-90 audited financial statement for the entire ACT Government be available?

MR KAINE: I think that is the same question that the Leader of the Opposition asked me earlier, Mr Speaker, and I took it on notice.

Seniors Card

DR KINLOCH: My question is to the Chief Minister, Mr Kaine, who I believe is the holder of the largest seniors card in Canberra. I seem to remember seeing you with that enormous card last year, Mr Kaine. What action has been taken to extend those concessions offered to holders of the seniors card? You can see why I need to ask!

MR KAINE: I understand Dr Kinloch's interest in the question, Mr Speaker, but I have to dispel his illusions. In fact, I do not have a card and I have not yet applied for one, but along with Dr Kinloch I am sure that I will when I retire from this place. Mr Speaker, on 13 December last year I announced a number of concessions that were available to senior citizens on production of a card. They were, I think, fairly comprehensive, but I also said that other matters would be considered.

There is a committee that is looking into these matters. It includes representation from my department, from the ACT Council on the Ageing, from the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association, from the Regular Defence Forces Welfare Association, from Probus, from CARD, from the Canberra Chamber of Commerce, from the Australian Small Business Association, from the Tourism Commission and from the Consumer Affairs Bureau; so I think the committee is fairly wide ranging in its representation. Its job is to recommend to the Government additional things to be added. It is working towards a further expansion of the list of concessions and discounts that are available, and we expect to be able to produce a seniors card directory very soon - in fact, to coincide with Seniors Week in April. It will list all of the things that are available to seniors under the card system.

Portfolio Expenditures

MR WOOD: I direct a question to the Chief Minister in his capacity as Treasurer. I was very interested in the answer that he gave to Mr Connolly just a little while ago. In view of that, Treasurer, what action have you taken in relation to Mr Collaery's admission on the front page of the *Canberra Times* that his welfare branch budget blow-out was "preordained and predelivered"?

MR KAINE: Mr Collaery's alleged budget blow-out is in the same category as Mr Humphries' alleged blow-out. The only people who keep talking about these blow-outs are the members of the Opposition who assiduously feed the media. As far as I am concerned there is, as yet, no budget blow-out. No Minister has yet come to me seeking supplementation of his budget.

19 March 1991

I have indicated that in connection with the hospitals I have granted the money that would normally be made available during the course of the year to cover national wage case increases, and also in the case of the hospitals to make up the shortfall in their revenues due to the smaller number of private patients that have been admitted. Revenue from that source has been less, and since we offset that revenue against the moneys that the Government provides, I have made up that shortfall.

Mr Wood: So, there has been some blow-out?

MR Kaine: Only the national wage case increases which are normally provided and for which the Government makes provision every year. It is not given to people in their budgets. It is held back in Treasury and is made available as required. In the second case, where there is an unexpected shortfall in revenue because of a lesser number of private patients booking into our hospitals, since that expected revenue is offset against the money that the Government provides, it is necessary that the Government make up that amount of money.

No other claim has been accepted from any department for additional funds at this stage, and I have made it quite clear that any Minister that wants additional funds is going to have to come to me with a properly documented bid and there is going to have to be justification and there is going to have to be an explanation as to why at this stage of the year they find that they do not have enough money to meet the commitments that they entered into at the beginning of the year. The budget is developed in Cabinet and Ministers know what the available funds are and, as I explained earlier, so do all of the managers that are subordinate to them. I am not about to simply sign another cheque without proper and full justification.

MR WOOD: I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Treasurer, is it your expectation, then, that Mr Collaery will keep to the target when his budget is concluded?

MR Kaine: It is my expectation that, when in one element of a Minister's budget there is a requirement for additional funds, he should first of all look across his whole portfolio area to see where offsets can be made within his budget, because there are ups and downs in the course of the year. There are not all ups; there are downs as well. I expect the Ministers to manage their budgets properly and to balance the funds within the allocation that is made to them. If they have an underexpenditure in one area, or an increase or decrease in revenue, then they should offset that against other elements of their budget before they come to me and ask me to make additional funds available out of the Treasurer's Advance.

House Building Approvals

MR MOORE: My question is to the Chief Minister, Mr Kaine. I refer you to the matter of public importance discussed in this house on 20 February 1991, relating to objections raised by residents of Calwell to certain residential planning decisions. At one point you said, and I quote from *Hansard*:

... I am informed that other examples of adjacent identical houses exist, for instance, in places like Bruce Heights. It is not unusual to find that somebody builds houses of the same design.

Can the Chief Minister tell us who informed him of the existence of those houses; where the houses are located, since the residents of Calwell went looking for them out of an obvious interest in the matter and failed to find them; whether or not those houses bear any physical resemblances to the design of the houses in question in Calwell; and whether or not those residences interfere with their neighbours' amenities in the same manner as that claimed by the residents of Calwell?

MR KAINE: Mr Moore asked almost the same question on 20 February and I undertook to answer it. In fact, I have the answer, so I will provide it to him in full. Of course, there are inferences and suggestions in Mr Moore's question that I think need to be set aside.

Mr Speaker, the Interim Territory Planning Authority was the body that advised me that there are other examples of identically designed houses in Canberra, and I think it would be in a position to know. Examples at Bruce, which I mentioned, where identical large detached houses have been built side by side, are at sections 53, 68 and 71. Identical houses are usually found on sites released for multiple dwellings, as in the examples given at Bruce, but the final result on the ground is the same.

In the case of standard house blocks released individually, builders and lessees usually seek variety in design; but the Planning Authority does not refuse identical designs as a design and siting matter, and nor should it. As long as the designs meet all of the planning parameters, the Planning Authority has no right or authority to refuse to accept them. The Planning Authority has advised me that recent examples of identical house designs on standard blocks can be found at blocks 22 and 23 of section 707 in Calwell, blocks 162 and 163 of section 754 in Calwell, and blocks 20, 21 and 23 of section 624 in Theodore. So, it is not at all unusual. In the latter two cases different external bricks and tiles have been used, but the designs are the same.

19 March 1991

The examples that I have quoted do not relate in other respects to the design and siting situation at the blocks fronting Tuthill Place, Calwell, to which Mr Moore refers. And I have no knowledge that the former have been the subject of any complaint. As far as I know, this is the first complaint that we have ever had.

In respect of the proposed houses at Tuthill Place, I would remind Mr Moore that the ACT Ombudsman has carefully examined each ground of complaint that has been raised, and he has found that in each case the then Interim Territory Planning Authority had taken proper account of the gazetted design and siting policies and that the ITPA acted reasonably, in the Ombudsman's words, in approving the plans for the three houses.

Mr Moore would also be aware that, even though the plan for the Tuthill Place houses has been approved, my Executive Deputy, Mr Jensen, and the ITPA have attended a number of meetings with the local residents and the builder to see whether agreement could be reached to amend the design of the houses. I am advised that the builder is expected to submit revised drawings in the next few days to see whether he can in any way accommodate the local residents.

I think that this has gone on long enough. I have made it clear on several occasions already that I have no power to intervene on behalf of a complainant and act contrary to the law. If a builder submits plans that are properly approved, and the Ombudsman has said that they were, then you are asking me to step in now and say that these people have to have this law set aside in their favour. I do not believe that I should intercede on anybody's behalf in that manner, and I do not think, Mr Moore, that you really believe so either.

Bruce Stadium

MR JENSEN: Mr Speaker, my question is directed to the Attorney-General in his capacity as Minister for sport. I ask the Attorney: Does he intend to recreate the Bruce Stadium trust? If so, when? Are negotiations complete in relation to the current discussions with the Raiders regarding Bruce Stadium?

MR COLLAERY: Thank you, Mr Jensen, for the question. The answer to the second part of his question, "Are negotiations complete?", is easy. The short answer is no. Further negotiations will be pursued this week. As members will be aware, it is my proposal to meet with the New South Wales League's John Quayle at a convenient time this week.

The first part of Mr Jensen's question was about recreating the Bruce Stadium trust. Of course, as we now know, the word "trust" was a bit of a misnomer. It never was a trust; it was an unusual creation of the Follett-Whalan

Government. In fact, it did have some trustee-type role, and that is adequately set out in the Auditor-General's report, in chapter 5. But as I indicated - I believe, last night or on Sunday night on television - the trust itself included the chief executive officer of the Canberra Raiders. As such it could hardly be said, in the day-to-day hiring arrangements and the rest, that the trust was at arm's length from the group who, in fact, were the main hirers of it.

Given that circumstance, if and when the Government decides to recreate a trust to deal with the stadium and any other public fixture, we would give consideration to the wisdom of appointing to the board of governors, as it were, a member of the very hiring group to consider such issues as hiring charges and the rest. That is a circumstance that, in my view, needs to be kept always at arm's length from government, as trusts have been in Sydney and Melbourne.

Mr Speaker, to go back to the earlier issue, the Opposition has just been attacking our budget; but let me assure it that the minor disturbances that have occurred in a couple of the programs of some of the Ministers have nothing on the issues and events that will be revealed in due course about Labor's handling of the Bruce Stadium contract.

Casino Project

MS FOLLETT: My question is to Mr Kaine. Mr Kaine, on 13 March in the Assembly, Mr Collaery said, in relation to allegations raised by Mr Moore, that it was your responsibility as Chief Minister to determine whether a National Crime Authority investigation was appropriate to clear the air. I ask you, Mr Kaine: Have you decided to refer the matter to the NCA, and, if not, why not?

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, because of the potentially serious nature of the accusations and the unsubstantiated allegations that Mr Moore made, I have initiated contact with the chairman of the National Crime Authority, and I will be determining, in conjunction with him, whether or not there is sufficient substance in what Mr Moore said for the NCA to take on that inquiry. The preliminary indications are that that is not the case. But until I have spoken personally with the chairman, which I expect to do within the next day or so, I would prefer to leave the matter in abeyance. Of course, I will inform the house if there is any necessity for any further action on that matter.

Mental Health Legislation

MR STEFANIAK: My question is to the Minister for Health. Has the Minister seen the *Canberra Times* editorial of 17 March this year entitled, "Housing mentally ill on remand"? How would the Minister respond to the assertions within that editorial that he has shown no sense of urgency in bringing the recent report on mental health legislation forward for debate?

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Stefaniak for that question. Of course, I have seen that editorial, and I can assure the *Canberra Times*, and, indeed, this Assembly, that the report of the review committee will be treated in a professional, considered and proper fashion by this Government. It would be entirely inappropriate to draft replacement legislation hastily, merely because it has been suggested by the *Canberra Times* or anybody else that these things should be done with great haste.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Assembly of the action that the Government has taken so far in addressing this problem. On 5 May last year, I announced the establishment of an expert steering committee to review the Mental Health Act. It was chaired by Mr Nick Seddon of the ANU Law School, and it included many community representatives. The committee provided its report to me at the end of November last year in the form of a detailed and highly professional document entitled *Balancing Rights: A Review of Mental Health Legislation in the ACT*. The report contained some 59 recommendations and is, I believe, one of the most significant documents to emerge in the field of mental health law in this country for many years. I intend to table that document shortly, formally, in the Assembly. I indicate that the reason that it has not been tabled is that there was such enormous interest in the original print run that the first print run of 300 copies was, in fact, exhausted shortly after it was released at the end of November. A second run has occurred, and it will therefore be available shortly for tabling in this place.

When tabling the report, I shall detail the process that the Government intends to follow in responding to it. In short, however, this process will allow sufficient time for public consideration of, and comment on, the report, following which the Government will formalise its response. This response - in a sense, the white paper that the *Canberra Times* editorial referred to - will precede the drafting of replacement legislation.

Government Expenditure

MR BERRY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to your statement last week that the budget, which is enshrined in an Act of this Assembly appropriating money to particular uses, is no more than an estimate of expenditures. I quote from *Hansard*:

The objective of a budget is to implement government policies. They are budget estimates. That is exactly what they are. For anybody to assert that they are fixed figures that are set in concrete and cannot be changed -

and so on. I therefore ask the Chief Minister: What obligations do you believe that you and other Ministers have to keep expenditures within the budgeted figures?

MR KAINE: Mr Berry is obviously still trying to grapple with the concept of budget management. He did not do it so well when he was a Minister, and he is not doing any better now. As I have already indicated, my other Ministers and I understand full well our obligations to remain within the budgetary constraints; but Mr Berry seems totally to overlook the fact that part of the appropriation was a \$13m Treasurer's Advance, from which the Treasurer is empowered to make extra advances should they be required and should they be justified.

I would also point out for Mr Berry's edification - since he does not seem to understand the system - that, should I make such advances, I am obligated to inform the Assembly that such advances have been made. And I adhere to that implicitly, Mr Berry. I, in no way, intend to depart from the normal responsibilities and constraints of budgetary management, and I wish that you understood as much about the budget as I

MR BERRY: I have a supplementary question. Chief Minister, are you saying that Ministers may freely spend more than the amount appropriated by law?

MR KAINE: I am not saying anything of the kind; I am merely saying that, if they can justify it - and I will repeat it - if they can justify it because of unforeseen circumstances, they can have an additional allocation of money. You, as a member of this Assembly, gave me a \$13m Treasurer's Advance from which I can allow them to have that money. That is the way the budgetary system works. You voted with the Assembly to give me that Treasurer's Advance.

I know that you do not understand it, and you hate having a little lecture as to how the budgetary system works. You asked the question, and you get very sensitive when I touch on your total inability to understand the way in which the budgetary system works. But I will give you a little lecture anyway from time to time, because, if anybody needs it, you do.

Belconnen Remand Centre

MR STEVENSON: My question is to the Attorney-General, Bernard Collaery, and concerns what would appear to be the unnecessary expenditure of taxpayers' money. I believe that a training course was recently completed at Warrambui for staff from the Belconnen Remand Centre, this being the final course in a series of courses, each one lasting several days and involving living-in arrangements. The question is: Why were the courses run at Warrambui at considerable expense and possible disruption to the Belconnen Remand Centre, when the Belconnen Remand Centre itself has its own training room which was added recently, only last year, at a cost of \$100,000?

MR COLLAERY: Yes, there was a training session out at Warrambui. I do not know much about the content of the course, other than that it was an opportunity to train and retrain corrective services staff, particularly those who are undergoing retraining in relation to dealing with prisoners with emotional and psychiatric disturbances.

I do recall, however, that whilst they were there they joined, I think it was, the Sutton Fire Brigade, and saved a property from being burnt in a bushfire. I received commendations from the local shire in relation to some named officers, to whom I wrote personally to thank them for their extracurricular activities whilst they were out there doing the training.

The rest of Mr Stevenson's question, Mr Speaker, I will take on notice. I will give him a detailed response, setting out the curricula, times of instruction, and exactly what went on out there.

Mr Kaine: Mr Speaker, I request that any further questions be placed on the notice paper.

TAFE Programs

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, I have been waiting for Mr Wood to come back. He asked me a question on 20 February, which I took on notice, and now that he is back I would like to provide that answer. His question had to do with the consolidation of campuses in the TAFE system and what the effects of those consolidations would be on TAFE students, and I would like to give Mr Wood an answer to that.

I am sure Mr Wood is aware that TAFE has in place a campus consolidation strategy which aims progressively to consolidate TAFE onto fewer campuses, to better achieve educational and economic objectives. The institute currently operates on nine sites compared with 11 at the end of 1989, so the consolidation process has already begun. The object of this strategy is to permit better use of expensive equipment and libraries, to improve access by students to child-care and counselling services, and to better serve the ACT's total population, while also seeking to meet expected growth in Gungahlin-West Belconnen, and Jerrabomberra-Tuggeranong respectively.

Consistent with this strategy, three major initiatives have been taken. Firstly, another building has been constructed on the Canberra Avenue campus to accommodate panel beating and spray painting facilities previously housed in leased facilities in Fyshwick from this semester. Secondly, refurbishment work on the new southside campus, the former Woden Valley High School, is progressing well, to enable relocation from the inherited unsatisfactory Callam Street site at the end of this year. Thirdly, in the 1990-91 budget my Government approved design work for the extension of the Bruce campus to accommodate the School of Electrical and Electronic Studies from the Benjamin Way site. A construction project proposal for that is being prepared for Government consideration for inclusion in the 1991-92 capital works program.

Following on from the substantial progress with and the achievements of the strategy, site master planning studies of the institute's Bruce and Reid campuses are being undertaken in preparation for the consideration of future directions with respect to the remaining campuses. In all of these initiatives the key consideration is to ensure that maximum technical and further education opportunities are provided to the ACT community within available funds, while maintaining educational quality and balancing cost-effectiveness considerations.

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION Paper

MR COLLAERY (Deputy Chief Minister): Pursuant to section 6 of the Subordinate Laws Act 1989, I present the following paper:

Tobacco Act - Exemption (S14, dated 8 March 1991)

19 March 1991

CIVIC SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT **Ministerial Statement**

MR KAINE (Chief Minister), by leave: Further to my statement to the Assembly on 12 February this year, I am now able to provide further information on the status of the section 19 development project; one, of course, in which many people have a great interest. It is probably no secret to anybody that one of the difficulties with this project is in ensuring that there is sound and adequate financial support behind it. That is one of the reasons why the process has taken so long to get to the point that we have now reached.

As a result of information received in the last few days, I can advise that there is a firm offer of finance in support of the recommended proposal, with evidence of substantial funds available to back the project. After careful consideration of the circumstances - and the Cabinet has taken two weeks to look at it - the Government has decided to grant a further 28 days' extension to the recommended consortium, to allow a complete and thorough analysis of this financial offer, and to satisfy itself as to the bona fides of the investor and the other consortium members. The extra time will allow the Casino Surveillance Authority to carry out its own investigations and allow it to report to the Government. The Government has decided to allow this extended period because of the importance of the Civic Square project and its possible impact on employment in the construction and tourism sectors. We believe that this imposes an obligation on the Government to offer every reasonable opportunity to bring this project to a successful conclusion in the interests of the community. I ask all members of the Assembly and the ACT community to support us in allowing this further short period of time, in order to ensure that all reasonable possibilities are fully explored.

Mr Speaker, I must emphasise that this extension of time will not in any way compromise the current selection process, and the bid will remain fully conforming in terms of the agreed development conditions. We expect to be able to make a firm decision on this important issue within 28 days. I present the following paper:

Civic Square Redevelopment (section 19) project - Ministerial statement, 19 March 1991.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

LITERACY - INTERNATIONAL YEAR Ministerial Statement

MR HUMPHRIES (Minister for Health, Education and the Arts), by leave: Mr Speaker, I would like to report on progress made in the ACT during International Literacy Year last year. In 1966, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, declared 8 September each year to be International Literacy Day. This signalled a new awareness of literacy throughout the world. At first, the focus was on the underdeveloped nations of the world. The industrialised nations have only recently begun to understand the seriousness of the literacy problem amongst their own people. As a result of this changing attitude, the United Nations declared 1990 to be International Literacy Year - ILY, for short - and the beginning of a decade in which all nations should recognise and address the literacy needs of their people.

In 1989, the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training funded our first national survey of the adult population to gauge competence in literacy in English. Rosie Wickert's summary report on this survey, called *No Single Measure*, was released in late 1989. It introduced us to the concept of functional literacy defined as:

... using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

In other words, Mr Speaker, literacy is not seen as a fixed set of skills to be learnt by everyone, but as different sets of skills demanded of people according to the specific needs of their specific contexts. It is this functional view of literacy which makes the findings of the Wickert study so disturbing and of such importance to Australian society. The study found that:

... a majority of Australian adults can perform straightforward literacy tasks, but many appear to be unable to complete tasks of moderate complexity.

An estimated one million adults do not have the requisite literacy skills to function adequately in an advanced technological society like Australia's.

These findings were surprising for two reasons. Firstly, the proportion of those with very low levels of literacy proficiency was much higher than is widely realised. At least 11 per cent of respondents could not perform the basic literacy tasks that had been set. Secondly, some literacy difficulties were experienced by a large proportion of respondents, even amongst those with high levels of education. Only 22 per cent of all respondents could complete all tasks correctly, and only 73 per cent of respondents with professional qualifications could carry

19 March 1991

out the most difficult task set. The performance of young adults was also unexpected. Respondents in the 21-24 age group performed better than older respondents, despite a common view that literacy standards had dropped in recent years.

ILY 1990 gave the ACT the opportunity to celebrate the many areas in which we have gained a reputation for educational excellence; for example, the literacy proficiency of our school age population appears to be higher than in most other States - in fact, all other States. We have the highest rate of school retention to year 12, and our secondary college system is regarded by other States as a model.

The ACT Ministry for Health, Education and the Arts plays an important role in the achievement of these high standards. As well as an ongoing commitment to curriculum development, a range of programs is offered for students with special literacy needs, and for the professional development of teachers to meet those needs. The Government recognises the importance of these programs and their continued resourcing is assured. Details of these and other programs can be found in the ACT progress report on ILY 1990, which was released at a public ceremony to mark International Literacy Day 1990 at Lake Tuggeranong College.

In 1990, the ACT, together with South Australia, hosted the national collaborative curriculum project, which mapped the English literacy curriculum throughout Australia. In 1991, the ACT will co-host two significant literacy projects. The first will prepare a national statement on English for Australian schools; and the second will develop an English subject profile which will outline students' levels of achievement in literacy as they progress through the various stages of schooling.

The ACT's selection as joint leader of these very important projects is indicative of the esteem in which our education system's literacy achievements are held. In addition, the ACT is collaborating with the south coast region of the New South Wales Department of Education and the Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn on the secondary literacy and learning project. This focuses on the professional development of teachers in junior secondary schools and promotes the Government's commitment to regional initiatives. Feedback on the school component of our ILY program includes a reported increase in the number of requests for workshops for parents wishing to assist their own child's literacy development.

Mr Speaker, in comparison with other States, the ACT provides a high standard of tertiary education and the population, I think, makes good use of it. The ACT population has the highest rate of participation in tertiary education in Australia. This is not surprising in a city whose largest employer is the Australian Public

Service, and where an estimated 56.4 per cent of the work force works in office based occupations. However, as in other advanced societies, basic skills education for the post-school-age population is less than adequately provided for in this Territory. The 1990 report *A Strategic Review of Commonwealth State Adult Literacy Expenditure* concluded that the demand for such education far exceeded provision in all the States of this Commonwealth.

As the main provider of adult literacy education in this Territory, the ACT Institute of TAFE runs a number of literacy programs. In 1988 and 1989 it advertised, on radio and television, free places on one such program and received a deluge of applications. The level of demand exceeded the number of places offered by approximately six to one. Waiting lists exist for all adult literacy programs coordinated by TAFE, including the volunteer home tutor scheme.

This highlights a number of problems, I think, Mr Speaker; namely, the shortage of places in adult literacy courses, the need for review of the fee structure, and the need for appropriate avenues of promoting their availability. It is believed that many adults needing help do not apply for these courses for a number of reasons, including an inability to pay fees and a lack of confidence. The issue of fees for adult literacy courses has been brought to my attention by the ACT Council for Adult Literacy. Concessions are currently available to the unemployed, to women re-entering the work force after a number of years in the home, and parents on family allowance supplements. This Government is looking into various options for allowing the TAFE to waive fees where necessary.

As we enter the last decade of the twentieth century, the push for economic reform in Australian industry has focused attention on skills formation in the work force. The award restructuring process is calling for a number of reforms, including the broadbanding of skill levels within industry, the establishment of skill related career paths, and the elimination of impediments to the multiskilling of the work force.

The emphasis is on flexibility. We need, I think we would all agree, a flexible, multiskilled adult population and a flexible training system; one which provides greater access to training in a wider range of contexts to a wider range of people. This need for diversity and flexibility is bringing renewed attention to informal providers of post-school literacy education such as community based and industry based providers. Industry based training is receiving attention through the national training reforms being coordinated by the Commonwealth Government and the ACT Vocational Training Authority.

In an effort to encourage more workplace based basic skills training, our International Literacy Year program included a series of basic workplace education pilot programs which

19 March 1991

involved the teaching of literacy and numeracy in three workplaces. The three sites selected were the Southern Cross Club, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Patents Office. The pilots were designed, implemented and evaluated by the ACT Institute of TAFE. The employers provided paid leave for staff to participate. The programs had positive academic and attitudinal outcomes, including an increase in the confidence of participants to pursue further study. Further programs have been commissioned by other employers, particularly in the ACT Government Service. A more detailed evaluation of the basic workplace education pilot programs is contained in that ACT ILY progress report that I referred to earlier.

I want to talk briefly about literacy needs of ACT youth. The specific needs of youth in the ACT have been recognised as worthy of attention, and two areas of need have been identified, namely, the interface between secondary colleges and TAFE curricula; and the role of community based basic skills programs in youth centres. The motivation for this focus comes from the increasing demands being made on the education systems by increasing school retention rates, particularly in the ACT, the introduction of competency based vocational training, and the threat of increasing youth unemployment due to structural changes in industry.

In 1991 the ACT Ministry for Health, Education and the Arts and TAFE will explore ways of addressing these emerging needs. Resources committed to this project have been supplemented by a \$12,500 grant from the Commonwealth Government. The Canberra youth groups network is also active in the area of youth literacy education. They are developing a joint pilot program which includes, amongst other things, computer aided literacy education. These programs allow disadvantaged early school leavers to acquire necessary living skills in an environment they find more acceptable. They highlight the importance of providing such education in both formal and informal environments, to more appropriately meet the needs of the learner.

Mr Wood: They split their infinitives in this, too; that is crook.

MR HUMPHRIES: I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker!

Ms Follett: He is the Minister for Education.

MR HUMPHRIES: I do not necessarily write these things, Ms Follett. "To meet more appropriately the needs of the learner" - I correct that statement for *Hansard*, Mr Speaker.

So, what was achieved - I think it is fair to ask - in International Literacy Year? Many initiatives were encouraged and resourced in 1990, including the establishment of new consultative arrangements. These

arrangements will continue. The ACT ILY Coordination Committee will be reconstituted to oversee the development of an integrated ACT literacy strategy which will cover all levels of education, from before school to the adult years, and both formal and informal provision. This strategy will determine priorities for the 1990s, as we work towards the United Nations target of literacy for all by the year 2000.

The Government recognises the importance of basic skills education in a rapidly changing technological society, and shares the view of the ACT Council for Adult Literacy in accepting the right of all citizens to develop:

... an active literacy which allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively in society.

Mr Speaker, I commend this paper to the house:

Literacy - International Year - 1990 - Ministerial statement, 19 March 1991.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Nolan**) adjourned.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - WESTON CREEK **Discussion of Matter of Public Importance**

MR SPEAKER: I have received a letter from Mr Berry proposing that a matter of public importance be submitted to the Assembly for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Liberal Residents Rally Government to maintain Health and Community Services in Weston Creek.

MR BERRY (3.23): The people who were not mentioned in the topic of this matter of public importance, the No Self Government people, have had a role to play in this as well because they have helped the Chief Minister, Mr Kaine, deliver a government that, as he described it in his election material, one could afford. The people of Weston Creek would disagree because they have had their community assets pillaged by this Government and, of course, they sting from the effects of those raids on their assets. The people of Weston Creek have been singled out for special treatment by a very special government. This lot opposite have ensured that people in Weston Creek have been subjected to more cuts than any other area of the ACT.

19 March 1991

One asks the question, "Why?". It is very difficult to come to an answer. There have been school closures and, of course, Holder High School and Holder Primary School have been mentioned in that respect. There have been preschool closures and the Holder Preschool is targeted for closure. But, most importantly, included in this attack on the assets of Weston Creek has been the closure of the Weston Creek Health Centre. It is also important to ensure for the public record that the Government's incompetence and bungling on this issue is featured.

What it has really meant, from the outset, is disruption of the Weston Creek Community Service. Mr Hudson agreed that the Weston Creek community had been harshly attacked when he recommended that the Government proposal to close Rivett Primary School be dropped. But why close the health centre? It seemed that there was no answer. Why would you want to close a health centre? After all, anybody who is informed on the delivery of community health services would know the value of a quality health centre and respect the value of those services in ensuring that our people do not find themselves in hospital as early as they might otherwise. Well, the answer is: So that they could close Lyons and North Curtin schools. The health centre was closed not because the services were not needed or were not used in the Weston Creek area, but so that this Government could close the Lyons and North Curtin schools.

It was just another decision of this Government made on simplistic economic grounds. That is what the school closures debate has shown; that these were simplistic economic grounds that did not even address the community's use of services or the need for services. It was merely a knee-jerk decision made on the run, and I will come to that in a little more detail later.

The Government had to find space after they found out that they could not move the students into South Curtin school until they had relocated the Therapy Centre. I have to say that on the day Mr Humphries did not even seem to know there was a Therapy Centre, because no plans had been made for its removal from the South Curtin school. Having had it pointed out to him that there was a significant group in the community that needed help and that their centre had to be saved, the Government responded with a knee-jerk decision to relocate the Therapy Centre in the Weston Creek Health Centre. But, most importantly, they forgot about the important services that that health centre provided to the people at Weston Creek. That illustrates the bungling nature of this Government when it does not even know about such important services as are provided by the Therapy Centre. If it had known, it would have been included in its school closure arrangements. But it had been forgotten.

We then come to the question: Why would you want to move the Therapy Centre to the Weston Creek Health Centre? It was not because it was a better location for the people that used it. That was not proven. As I have said earlier, it was because the Government had forgotten about it and had to find a place in a hurry. It seemed that there was some sympathy within the bureaucracy towards the withdrawal of that important community health centre from the people of Weston Creek.

What services at the Weston Creek Health Centre have been closed down or moved out? The podiatrist has been closed down in the Weston Creek Health Centre.

Mr Humphries: Closed down there; not moved away.

MR BERRY: The Minister agrees that it has been closed down at the Weston Creek Health Centre. The dietitian has suffered a similar fate, as well as the immunisation clinic, the baby health clinic, the physiotherapist and the psychiatrist. It may be argued that the psychiatrist could provide services from another location because those services are for all Canberrans. But the same cannot be argued for those other important services which have been closed down in the Weston Creek Health Centre.

Mr Humphries: Why not?

MR BERRY: All of the other services were local services for the people of Weston Creek. Mr Humphries asked, "Why not?". If he had spent a little bit of time out in the Weston Creek Health Centre he would have noticed that the people who use these services are mostly the frail and the aged, or the very young and the disadvantaged in the community. Obviously the Minister has not spent any time there, or he would have noticed this and he would not have had to ask me the stupid question, "Why not?". What a stupid question.

The people who were using those services in that centre were the people who needed them; not people who could hire a chauffeur or a taxi or have somebody drive them to centres far removed, perhaps even to private practitioners in the medical field. These were the people who needed a community health centre, one nearby - the old, the frail aged, the young and the disadvantaged. And all I get from the Minister is, "Why not? Why shouldn't we close that health centre?". Well, that is just not good enough.

We have had many complaints from the residents of Weston Creek about the closure of their health centre. There have been a couple of public meetings which have addressed this issue, but the Government still takes no notice. Canberra's population, if this Government has not noticed, is ageing fast and we must ensure that there is a full range of services provided where those services are needed.

19 March 1991

I think even the Government acknowledges that priority should be given to the delivery of community health services at health centres out in the community; otherwise, as I have said earlier, we end up with the situation where people find their way into acute hospital beds before they need to. It is a simple fact that the ageing are not as mobile as the young - I think Mr Humphries would recognise that - and to force the ageing of Weston Creek to travel further to gain access to basic health services goes against the whole tenor of the Assembly's report on the ageing. It is about time that the Minister woke up to that and agreed with it.

This is an attack on the Weston Creek Health Centre and one has to ask the question: Is it just the thin end of the wedge? Is this Government going to undermine the whole health centre structure? It is becoming pretty obvious that they are pretty sensitive about the health centre structure. There has been enough concern out there in the community about perceived positions of the Government on health centres to worry me and the Labor Opposition sufficiently to fight for the retention of the health centre structure in the ACT. This Government has kept its credentials hidden. There is a secret agenda and they are not laying it on the line. The first of the health centres to go has been the Weston Creek Health Centre.

Last year, Mr Speaker, we also saw a move or signs of a move by the Government to close the Melba Health Centre. It was a welcome sign of community spirit that the people of Melba rose angrily against the Government's decision and the Government saw the error of its ways, we think, and backed off a little. We still do not know what the eventual plans for that health centre might be; but at least the Government is marking time, as far as we can make out, in response to the community's extreme anger about the suggestion that the Melba Health Centre would close.

Minister Duby jumped in and assured the community that their health centre would not close. I rather suspect that he did not have Mr Humphries' agreement to that when he did it. So much for Cabinet solidarity and loyalty in the Government opposite. It does not seem to exist, as we have witnessed by the quivering blades which have found themselves embedded in Mr Humphries' back in recent times. But we have to say, thankfully, that the Melba Health Centre has not closed and we look forward to its retention because it is an excellent health centre.

Bill Stefaniak, who I suspect sets out to represent the people of Weston Creek, has not done so well in all of this because he has not been able to deliver to the people of Weston Creek a program which ensures the retention of the Weston Creek Health Centre. I think we have to ensure that the campaign goes on. Mr Stefaniak has called for the people of Weston Creek to submit ideas for development or for new facilities in the area. He has said that there is a potential for many parts of Weston Creek to be further

developed for housing, thus boosting the population and maintaining school enrolments. But why would people want to move to an area with no health centre?

Ms Follett: And no schools.

MR BERRY: And no schools. This sort of drum beating, in my view, sends a very distorted view to the community, but the community out there are fairly observant and are awake to what this Government is about. On the one hand we have people like Bill Stefaniak saying that there is a potential for development in the Weston Creek area, and on the other hand we have the Government tearing the guts out of the community by pillaging the community assets.

Mr Humphries: Emotive language.

MR BERRY: But it is true. The Minister says that it is emotive language. Well, the withdrawal of your community health centre is an emotional issue. A lot of aged people, frail people and disadvantaged people are emotionally upset by what this Government has done. If the Minister has not recognised that now, things are crook. The impact on the Weston Creek community has never been assessed. This is a knee-jerk reaction to the needs of the Government, caught by its bungle over school closures. Like the Therapy Centre, their location was not known when the decision to close the health centre was taken.

The Minister was not aware of the Therapy Centre, I am sure. Without any consultation on their fate, it was decided that they would have to move. And what has this move meant? It has meant that there has been significant dislocation of community services and, of course, an increased cost of rent which will have to be subsidised by government. We know that the rent for the Weston Creek Health Centre was about \$100 a week and in their new location it could be somewhere between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a week, depending on the outcome of negotiations on their future digs. Then again, we are not quite sure what might happen to them. It could be that they will end up in the Weston Creek Health Centre again.

What is most important as far as the Labor Opposition is concerned is that we get that health centre open, to provide community health services to the people of Weston Creek who need them. Bill Stefaniak ought to be fighting for that. The result of the Government's short-sighted decision to close schools means that the people of the ACT will have an extra burden of up to \$100,000 for the provision of rent to the Weston Creek Community Service.

19 March 1991

With the decision not to move the Therapy Centre to the Weston Creek Health Centre came the opportunity to turn around the expense of the decision and reinstate the community service and the health service in the Weston Creek Health Centre. But what has the Government done? It has played it very close to the chest now because it has no philosophical commitment to the provision of services to the disadvantaged in our community. This Government has bungled the opportunity, it seems, and it intends to move the Independent Living Centre to the Weston Creek Health Centre. The Government has steadfastly refused to consider the needs of the residents of Weston Creek. I have to say that this proves that the actions of this Government made the residents of Weston Creek second-class citizens.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I call on the Government to reinstate the health centre at Weston Creek and the community services in the Weston Creek Health Centre, and to do it as a priority. I must say that we have to have no more hollow words on this issue. They have to be serious about delivering these services to the community.

MR HUMPHRIES (Minister for Health, Education and the Arts) (3.38): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I understand the Opposition's need to speak on these sorts of issues, about pools at Tuggeranong and health services in Weston Creek and so on. The Opposition are very sensitive to the fact that they have no members of this Assembly who come from or who live in many of these places in Canberra, unlike this Alliance Government. I understand, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, that nobody on the Opposition benches - - -

Mr Wood: That is not really a good example, is it? Haven't you realised it a little late?

MR HUMPHRIES: I think it is an excellent example, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker.

Mr Wood: You went in the wrong direction.

MR HUMPHRIES: On the contrary; I think it is very important and good to note that this Government does have representation from the whole of the ACT - from north Canberra, from south Canberra, from Belconnen, from Weston, from Woden, from Tuggeranong. Every part of the ACT is represented.

Mr Wood: I do not think you should use the word "representation".

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jensen): Order, Mr Wood! I think Mr Humphries
- - -

Mr Wood: You think what?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am just about to suggest that Mr Berry was heard in relative silence and I request that you do the same for the Minister.

MR HUMPHRIES: Thank you, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. I will not touch on that raw spot any more during this speech. I want to correct a few assertions made by Mr Berry which are, as usual, inaccurate. Mr Berry alleged that the ACT Government had closed the Weston Creek Health Centre. That is simply not the case. Mr Berry obviously would like this particular scenario to conform to his predetermined concept of the ACT Government charging in, closing health facilities and selling them off.

What, unfortunately, he has failed to bear in mind is that, first of all, there are at least two health services, and more on the way, operating out of the Weston Creek Health Centre now and into the future, and they are, particularly, the doctor and the dentist who are located on that site. What is more, services will continue to be provided to people in the Weston Creek area on much the same basis as they are provided now.

Mr Berry conveniently overlooks that fact and also overlooks the fact that the Government will continue to provide services on the basis that the Weston Creek Health Centre will remain an asset for the benefit of the people of Weston Creek, and, indeed, for the whole of Canberra.

If we were going to dispose of the Weston Creek Health Centre, sell it off, give it away to somebody else, privatise it, or anything of that kind, you could understand some of the comments that have been made; but we are not doing that. We are merely, in effect, reorganising the services available from the Weston Creek Health Centre. Where is the crime in that? I do not think there is any crime in that. I think we are responding to the changing needs of Canberra in a way in which those knee jerkers opposite cannot respond because they do not accept that any change can be validated by this Government. I think, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, that we should all be aware of what those changing needs are and be prepared to respond to them. We as a Government certainly are.

Mr Berry also alleged that the Hudson report had found that the needs of the Weston Creek community had been attacked by the Government's original decision. That, of course, is Mr Berry's own emotional gloss on the original report by Mr Hudson. Nothing of the sort was said in his report, although he did suggest at the end of that report that if certain circumstances were satisfied there ought not be a closure of the Rivett Primary School.

19 March 1991

While I am on schools, I might just briefly touch on the points Mr Berry raised about them as well. He asked why it was that the ACT Government was closing schools in the Weston Creek area. I do not think there is any need to go over those arguments in detail. Mr Berry is one of the few people in the ACT who do not understand why this had to happen; but for his benefit I might remind him that there are seriously declining school-age populations in the Weston Creek area. That was the reason why this Government felt it necessary to close a primary school in that part of Canberra. It was very much the same reason why the former Federal Labor Government found it necessary to close a primary school in the same part of Canberra; that is, that there is a seriously declining school-age population there.

To return to the issue of health services moving out of the Weston Creek area - my colleagues Mr Stefaniak and Mr Collaery will touch on other things as well, such as the provision of other services on that site and, in particular, community services available in Weston Creek - it is quite erroneous and inaccurate of Mr Berry to portray the moving out of some facilities from the Weston Creek Health Centre as a denial of all those services to people in Weston Creek. It is simply false.

I will give you some examples. The community psychiatrist presently operates from Phillip. That person was previously located in the Weston Creek Health Centre. The psychiatry clients do not come just from Weston Creek; they come from all over the ACT. There are advantages in locating a facility like a psychiatrist at a major public transport interchange, or a major shopping centre like Phillip, together with a whole series of other facilities, in this case at the Phillip Health Centre.

The Opposition is quick to put out press releases saying that the people of Weston Creek lose out, but is not so quick to acknowledge that people in Woden or in other parts of the ACT to which services might be relocated benefit from these government decisions. They also fail to mention the benefits that flow to people in the Weston Creek area from the relocation into Weston Creek of certain services which the Government has decided to put there. That, of course, is glossed over; it is ignored; it is not important in the drive to make people think as little as possible or think as poorly as possible of this Government.

Other services were previously in the Weston Creek Health Centre. The infant and child health clinic was formerly there. It now operates at Minns Place in Weston and it operates with increased hours of service at neighbouring clinics, namely, Rivett, Waramanga and Duffy. The immunisation clinic for infants has been transferred to the Phillip Health Centre. An important part of all those services changes is that, because they have moved to those sorts of locations, there is the capacity to increase the operating hours of those services.

In the case of many ACT services, because of the splintered nature of their operation - that has been an historical fact in the ACT; and here I am talking particularly about infant health clinics - and because of their wide scattering across the Territory, necessarily operating hours are very short. A great advantage of bringing services into more central locations and reducing the total number of operating locations is that the ACT has the capacity to operate longer services at those centres, to operate for longer periods during each working day. Many of the services now moving, for example, to the Phillip Health Centre will, in fact, be available for five days a week and working longer hours during each of those five days as compared with the operating hours at the previous Weston Creek Health Centre when it was operating as a full health centre.

The community nursing team, previously located in the Weston Creek Health Centre, delivered and delivers domiciliary health care to people in the ACT. They have been relocated to two sites - one in Kambah and the other in Phillip - due in part to the restructuring of teams as part of the nurses career structure review.

There will be no change to client services because services are delivered to clients in their own homes. What demonstrated need, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, is there for those nurses to base themselves in Weston Creek? They travel to people in their homes; so why should they be based in Weston Creek? Why could they not be based, for example, in Phillip which, in fact, is slightly more central to the whole of Canberra than is Weston Creek? I would argue that those sorts of things have been overlooked, I would say deliberately, by those opposite in their desire to paint black pictures about this Government's program of change.

Sessional services delivered by health professionals who went to Weston from Phillip for one to two sessions per week have also obviously been affected. Services have been transferred to the Phillip Community Health Centre in many cases, and I have already referred to the longer operating hours that are possible as a result of that. The sessional services that have been transferred now to Phillip include physiotherapy and podiatry. I think Mr Berry mentioned those. It is also worth mentioning that the dietitian now operating out of Phillip has a Territory-wide service to provide. There is no good demonstrated reason why that service has to be provided at Weston Creek rather than at some other central location in the ACT. On that score Mr Berry has completely failed to convince me, or anybody else listening to this debate, I imagine, that there is any imperative reason why those State-wide services have to be provided out of Weston Creek.

19 March 1991

But, as I said, the critical flaw in the Opposition's argument is that the centre remains open as a centre providing services to people in the ACT and it continues to provide a range of services, including new services not previously located in the Weston Creek area. There are two outstanding examples of that. First of all, there is the Therapy Centre previously located in the Curtin Primary School. Naturally, people who use that service presently and who live in the Weston Creek area will be significantly advantaged because they will be able to take their children a shorter distance to that facility than was the case previously. I think most other citizens of the ACT would not suffer unduly because of that move. Citizens in Tuggeranong, for example, will not necessarily have any further to travel to go to Weston Creek than they did previously to Curtin. Similarly, those living in Belconnen, or north Canberra or even south Canberra will not have significant impositions put upon them as a result of that change. So, what one person loses, another person gains.

The Independent Living Centre is another good example of how that service is being enhanced to the benefit of people living in the Weston Creek area. Mr Berry fails to mention the fact that there are people who presently need and use the services of the Independent Living Centre and who live in the Weston Creek area. What has he said about their additional benefits, their additional gains from the fact that the ILC will now be located in that place? He has said nothing at all. Of course, he will not, because he does not want to paint the other side of the picture. It is not in his interests to present a balanced picture of these services and what is happening to them.

I think that there are many emotional things being said at the moment about changes in the area of health, and it is most unfortunate that the Opposition happens to jump on that band wagon and to use that as an opportunity to beat the Government. It may be that in the course of time facts will prove themselves and prove the Opposition to be wrong, but in the meantime it is this Government's job to make sure the people are made aware of these sorts of misleading statements.

I think it is unfortunate also that some of this attitude spills over on occasions to other people. Members may have seen an article in the Weston Creek-Woden edition of the *Valley View* last week, the 12 March edition, in which a banner headline on the front page said, "Health Services Condemned". This is the article. It quoted a random survey conducted by the *Valley View* on Friday, presumably of the preceding week. I quote from that article:

Thirty-four percent of residents interviewed during the survey said they were not satisfied with local health services.

The first question that sprang to my mind was: What did the other 66 per cent say? As a result of that query I arranged for the editor of the *Valley View* to be contacted this morning and to have my office discuss with him some of the implications and the manner in which that survey was conducted. It was the editor who conducted the survey and that particular person was not exactly sure about some of the responses he had received because the notepad on which he had recorded his interviews with people was at home. That is fair enough.

He thought, however, from memory, that he had interviewed about 50 people and that about another 20 or so had been interviewed by another member of his staff. About 70 people, in other words, had been interviewed in Weston Creek. Whether that is a statistically valid sample or not I think those people from places like the Australian Bureau of Statistics could argue about. He said, in addition, that, while 34 per cent said that they were unhappy, most people were unaware of any problems in the Weston Creek services area. An equal percentage, that is 34 per cent approximately, said that they were fairly satisfied with health services in the area. Another 20 per cent of people did not know. I think, in the circumstances, to see a headline like "Health Services Condemned" because 34 per cent said that they were unhappy and 34 per cent said that they were fairly satisfied is a slight stretching of the evidence that was actually brought forward in this survey, whatever that evidence is worth, given the sample size and the way in which it was conducted.

I think it is extremely easy to attack, to criticise, to score political points about the inadequacy of services - - -

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Mr Humphries! Your time has expired. Is there no-one speaking from the Opposition benches in accordance with normal procedure?

MS FOLLETT (Leader of the Opposition) (3.54): Nothing that Mr Humphries has had to say on this matter would persuade anybody of the Government's good intentions in relation to Weston Creek. It seems to me and, indeed, to the residents of Weston Creek itself that all of the Government's activities relating to that area have been marked by short-sightedness, by total chaos and by inevitable conflict. It has been the actions of the Ministers involved and of the Government as a whole that have brought about that situation.

Mr Humphries seems to put great store in an attempt to persuade Mr Berry and other members of the Opposition of his actions in relation to Weston Creek. I put it to him and to the Assembly that it might be of a lot more use if he attempted to negotiate and consult with the people of Weston Creek themselves on these issues. That has yet to happen. What we have seen in Weston Creek is an attempt by

19 March 1991

this Government to pretend, first of all, that the place does not really exist; that those eight suburbs are somehow to be divided equally between Tuggeranong and Woden, and the Weston Creek community, that neighbourhood, somehow ceases to exist as an entity.

The Government's view is put in spite of the fact that at least one of its members actually lives there. I find it extraordinary. Action by the Government in relation to the Weston Creek area really stands alone. They have taken no such action in relation to any other area of the ACT. The people of Weston Creek quite rightly feel that they have been singled out by this Government for particularly harsh treatment. An examination of the services that they have lost under the Alliance Government bears out what they believe.

They have lost their primary school, the Holder Primary School, and the preschool. In that decision the views of the local community were not considered, and have still not been considered. It is still unclear what intentions the Government has in relation to the Holder school site. They do not know; chaos reigns. We understand that the Therapy Centre - Mr Humphries has again mentioned that issue - may be moving to the Weston Creek area, but the people of Weston Creek do not really know about that. We understand that the Independent Living Centre might be moving to Weston Creek, but nobody has heard about it.

Apart from the short-sightedness of the Government's actions, they have marked themselves out also for a particular tactic in regard to community activities. That tactic is to set one community's needs against another's. It was very evident in this Government's treatment on their school closures program that they intended to win their point of view by setting community groups against each other. Their setting of the legitimate needs of the Therapy Centre and the Independent Living Centre against the needs of people in the Weston Creek neighbourhood is another example of that tactic. It is a despicable tactic. It is a tactic used by a Government that knows that its decision making, its rationale, has no credibility whatsoever. I think it deserves to be condemned, and I know that the people of the Weston Creek area do condemn it.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, the closure of the Weston Creek Health Centre has outraged that community. Mr Humphries has only to visit the area to find that out for himself. He has told us that the service will continue to operate, but it is no thanks to him. The people in Weston Creek know full well that Mr Humphries would have got rid of all of the services, including the doctor and the dentist, from that health centre, if he had been able to. Only the fact that they had a lease saved them from being chucked out.

Mr Humphries has referred to the relocation of services such as the immunisation clinic, the psychiatrist, the physiotherapist and the chiropodist, community nursing, the child medical officer, the social worker and so on. "Relocation" he calls it. But to the people who live in that neighbourhood of Weston Creek, whose very existence the Government denies, they are their services. Relocation is not of much use to you if you are not too mobile, if you do not have a car, if you cannot get about as easily as you would like to, either because you are elderly or because you have young children, or whatever the reason. Relocation is no help whatsoever to the people of the Weston Creek area.

But, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, it is the proposal of the Government to shift the Weston Creek Community Service into commercial premises that really hits an all time low in their handling of community concerns. That shift would involve rent of at least \$51,000 a year. It involves a lack of toilet facilities on the ground floor of the building. It involves additional difficulties of access for people with disabilities, for the frail aged, and certainly for young mothers with children.

I am informed that the Government has now signed or is in the process of signing the lease on that property, but as of lunchtime today the community service had not been advised of any steps in the process. It has not been advised of whether that lease is to be signed. The Community Service, which is to use these premises, has not been advised of what the lease conditions are; nor has it been advised of how the rent is to be paid. It has not got the money.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I would ask, through you: Is it the intention of Mr Collaery or his portfolio to find the additional funds for that rent? If so, I would put it to the Government that they need, first of all, to make sure that the community service is properly consulted, and, secondly, that it is assured on the question of the funds. They have had no consultation whatsoever.

Mr Collaery: Nonsense; I have been out there and spoken with them.

MS FOLLETT: I have been advised that they have not had any indication from the Government of their intentions. They have no indications of what are the necessary refurbishments to the building, what are the internal office rearrangements to accommodate the service, and so on. I would be very glad to hear from Mr Collaery, as he seems anxious to speak on this matter. What is to become of the volunteer program in Weston Creek under these new arrangements? They do not know. I take it that Mr Collaery knows, sitting over there muttering away to himself. I think it is time he informed the Assembly, and it is long overdue that he informed the Weston Creek neighbourhood.

19 March 1991

I trust that Mr Collaery will also be able to advise us what is to happen to the special care transport service, the community work program, the aged care program and the senior citizens drop-in centre, the youth program and the youth drop-in centre. All of these are within your portfolio, Mr Collaery. I would like to ask how these services will be provided when there are not adequate kitchen facilities, when access is difficult for many people, when the toilets can only be reached by climbing two flights of stairs.

Mr Collaery: Have you been there?

MS FOLLETT: Mr Collaery asks have I been there. I think a better question is: Has he been there? The people of Weston Creek have also been disadvantaged by the loss of their Weston Creek baby health centre. The Government's preparedness on that issue to attack people who are least able to help themselves just demonstrates their total lack of care for the community. We have the farcical situation where, depending on which side of Hindmarsh Drive you live, you have to use either the baby health centre in Woden or the one in Tuggeranong for immunisation services and for baby health services.

As I said before, the Government is pretending that Weston Creek does not exist, that the people in Weston Creek are not as entitled as other communities in the ACT to have those services delivered to them locally. One issue that I would like to raise, finally, is this: There is a large elderly population in Weston Creek, and that includes, of course, the Mirinjani Retirement Village. It is those people who perhaps have the greatest difficulty in coming to terms with this Government's denial of the essential services which they require. Those people are the least able to use Mr Humphries' so-called relocated services, and they do require those services to be delivered in their own neighbourhood.

It is a fact that many of the people in Weston Creek went there specifically for the services that were available. Now they are facing a situation where those services have been wiped out by the Government opposite. We have had no word of comment from government members on this issue, despite the large amount of press comment.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Ms Follett; your time has expired.

MR COLLAERY (Attorney-General and Minister for Housing and Community Services) (4.04): There are two political groups in the ACT community who trade off ignorance, prejudice and ideological standpoints and who fall like a vulture on every issue that can sway people who probably do not have time to take a very full interest in public affairs. I refer, of course, to the Abolish Self Government candidate and the Labor element in this community. Both trade off ignorance and prejudice. They use the same language. I was sitting here this afternoon thinking what a similarity there is between the two when we hear the language, when we hear of the atrocities, the banishments, the lack of consideration - all that language used by those two groups, the Abolish Self Government and the shortly to be abolished around Australia Labor Party.

Mr Connolly: We will be here when the Residents Rally is but a distant memory.

MR COLLAERY: I suggest that you read Max Walsh in the last *Bulletin* to see where your Labor Party is going. Ms Follett made a number of statements, once again in line with the usual way the Labor Opposition acts on this floor. They do not back it up. She failed to respond to interjections to indicate whether she had toured every room of the Weston Creek Community Service, like I did recently. She did not respond to that.

There has been no reduction of community services at Weston Creek. I am saying that as Minister. I have been there and have spoken at length with the coordinator there. There is an aged drop-in service which is housed in a west-facing, triangular shaped room. There is a youth drop-in centre at the other side of the triangle which is unfortunately placed - it was placed before we were in government - opposite Matilda's Tavern. Sharing Places, with which I have constant and very meaningful contact, is behind and below the community hall, and the Pooh Bear's Occasional Care is there as well.

Ms Follett said that there had been a diminution of those services. There has been no diminution of those services. The drop-in centres for youth and the aged are where they were before this process started. I will come back to what I see is the great future for the Weston Creek Community Centre, but I want to deal with the facts. Ms Follett also put into the record that the Weston Creek Community Service does not know their lease conditions. Let me put this on the record. I went out there and asked for a copy of the lease and they gave it to me. They gave me the lease. I did not have a copy in my ministerial office; so I went out there with a ministerial staffer and I was given a copy of the lease.

They know their lease conditions on the Brierly Street frontage. They know them full well. They were also interested in expanding their accommodation on the Brierly Street frontage and there has been some negotiation taking

19 March 1991

place. I can inform the house that the proprietor, on my last advice last week, was willing to grant a further lease on that commercial shopfront area. I want to say and to put on the record that that is blue chip frontage. I do not believe that we can afford the escalating rent rises for the next 10 years on that blue chip frontage, and we need to look for the long term in Weston Creek. I will come back to that.

Ms Follett also said that they did not know whether additional funds would be granted. They were told by me, and they have been told by my department on numerous occasions, that we will meet the costs of the extra rent. I suggest to you that, were there representatives of the Weston Creek Community Service here now, they would nod and put down the nonsense that this person who purports to offer an alternative government put to us today. It was entirely improper of the Leader of the Opposition to make all those propositions which are fundamentally wrong and clearly untrue.

Ms Follett also said that the Weston Creek Community Service had not been properly consulted. Well, Ms Follett has a press release, I am sure, from the director of the community service - the last one that was issued by fax on 13 March - and that document refers to contact with the Alliance Government, and other press releases refer to contact with me, as Minister. They have been consulted. There have been literally scores of phone calls to my office and to my ministerial staff. There has been a high volume of personalised interface action between my ministerial office and that service. Not been properly consulted? I think we have gone the other way. We have discussed it at great length. Ms Follett said that the Alliance does not know what is going on out there. She failed to respond - I put it on the record - to a challenge as to whether she has been to those places, not just to a hall where the usual Abolish Self Government or Labor beat-up had to be done. I am talking about the actual places. Has she been there and spoken to the supervisors in those places, as I have as Minister on more than one occasion?

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, this again is an MPI that lacks a credible base. This Government has to defend itself from the most simplistic and superficially attractive propositions. They may attract some tabloid press, and they may well get, through scaremongering, people to public meetings; but they do nothing for the level of government in this Territory.

This Government, following the tradition of this city, will, when resources permit, look carefully at the prospect of consolidating those functions, as we have, and as previous Federal governments have, in Belconnen, at Majura, and now, under our Government, beside the Griffin Centre. Recently Mr Jensen and I laid the foundation stone for the Tuggeranong Community Centre, and, of course, we have other centres in the Territory.

It is only a matter of time before we provide the fuller facility at the Weston Creek Community Centre.

Mr Wood: A fuller facility. That says it.

MR COLLAERY: There is a program, a prudent program, to provide full community centre facilities in the Territory. Mr Wood cast some doubts on that. This Government is committed to the community service elements that exist at Weston Creek. I have already indicated to the community service that if, in the process of unravelling the higher infrastructure costs of this town, stresses are created and dislocations occur within an immediate sector, within a hundred or so metres of other installations, then I regret it; but the fact is that as time goes by those excellent functions at the Weston Creek Community Centre will be drawn together and become even stronger and more powerful. We all hope for that. I am sure all members share that wish.

There were some other comments made that my colleague Mr Humphries has asked me to put down. There had to be an appeal to the babies. The Leader of the Opposition said that we had done away with the infant health clinics. She did not mention in her speech that it is now operating at Minns Place in Weston, with increased hours of service at neighbouring clinics in Rivett, Waramanga and Duffy. The immunisation service for infants has been transferred to the Phillip Health Centre.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I do not think I need to respond at any further length. There is no strength to this matter of public importance. It is important that we provide community services and that we provide centres for them to be conducted from. We have done that and we will continue to do it.

MR WOOD (4.13): Towards the end of his speech Mr Collaery effectively conceded the arguments we have made when he talked about the disruption that was being caused. His tirade ahead of that is seen to be no more than his usual diversionary tactic of attacking the ALP. Those last few minutes of his speech were the most significant. Perhaps it is again part of the Residents Rally tactic of separating itself from the Liberal Party. It may be that he will go back to the people of Weston Creek in some months' time, during an election campaign, and say, "Well, it was the Liberals who did that; we did not really like it".

I am impressed, if that is the right word, by the fact that Mr Stefaniak has not spoken in this debate. I find it unusual that a member who lives in the area will not stand up and engage in this important discussion.

19 March 1991

The actions around the Weston Creek Health Centre are typical of the poor planning that characterises this Government. It is sadly consistent with the poor planning that accompanied their school closures and the whole host of other measures that they undertake. It seems that the Government cannot look one step ahead of what it intends to do. The changes around the former South Curtin school involve the most expensive alternatives that could have been undertaken. This is from a government that supposedly is setting out to make these changes to save money, yet nothing is more directly opposed to that. If you look at the Macquarie school and the South Curtin school, the options they have undertaken are the most expensive; yet we have Mr Humphries time after time talking about the need to save money. It just does not add up. It makes no sense at all.

I want to make one point as an aside, I suppose, from the major debate. I note that Mr Humphries argued that the actions of protestors and the pickets around the school cost the Government money. He was using them as an excuse to explain why it cost more to get the North Curtin children into the new Curtin school. Again that is not the case and again it is the poor planning of the Minister that is responsible.

The additional cost was incurred as a result of overtime and bonuses that were paid in order to complete, if only roughly, the necessary work to have students in on the first day of the school year. It was due to the overtime. What caused that overtime was nothing more than the planning of the Minister. No action at all took place at that school until the last possible moment. Nothing changed during the six or seven weeks of the school holidays; the pickets were there, surely, but nothing changed.

If these changes were to go ahead - and, of course, we did not want them to proceed - surely any sensible administrator, any sensible Minister, would have said, "Let us do it the minute school closes down for the holidays. We have the whole six or seven weeks to do it and we can do it in that time". But, of course, in the typical style of this Government, it was all left to the very last minute. For that reason they paid a much higher price for it than they would otherwise have had to do.

At the same time I understand that bonuses were paid to workers to encourage them to stay there, and that a transport firm was brought up from the coast somewhere at considerable cost and turned around again. There was no benefit from the money that was paid. The changes, all the work that had to go on around South Curtin school, with the delay that occurred at the same time, really did impose that additional cost that the Minister was talking about. It was due to the desperation that the Government had that those children at North Curtin should not return to their

school. His inability to plan, his inability to resolve the issues, led to that additional cost that I referred to; it was not due to any other factor.

One of the things that have not been given to us by the Government today is the cost of those very high rentals as a result of some of these changes around the Weston Creek area. I presume that they are known. Mr Collaery talks about other matters, so I assume that he knows what they are. I wonder why he is not saying it.

Mr Speaker, I have received a note from your deputy who tells me that Mr Stefaniak would like an opportunity to speak. In view of that remarkable indication - it is a welcome change from the silence that has come from the Government back bench over the whole issue of school and hospital closures - I am prepared to curtail my time to allow him to say some words. I welcome it.

MR STEFANIAK (4.19): Mr Speaker, I am happy to talk on this subject because I am the only member of the Assembly who lives there. I am concerned that the Leader of the Opposition, who is not here now, might be talking up a situation that does not really exist.

During the course of this Assembly I have received a large number of complaints and comments from people in Weston Creek. I get them quite frequently; I get them every time I go to the shopping centre. I get people coming round to my house. At one stage I rented a room out there in the community centre. I have spoken to a lot of people about a lot of things. The schools issue was certainly a very big one, and I am glad that I made quite a positive contribution in relation to a number of problems that arose. I spoke with my friend Mr Humphries and I am very happy that Rivett Primary School remained open.

Mr Connolly: Positive contribution? But they shut the schools in the area.

MR STEFANIAK: There were some continuing problems, Mr Connolly. You may well laugh about that, but there were some continuing problems there as a result of that school remaining open. I am pleased to say that every time I saw the Minister for Education, who had responsibility for that school, he was always prepared to listen; to listen to the community groups who saw him and, indeed, to act on some of the problems when he realised that there were problems there. I found him most responsive to those problems.

I have listened with interest to the debate today because, of the problems people in Weston Creek have come to me about, I have not had very much concern expressed to me since we took government in relation to either the community centre or, more specifically, the health centre. I can recall some representations last year when I took Mr Humphries around the health centre and we tried to sort out a problem for one particular group there, but in relation

19 March 1991

to this current issue I think I have received about two letters on it. When one compares that with other problems in Weston Creek, including some problems they are suffering now in Brierly Street as a result of some late night drinking binges and some problems a few shopkeepers have had with broken windows, I just have not received anything in relation to the question of the health centre.

I have listened with interest to the speeches. I listened with interest to what the responsible Minister for Health has said, too. He indicated that there are some facilities which have been transferred; there are others which are being transferred in. He has indicated, and he has put it most strongly, that the people at Weston Creek are not being disadvantaged.

I noted with interest some comments made, I think, by Mr Berry who indicated that people will have to go to Woden now for certain facilities they would otherwise get at the Weston Creek Health Centre. Certainly other facilities are coming into Weston Creek. But let us just look at that. Unless one lives very close to the Weston Creek Health Centre one is going to have to travel there. Let us assume that the people concerned do not have a car. They are going to have to get there with the help of friends or by bus. If you live close to the health centre, the only people that may affect - and I concede this - may well be the elderly. Mr Humphries was at pains to indicate how they will not be disadvantaged.

I can see that there may be some problem and I am certainly going to take some steps myself. If need be, I will go out there and talk to elderly people to see how the new arrangements are working. The fact of the matter, Mr Berry, is that no-one has really complained to me about any problems there so far. I think that is demonstrated by the conversation Mr Humphries had with the editor of the *Valley View*, who indicated that a large proportion of people surveyed in Weston Creek did not know that there was a problem. Maybe, Mr Berry, there is not a problem here.

Mr Berry: You cannot deliver; that is why they will not come to you.

MR STEFANIAK: Maybe it is just part of your fertile imagination. You are dreaming it up and you are probably - - -

Mrs Grassby: You should have come to the public meeting then, Bill, if there is no problem. There were a lot of people there.

MR STEFANIAK: I would have loved to, Mrs Grassby, but you did not invite me. I noted in the paper that there were selected speakers. They were selected very carefully by the ALP branch.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Stefaniak, the time for the MPI has expired.

MR STEFANIAK: I seek a short extension, Mr Speaker, of two minutes.

Leave not granted.

MR SPEAKER: The discussion is concluded.

CASINO PROJECT Allegations by Member

MR MOORE, by leave: During the last sitting week, in response to a motion of the Government, I made a speech in which I attempted to justify certain allegations I had made in question time. In the cold light of the following week it is quite clear to me that the procedures I followed were inappropriate, and therefore I apologise to the house. I assure you that, should I believe it necessary to raise any allegations in the future, I will do so only if I am prepared to present, and have tabled, all appropriate evidence.

With reference to the particular issue raised, I should point out that in putting the original question there was never a suggestion that anyone was in a position of being bought off by would-be casino operators. Rather, the notion was a matter of protocol - that there was a failure to keep at arm's length from the process, a failure to stick to a government commitment. However, if the Government still considers the matter to be of such importance as to go to the National Crime Authority, I assure the house of my full cooperation with that body. Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you, members.

STOCK BILL 1991

Debate resumed from 21 February 1991, on motion by **Mr Duby**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MRS GRASSBY (4.25): In speaking to this Bill let me say from the start that the Labor Party is not opposed to the substance of the purpose of this Bill. It is fair to say that the Stock Act of 1934 was somewhat out of date and required amendments and modification to give it consistency with similar legislation elsewhere in Australia.

19 March 1991

In seeking to simplify the administration in this policy area and to make things easier for the rural leaseholders, the Bill essentially overcomes some of the previous difficulties associated with the outdated Stock Act of 1934. Clearly, the need exists for a controller of stock and for the ACT to register its own brand for large stock. I am pleased to see both measures adopted in this Bill.

It is also good to see that close cooperation with the relevant authorities in New South Wales will be maintained to avoid unnecessary duplication. I am also pleased to see that the costs associated with this Bill will be covered by the existing budgetary allocations and the levy imposed on the rural leaseholders.

I should like to mention that the penalty system involved with this Bill raises a larger issue which should be addressed by the Government, and that is that there should be a unit penalty system applied to all legislation. I simply ask: Has the Government taken our proposition on board?

I sent copies of the Bill to the leaseholders association and to different people to comment on it. However, I had nothing back. So I gather that they are very happy with the Bill; otherwise I am sure we would have heard from them. The Minister said in this speech that he had also contacted all these authorities and had had no complaints about the Bill. In closing, let me again say that the Labor Party supports this Bill fully.

Sitting suspended from 4.27 to 8.00 pm

MR SPEAKER: Before Mr Jensen proceeds, I advise members that the Kambah Scout Group is in the public gallery.

MR JENSEN (8.01): Mr Speaker, I am speaking tonight to the Stock Bill 1991, presented to the Assembly by the Minister for Urban Services. Like Mrs Grassby, I contacted the Rural Lessees Association and provided them with a copy of the Bill. As they have not been in contact with me since then, I presume that they are happy with the provisions therein. As the Minister stated previously, the Stock Bill 1991 will replace the Stock Act 1934, which has become rather outdated. It is like a lot of legislation in the ACT that was ignored or forgotten by successive Federal governments, both Liberal and Labor.

In presenting this Bill, the Alliance Government is acting to reduce unnecessary regulative controls on primary producers in the ACT. The measures taken to reduce the regulative controls are to allow ACT primary producers to write a permit for the droving of their own stock, and to release lands no longer required for stock routes.

In regard to permits for the droving of stock, the Stock Act 1934 requires a landholder to obtain a permit from a person authorised to issue stock permits. The intention of the permit is to make stock theft difficult. There are, however, relatively few people authorised to issue permits, and often a permit is required at short notice. This means that landholders who wish to drive their own stock suffer unnecessary delays.

In New South Wales, for example, landholders and stockholders may write a permit for the movement of their own stock, provided they periodically forward a return of permits issued to an appropriate authority. The proposed legislation for the ACT provides for the same arrangement, with the appropriate authority being the controller of stock within the Parks and Conservation Bureau of the Department of the Environment, Land and Planning. This initiative will ensure that landholders who wish to move their own stock will not experience unnecessary delays waiting for a permit to be issued elsewhere.

Let me now focus on stock routes as they apply in the ACT. Those of us from the country are fully aware of the use of stock routes and travelling stock reserves, which are prevalent throughout the country. They have been used for droving stock over great distances in the vast expanses of pastoral Australia. Much Australian folklore has developed over these great areas of terrain, and we can read of the great exploits of people such as Captain Starlight and others, back in the early days of Australia.

Henry Lawson spent some time "on the wallaby", as they say, moving along these tracks in western New South Wales. In times past they have been used for grazing - the long paddock - especially during droughts. Those of us who are familiar with A.B. "Banjo" Paterson will know that he wrote a number of poems about the long paddocks and their use by stockmen, as opposed to the pastoralists, who sought to stop the stockmen from grazing stock in their area and moved them on.

Stock reserves exist in the ACT under the provisions of the Stock Act 1934. The current need for stock routes and reserves was closely assessed in reviewing the Act, and it was decided that provision for stock routes and reserves was no longer appropriate in the ACT. The droving of sheep or cattle is incompatible with the age of modern highways and fast vehicles, although those of us who have travelled recently in western New South Wales are aware that it does go on in that part of the country. In the ACT, where rural land is close to the city, stock routes have in a lot of cases been incorporated into residential development.

I should emphasise that this action does not preclude emergency accommodation of travelling stock or drought grazing; nor does it preclude the movement of stock in the ACT. Areas of unleased rural land could readily be made available for holding stock in an emergency.

19 March 1991

The change proposed in the Stock Bill 1991 is to remove provisions for stock reserves and stock routes. That will assist in rationalising the use of rural land in the ACT. It will be further rationalised and identified when the draft Territory Plan is put on the table, and those areas that are identified for long-term rural use will be clearly indicated on that plan.

In summary, the proposed changes outlined by the Minister regarding registration of stock brands and flexibility of stock rates, combined with the streamlining of procedures for obtaining permits for droving stock, will reduce the regulative controls on primary producers and will be welcomed by rural lessees in the ACT. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

MRS NOLAN (8.07): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that much of the ACT legislation is outdated. The Alliance Government is committed to updating legislation, and this Bill certainly goes some way towards doing that. As we have already heard, this Bill replaces the Stock Act 1934, which has become outdated.

Primary producers are a very important part of the ACT, just as they are a very important part of Australia. The difference, though, is that this Government recognises the important role of the rural industry in the ACT, whereas the rural community around Australia has been sold out by the Federal Labor Government. The New South Wales Government has also updated its legislation in this regard, and I am pleased to see the ACT coming into line with New South Wales.

The main provisions of this Bill are to establish a large stock brand register in the ACT and thus allow ACT primary producers to transfer the registration of a large stock brand to the ACT register; to provide a mechanism where the ACT controller of stock can vary the stock rate on a yearly basis, allowing consistency with nearby areas of New South Wales; to allow ACT primary producers to write a permit for the droving of their own stock; and to release lands no longer required for stock routes.

The regulatory reforms in the Bill are designed to reduce unnecessary administrative overheads to landholders and the Government. Under the proposed legislation, an ACT primary producer will be able to transfer a registration in New South Wales to the ACT register at no cost. As of 1 July 1991, under new arrangements in New South Wales those primary producers who have not reregistered their large stock brand will have their brands cancelled.

The New South Wales Government requires an annual fee for those who do not pay stock levies in New South Wales. This action will be a strong inducement for ACT stock owners to transfer registration to the ACT register. The controller of stock will maintain the necessary liaison with New South Wales authorities to ensure that ACT brands are dissimilar to those in New South Wales, thus protecting stock owners in the ACT.

Stock levies are collected by State authorities based on the carrying capacity or stock rate of the land as assessed by the local Rural Lands Protection Board. The funds collected are directed to the employment of officers such as a veterinarian, stock inspector and rabbit inspector. The Stock Bill 1991 provides for a similar scheme to operate in the ACT. A high priority objective of the Government is to develop strategies for the control of stock disease and feral animals. Typically, this involves action to eradicate footrot and sheep lice infestations, control of rabbits and prevention of stock theft.

Under the current legislation, the stock rate is established within the ACT. Variation of the stock rate to account for influences such as inflation requires an amendment to the legislation. The Stock Bill 1991 provides for the controller of stock to establish a rate each year consistent with the rates applying in nearby areas of New South Wales, and I think that is very important. We are an island surrounded by New South Wales, and it is very important that we have legislation in this area consistent with that in New South Wales. This provision of the proposed legislation will reduce administration costs and repeated representations to this Assembly requesting changes in the stock rate.

In summary, the proposed changes in procedure for the registration of stock brands and flexibility and variation of stock rates will streamline the administrative procedures of the Parks and Conservation Bureau and provide consistency with nearby areas of New South Wales. There is also no doubt that stock returns based on the financial year rather than the calendar year are preferred by the rural community. Much of their other paperwork is on a financial year basis, so why not stock returns? This Bill will allow that to happen.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly. Rural production in the ACT makes a very significant contribution to our economic base, and I am pleased to see this Bill before the Assembly today.

19 March 1991

DR KINLOCH (8.11): I have only a very brief comment to make, Mr Speaker, especially as we have the Scouts with us. I would like to say how exciting Bills are, and the Stock Bill 1991 is probably one of the most exciting Bills we have ever had in the Assembly. It has some suggestions in it for ways in which we could identify factions, whether within the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, or even, Mr Jensen and Mr Collaery, within the Residents Rally. It is a question of whether you clip the left ear or the right ear, and this is well described in item 31. I do commend this to all factional groups.

The thing that is most exciting and, indeed, of literary significance is on page 15, under "Placement of Brands". I would like to read one of these to give the full flavour of how a literary presence is often to be found in our Bills:

Near-shoulder
Off-shoulder
Near-rump, hip and thigh
Off-rump, hip
Near-ribs and saddle
Off-ribs and saddle

It is really magnificent stuff. I commend it, and it should appear in the next issue of *The Poetry of Canberra*.

MR DUBY (Minister for Finance and Urban Services) (8.13), in reply: I thank Dr Kinloch for those enlightening comments concerning the interesting legislation we get to address here in the Assembly. People often forget that the ACT does have a significant rural base. Indeed, we are one of the few places in Australia that have more people than sheep. There are about 150,000 head of sheep in the Territory and almost 15,000 head of cattle. So it is a significant area of concern to a small portion of the population.

I was heartened to hear the expressions of support from members of the Assembly. The changes proposed in this Bill regarding the registration of stock brands and flexibility of stock rates, et cetera, combined with the streamlining of procedures for obtaining permits for the droving of stock, will reduce the regulative controls on primary producers and thus will be welcomed by the rural lessees of the ACT. I thank the Assembly for its support.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

FORWARD ESTIMATES 1991-92 TO 1993-94
Ministerial Statement and Paper

Debate resumed from 13 December, on motion by **Mr Kaine**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS FOLLETT (Leader of the Opposition) (8.14): When the Chief Minister presented this report he said, "The report is not a policy statement but a factual one", and we would normally see that as an uncontroversial statement. However, the passage of time since this report was presented in December last, along with more recent statements by the Chief Minister, have brought into question its factual nature. Leaving aside the clearly subjective policy nature of the Treasurer's statements accompanying the report, the decisions and admissions of this Government since the budget was brought down last year must bring into question the continued accuracy of the estimates.

The debacle of the Government's handling of its school closure program is a clear example. The Minister for Education has now admitted that the school closure program is costing the Government substantially more than they estimated, and in fact their estimate was always disputed by the schools community and, indeed, by the Labor Party.

We have also had the debacle of the Government's direct attack upon the community in its attempt to close Lyons school. This attack included the Government calling in the police to arrest parents trying to defend their school. So desperate was this Government that, after several attempts to get workers to scab on their colleagues, they were forced to pay some workers cash bonuses in order to encourage them to cross the picket.

We had the fast-tracking of the South Curtin refurbishment because of the Government's inability to deal appropriately with the community. How much this has cost the ACT taxpayer we may never know. We have seen the blow-out in costs associated with moving staff from Lyons Primary School, and now there is the amazing fiasco of the Government's performance in the Cook Primary School dispute. They tried to rush through the move of the Belconnen regional office of the education department from Cook to Maribyrnong. Again, because of the failure to communicate with the community, this move ended in a shambles. The move of Cook students to Macquarie has given ACT residents the clearest indication yet of the Minister's inability to keep his promise that no child would suffer because of his school closure program.

On the education front, we must also remember that the budget had not even been passed when the Government accepted that its estimates were incorrect. I ask: Has this been taken into account in the forward estimates? In looking at the forward estimates, we ought also to look at

19 March 1991

the Government's hospital closure program. The mishandling of the Alliance Government's attempt to dismantle the public health system is costing the people of Canberra dearly. This cost is not only in the loss of service but also in forcing people into the expensive private health system as public beds decrease and waiting lists increase.

The mishandling of the Government's program is costing the people of Canberra in financial terms as well. We have the Hunt Boilers dispute. The blame for the cost of this dispute must lie fully at the feet of the Minister for Urban Services - a Minister who is not even competent enough to ensure that the commitments he does make are honoured; a Minister who has said in this Assembly that he did not even know what his commitments in this regard were but he "was satisfied" that they were being implemented.

Such blow-outs are significant enough without taking into account the fact that the original hospital restructuring budget did not even include estimates for a large number of unavoidable transitional costs and the provision of necessary facilities such as car parks.

The Minister keeps assuring us that the hospital redevelopment is on budget, but I predict that that budget will be a moving target. The blow-outs in the hospital closure program may end up being insignificant compared to the failure of the Government to keep the actual hospital budget in check. The Government has already admitted that it is running almost \$12m over budget, and that figure grows every time the Government makes a statement on it.

The Minister knew about the budget problems at the end of 1989. I ask what action he took. The answer is glaringly obvious: He took no action whatsoever. The Minister has admitted that he did not even bother to ask for a progress report on the budget before he went on his extended European vacation. To this we must add the remarks of the Auditor-General in a truly astonishing report, a report that quite clearly illustrates that financial management, or what there is of it, is in a shambles. If the Auditor-General finds that financial accountability in this Government is in a mess, how can we assume that even the most diligent Treasury officer can produce accurate forward estimates? With all of these factors at work, I ask: How can this Assembly assume that the forward estimates are, in Mr Kaine's words, simply a factual statement?

Even more critically, how can the forward estimates be a factual statement when the Treasurer himself does not even consider the budget factual? He has stated that the Appropriation Bills passed by this Assembly are merely budget estimates of expenditure. On this basis I suggest that we should retitile the forward estimates and call them the forward guesstimates. Even if we accept that they may have been a factual statement of the Government's hopes at one stage, I doubt their accuracy now for anything other than general trends.

In terms of those general trends, I must say that I find the forward estimates quite encouraging. To me, they indicate that, without the financial mismanagement of this Alliance Government, the outlook for the ACT budget is not as depressing as is often made out. Obviously, there are assumptions made, such as the outcome of the Grants Commission inquiry, which raise some doubts. However, leaving aside the restructuring provisions, which cannot be seen as ongoing recurrent expenditure, it does appear that the ACT recurrent budget is stabilising.

Whether this will continue under the incompetence of the Alliance Government is doubtful. I should add that I am concerned about the Government's projections on its future capital expenditure. The forward estimates show that this Government is planning to preside over a massive reduction in capital expenditure and it is quite beyond me, Mr Speaker, how the Treasurer can claim that these cuts will, in his words, "not only help stabilise local activity in 1991-92 but also provide the base for a longer-term core program of essential works, thereby minimising the peaks and troughs that have affected the local industry in the past".

They are Mr Kaine's words. I ask: Is he suggesting that we simply remove all the peaks so that we only have troughs? If you slash public capital expenditure when private capital expenditure is subdued, the fact is that you simply get lower troughs. This is not the kind of stabilisation that the Canberra community needs. It will lead to fewer jobs and an even less confident private sector. Mr Kaine's much vaunted budget strategy will do nothing for the ACT economy, except deepen our recession.

The real problem facing the ACT economy is that Mr Kaine and his Alliance actually have no economic strategy for Canberra. There is no plan and there is no concrete proposal. There is simply media hype and talk followed up with indecision and inaction. I would ask you to look, for example, at their response to ACT unemployment. The Chief Minister dismisses the facts, saying that our unemployment is still better than the national rate. All Mr Kaine says is that the Federal Government should do something. It is never his responsibility.

There is also the Government's response to the explosion of business bankruptcies under Mr Kaine's administration. The Chief Minister's first response, as usual, was to deny that the problem existed. He simply attempted to shoot the messenger - in this case, it was the *Canberra Times*. Then, when the facts became so obvious that they could no longer be ignored, the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Collaery, acting for the Chief Minister who was also on an extended overseas holiday, decided that it was time to act.

19 March 1991

As usual, Mr Collaery decided to address only the symptoms, not the causes. While Mr Collaery's attempt to provide a counselling service for bankrupts does deserve support - and, indeed, I support it - it does nothing to assist the ACT economy. What this Government must do is to implement policies designed to improve the economic climate in Canberra. What I mean by that is that they must act, and not simply continue to talk about acting.

It is not good enough for the Chief Minister to blame the Federal Government, stating that there is nothing he can do about the declining performance of the ACT economy. Mr Kaine, as Chief Minister, does have ministerial responsibility for the management of the ACT economy and he cannot continue to abrogate that responsibility. It is not good enough that nine months have elapsed since the Chief Minister, in response to this Assembly's committee report on commercial tenancies, said that the Alliance Government believed that there was a need for urgent action to address the problems encountered by commercial tenants.

As I say, nine months later, he is unable to tell the Assembly what the state of play is. The level of commercial rents is, after all, one of the more important factors in the increasing spate of bankruptcies. It is now clear that the inability of this Government to make a decision will most likely cost the ACT the section 19 redevelopment project. I know that Dr Kinloch would welcome that. He is on the public record as saying that. That section 19 redevelopment project is an economic boost that the ACT desperately needs. Again, we need action, not just more rhetoric. In the middle of a period of economic downturn, all I hear from the people of Canberra about the Government is its failure to grasp the nettle and actually do something for the ACT.

Finally, we have the great mess of ACT planning and development approvals. All we in the Opposition hear from the community is complaints about the current system, and those complaints are not necessarily that the system is flawed but that this Government is too lazy to make even the simplest decision. One way of fixing this is to introduce the new planning legislation. But, given the difficulties that the Government is having in getting that right, we can only assume that it is many months away - and that is despite Mr Kaine's assurance some four weeks ago that it would be available within two weeks.

The bottom line with all of these issues is that the Alliance Government simply cannot wash its hands of the ACT economy. I would suggest that, if Mr Kaine has that planning legislation, he might be wise to make it available rather than keeping it in his bottom drawer, because the ACT economy is the Government's responsibility; and, if there is something that you can do about it such as bringing forward the new planning legislation, then you ought to do it - not just sit there and bluster about it.

The Government must undertake concrete action to assist our economy at a time of recession. It must act for the sake of Canberra's young people who are out looking for jobs; and it must act for the sake of the Canberra small businesses that are facing bankruptcy. In conclusion, I would say that, as far as the Government goes, it is action and not rhetoric that is required.

MR HUMPHRIES (Minister for Health, Education and the Arts) (8.27): We in this place have become used to the Opposition's approach on these matters, and tonight is no exception. That approach, of course, is to sling mud and to make accusations - accusations which cannot and do not stand up to the cold hard light of day but which obviously gain some currency through repetition. Many of the things Ms Follett has said tonight have been said many times before and, of course, she will continue to say them into the coming months, particularly leading up to the next ACT election. The mere fact that she repeats them endlessly, vigorously and with the support of her colleagues does not make them true, and that is the case for almost everything that she has said tonight.

I am happy to go through some of the things she has said and indicate what I believe the situation to be. But it is not accidental that these comments come in the debate on this forward estimates report, because it seems to me that there is encouragement in this document. There is a clear sign that the ACT has the capacity to deliver real change in the economic outlook for the ACT. In particular, inasmuch as it reflects the present Government's policies, it certainly indicates that we have the capacity to reduce expenditure in a range of areas without affecting the quality of services that are offered by the Government.

Ms Follett skirted this issue. She does not particularly have a good record on this issue. For that reason I am not surprised that she skirted it; but nobody can ignore the vital role that responsible economic management will play in the coming years, particularly with the end of that period of special Commonwealth funding. In particular, nobody can ignore the capacity of any government to control public expenditure and, indeed, reduce it as we find ourselves with a smaller financial base than we have enjoyed in the past.

That is an essential question. It is all about reducing public expenditure. I think these forward estimates indicate that it can be done - with the right policies. I say again to the Opposition, as I have said many times before, that when they come up to this place or to the public of the ACT - I do not mind which - and tell us what they are going to do about the public expenditure problem, then I will sit up and listen; but so far I have not heard a thing.

Ms Follett: We will form a government.

19 March 1991

MR HUMPHRIES: Ms Follett volunteers, "We will form a government". That is a very small part of the solution, indeed, Ms Follett; you have a lot further to go than that. I suggest that before you form any government you need to spell out to the people of the ACT how you are going to solve these problems. Those people opposite carp endlessly about how they are going to fix problems and what a bad job we are doing; but, in fact, they do not say just what solutions they propose. That will be a telling point, I think, in the coming election.

I will go over some of the points Ms Follett made. Estimates of savings since school closures I stand by. The Hudson report - which those opposite at various stages tried to denigrate, but which, in fact, was a very convincing document when it was finally released - indicated quite clearly that there were substantial savings to be made by a school consolidation program. It recommended that there be some withdrawal from some of the attempted savings; but, generally speaking, the \$2.5m per annum in a full year was possible as a result of this Government's program. I am certainly not going to take responsibility for the actions of others as far as they relate to the incapacity of the Government to fully realise those savings in this financial year.

Ms Follett, together with her deputy, Mr Berry, continued to make insinuations about the capacity of the hospital redevelopment project to deliver the goods. But I emphasise the word "insinuations". Not one piece of evidence has been produced so far, in this place or outside it, to prove that there is actually some problem with the hospital redevelopment process - not one shred of evidence. Quite clearly they are relying once again on the tactic of simply repeating things often enough until people believe them. I suggest that they try the tactic of repeating often enough that the moon is blue because sooner or later some people will actually believe it. I think they do themselves a disservice in that process. It is in the interest of every Canberran that this process of hospital redevelopment go ahead. This program was contained in a report which Mr Berry received when he was in government and which clearly spelt out the imperatives in this area. Mr Berry, in fact, quite substantially accepted them - including the creation of a principal hospital at the Woden Valley site. That is an important part of the future capacity of this Territory to manage its resources, particularly in the area of health, into the coming decades. Without that project that will be impossible.

The Opposition continues to peddle the untruths that it has been pushing in recent days about supplementation in the hospital budget. They continue to pretend that supplementation is the same thing as a budget blow-out. They know that that is not true. Mr Berry has not for one instant attempted to justify his own supplementation of his own budget in 1989. It is also untrue to say, as Ms Follett has said, "I quote you about the budget problem

back in December of 1989". That is a twisting of the truth. I knew about a budget problem in 1989. The Government took action to respond to that. It took appropriate action. It had to fix up a very big mess inherited from Mr Berry - a \$7m budget mess - and I think people acknowledge that fact. We have only ourselves to look to to deal with this problem, given that the Opposition is insistent on remaining uncooperative in the process of managing the ACT's long-term financial problems. It depends on this Government to deal with those issues.

I note with some interest the contrast in the comments Ms Follett has made tonight about the economic outlook for the ACT and those made by her party colleague the Federal Minister for Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories on the same topic. I was present at the luncheon last Friday when she spoke about that, and I would have to say that Mrs Kelly's outlook was very positive. She said that the ACT had much to be proud of and that the situation here is considerably better than it is in most other places in this country. I really have to wonder how those two views can be reconciled - Ms Follett with her tales of doom and gloom, all put at the doorstep of this particular ACT Government, with no mention whatever of the Federal Government's role in any of this; and Mrs Kelly's comments which paint a considerably better picture, particularly in such areas as youth unemployment, than that painted by the Opposition. Clearly those two views cannot be reconciled.

Mr Collaery: They cannot. All the engines are out on the port wing.

MR HUMPHRIES: Indeed, as Mr Collaery says, it is all to do with port and starboard, is it not?

Mr Collaery: There is a bit of a tilt to the left.

MR HUMPHRIES: It could well be, Mr Deputy Chief Minister; I think I would accept that view. The claim that this Government lacks a strategy for dealing with the ACT's economic problems, I think, needs to be contrasted with the strategy, if that word can be used, that the Follett Government used when it was in power for seven months in 1989. What was their approach to economic problems in the ACT then? What can we expect if we have another dose of the Follett Government after the next election, heaven forbid? Last time we saw increasingly unsuccessful attempts to trim expenditure in the ACT; plans announced which had to be withdrawn after public outcry and outrage about those things; a complete lack of determination in the areas of health and education, among others; followed by a necessity to resort to huge hikes in business taxes, with the result that the ACT, of course, lurched from crisis to crisis until in December of 1989 the Alliance Government put the Follett Government out of its misery. I think the contrast between what has been achieved by us and what was not achieved by those opposite will be a very longstanding memory on the part of many people in the ACT.

19 March 1991

We are achieving significant goals in the area of expenditure reduction. Those are borne out by these forward estimates. They should be examined closely by those opposite; and, in particular, those opposite should think very carefully and clearly about how they are going to portray their own plans to the ACT. It is not enough to criticise this Government and say, "We would do it differently", unless you can stand up in this place, or outside, and say how you would do it differently. I do not believe that they can do it differently. The prospect is a charade.

MR DUBY (Minister for Finance and Urban Services) (8.37): I am surprised that there appear to be no other speakers from the other side of the house. Having listened to that brilliant expose just presented by my colleague the Minister for Health, I can well understand why they sit there shamefaced and ashen-faced, wondering how they could possibly respond to that very good exposition of the nothingness that Ms Follett had to offer.

The Chief Minister said when he presented the forward estimates that the report was a factual one that detailed the forecasts of receipts and expenditure based on the existing policies of the Government. The forward estimates include the full-year impact of the initiatives taken in this year's budget. They also take account of projected population and employment levels, as well as forecast growth in the ACT. The forward estimates reflect the current economic environment, that of a recession - the recession, I might say, that we had to have. This is the recession that was brought on entirely through the bankrupt policies of the Federal Labor Government, and something which I noticed is referred to - - -

Mr Connolly: It is never your fault.

MR DUBY: Did this ACT Government bring on an Australia-wide recession, Mr Connolly? Of course it did not. It certainly did not. Many people are calling this recession a depression; yet Ms Follett in her expose can simply refer to it as "the hard times we are now facing", never, of course, sheeting home the blame to where it should lie. It should lie with the Federal Government; it does lie with the Federal Government and it will continue to do so. People in Australia know who to blame for excessive interest rates, for the young people losing their jobs or never being able to get a job under the policies that we have had for the last eight years, or for the small businesses going broke. Somehow Ms Follett says that all this is the fault of this ACT Government. What a load of rubbish.

As I said, the forward estimates reflect the current economic environment, together with the expected impact of Commonwealth funding levels over the next three years. The Government strategy is that of a balanced budget - something, of course, which Ms Follett as Treasurer could never quite grasp - minimising its needs for borrowings and making the best use of its assets. Obviously the Grants Commission report, expected later this month, will be a significant factor in how the budget will be shaped in the future. To balance next year's recurrent budget, based on certain assumptions about the level of Commonwealth funding, we need to bridge a gap of some \$20m. Part of the strategy will be to continue to fund, from the ACT budget, restructuring proposals which are aimed at achieving long-term expenditure efficiencies and making better use of technologies currently available to us.

In this year's budget a number of proposals in my portfolio are on target to save considerable costs in the long term. One example is the review of telephone and other communication systems, which aims to improve network management, PABX facilities and management and building cabling, and to integrate voice and data communication by utilising modern technologies in these areas. I am happy to say that savings of up to \$1m per year are expected once these measures have been fully implemented. Another example is the energy management program which, in terms of large buildings, aims to use more efficient lighting and heating and to ensure better utilisation of air-conditioning and water. Up to \$350,000 a year will be saved from that program. Another one is the rationalisation of government properties to ensure the maximum utilisation, and to identify surplus properties for sale or for alternative use either by the community or by the Government.

The Government's commitment to ensuring that its assets are properly maintained - after years, I might add, of reduced funding by the Commonwealth - has resulted in an allocation of an additional \$7m for repairs and maintenance. The backlog identified in last year's survey will be addressed so that assets remain functional and operative for a longer period and hence avoid the need for expensive capital replacements.

While the budget strategy aims to minimise borrowings for the capital program, this Government's construction program will provide for longer-term stability in terms of a solid base for an ongoing capital works program. That is something that I think Ms Follett does not understand. This should further reduce the disruption that has been caused by peaks and troughs that have affected and plagued local industry over the years.

The hospitals redevelopment program obviously is the priority in the initial years of the forward estimates period. However, we are putting together a comprehensive program of new works to ensure that residents of the growth

19 March 1991

areas of Canberra get the services and facilities available to the other residents of the ACT. Whilst the forward estimates provide for delivery of services, we will be looking at doing things more effectively and more efficiently. Reducing overhead costs is obviously one way of ensuring that as much of available funding as possible is directed towards service delivery. My department will continue to look at ways of reducing non-essential overhead costs. In order to meet its challenges and new functions more efficiently, the Department of Urban Services has recently completed a major organisational restructure. The main aims are for the department to be better placed to provide services to the community and to meet emerging needs and to ensure that it can provide services and advice to government.

Ten-year responsibilities for the department include the commercialisation of a range of internal services, which will be subject to the competitive user pays discipline of the provision of common services to government agencies in an environment which requires minimising of such costs; the development of the corporatisation process; and the establishment of Territory owned corporations. To that end, as people are aware, we have already established some Territory owned corporations and there are others in the pipeline. To my mind, the most important of those measures will be the corporatisation of ACTEW which will take place from 1 July of this year.

As noted in the recent Estimates Committee report, from next financial year departmental rental costs will be attributed to individual programs to ensure that the full cost of program delivery is clearly reflected in the budget. The department will continue to identify and attribute other such costs in a similar way. These are just some of the areas in which my department has been active and which are reflected in the forward estimates as examined by the committee.

One interesting point that Ms Follett made in her address should not be allowed to go unremarked on. Although she was carping at this Government about our performance in terms of many things which are beyond our control, she said - and I will paraphrase her - that, given the incompetence of the Alliance Government, somehow this year's budget appears to be on track and the estimates report seems to give a balanced budget. She was, of course, quite amazed. Coming from Ms Follett, I regard that as a very good compliment on the financial management of this Government and its officers.

Looking back at the fairy days of the Labor Government that we had here in 1989, no-one would ever wish to have that situation repeated. Indeed, the question posed by Mr Humphries was: What would happen if the ACT was given another dose of Follett economics or another dose of a Labor government? Of course, what we would have in that situation is another dose of the Trotsky Left that Mr

Berry, of course, is very pleased to hold his head high and say he belongs to. Is he a Trotskyite? I am not sure. Anyway, what would happen, of course, is that we would have, God forbid, another case of the mismanagement that we experienced for seven months under Labor and under Ms Follett.

Her carping at the performance of this Government, while in my view not even addressing the issue of what the forward estimates report is all about, shows just how clear her misunderstanding is of matters economic. As I said, the very fact that we are getting no response from the Opposition - as they say, "Our leader has said it all" - indicates just how bankrupt Labor is in its policies, its economic management and its understanding.

MR MOORE (8.47): Mr Speaker, I think the most critical factor in dealing with the forward estimates report will be the forthcoming report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, due in just a few weeks' time. When we see that Grants Commission report we will really be able to interpret the forward estimates that we have before us.

The Treasurer, in his speech on the forward estimates, stated:

We will be aiming to produce future balanced recurrent budgets, to minimise borrowings and to better utilise the Territory's capital base.

I think the aim that is outlined there is one that anybody who is interested in responsible budget management would accept as a positive and appropriate goal. I think it is particularly important - I have made this comment on a number of other occasions - that we have illustrated a responsible attitude to borrowing so that we do not put ourselves in the position of so many other States where the debt, thanks to previous borrowing, weighs down the budget in such manner that the budget itself, and the possibilities of government control over it, become crippled.

When we look, through the Estimates Committee, at the relationship between the capital and recurrent budgets we see that, on a percentage basis, it is the same as that which existed under both the Labor Government and previous Commonwealth governments. That indicates to me that this Alliance Government has not set its own priorities as far as its budget goes, except within that framework.

Rather than accepting the capital and recurrent budgets and the relationship between the two, it is most important for a new Territory government to assess the community's needs and desires. I think this is something that needs more effort and ought to be looked at much more carefully. The Treasurer said in his speech:

19 March 1991

... the forward estimates indicate that an adjustment of some \$20m is required to achieve a balanced ... Budget in 1991-92 and this gap increases to \$39m in the later years.

This raises the issue of the Commonwealth Government's shoddy treatment of the Territory and the fact that, in handing self-government to this Territory, the Commonwealth was really most concerned with its own budget cuts. Whatever the arrangements were going to be and whatever the nature of the particular government that was likely to be in place, it was quite clear that the self-government exercise was, as much as anything, a cut to the ACT and that it would be the responsibility of the ACT Government and the members of the ACT Assembly to wear the ignominy associated with those cuts instead of it being pointed directly where it most clearly belongs - in the hands of the Commonwealth. The Chief Minister said further:

The recent rejection of my claim for assistance from the Transitional Funding Trust Account for restructuring projects ... means that we are unable to cut our reliance on new borrowings below the budgeted figure of \$44m.

This also illustrates the attitude at the time of the Federal Government, although one must not overlook the negotiating skills of this Alliance Government, which went to its Federal counterpart indicating that if it borrowed it could manage. I think in that regard the negotiating skills leave something to be desired. I am sure that we have learnt a lesson about dealing with the Commonwealth Government as far as that goes, and I doubt whether it will get it that easy again.

The Chief Minister set out the specific targets for review as follows:

Reviews of the land, policing, roads and environment and conservation programs are currently under way and further programs will be covered prior to the finalisation of the 1991-92 budget.

It is interesting that the areas under review are areas of great concern to the people of Canberra. I have spoken on many occasions about policing, and if I have time I will make a few more comments later this evening. As far as environment and conservation are concerned, a review has been talked about rather than the possibility of their being slashed. Nevertheless, I emphasise that those particular aspects of our society are the ones that people are becoming more and more concerned with. I would hate to think that they are, in fact, the areas targeted - that is not what has been suggested; they are under review - but, if they appear to be areas that are targeted, then I think we have to very carefully weigh up what we will see as a loss as opposed to what we will gain from a financial cut. The overview in the document, on the very first page, says:

Unemployment in the ACT remains lower than the national average, due to the stability of the public sector in the ACT, however limited growth in employment is anticipated due to the slowdown in private sector economic activity.

I would like to emphasise that, whilst our unemployment remains lower than the national average, we still have a critical problem with youth unemployment that must be attacked. We need to ensure that the next budget contains appropriate strategies to ensure that that matter is being tackled in the best possible way.

According to the Chief Minister and the forecast in the recurrent budget overview, the existing policies are "soundly based". My reading of the budget and the extended budget, covering up to the 1993-94 period, indicates that in fact the ACT does have the potential to continue under a sound budget. One question that comes out of that overview statement refers to the Community Development Fund. If there was ever any doubt about the community services being done in the eye by the Alliance Government with reference to the Community Development Fund, it should be dispelled by what is stated on page 4:

... the full year effect of the abolition of the Community Development Fund (CDF) resulting in increased gaming machine taxation collections and the distribution of the grant programs via the general budget -

is a significant impact on the forward estimates, as part of its improvement.

Mr Collaery: Where does it say that?

MR MOORE: Mr Collaery, I refer you to page 4; I was quite specific. It says:

The other significant factors impacting on the forward estimates are:

... ..

the full year effect of the abolition of the Community Development Fund -

if you read it that way. I think that is a significant factor. Another point I would like to raise concerns the following quotation:

Capital receipts are forecast to decline over the next few years ... primarily due to the changed arrangements for land rents whereby it is expected that most businesses will commute these payments by the end of 1992. Thereafter, rents are expected to be minimal.

19 March 1991

Further on it is mentioned that the figure for the betterment levy on the sale of land remains at \$3.4m across the full range of the estimates. It seems to me that that is an indication of the Alliance Government's approach to betterment. In a Bill that we are about to debate later this week there is a sliding scale of betterment levy, from 50 per cent for land held for over 20 years to a higher betterment charge for land held for shorter periods. This indicates, of course, that we can expect very little increase in that area, because the land that is being developed and on which we would expect to see betterment charges levied has, of course, been held for over 20 years.

Mr Speaker, whilst I had some other points to raise, they follow very much the same sort of direction as these few specific examples that I have drawn attention to. There is clearly a positive feeling about the forward estimates and the forward estimates report. I think that there are still quite a few factors to consider and quite a number of issues where things could be improved for the people of Canberra.

MR COLLAERY (Attorney-General) (8.57): Of course, I agree with Mr Moore. Things should and can always be improved for the people of Canberra. That is what this Assembly is about. Those of us who are here to participate and to get reasoned debate understand that. But, once again, we heard Ms Follett - who, of course, is not in the chamber again and has not been for some time - making some carping criticism from a prepared script. What many of us in this Assembly are waiting for is to see what the Leader of the Opposition can do without a script. We are all waiting for that.

The overall comments on remarks in relation to forward estimates I leave to the Treasurer, Mr Kaine. I will just pick up a number of the points made by the Leader of the Opposition. She referred to the inept budget management of Mr Humphries and me and gave no real analysis of those issues. She has sought, to my knowledge, no real documents under freedom of information or anything to test out her theories because I think she does not want to test her theories.

There has been no request to me, as a Minister, in question time, to detail how I had a budget overexpenditure. There was no real inquiry, just a whole range of accusations and statements, unsubstantiated in part and, in others, not reflecting information that has already been put to the Assembly by the Treasurer. For example, we hear criticism of projected budget expenditure increases from the Australian Labor Party; yet, when we look at some of those expenditures, particularly those in the Housing and Community Services Bureau, we find that salary overruns relating to award increases and SEP implementation amount to the sum of, as I understand it, \$813,000 in the bureau that I administer.

Lawfully and procedurally, as the Chief Minister has indicated, that is a proper subject for supplementation under section 5 of the Appropriation Act. It is quite lawful. However, today in question time we heard suggestions on the other side that somehow the Ministers were not observing the law.

Mr Berry: I think it is true.

MR COLLAERY: Mr Speaker, Mr Berry's interjection says that he can prove it.

Mr Berry: No, I did not say that. I said, "I think it is true".

MR COLLAERY: You think it is true. Mr Speaker, why do they not prove it? I ask the Opposition through you, Mr Speaker: Why do they not come here and prove the claims they make? They do not make it. It is shameful and extraordinary for an Australian Labor Party to stand up here and criticise the budget overrun of \$813,200, which has occurred as a result of the industrial relations activities of their friends, in many cases. When people in the Professional Officers Association, the other professional public service groups and the public sector unions look at these remarks that I am making, hopefully they will understand.

They will again disown, as they do, the Labor Party that purports to represent them but takes cheap shots at us when we concede award payments and set implementation guidelines which, in the case of my alleged blow-out, involve \$813,000. So, shame on you, and it does you no credit. To continue this paradox in relation to a party that says that it reflects the social justice ethic, what poor taste they show in tackling some unanticipated expenditure in the welfare and concessions area. I will not go into detail; but clearly an attempt in my area to deal with low income earners and people on social benefits schemes, resulting in increased expenditure, becomes an acceptable target for criticism.

Were they sufficiently experienced in government, they would know that it is entirely outside the ability of governments to control expenditure in the provision of ad hoc services for people in the welfare and other categories. They know that; yet they made that criticism. My criticisms could go on about the paradox of the Australian Labor Party taking those points. I do not propose to read from a brief that I have. I will stick to some notes I have of what Ms Follett said.

One thing that struck me is that, while we were trying to maintain some of the program budgets in my area, a young person presented himself for intensive therapeutic and one-to-one care in an environment that cost us a cool \$150,000 to discharge a social obligation to one distressed young soul. Then again, we have had to spend a very large sum setting up a special house in Ainslie to care for two

19 March 1991

particularly behaviourally disturbed young people. A house had to be provided and a 24-hour shift organised to care for two youngsters who could not be allowed into other programs. I will not raise any privacy issues, but I am certain that one of those instances is well known to members in this house.

Those issues do expand a budget. They cannot be anticipated. When you have trimmed your sails in the way that we have had to - thanks to the Commonwealth Government - you cannot make floating provision for exigencies of that order. Mr Speaker, there is no fire in our command capsule. We are in control. The Labor Party continues to grasp at straws and to go around like Dennis Stevenson. There is a great parallel developing there, with the tactics of the Labor Party around town at the moment. There is the scaremongering and the trick reports. Even the media have given up swallowing some of those stories.

The other point that I wanted to make was to refer to page 123, notation (d), of the forward estimates report. I say this particularly for Mr Berry's benefit. You can see that there is an anticipation of extra expenditure occurring in the corrective services area. I will read it into the *Hansard*:

Expected client growth -

which is a delightful euphemism, as I am sure members will agree -

in adult corrective services will result in additional expenditure of \$301,000 in 1991-92, \$656,000 in 1992-93 and \$1.076m in 1993-94.

Implicit in that is a recognition that we are dealing with a budget expansionary item. It is explicable, therefore, that the projected additional expenditure this year has, in fact, been, as I understand it, more than that which was predicted. But still, the prediction was there that we would need to make higher estimates in future years. Certainly, quite prematurely, our costs in the corrective services area have increased.

Members know why, and members support generally, as far as I know, the measures we have had to introduce which have caused that extra expenditure. That has resulted from our desire not only to work out our situation with New South Wales and pay some heavier bills from there, but also to develop new diversionary programs which we had not anticipated bringing on stream so quickly.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the debate gives us the chance to say to the Opposition, "Show the same skills, show the same economic analytical abilities that we would expect of you, were you in government; analyse our figures, our suggested overruns, and come up and prove your statements". You have not done that today. The Opposition has not done that.

MR KAINE (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (9.07), in reply: I assume, Mr Speaker, that no other member of the Labor Opposition wants to add anything to the debate, which is typical. They seem to have single-shot guns these days. One of them gets up and fires off a few ideological barrages and then sits down, and then they all go home. They might leave one to hold the fort, but not to contribute anything to the debate.

I must say that I was somewhat disappointed and surprised, in some respects, by Ms Follett's response. On the other hand, in other areas, I was neither surprised nor disappointed. For example, in terms of the hospital closures, we got the old tirade that we are dismantling the public hospital system. So, we fall back on all the ideological phrases that they can drag up, time and time again.

The fact is that we are not dismantling the public hospital system. We are not decreasing public hospital beds, which was another accusation she made; and so it goes on. It does not matter whether it is the truth or not, just throw it out and somebody might listen and somebody might hear. I was disappointed, in connection with the school closures, that we were not told that we were destroying the social fabric of the society that we live in. Somehow she missed that one. I just remind her that she missed the opportunity to get in another one of those ideological plugs. The Leader of the Opposition, as usual, added nothing to the debate, in connection with the forward estimates. As usual, she made no constructive comment. She offered no suggestions as to how we might do it better, but then she never does.

She did not handle it very well when she was the Treasurer. I submit that she must go home, night after night, and breathe a sigh of relief that she is not the Treasurer, because she knows that there are difficult decisions to be made. She knows that we are making them. She knows that sometimes some of these decisions are not popular. We do not shy away from that. I wonder how she would handle it if she were sitting in this chair now, having to make these decisions. She confronted nothing when she was Treasurer.

I claim that when I was Leader of the Opposition we did make constructive comments. I remember very well, in the debate about her first budget, criticising it because it really took no initiatives to address the problems of the day. I put forward a scenario as to how she might deal with the health and hospital system. In fact, the outline that I gave then is exactly what this Government is implementing today. I believed then that there were things that should be done. I pointed them out to her when she was Chief Minister and Treasurer. Of course, she did not choose to hear. She did none of those things. She took up no suggestions, and she was devoid of ideas herself. In a way, the kind of response that we have does not surprise me.

19 March 1991

Once again, she said that the Government has no policy, no strategy. The strategy has now been spelt out several times. It can be encapsulated in four simple statements. The first is to foster the private sector, because that is where the jobs and the future revenues for the Government are going to come from. It is to balance the recurrent budget. We have done that this year. We will do it again next year. It is to minimise borrowings. We have reduced the borrowings significantly this year, as compared to what they were in previous years. We will continue to maintain our borrowings to an absolute minimum. Finally, it is to make maximum use of existing assets. That is our philosophy. The whole objective is to cut costs, to reduce the cost to the taxpayer, to reduce taxation to the minimum, and to deliver an effective service in so doing.

Of course, in meeting those commitments we are setting about restructuring the ACT Government Service, to make it do its job better. We have embarked on a hospital rationalisation program which will, in two years' time, present two hospitals which will deliver exactly the same level of service as the three hospitals previously did. There will not be any reduction in beds. There will be a consolidation of technical resources, of a medical nature, that will provide, probably, a better service than we have had in the past. This nonsense about dismantling the hospital system is a clear acknowledgment that the people opposite simply do not understand the realities of the day.

We have embarked on a schools consolidation program with the objective of reducing the cost and restoring short resources to the Government so that they can be used in other areas that are more important; for example, so that we can provide facilities for the ageing, for the disabled and the disadvantaged in our community, rather than having those resources locked up unproductively in schools. Of course, we have set about corporatising certain government enterprises with the objective that they will become more commercially oriented and will operate at less cost to the taxpayer. They are not being subsidised but have to operate in a purely commercial and competitive way. These are just some of the things that the Government is doing to address the budgetary problems that are confronting us.

What would the Opposition do if suddenly overnight the roles were reversed and they were sitting over here as the Government? Would they reopen the schools? They have said that they are going to. Would they reopen the Royal Canberra Hospital? They have said that they are going to. They know well that they could not do any of those things because they have not the faintest idea where the money would come from.

Mr Berry, in particular, prattles on about the hospitals restructuring program. He did not even know where he was going to get the money from to maintain the Royal Canberra Hospital. He had no idea. He has no idea where he might

get the money from to fulfil the promises that they are making in terms of reopening the Royal Canberra Hospital and setting the clock back into the unproductive days. Where the money comes from, who knows. I suppose Mr Berry and Ms Follett will wave their magic wands and the pot of gold will appear. I am sorry to have to tell them that it does not work that way.

Mr Stefaniak: Just like Victoria and South Australia.

MR KAINE: Yes. South Australia was mentioned. We have seen what happened when Labor governments in other parts of Australia followed the pot of gold theory. It does not work. They run up such a high public debt that the governments themselves are forced to - - -

Mr Collaery: They will privatise their own party.

MR KAINE: They will privatise the government. They will not be able to afford to run it otherwise. We have seen the consequences of that. Ms Follett talks about the fact that I said that our forward estimates were fact. Ms Follett seemed to think that hers were fact, too. She gave us a \$35m deficiency that we had to make up. That was just on the recurrent account.

I would still be surprised to find out how Ms Follett was going to make up that \$35m deficiency on her own forward estimates had she been in a position of having to deal with it. We confronted the issue by increasing revenues and by significantly cutting expenditures in this current fiscal year. I wonder how she would have dealt with it. She never tells us how she would have done it. It is very easy to sit over there. Just for once, in one of these debates, let us have something constructive from the other side.

In terms of policies, where is the Labor Party's policy? Where is their economic statement about what they see as the future of Canberra? Where is their financial philosophy under which they would finance the Territory in a situation of declining revenue? We never hear anything from them on these issues because they are so bereft of ideas; they simply do not know. As I said earlier, their would-be Treasurer must go home every night and sleep soundly because she does not have to confront the issues. Ms Follett knows that we have to confront those issues. She knows that we are confronting them head on and doing what needs to be done.

The Leader of the Opposition had the effrontery to talk about ACT small businesses facing bankruptcy. We might well ask why they are facing bankruptcy. It would not, of course, have anything to do with the fact that the whole national economy is in tatters because of the actions of the Labor Government at the Federal level. It would not have anything to do with the fact that elsewhere in Australia where there are Labor governments the financial and economic situation has absolutely fallen apart at the

19 March 1991

seams. The Labor State governments, almost without exception, are in severe financial trouble, and you know it. They are in severe financial trouble because they have absolutely no sense of responsibility when it comes to public money. Their approach is that you rip it out of the public and - - -

Mr Jensen: Or you borrow it.

MR KAINÉ: You borrow it or you take it away from business and then you squander it, but you do not manage it. That is the same philosophy you have at the Federal level. The only exception is Queensland, where they inherited a very strong situation from a conservative government. They are living on the fat at the moment. We will see how long they last before they run themselves into financial difficulties.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 46, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

MR SPEAKER: Do you claim that you have been misrepresented?

MR BERRY: I do. During the debate on this issue, Mr Humphries cobbled together some words which, in my view, cast a slur on the character of Opposition members. Mr Humphries said that no facts had been presented to show up - and I use my words now - "the Government's mismanagement and incompetence". That is demonstrably untrue. This Minister has put these words together in a deliberate attempt to distort - - -

Mr Kaine: Mr Speaker, this clearly has nothing to do with a personal explanation. Mr Berry is about to defend the Labor Party. That is not what personal explanations are about.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Please get to the point, Mr Berry.

MR BERRY: He said that no facts had been put forward. One thing that I will admit to, Mr Speaker, was that I said, at one point in time, that the budget in the hospital system would blow out by \$8m to \$10m. I must apologise to this house. I was wrong. According to the Chief Minister it was near \$12m. I wish I had said \$12m. What has also happened is that other facts have been placed before this place - I will only use a couple of examples - and one is that waiting lists under this incompetent Minister, Mr Humphries, have blown out by 60 per cent.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Berry, a personal explanation is acceptable, but I think you are off the track.

Mr Humphries: Mr Speaker, under the same standing order, I would like to make a personal explanation of my own.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Berry still has the floor, if he would like to get to his point.

MR BERRY: Thank you.

Mr Kaine: He had better stick to the point, or he will not have the floor.

MR BERRY: The point I am making, Mr Speaker, is that the - - -

Mr Kaine: Don't wave your finger at me.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, I was waving my finger at him, not at you, because he was interjecting.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Come on, let us get on with it.

Mr Kaine: Have you been on the sauce tonight? Is that what your problem is?

Mr Connolly: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Chief Minister said, "Have you been on the sauce tonight?". That is an issue that you have ruled on in the past.

Mr Kaine: Which is exactly the comment he made about me last week, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: I realise that. I think that at that time he did withdraw, Chief Minister.

Mr Kaine: Well, I withdraw accordingly, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Please proceed, Mr Berry.

MR BERRY: I have to say, Mr Speaker, that the sauce I was on was of the tomato variety, not the one the Chief Minister was on.

I present this other fact, which Mr Humphries claims has never been presented, and that is in relation to ambulance services. It has been presented in this place time and time again.

Mr Kaine: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In no way could Mr Berry claim that he has been misrepresented on ambulance services because they have not even been mentioned.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, thank you for that observation. Mr Berry, have you concluded at this stage?

19 March 1991

MR BERRY: The point I am trying to make is that the Minister, Mr Humphries, deliberately put together some words calculated to distort the facts as they are presented to this place. He has tried to hide behind that personal slur, which I take very personally and which has to be exposed. There are untruths being spread around this place which need to be put to rest. The fact of the matter is that I have laid before this house, time and time again, that this Government's budgets have blown out. It has failed to manage the hospital system and the Ambulance Service is in a state of collapse.

Mr Kaine: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Whatever assertions and allegations Mr Berry has made are totally of no significance. He has not been misquoted by anybody. He is simply trying to debate the issue.

MR HUMPHRIES (Minister for Health, Education and the Arts): I seek to make a personal explanation under standing order 46, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

MR HUMPHRIES: I do, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Please proceed.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Berry has given us a very eloquent little tirade in his usual fashion. He unfortunately premises the whole comment - the entire tirade - on a misconception or mishearing of what was said. I did not say that there was no evidence of "government mismanagement". I said that there was no evidence produced by the Opposition of a blow-out in the hospital redevelopment budget. That is what I said. That is what the *Hansard* record will show. I stand by that comment. No evidence has been produced by the Opposition in that regard. I look forward to something being produced in due course. However, I know that it will not happen.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

SOCIAL POLICY - STANDING COMMITTEE Report on Public Behaviour

Debate resumed from 12 March 1991, on motion by **Mr Wood:**

That the recommendations be agreed to.

MR STEFANIAK (9.23): I rise to speak in relation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. This report of the Social Policy Committee on public behaviour was presented last year. This committee initially looked at this matter as a result of a private member's Bill that I, in fact, introduced on 28 June 1989. I note an error in the report, and that is that that particular Bill was passed on 25 July

1989. In fact, that particular Bill was withdrawn and the subsequent Bill, the Police Offences (No. 2) Bill 1989, was passed on 4 August 1989. I make that note.

The Government has now indicated its response to the Standing Committee on Social Policy report. I will deal with a number of points. The first point raised in the Government's response relates to what has been perceived as a problem in certain areas, and that is skateboard riding. Of course, skateboard riding can be annoying and even hazardous in public places; but the Government, and I think all members of this Assembly, would also see responsible skateboard riding as an activity that is to be encouraged. It is something that is not a new phenomenon. There was a craze about 20 years ago. Skateboard riding certainly has been around now for a number of years. In fact there are some very excellent competitors.

Areas for expanding skateboard riding need to be identified because irresponsible skateboard riding has caused a number of concerns around our major cities. I wonder whether the level of talking can be kept down a little bit.

MR SPEAKER: Yes. I must admit, Mr Wood, that we did miss your voluminous voice while you were away. Could you please keep the volume down.

MR STEFANIAK: I know that there are certain areas where a lot of people have expressed concerns about unruly skateboard riders. I am pleased to see the Government indicate that some of the recommendations of this committee are going to be taken into account. The recommendation that the legislation be amended to ban the riding of bicycles and, indeed, skateboards within 20 metres of an open shopfront has a lot of merit. At the same time, this is a real sport, and facilities have been provided throughout Canberra by this Government and more are proposed. I recall my colleague Mr Duby opening one in Belconnen recently. Further facilities are planned. Indeed, as a result of that facility in Belconnen, there seem to be a lot less complaints about unruly skateboard riders.

There are a number of other activities in Canberra which have caused some concern to various people. They are a major activity such as the Summernats and also the Food and Wine Frolic. That will also lead me into a discussion on alcohol. In relation to the 1990 Street Car Nationals, I think that is almost a copybook way of how to go about preparing for a large public event. The 1989 Summernats were not as well run as the 1990 Summernats. There were a number of problems. Lessons were learnt. As that was one of Canberra's largest annual public events, the Government adopted a different approach.

19 March 1991

There was a lot of prior preparation, planning and liaison between all the relevant government agencies, including the police and the organisers. That worked very well. It was generally a very well run public event. I think all people concerned, including the residents, were a lot happier with it than last year. That might also say something in terms of how well other events such as the Food and Wine Frolic can be run. I note in the report that the Canberra Festival Committee states that that is, in fact, meant to be a family day in the park. I think the AFP opinion that what was meant to be a family day in the park has ceased to be so is, in fact, quite correct.

By about 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the Food and Wine Frolic gets pretty unruly indeed. Far from being a family activity in the park - I am more or less tempted to use a colloquial euphemism here, and you will probably ask me to withdraw it - it is just basically a gigantic piss-up, for want of a better word. That causes concern to some members. I think "booze-up" might be a little bit more polite. I note that neither the police nor any other agency has indicated that that should stop. Certainly a number of steps need to be taken there. There are a number of other activities and problems highlighted by this report that I think need to be taken into account. Indeed, in the Government's response, a number of measures have been taken to alleviate those problems.

Alcohol control is very important. Alcohol is one of the biggest factors in relation to anti-social behaviour in Canberra. That was recognised not only by this committee, but by the committee that I chaired which looked at move-on powers under the Police Offences Act. One of the big problems in Canberra which so many people see is that of alcohol abuse and crimes related to the excessive consumption of alcohol. A number of improvements have been made. The Liquor Act now gives the AFP the same powers that the Gaming and Liquor Authority inspectors have to initiate proceedings for breaches relating to under-age drinking. The AFP also now has the same control over the sale of liquor to intoxicated persons as the Gaming and Liquor Authority.

I note also in the report some recommendations and some discussion in relation to problems of licensing hours. Recommendations were, in fact, made to that committee that consideration be given to suspending liquor licences and, indeed, to restricting liquor licences to certain times. It would seem that there are a number of places in Canberra where some real problems do emanate as a result of excessive consumption of liquor. At present, Brierly Place in Weston is a huge problem. I believe that the owner of the Playwell sports store has had his windows broken 37 times in the last 18 months. That is a quite intolerable situation. Basically that is caused by persons who drink too much liquor and carry on in a totally unacceptable way after they leave what has been pinpointed as a certain licensed premises there.

Weedon Close, Belconnen, has also been a constant source of irritation to the law enforcement agencies in our Territory. In fact, I can recall problems there dating back to the early 1980s. The numbers of people you see going through the court as a result of offences there are quite legion. That remains very much a trouble spot. I note the committee's recommendations. The committee made a number of recommendations that on licence hours remain unchanged at present and that the matter of restricting on licence hours remain on notice for the committee's future consideration. The Government agreed with those recommendations in its response.

I mentioned to Mr Wood some months ago continuing problems in relation to excessive drinking in the early hours of the morning because most of the problems do occur after 4.00 am. Quite often problems occur at 5.00 am and, indeed, even people going to work, or shoppers going shopping on a Saturday morning, as late as 8.30 or 9.00 am, bump into numbers of drunks who cause problems. Of course, some days are worse than others. There is a lot of force in the AFP suggestion that licences be restricted so that these on licence premises close at 4.00 am and do not reopen until 10.00 am. That is something that I have mentioned to the chairman. That is something that I have mentioned to the Attorney-General. I am currently getting some further data in relation to that because I think that is something that this Government will perhaps have to do. It will not affect very many liquor licence premises because there are very few that do, in fact, trade at that hour of the morning. I cannot see any real justification, given the extent of the problem, for a few places to continue trading when problems do emanate, it seems, as a result of those places continuing to trade at those very late hours.

Mr Speaker, policing is another area that this committee looked at. Indeed, it is pleasing to see that the AFP - as did its predecessor, the old ACT police - has continued to channel its efforts into community policing. It has a reputation of being perhaps one of the best community policing forces in the country. That reputation is a deserved one and has been there for some 30 years. It is good to see the steps the AFP continues to take to ensure that it does remain a community police force. Could I have a short extension of time?

Leave not granted.

19 March 1991

ADJOURNMENT

MR SPEAKER: It being slightly past 9.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Weapons Legislation

MR CONNOLLY (9.33): Unfortunately, Mr Stevenson is not present, but I will send him a copy of *Hansard* because if he reads it he will be no wiser but, perhaps, better informed. On Thursday I listened with interest - as, I noted, did the Attorney-General - to Mr Stevenson's explanations to why the gun Act was unconstitutional. I must say that at the time I did not understand what he was talking about.

I have since read his speech in *Hansard* and also read a document that he tabled called "A Review of Law", written, I understand, by a person by the name of Mr Schulze, who, Mr Stevenson tells us, is a solicitor from Sydney. I now understand what Mr Stevenson was talking about.

What Mr Stevenson has done is cobble together a series of quotes from judges in New South Wales in the period 1828 to 1844 dealing with the repugnancy of New South Wales colonial legislation to English Acts of parliament. Judges at that time had the clear power to say that instruments of that subordinate legislature which were repugnant to English law were invalid, and they so held. The cases that he referred to were, of course, pre effective self-government in Australia, which dated from 1856. The issue was revived later in the 1860s by Judge Boothby in South Australia and led to the passage of the Colonial Laws Validity Act, which was an act of the British Parliament which stipulated the circumstances in which Acts of colonial legislatures were valid.

Even after that time there were criteria by which Acts of a colonial parliament could be held to be invalid. Up until 1931 Mr Stevenson's point could have had some validity; that is, there could have been an argument that an instrument of a State-level parliament could have been invalid because it was repugnant to British law. That argument, of course, completely disappeared after 1931 with the passage of the Statute of Westminster. That demolition of Mr Stevenson's argument is made even more definite by the passage of the Australia Act in 1986, which clearly states that the laws of a State parliament - and we can read for that "a Territory parliament" - are valid.

The courts have also demolished Mr Stevenson's argument. The most effective demolition was that of the High Court of Australia in a unanimous judgment, which as lawyers in the chamber will know is a rare enough occasion of itself, in the case of the *Union Steamship Company of Australia v. King* in 1988, reported in volume 82 of the *Australian Law Reports* at page 43. In that case the High Court of Australia said that the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of a Territory is as ample and plenary as the power possessed by the imperial parliament itself.

The words "for the peace, order and good government" are not words of limitation. They went on to explain that the peace, order and good government power, which is, of course, the power conferred on this Territory, is a total plenary power. The Supreme Court of South Australia has recently, in 1984, in *The Grace Bible Church v. Reedman* unequivocally asserted that the power of a State parliament to pass laws for the peace, order and good government of that State is untrammelled and cannot be called in question in court.

I refer Mr Stevenson to an article on this by Professor de Q. Walker who has difficulties with this proposition. Professor Walker argues that as a matter of jurisdiction it should not be the law, but he concedes that that is the law in Australia. It has also been clearly asserted by the Supreme Court of New South Wales in the 1988 litigation concerning the deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation. The case in question is the *Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers Federation of New South Wales v. The Minister for Industrial Relations*, reported in 1986, volume 7 of the *New South Wales Law Reports* at page 372.

In that case some judges toyed with the idea that a State supreme court could hold invalid a law of a State parliament because it was not a law for the peace, order and good government of a Territory because it infringed on some alleged basic constitutional rights. In the end, they concluded that that was not the state of the law; that although that may have been an attractive, philosophical or jurisprudential proposition, it was not the law.

The Supreme Court of South Australia has unanimously told us that what Mr Stevenson said is nonsense. The Supreme Court of New South Wales has, by clear majority, said that what Mr Stevenson told us is nonsense. The High Court of Australia has told us unanimously - and again I say that it is rare for the High Court to speak unanimously - that what Mr Stevenson said is nonsense. I hope that Mr Stevenson reads this and, as I say, is better informed, if no wiser.

Weapons Legislation

MR STEFANIAK (9.38): Just on that, Mr Connolly reminded me of a point that he made in that debate which I think I should comment on. Mr Stevenson was a little bit inaccurate in terms of his history; so I feel, perhaps, that I should give him a little bit of a history lesson. Mr Stevenson thought that the Japanese did not invade Australia in 1942 because everyone had a gun and knew how to use it; and that was a real problem. Japan did not invade Australia in 1942 largely because her supply lines were overextended. I have done a fair amount of reading on that particular campaign. There was talk within the Japanese Imperial High Command as to whether they should go on and invade Australia. Preliminary steps were taken, such as the bombing of Darwin. Japan, of course, invaded Papua New Guinea. They suffered their first reversal on land there at Milne Bay by Australian militia forces, of all things. That was the first reversal suffered during the campaign in the Pacific.

Their ability to invade Australia - as I think Mr Jensen mentioned during the debate - suffered a severe setback in the Battle of the Coral Sea which effectively stopped their invasion fleet which was headed to invade Port Moresby. That would have posed a huge danger to north Queensland. Any further ability they had to invade Australia was blown out of the water in the Battle of Midway. Nowhere during my study of the Pacific campaign could I see any reference anywhere to the Japanese High Command being worried by the fact that a lot of Australians privately owned guns.

Canberra Festival

MS FOLLETT (Leader of the Opposition) (9.40): I just take advantage of the adjournment debate to speak very briefly about the Canberra Festival. At the outset I want to congratulate the organisers and all of the sponsors who were responsible for bringing to us what I believe was an extremely successful and enjoyable festival. I would like in particular to mention Ellen Blunden. I know that she is a paid employee and that it is her job to do this; but I believe that she did it exceptionally well and that her efforts and her energy during the festival, and in organising the festival, were absolutely exemplary. I would like this Assembly to pass on their congratulations to her for that job.

The festival also had a couple of firsts which I think are worth noting. The Birdman Rally went off this time; somebody actually got the money, and that is an historic occasion in the ACT. Mr Stefaniak of course attempted - disgracefully, in my view - to ram the Opposition but only managed to achieve the sinking of his own ship of state. There is some deep symbolism in there somewhere, but it will take a little while for that to work out. I notice

that his major contribution to the debate tonight has been to talk about other people blowing themselves out of the water. I think that Mr Stefaniak is a prime example of just that.

I would just like to again congratulate everybody concerned with the Canberra Festival. It was truly wonderful. I think Canberra appreciated it. Obviously the numbers that turned out indicated that. I also thank all of the sponsors who put their money where their mouth is in their appreciation of Canberra and Canberra's people. In particular, some of the new sponsors who have only just come into the festival should be very much encouraged. I believe that it was the Canberra Chamber of Commerce's first venture into the festival. I think that all of those sponsors should realise that they are on a good thing. I think it bodes well for the future.

Canberra Festival

MR DUBY (Minister for Finance and Urban Services) (9.42): Mr Speaker, Ms Follett stole my thunder somewhat in expressing what is, undoubtedly, the wish of the Assembly in congratulating not only ourselves but all of the citizens of Canberra for participating in and being involved in a magnificent Canberra Festival for 1991. I join with Ms Follett in particularly congratulating the organisers on the festival committee who of course work within my portfolio area. I am referring, of course, to Ellen Blunden and Liz Grant and, of course, all the other workers on the festival committee and all the unsung heroes who got together as part of the community and made the festival the grand success that it was.

This year I think the expenditure on the festival was in the order of something like \$1.2m. As Ms Follett rightly pointed out, the lion's share of that, around about \$800,000, came from sponsors. This is a good thing. It is a sign of things to come. Whilst we all enjoy having a party, we like to see a bit of money on the fridge at the end of the day.

Mr Collaery: There is nothing left in the fridge.

MR DUBY: Yes, that is a point. As I said, I think it was a very successful festival. It is something that I know that all of us will try to participate in and make even better in 1992.

19 March 1991

Canberra Festival

MR STEFANIAK (9.44): In relation to the 1992 Canberra Festival, might I extend an invitation to Ms Follett and to her team to join with the members opposite who thoroughly enjoyed that particular race. The Assembly also starts next year. Who knows who will be here? I suppose that is an obvious question, but certainly the Assembly did put in a team. I thank the three members of the Assembly who are sitting here tonight who played a part, as well as a number of Assembly staff. We had about eight or nine staff from the Assembly who had a most enjoyable day. For the record, you cannot believe everything you read in the media. In fact, it was the FM104.7 boat that actually sank the ANU China Club boat and did the ramming, although we certainly did capsize, as you can see from that newspaper report. It was a most enjoyable day. I thank all persons in this building who participated. Hopefully our crew next year will involve all members from all sides of the house as well as staff.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 9.45 pm