



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

14 October 1992

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MADAM SPEAKER (Ms McRae) took the chair at 10.30 am and read the prayer.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MEMBER

Motion (by **Ms Szuty**) agreed to:

That leave of absence from 14 to 16 October 1992 inclusive be given to Mr Moore.

FUEL AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

MS ELLIS (10.31): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) congratulates the staff and students of Lake Tuggeranong College following their recent success in the 1992 Shell Mileage Marathon at Amaroo Park; and
- (2) recognises the initiatives of the ACT Government in developing and encouraging the use of fuel and energy efficiency in our community.

Madam Speaker, we are all aware of the importance of energy efficiency in this day and age. Countries throughout the world have, as a priority, schemes and strategies to ensure energy efficiency in housing, transport and industry. Australia is part of this international strategy and is itself involved in many programs - global, national and local. It is important for us as Canberrans to ensure our involvement in this process. It is equally important to know why we have involved ourselves and what the importance of energy and fuel efficiency is.

Madam Speaker, governments in Australia have a target to reduce greenhouse gases in their local area. Local, State and Federal governments are involved in this process, and it is this process which will ensure that the generations following us will live in a safe environment. The greenhouse effect is the result of increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, including the human introduced gas of chlorofluorocarbons. The combined effect of these gases is changing the climate. The earth is increasingly becoming warmer. If we do not work to halt global warming over the next 50 years we are likely to see increased flooding and rainfalls, our oceans expanding and thus threatening fresh water supplies, and increased temperatures worldwide.

Of course, Madam Speaker, there are many ways in which to slow down or even halt global warming. Governments around the world are party to treaties and protocols to halt the greenhouse effect. State and local governments run education campaigns and conserve energy in commercial buildings, transport

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systems and so on. Industry is subject to various laws by States and Territories to regulate and penalise various polluting emissions from vehicles and industrial processes.

The effect on global warming at a local level can be seen in the fact that the average Australian family produces about 20 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. Madam Speaker, 15 per cent of a household's production of greenhouse gases comes from packaging and durables. A whopping 25 per cent comes from cars. The other 60 per cent of our energy use comes from water heating, cooking, refrigeration, clothes washing and drying, home heating, lights and other appliances, including simple things such as mixmasters and toasters. Obviously, Madam Speaker, cars produce more greenhouse gas emissions than any other single household activity. It is in the area of transport that we as individuals, families and governments are required or requested to do something about the greenhouse effect.

To this end the Shell petroleum company sponsors each year the Mileage Marathon held at Amaroo, in which teams enter energy efficient vehicles they have built. The vehicles are required to complete a set course at a minimum average speed of 25 kilometres an hour. The vehicle that uses the least energy wins. This year Lake Tuggeranong College students entered in all three categories of the race - the commuter, single-seater and open sections. Lake Tuggeranong College won the open commuter class and performed with distinction in the other categories.

Madam Speaker, the involvement of Lake Tuggeranong College students in the Shell Mileage Marathon was not limited only to the drivers. In fact, about 40 students were involved from various departments, including engineering science, design, technology, metalwork and automotive technology. Media students who filmed the event will produce a video that will be sold within ACT schools as an educational tool and made available to other competitors in the marathon. These students have demonstrated the different industrial and professional involvement required in energy efficiency. Through commitment to the goal and cooperation between different departments and areas of expertise, these students were able to produce a quality product of which there is no better example in the country. Those 40 students are very fortunate to have been involved in such a successful, innovative and educational project.

Madam Speaker, the members of the Canberra community are also fortunate to have within one of their own schools students who have achieved excellence in the field of energy efficiency at this early stage of their education. Obviously, Madam Speaker, the car that the students developed and drove is not yet able to perform the duties of the family commuter cars that Australians have come to expect. However, I believe that I can say with full confidence that the Lake Tuggeranong College students are in the forefront of development in energy saving transport. I am sure that all the students at Lake Tuggeranong College, and in particular the students who took part in the competition, are now more acutely aware than ever of the issues and concerns of energy saving within our community. It is perhaps even more significant that these students have shown us what can be achieved in conserving energy and have highlighted the need to develop specific strategies. Indeed, Madam Speaker, we can all take a leaf out of the Lake Tuggeranong College book.

I would like to congratulate the students of Lake Tuggeranong College, the teachers - in particular, Stewart Clode and the principal, Rob McConchie - and the sponsors: DAS fleet, Shell Tuggeranong service station, Approved Systems, the NRMA and Neoplex Signs. Stewart Clode commented in his report in the most recent Lake Tuggeranong College newsletter:

Sponsorship is not easy to gain ... Our sponsors should receive as much recognition as possible because of their confidence to invest in the education sector.

I trust that we will again see a superb performance at the 1993 Shell Mileage Marathon. This year, 1992, many other Canberra schools also competed in the marathon and, with the success of Lake Tuggeranong College, I am sure that this will become a popular and educational competition for Canberra schools in the future. Lake Tuggeranong College has certainly demonstrated an innovative and intelligent approach to energy and fuel efficiency.

Likewise, the ACT Government continues to develop environmental efficiency in many areas. The *Environmental Budget Statement 1992-93* states:

One of the pressing issues for the ACT over the next decade is the efficient use of energy. As a net importer of energy, the ACT needs to be conscious of the fact that we contribute to the point source pollution of the supplying State, and global environmental degradation in relation to carbon dioxide and methane emissions. There are also significant economic and environmental costs in inefficient and unnecessary energy use. The Government believes that it should take a leading role in the community in finding ways of reducing energy use, and using energy more efficiently.

To this end, Madam Speaker, ACT government agencies have engaged in various energy saving measures. The Asset Management Services section of the Public Works and Services group has undertaken an investigation of energy saving options available in government buildings in the ACT. As a result it is estimated that savings of between 30 and 60 per cent can be achieved in lighting costs and 20 per cent in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning costs.

Projects that have already been undertaken in this area include the installation of automatic light controls, the installation of more efficient lighting and the improvement of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning controls. The techniques devised are being extended to new buildings. Some of the new projects that AMS staff have been involved in include Gordon, Bonython and Conder schools, new works at Bruce TAFE and the Tuggeranong indoor aquatic centre. In fact, Madam Speaker, the energy conscious designs that the ACT Government is adopting have the potential to achieve savings of 60 per cent or more in energy consumption in new buildings compared with existing buildings. With new designs, the Planning Authority has produced draft energy guidelines which are currently available for public comment and will then be finalised.

The Department of Urban Services - through ACTION, Waste Management and ACT Electricity and Water - is also showing an innovative and progressive approach to energy efficiency. Members would be aware that 120-litre bins will soon be on trial in the ACT. These bins, which include separation of recyclable wastes from non-recyclables, will encourage householders to separate rubbish.

The size of the bins - 120 litres - will also encourage the extensive recycling facilities at Canberra's tips and recycling centres. Madam Speaker, one of the major recent developments of ACT Electricity and Water has been the sponsoring of an energy efficient house in Tuggeranong. This house is currently under construction and will be used as a model and educational classroom for primary school projects. As well as this, ACTEW, in conjunction with the Department of Education, has developed a schools kit called "Act Now". ACTEW also produces for public consumption information brochures on the wise and efficient use of electricity and water.

As the only public transport system in the ACT, ACTION has a major responsibility to the commuters of Canberra and to the encouragement of the efficient use of fuel. As we all know, using ACTION is far more fuel efficient than using private cars. Forty people on a bus use far less energy and fuel than 40 cars with no passengers. To this end, ACTION has undertaken several steps to encourage use of ACTION buses and has undertaken trials of alternative fuel-efficient buses. ACTION's park and ride program encourages commuters to leave their cars out of the city and conserve energy by taking ACTION to work. The considerable incentives to commuters to use park and ride include saving petrol, saving on parking costs, and fast and convenient travel to and from work.

ACTION has undertaken two trials using the newest forms of efficient and clean fuel. The compressed natural gas trial commenced in February this year, and negotiations are currently under way to produce two natural gas vehicles for permanent use by ACTION. By early December this year the diesohol trial will be under way. A bus will be run on a combination of diesel fuel and ethanol, which is an organic fuel source. ACTION is currently negotiating an order of buses which will meet the European Community requirements for standard diesel engines, which are ahead of any other requirements in Australia. These buses will also have noise emission levels below existing national limits.

The ACT Housing Trust is a leader in environmental design of dwellings in the ACT. In fact, the Housing Trust's design standards specify a number of energy efficiency requirements, including dwelling siting and orientation, insulation, window location and type of heating. Housing Trust dwellings are constructed or purchased to meet these standards. The Housing Trust continues to upgrade its existing buildings. This practice is obviously energy efficient but is also cost efficient and assists Housing Trust tenants in conserving energy themselves. As well as this, the Housing Trust, in conjunction with a firm of architects, has developed new fuel efficient dwellings in the new Gungahlin suburb of Palmerston. New Housing Trust houses will be monitored, at no cost to the Housing Trust, by a consultancy group which will measure temperature change over time as compared to energy use.

These Housing Trust developments will ensure that public housing in the ACT is among the most energy efficient in the country. The progressive measures put into place by the ACT Government since self-government in the area of fuel and energy efficiency have ensured that the ACT has developed an environmental policy comparable with the best in the country. Whilst we can and should congratulate both the Government on its initiatives in the area of fuel and energy efficiency and Lake Tuggeranong College on its wonderful success at Amaroo Park recently, we should use the success of that college to give us as law-makers and policy-makers the impetus to continue our efforts and support our community's initiatives.

MR CORNWELL (10.43): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party, in broad terms, supports the motion. It is quite unremarkable really. It is almost a motherhood statement. But I would like to -
- -

Mr Kaine: It is an occasion for the Government to pat itself on the back.

MR CORNWELL: Yes, indeed, Mr Kaine. I would like to confine my remarks to paragraph (1) because I think we need to recognise it for what it really is - that is, an attempt to gain a few cheap political points in the Tuggeranong Valley. Madam Speaker, Ms Ellis is fast becoming notorious in this place for her parochialism towards Tuggeranong, a tactic she obviously has learnt well from her guide and mentor Ros "I only approved the cover" Kelly. Whilst this is a legitimate and often successful political ploy, particularly with the ill informed and perhaps the shallow, I suggest that it can also be quite narrow and unfair; and so it is in this case.

I say this because the motion ignores other ACT schools that participated in the 1992 Shell Mileage Marathon. Their efforts have been quite well documented in the *Chronicle* and in the *Valley View*.

Mr Kaine: Even in the *Valley View*?

MR CORNWELL: Yes. I refer to, among others, Stromlo High School. My mention of Stromlo High School prompts Mr Lamont to make snoring noises, as if he were bored with the whole matter. I am sure that the people of Stromlo High will be interested in that response from a member of the Labor Party. Stromlo High School was seventh in the two-seater commuter class, with 312.83 miles per gallon this year, and it has been an entrant in this competition since 1989. I refer also to St Edmund's College, which entered this year for the first time and were winners of a trophy for the best first time entrants with the most innovative engine and transmission development. I refer also to Marist College, whose students were not officially entered by the school. Like the students of St Edmund's, they did most of the work on their machines on their own. They also raised their own funds to participate in this Mileage Marathon.

I do not believe that any of these endeavours detract from the success of the Lake Tuggeranong College entrants. I repeat that the Liberal Party joins with the Government in applauding Lake Tuggeranong College. But I urge you not to overlook or ignore the efforts of other ACT schools. That is, in fact, what Ms Ellis's motion does.

Mr Connolly: Ha, ha, ha!

MR CORNWELL: Mr Connolly finds that amusing. Obviously unlike Mr Connolly, I believe that all young people deserve encouragement and praise for their achievements. I am surprised that the Labor Party obviously does not believe this. Where is their sense of equity? Where is their sense of social justice that they are always talking about out there? Where is this sense of social justice in this narrow, parochial motion - or at least the first part of it is - which appears to be motivated more by an attempt to curry favour and local votes in the Tuggeranong Valley than by a desire to pay the quite fitting tribute that I believe all ACT school participants deserve.

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Therefore, Madam Speaker, I believe that the Assembly should acknowledge and celebrate the success at the 1992 Shell Mileage Marathon of all ACT school entrants, while nevertheless recognising the particular achievements of the Lake Tuggeranong College staff and students. Accordingly, I would like to move as an amendment to Ms Ellis's motion:

After "success", insert "and all other ACT schools participating".

I am quite prepared to move that at the conclusion of this debate, Ms Ellis - unless, of course, you are prepared and gracious enough at this point to accept the amendment in the spirit in which it is offered to you.

Ms Ellis: Of course I am, Mr Cornwell.

MR CORNWELL: If you accept the amendment we can then debate it in full.

Ms Ellis: It is accepted.

Ms Follett: You have leave to incorporate it.

MR CORNWELL: Very well. I seek leave to move the amendment, which I think has been circulated to members.

MADAM SPEAKER: You do not need leave because we have a motion before us.

MR CORNWELL: I am following the Chief Minister. I always follow everything she says. I move:

After "success", insert "and all other ACT schools participating".

MR LAMONT (10.50): I think it is appropriate that we mention Chisholm High School, which unfortunately Mr Cornwell overlooked. Chisholm High School is in the Tuggeranong Valley as well. It is interesting to note the rather churlish way in which Mr Cornwell addressed this issue, although I do not believe that he attempted to belittle the success of Lake Tuggeranong College. I want to make sure that Mr Cornwell is aware of the efforts of Chisholm High School - which is also in Tuggeranong, just in case you have not been down there either, Mr Cornwell. It was a rather churlish way in which Mr Cornwell chose to address his remarks to a motion which I believe is deserving of the unanimous support of this chamber.

I think it is important that we as a government and we as an Assembly support the activities of our schools and colleges in entering competitions such as the one outlined by Ms Ellis. The reason for that is that it is our responsibility to encourage the designers, the inventors and the leaders of the future to take account of, and to raise their consciousness about, our dwindling fuel reserves and to encourage them to devise ways of conserving fuel and energy. That is the major success that I see of the program that is supported by Shell and similar types of activities around Australia that are supported by a great number of other organisations. I believe that the substance of Ms Ellis's motion, as I have said, is deserving of the full support of this chamber. It is interesting to note that, as I understand it, no funds, other than through sponsorship, were provided to allow schools and colleges to enter these activities. It is gratifying to see that they were able to secure support from a wide range of ACT businesses. I believe that we

should congratulate those businesses in these recessionary times - even though we are emerging from that recession and we are assured of continuing that emergence with the re-election of the Keating Government next year. The continued support of the ACT business community is something which I personally applaud and which my colleagues applaud. I certainly hope that businesses in the ACT continue to provide that support, because it is important that they become more involved in the education process. This is one extremely clear and decisive way in which that participation can be demonstrated.

Madam Speaker, I could take a cheap shot, which I am not normally prone to do. This is really the difference between us and them. Ms Ellis talks about the success. It could be said that some people opposite talk about the also-rans, but that is not the issue we wish to draw attention to. It was the contribution of all of the schools involved in this program that made it a success. The fact that so many schools were prepared to be involved made this program the success that it was. I congratulate Ms Ellis on raising the issue and raising the consciousness of this Assembly about this most deserving program which was won this year by Lake Tuggeranong College.

MR KAINE (Leader of the Opposition) (10.54): Madam Speaker, I will speak briefly. I agree with Mr Cornwell that this is a pointless motion. Paragraph (1) is a good thing which Ms Ellis could easily have dealt with in a five-minute statement in the adjournment debate, which would have been appropriate for this kind of thing. The second part of her motion, however, is a slightly different thing. I notice, Madam Speaker, that it does not recognise the initiatives of the ACT Follett Labor Government. Indeed, if Ms Ellis had done that, she would have invited criticism, because programs encouraging energy efficiency in our community have been going on for a long time, not only under the Follett Labor Government either. If we want to pat ourselves on the back and say how great we are because we have introduced energy efficiencies over a series of governments, that is okay, I suppose. But why do we want to do it? Who is kidding whom? Are we world leaders in this field? I do not think so. In fact, we are doing what any sensible government would do. It was done under the Alliance Government - it was started before that - and has continued under the Follett Labor Government. That is fine.

But there is one part of this motion that I am not sure Ms Ellis understood when she wrote it. She is asking us to recognise the initiatives of the Government in the use of fuel. I do not quite know what that means. Is she congratulating the Follett Labor Government on policies that generate the use of additional fuel?

Ms Ellis: Fuel and energy efficiency. Read the sentence.

MR KAINE: Energy efficiency is a different thing. There are two thoughts there. One is the use of fuel; the other is energy efficiency. You do not use energy efficiency. Read your own sentence - read Ros's sentence. I presume that Ros wrote it for you. I do not think it says what you intended it to say. I do not know that I particularly want to pat myself on the back - and if I were to support this motion in its present form I would be doing so - for encouraging the use of fuel. Which fuel are we encouraging the use of - electrical energy, natural gas, petroleum products or coal? I do not know that I am encouraging the use of fuel. In fact, I hope that we would discourage the use of fuel so that we generate less of the gases that are destroying the ozone layer.

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I do not think Ms Ellis quite understood what she meant when she wrote this motion. If she had not used the words "the use of fuel and" it would have been a good motion, because the ACT Government is developing and encouraging energy efficiency - and so it should. I am a bit ambivalent about the motion. I do not think it says what Ms Ellis meant it to say. The first part is entirely tolerable and acceptable. It is something that the Assembly could well do; but, if Ms Ellis thinks she is going to score a couple of points down in Tuggeranong because of it, I do not think that is going to happen.

It makes you really wonder why we are spending time in the Assembly here on this Wednesday morning discussing such a motion. There will be no value when we have finished discussing it, except that we will tell each other how great we are. I do not think that is what we were put here for. I would prefer to see us discussing something productive such as Mr Lamont's motion, which I notice he keeps shoving back down the business agenda because he does not want to discuss it.

MR STEVENSON (10.58): I heard a comment about a warm inner glow and I could not help remembering the opening statements by Ms Ellis that we are all going to fry in the hothouse. Perhaps that is a slight exaggeration of what was said.

Ms Ellis: The humour displayed by the Opposition on this subject dismays me. Go ahead, Mr Stevenson.

MR STEVENSON: I do not know whether I should comment on that or not. Nevertheless, let me comment on the statements on so-called global warming or the greenhouse effect. I think it is obvious that the greenhouse effect is an entirely natural phenomenon that prevents the Earth from freezing. We well acknowledge that. So, when people talk about a greenhouse effect they talk about a so-called enhanced or increased global warming over a long period of time. The convolutions that have been gone through, to maintain this absolute farce for so long without people having an opportunity to see the facts, are absolutely amazing.

Let me present in a nutshell something that would require any intelligent individual to relook at the idea that we have a problem with enhanced global warming. East Anglia University was one of the early proponents of the idea that during the last century the global temperature rose by 0.5 degrees. In 1979 NASA started to do satellite sweeps - they are doing two satellite sweeps - and collect global temperature data. That is somewhat better than some of the earlier models because it does not pick up data where you get a heat sink problem. Collecting global temperatures just outside airports, as has been done, and just outside urban areas - where you have a build-up of heat or a heat sink - does not necessarily give you valid scientific data. It gives you nonsense. Nevertheless, NASA have collected the data. Since 1979, with their global satellite sweeps, they have shown that there has been no - I repeat no - significant global temperature increase. NASA has shown - and these are the latest figures, released last week - that the global temperature has dropped in the last year by 0.7 degrees.

So, I suppose that now the people pushing the so-called enhanced global warming line will be rushing around saying that an ice age is coming again, as they did in 1975 when around the world we saw headings such as "Ice Age Imminent", three-hour documentaries on the coming ice age and other

absolutely nonsensical information. The whole proposition of enhanced global warming is absurd and has been totally misrepresented by politicians and by media that are not prepared to go into detail and explain what is happening and what they are saying but simply sensationalise the whole thing.

But let us have a look at the real causes, leaving aside the suggestions that the carbon dioxide content of beer is under scrutiny and that banks are refusing mortgages on certain seafront properties. I leave aside those extremes that have arisen from the greenhouse effect scare. There are far more serious implications. Governments the world over - and ours is no different - are spending hundreds of millions of dollars in perpetuating this myth, rather than a small amount of money on actually looking at the data that is readily available for anybody who truly wants to look. Enormous sums are going in grants for research, staff costs and so on - all to no avail.

It is said that the biggest problem perhaps is that gases that were used previously now need to be phased out. That was a major talking point at the conference in Rio. If we phase out these gases - which are very cheap gases because the patents on them have run out - and phase in other gases, it will be very expensive because the patents on these gases are newer patents. If we also require refrigeration units to be changed, that will be a problem in Australia, but our problem will be nothing compared to the problem in underdeveloped countries.

Mr Berry: Halons are safe; you can let them out in the atmosphere - is that your argument? Are they safe?

MR STEVENSON: Mr Berry asks, "Are halons safe?". We will start talking about fluorides if you talk about halons. Some of them are extremely unsafe. I would like to go into more detail, although I think I have already gone into considerable detail. I give notice, as I usually do, that today I will ask a question without notice about the fact that NASA has recorded a 0.7-degree drop in temperature in the last year.

MS ELLIS (11.05): Madam Speaker, I find it quite astounding and in fact insulting to this community that the only thing the Opposition can do in this debate on a motion that I believe is important is to try to cheaply politicise it with accusations that I moved the motion merely to court votes in Tuggeranong. I find that appalling. What we are really about here is the future of our community. This is in fact a very important motion. It is relevant to the whole of our community. It matters to all of us how we manage our energy usage in the future.

It is more than encouraging to governments that our young people are not only displaying an interest but also developing at this early stage in their education an understanding of what we as a community must do. They are not only understanding that but also producing the goods. They are our engineers, our consumers, our scientists of the future. The Opposition believe that it is more fun to have a five-minute go at the fact that a Tuggeranong college won a competition. I in no way at all reflected any ignorance of the participation of other schools. They were in fact mentioned, but not by name. In fact, I join Mr Cornwell in congratulating them on their entries. What I am hoping for, and what I referred to in my speech, is an increase in the participation of schools in this town in the future, from pure peer pressure and competition. Nothing could be healthier.

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We as community leaders must not only fully accept the role that we have to lead the community but also accept, understand and acknowledge the impetus that our young people are giving us and thank them for it. It is the interest from those young people that should give us the drive, the initiative and the courage to compete and to continue on the tracks that I outlined as being followed by this Government already. I take grave exception to the fact that both Mr Cornwell and Mr Kaine think that all they need to do to contribute to this important debate about our future is to somehow trivialise it and politicise it down to the level they did.

I hope that the people not only in our schools but in our community realise and understand that obviously the Opposition have as much interest in the future environment of this planet as a piece of paper on their desk. I find it appalling. I welcome Mr Cornwell's amendment. It is a fine amendment and I have no problem with it. But I do take exception to the attitude generally displayed from those opposite. I had every encouragement in moving the motion and did so quite happily.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

DRUGS AND POISONS SCHEDULING

MRS CARNELL (11.08): I move:

That the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency, legislation to facilitate drugs and poisons scheduling by reference to the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Agreement to scheduling by reference was the outcome of a decision by AHMAC some years ago. All States and Territories have agreed to the process of adopting NHMRC recommendations by reference. Scheduling by reference refers to how drugs and poisons lists are updated. In the ACT relevant legislation is the Drugs of Dependence Act and, more importantly, the Poisons and Drugs Act. Scheduling by reference allows these lists to be updated more or less automatically by reference to recommendations of the NHMRC.

It should be noted that currently every time we wish to update the drugs or poisons lists we have to pass an amendment to one or both of the relevant Acts. Not surprisingly, this is unwieldy, time consuming and fairly inappropriate. The current system also duplicates decisions made by Territory representatives at the NHMRC. All States and Territories have an input to this body, which forms the standards for uniform scheduling of poisons and drugs. As I said, the Government has had notice of the need for uniform scheduling for some time. In fact, Mr Berry wrote in a letter to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 29 August 1991 - and I can table it if you like, but I am sure that you have a copy:

I am pleased to be able to advise you that the Government's legislation program for the current sitting of the Assembly includes these amendments. I would expect to introduce them into the Assembly later this year.

That was in 1991. It is now over 12 months later. Unfortunately, health is definitely not one of the Government's more proactive areas. We are still waiting for some action to be taken. Other States have made progress in introducing scheduling by reference. To be fair, we are not the slowest State in this respect; but we certainly have some catching up to do.

Queensland adopted recognition of the standard uniform scheduling of drugs and poisons last year - in fact, on 9 November. New South Wales adopted the legislation necessary as far back as 1987. Victoria originally adopted amendments to its Poisons and Controlled Substances Act in 1990. Unfortunately, further amendments needed to be introduced and were introduced in June this year.

Mr De Domenico: Even by Mrs Kirner.

MRS CARNELL: Even with an election coming up.

Mr De Domenico: Remember her?

MRS CARNELL: Yes. South Australia gazetted the changes necessary on 24 January last year. We in the ACT still do not have a Bill in front of the Assembly. In May, after much frustration in this area, I asked for a private members Bill to be drafted, in an attempt to introduce scheduling by reference before 1 August 1992. I was told that the Government already had a Bill in drafting and the Government's Bill had priority. "Good", I thought, "The Bill will be in place before 1 August so that ACT residents will be able to take advantage of the rescheduling of a number of drugs, one in particular being an antihistamine called hismanal".

Hismanal is the only available 24-hour acting, non-sedating antihistamine. It was made available over the counter in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia from 1 August. In Queanbeyan, a box of 10 of these tablets costs approximately \$6 less than the same box in the ACT and, as well as this, ACT consumers have to go to the doctor. This is not the first time this has happened. This has been an ongoing problem over the years for ACT consumers, and it is totally unnecessary. There is no doubt that it disadvantages Canberra consumers. Obviously, Mr Berry's own department thought the changes would have been introduced in time when they wrote on page 58 in the explanatory notes on health for the Estimates Committee that amendments to the poisons and drug legislation placed the ACT in accordance with the agreed NHMRC recommendations - a statement which, of course, is not true. In the Estimates Committee we had some other interesting information presented when Parliamentary Counsel stated that there was no hold-up in legislation that was with them. So, where does the problem lie? The problem must lie either in Cabinet or, alternatively, with Mr Berry directly. As I have said, all States and Territories recognise the benefit of conforming to the NHMRC standard.

There are two ways to introduce legislation by the simple drafting that has been used in other places. The first way is to introduce automatic or ambulatory references which will update the poisons list in accordance with national standards from time to time - for example, on 1 January and 1 July, to pick two arbitrary dates. The second and by far the best way is to simply make our poisons list identical with NHMRC standards. Whatever changes they make to

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their list become changes to our list. In other words, we simply use NHMRC schedules as our own. The second way is by far the best approach and is much simpler, provided there is a provision in the legislation for the Minister to make exceptions if he sees that as necessary.

Madam Speaker, I urge the Government to introduce scheduling by reference as soon as possible. We have already missed out on most of the hay fever season, and this has cost Canberrans many thousands of dollars and added substantially to the Medicare bill. Obviously, the Government does not have its legislation priorities in order. I assume that, as I have finally been given the opportunity to debate this motion after it has been on the notice paper for two months, the Government finally has legislation in this area ready. I challenge them to introduce it now. It must be done as a priority.

MR LAMONT (11.15): First of all, I am somewhat miffed at the suggestion by Mrs Carnell that this matter was first placed on the notice paper some two-and-a-half months ago and the Government has now allowed it to be debated. The Administration and Procedures Committee is made up of the Speaker; Mr De Domenico, the Opposition Whip; me, the Government Whip; and Mr Moore. It is the Administration and Procedures Committee, not the Government, that determines the order of private members business. So, I hope that Mrs Carnell stands suitably chastened for the way in which she has insulted this chamber and in particular the Administration and Procedures Committee.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, Mrs Carnell's proposal - that the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency, legislation to facilitate drugs and poisons scheduling by reference to the recommendations of the NHMRC - does not take into account the existing situation in the ACT with regard to its drugs and poisons legislation. If Mrs Carnell cares to sit there for five minutes she will, hopefully, come out somewhat more educated than she was when she walked into the chamber this morning. As the Deputy Chief Minister explained, there are three pieces of such legislation in the ACT requiring amendment to give effect to the NHMRC standards. That was explained by the Deputy Chief Minister when this matter was previously discussed here in this Assembly, and I am sure that when the Deputy Chief Minister speaks on this matter later he will cover that ground once again.

There are three pieces of relevant legislation in the ACT. These are the Poisons Act, the Poisons and Drugs Act and the Drugs of Dependence Act. In order to adopt by reference the NHMRC standard for the uniform scheduling of drugs and poisons, other changes to each piece of legislation are concurrently required to avoid duplication and to streamline controls over drugs and poisons. When it became clear 18 months ago that this was indeed not a simple proposition, the Government took immediate action and amended the schedules to both the Poisons and Drugs Act and the Drugs of Dependence Act to incorporate all the current recommendations of the NHMRC. I might add that at that time, Madam Speaker, which was in March 1991, the ACT was the most up-to-date State with regard to the implementation of the scheduling recommendations of the NHMRC.

Madam Speaker, during the review of the legislation it became apparent that reform of the controls over dangerous poisons was overdue; so the Government has taken this timely opportunity to improve certain controls over dangerous poisons by transferring these controls from the Poisons Act to the Poisons and

Drugs Act. At the same time these controls have been updated and simplified, which will ensure that the nationally recognised problems of unsafe storage practices and incorrect labelling of domestic chemicals will be addressed in the ACT.

This is in line with the national plan for domestic chemicals, which stresses that a national strategy for domestic poisons which includes all chemicals found in the home - including pharmaceuticals, home garden and handyman products and formulated products designed for home use - is needed. This plan was endorsed by the NHMRC in October 1991 and was noted at the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council meeting in March 1992. While this broader approach has resulted in delays to the adoption of the NHMRC schedule by reference, the Bills to be presented to the Assembly amending the three pieces of legislation - the Poisons Act, the Poisons and Drugs Act and the Drugs of Dependence Act - will offer a complete parcel of legislation ensuring that public health in the ACT is enhanced.

That is the simple reason why we have Mrs Carnell carping about the delay which has allegedly occurred in fulfilling the undertaking given by Mr Berry last year. The fact is that the world is not quite as simplistic as Mrs Carnell believes it is, looking through her rose-tinted pharmaceutical glasses. A great deal of additional work has been necessary to ensure that the legislation is appropriately dealt with. If Mrs Carnell cannot accept that, then I suppose it really behoves me to suggest that Mrs Carnell on this occasion is as misinformed about what the processes are as she quite obviously has been in dealing with other matters in relation to the health portfolio.

MR BERRY (Minister for Health, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Sport) (11.20): I think the first thing that the Assembly should note is that this proposal by Mrs Carnell arises from her attempts to have drafted legislation to carry out the very things she complains about, whereupon she discovered that the Government was already on the job and dealing with the matter. Miffed at that discovery, she then moved to try to rip a few political points out of the issue - political points that are not available. Of course, if she had a better understanding of the legislation process she would understand that this sort of legislation often does not rate as first priority. This legislation has not rated and will not rate as first priority in the current sittings.

Mrs Carnell's proposal that the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency, legislation to facilitate drugs and poisons scheduling by reference to the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council is not a simple matter, although I did note in the course of debate on the issue that she changed her mind and urged the Government to introduce legislation "as soon as possible". We are quite happy to cop that request. "As soon as possible" is fine, but the words "as a matter of urgency" suggest that you want us to immediately instate it as a first priority piece of legislation over others which the Government has decided to install as a first priority.

Madam Speaker, I intend to move an amendment which deletes the words "That the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency" and substitutes the words "That this Assembly notes that the Government is preparing".

Mrs Carnell: Do you mean a do-nothing, a cop-out?

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MR BERRY: Wait a minute. That incorporates the very words of the member herself. She urges the Government to introduce legislation "as soon as possible". That is what you said in the course of the debate. I am happy to cop that. The NHMRC schedules referred to by Mrs Carnell are those in the standard for the uniform scheduling of drugs and poisons. In addition to the schedules, the standard includes provisions about containers and labels, a list of products recommended to be exempted from those provisions and recommendations about controls on drugs and poisons.

Mrs Carnell: That is right. It is schedule 7.

MR BERRY: Mrs Carnell intervenes. I wonder what hat she is wearing today. Is she wearing the hat of a pharmacist from Red Hill; is she wearing the hat of the Pharmacy Guild, the union of pharmacy owners; or is she here in her part-time capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly? Methinks she is here on a part-time job again. The people of Canberra are paying for a part-time member of the Legislative Assembly.

Under the current poisons laws, control over the sale and supply, labelling and packaging of poisons and drugs, including drugs of dependence, is contained in three pieces of legislation, not two - you said two - the Poisons Act, the Poisons and Drugs Act and the Drugs of Dependence Act. The first piece of legislation - - -

Mrs Carnell: Because I was not talking about schedule 7 in this particular stuff; you are.

MR BERRY: By gee, they do not like being upset. The first piece of legislation, the Poisons Act 1933, controls the use of medicinal drugs and poisons. The regulations under that Act provide for licensing of sellers of drugs and poisons and also provide statutory rules in relation to dispensing prescriptions, the keeping of records and the storage of drugs. The second piece, the Poisons and Drugs Act 1978, was made to better control the prescribing of addictive substances and the labelling and packaging of all scheduled substances. The third piece, the Drugs of Dependence Act 1989, was prepared following agreement in principle at the Special Premiers Conference on Drug Strategy in April 1985, commonly referred to as the drug summit. At the summit, it was agreed that there should be uniformity of approach among jurisdictions on legislation governing drugs of dependence and a broad consistency on key issues such as the scheduling of drugs, the thrust of offences and penalties.

The ACT is not alone in the predicament where drugs and poisons control is not contained in a single Act. Before the Government can introduce legislation to facilitate drugs and poisons scheduling by reference to the recommendations made by the NHMRC, there are three main issues that need to be addressed. The first issue that must be addressed is the updating of the existing controls over dangerous poisons and their transfer from the Poisons Act 1933 to the Poisons and Drugs Act 1978 to allow for better control over schedule 7 poisons. Schedule 7 substances are poisons which require special precautions in manufacture, handling, storage or use or special individual regulations regarding labelling or availability.

The second issue involves the introduction of essential additional controls over the most dangerous schedule 7 poisons to better protect public health - a government priority. Appendix J to the standard lists the controls of these substances considered appropriate by the Council for the Protection of Public Health. To facilitate the introduction of these recommended controls into ACT law in addition to adopting the schedules by reference, the proposed government amendments will also adopt by reference appendix J to the standard. This will allow the application of criteria by the Medical Officer of Health in setting conditions for use of these substances when issuing or refusing authorisations for the manufacture, supply and/or use of these substances. The third issue concerns the introduction of fees for these authorisations in line with existing licence fees called for in the Poisons Act 1933 and the Drugs of Dependence Act.

As previously mentioned, before the issue raised by Mrs Carnell can be addressed, three pieces of legislation must be extensively amended - the Poisons Act, the Poisons and Drugs Act and the Drugs of Dependence Act. This is a complex parcel of legislation which requires the allocation of considerable drafting resources in both time and personnel. It is anticipated that when the appropriate Bills are available they will assist in fulfilling the Government's commitment to not only consistency and harmonisation of the schedules of drugs and poisons between States and Territories but also national uniformity of controls for the sale, supply, labelling and packaging of poisons and drugs, including drugs of dependence.

Mrs Carnell complains that the Government promised legislation last year. The Government said that the legislation was on - that is what we said - and it was.

Mrs Carnell: But it fell off.

MR BERRY: If you grow to a better understanding of the legislation program you will understand that sometimes second and third priority legislation falls off.

Mrs Carnell: You said that it would be through last year.

MR BERRY: Sometimes it falls off.

Mrs Carnell: You said that it would be introduced in the budget sittings last year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Berry has the floor.

MR BERRY: The amendment of this legislation is a priority, and drafting is now well advanced for these pieces of legislation. We will support the amendment that I have proposed because it mirrors the very words Mrs Carnell herself used.

Mrs Carnell: It does not.

MR BERRY: You used them in your speech. We will drag out the *Hansard*. You said - - -

Mrs Carnell: You said "notes that the Government is preparing". It was preparing last year. It was preparing the year before.

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MR BERRY: Madam Speaker, the amendment mirrors the intentions of the member herself, though it of course amends the words in the motion as proposed. We will, as soon as possible within the drafting requirements of the - - -

Mr De Domenico: Type it out next time so that you can read it properly.

MR BERRY: Madam Speaker, an amendment circulated in my name reads:

Omit "That the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency,", substitute "Notes that the Government is preparing".

The substituted words should read "That the Assembly notes that the Government is preparing". I seek leave to have those words included in the amendment.

Leave granted.

MR BERRY: I move the following amendment:

Omit "That the Government introduce, as a matter of urgency,", substitute "That the Assembly notes that the Government is preparing".

(Extension of time granted) I do not need to say any more, other than to urge members to support the amendment. Mrs Carnell is correct in saying that legislation has to be amended; but, as I have said, it requires a large amount of resources and time to put together what is a complex package of legislation. It is a priority for the Government. We have said that we will do it, and we will.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Berry, for clarity, would you mind reading out the motion as you propose it?

MR BERRY: Madam Speaker, if my amendment is carried the motion will read:

That the Assembly notes that the Government is preparing legislation to facilitate drugs and poisons scheduling by reference to the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

MR DE DOMENICO (11.32): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak very briefly. The Opposition will not support the Government's amendment. Let us read into the record the letter that Mr Berry signed. I assume that it is Mr Berry's signature. It says so here. The letter is to Mr Peter Holder, the chairman of the ACT sub-branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, and it is dated 29 August 1991. The letter reads:

Dear Mr Holder

Thank you for your letter of 24 July 1991 concerning amendments to the Poisons and Drugs Act 1978.

The proposed amendments are to control exceptionally dangerous Schedule 7 poisons, including pesticides and industrial chemicals, and to adopt by reference Schedules to the National Health and Medical Research Council's Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons.

It goes on to say - and this is a very important part of this letter, Madam Speaker:

I am pleased to be able to advise you that the Government's Legislation Program for the current sitting of the Assembly includes these amendments.

That was August 1991, last year. He goes on:

I would expect to introduce them into the Assembly later in the year.

That is 1991. That must mean that Mr Berry knew that the legislation was being prepared and was going to be ready to be introduced at the end of last year. Mr Berry now stands up here and says, "It is a very hard thing to do". Of course it is a very hard thing to do. Even Mrs Kirner's Government in Victoria - remember her? - introduced it. New South Wales has introduced it, South Australia has introduced it, Queensland has introduced it; but the ACT has not. The irony is that if I want to buy some hismanal antihistamines because I suffer from hay fever - and many Canberrans do - it is going to cost me about \$25 - - -

Mrs Carnell: Six dollars.

MR DE DOMENICO: But I have to go to a doctor as well. It is going to cost me at least \$25 to get them in the ACT. If I go to Queanbeyan, though, it will cost me \$6.

Mrs Carnell: Eleven dollars.

MR DE DOMENICO: So, it will cost me \$14 less in Queanbeyan.

Mr Berry: If you go to a doctor who bulkbills and buy it at a local chemist, it will cost you less.

MR DE DOMENICO: No, it will not. He has got that wrong as well. In the ACT, Mr Berry, you need a doctor's prescription before you can get them. The doctor's bill is \$18. Then you have to pay for the pills. In Queanbeyan they cost \$11. Eleven is less than 18.

Mrs Grassby: Tony, bulkbilling does not cost you anything with a doctor.

MR DE DOMENICO: There is the parrot at the back again. The facts are that it is cheaper to buy them in New South Wales than it is in the ACT. Mr Berry promised the people of the ACT last year that it would cost them less to buy hismanal, but of course he has not acted yet.

The Liberal Party says, "We have given him enough chance. Let us draft our own legislation". We are told, "Listen, you cannot do that, because the Government has its own legislation coming". We are saying, "Okay, fair enough. We will pull out. Let the Government do it". But the legislation is still coming - and so is Christmas and so is Easter next year. We still have not seen the legislation. In the meantime, we have seen a lot of things that this Government has done. It has banned circus animals; it has increased the potential to have abortions. It has done all these "very urgent" little things that come up from time to time, but if you want to buy some antihistamines to - - -

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Mr Lamont: You normally address the Chair when you are speaking.

MR DE DOMENICO: I am not going to listen to you, by the way. The last thing I am going to do is listen to you. I will obviously do whatever you say, Mr Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I trust that everybody will do that.

MR DE DOMENICO: I am sure that they will. I will ignore Mr Lamont from now on. I put him on notice of that. Unless this letter was not written by you, Mr Berry, your Government promised some action 14 months ago, and we ask - - -

Mr Berry: We said that it was on the legislation program.

MR DE DOMENICO: No. What you said was:

I would expect to introduce them into the Assembly later in the year.

That is what you said. If you want to retract that, that is up to you; but that is what you said. I seek leave to incorporate Mr Berry's letter in *Hansard* so that Mr Berry can read exactly what he said.

Leave granted.

Document incorporated at Appendix 1.

MR DE DOMENICO: The Liberal Party is saying to the Government, "You have promised the community that you will do something. Do it as soon as you can. You have had 14 months to do it. You have had longer than that, in fact. Let us get some action".

Question put:

That the amendment (**Mr Berry's**) be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 8

NOES, 5

Mr Berry
Ms Ellis
Ms Follett
Mrs Grassby
Mr Lamont
Ms McRae
Ms Szuty
Mr Wood

Mrs Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr De Domenico
Mr Kaine
Mr Westende

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION
Annual Report for 1991**

Debate resumed from 9 September 1992, on motion by **Mr De Domenico**:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR CORNWELL (11.43): As the overview of the 1991 annual report of the ACT Institute of Technical and Further Education states, the ACT TAFE had more than 18,000 course enrolments and nearly 1,000 full-time equivalent staff in 1991. It is the largest post-compulsory education provider in the ACT, providing some 300 courses. Unfortunately, through no fault of its authors, the 1991 annual report has a curiously out-of-date flavour to it. I believe that that is because it predates the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports - the challenging trio that, I think it is fair to say, have convulsed Australia's technical and further education establishments, their supporters, their employees and their administrators, including politicians, for most of 1992 to date; and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so until the end of this calendar year.

It is rather unfair that TAFE's 1991 report should have suffered this eclipse, because it identifies a quiet but steady progress that is more the norm, I suggest, than the massive changes recommended by the trio mentioned earlier. For example, the consolidation of campuses best illustrates the point I am making, with our friend the Battlestar Galactica down there in Callum Street, Woden, vacated, and the move of TAFE to the old Woden Valley High School site, now renamed the Southside campus; the closure of the old Narrabundah campus, which is now virtually vacated; and the proposal that the Belconnen campus be closed and moved back to the Bruce campus at the end of 1992. These are matters that can be confirmed by reading the recent Estimates Committee hearing transcript.

The 1991 annual report records that the Commonwealth funded an additional 500 places for 1992. No doubt this was translated immediately into jobs by this ACT Labor Government, as desperate, I would suggest, in 1991 as they are now in 1992 to try to make a silk purse of employment out of a sow's ear of training. One notes also the quite sobering statistic at page 11 of the report that an estimated 5,000 prospective students were expected to miss out on places in 1992. In the event, only 4,000 of the 5,000 were unsuccessful; but it is still an appalling figure. It was partly the result of a 10 per cent reduction in places due to a significant increase in full-time students. That in itself is an indication of the recognition of the need and of the desperation to obtain training by those seeking qualifications in "the recession we had to have", to quote Mr Keating.

As I said earlier, the 1991 annual report predates the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports and their influence on the future of post-secondary education and training. Since then, Commonwealth funding has begun to flow, until in 1992-93 we are flooded with additional financial resources. We have \$1.495m under the Australian National Training Authority, which unfortunately has now moved to Queensland, but that is another matter; we have over \$1m for the entry level training program; we have \$135,000 in adult literacy funding; and we have \$165,000 for Aboriginal education. These are all additional financial resources from the Commonwealth. In addition, the ACT Government has added its increased contribution, including \$513,000 for additional school leavers and \$184,000 for the full year effect of the Year 13 buy-out.

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TAFE is most fortunately served by additional finance. However, it remains to be seen whether this cornucopia of money for TAFE places and, by inference, training will translate into jobs, or whether it is simply a cynical political mopping up exercise to keep the official unemployment figures from breaking through the one million barrier before the next Federal election rolls around. As anybody involved in politics knows, the unofficial, or hidden, unemployment figure in this country is well beyond one million already. Whatever the intention, however, TAFE is benefiting from this increased funding, and one should be grateful for these small mercies.

I would like to make two more comments, Madam Speaker. Firstly, ACT TAFE, despite the high profile of one or two of its schools, consists of nine schools. They are listed on the cover of the 1991 annual report, in alphabetical order. I think this is right and proper; no school should be regarded as better than any other. All schools serve those who wish to attend them and be educated in them. From these schools come practical, innovative, qualified people, in so many disciplines that time will not permit me to list them here. Suffice it to say, however, that the nine schools, as the 1991 report indicates, already have attracted 180 students under the international student program. They are attending these TAFE courses on a fee basis, I might add. The number of overseas students has risen in 1992 and is set to increase further in future years. Indeed, when satisfactory student accommodation can be provided, we will probably find ourselves in a much better position to address the matter of international students and the funding they can bring into the ACT and into our TAFE system.

Finally, Madam Speaker, this will be the last occasion, when addressing a TAFE annual report, that we will refer to the report by that acronym. From January 1993 ACT TAFE will be known as the Canberra Institute of Technology. Naturally being conscious of costings, I trust that due attention will be paid to using up, or at least using for other purposes, the existing letterhead and that the new logo will not prove too costly. I support the change of name. ACT TAFE, I find, a clumsy expression. In fact, it is rather like not having your false teeth in place when you pronounce it. More to the point, if one reads down the list of nine schools represented, and if one, however reluctantly, like some twentieth century Luddite, examines the range of courses and curricula, one must reach the conclusion that the name change is both necessary and appropriate.

Earlier today I attended a breakfast at the TAFE college, addressed by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr Beazley, and he made the same point. He welcomed the name change here in the ACT. Somewhat to my surprise, and I believe to the surprise of numbers of other people in the audience, he said that name changes of this nature were being resisted elsewhere in the country. I do not really understand why that is. Nevertheless, Mr Beazley welcomed the name change. He added that of late there has been a move from the university system to the TAFE system. I have no doubt that the reasons for this are many. I am sure that they include the difficulty of gaining university entrance at all, due to the higher entrance requirements being imposed. Further, the desperation facing increasing numbers of school leavers in their quest for employment forces them to defer their entry into the world of work and puts pressure on various centres of learning.

However, there was another group that was identified by Mr Beazley - university graduates who are seeking a TAFE qualification because they believe that it provides them with better job qualifications than does a university degree. I regard this as a welcome change, and I hope that it will influence parents to pay more attention to the capabilities of their children rather than to their social aspirations. For too long, certainly here in the ACT, there has been a tendency to oblige children to go on to university, rather than to TAFE, for reasons that have nothing to do with their capabilities. The result is that you often end up with a rather indifferent arts degree graduate when you might have ended up with a very good plumber.

Mr De Domenico: You can still be a plumber with an arts degree.

MR CORNWELL: Indeed, Mr De Domenico; thank you. That would appear, from what Mr Beazley was saying, to be what is happening these days. People are coming out of universities with arts degrees and going to TAFE to train for trade qualifications.

Certainly, I believe that the new name, the Canberra Institute of Technology, properly reflects the high quality of the courses and the course content provided by the current nine schools. It also reflects the high quality and the higher expectations of those who seek to attend what will be the Canberra Institute of Technology. I have only one concluding remark: I do not know how we are going to pronounce the new acronym. I do not know, Minister, whether it will be "sit" or "kit", but I am sure that we will work it out.

MR WOOD (Minister for Education and Training, Minister for the Arts and Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning) (11.55): I thank Mr Cornwell for his generous remarks about what is currently ACT TAFE, soon to be the Institute of Technology. In three areas Mr Cornwell indicated that things were going well. The first was the increased expenditure for TAFE, particularly from the Commonwealth Government. The benefits of that Commonwealth Government funding cannot be overestimated. It has had a remarkable impact in the ACT, as it has around Australia. That program will continue with the commitment by the Federal Labor Government to increase substantially the amount of money going to TAFE and training systems - an extra \$720m. That is not the total amount; that is just more money in the next few years. The Federal Government has recognised that TAFE and training have been long neglected - the poor cousin, but a cousin whose skills are much needed. They have backed up that commitment with a very substantial amount of funding.

To introduce a sour note into what has generally been a harmonious debate, I have great anxiety, in the unlikely event that a Hewson government is elected, about the flow of this money. Dr Hewson's comments about training and TAFE are not at all encouraging; they are distinctly alarming. This new trend we have seen of recognition of TAFE would come to a sudden end if he were brought to government. I am confident, of course, that that will not happen.

The second area about which I thank Mr Cornwell for his comments relates to the students. I think he described the TAFE system as putting out practical, qualified and innovative people. That is praise for TAFE, and I join with him in commending TAFE for the work it does. I know that TAFE itself is of the view

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that it must do better and better still. It does not sit back and say, "We are doing a good job", and forget about it. It is constantly looking to improve the quality of its graduates. Very much at the forefront of this is the work coming from Carmichael and Mayer. As the new trends, the new policies, emerge and influence our system, we will see yet again an increased level of ability demonstrated by graduates.

I also thank Mr Cornwell for his endorsement of the term "Institute of Technology" and, in saying so, I note that a name is important. The basic work that TAFE does will not change. It will still concentrate on basic skills; it will concentrate on trade training and the whole range of programs it has long run. The name change will give a new focus and will assist in encouraging people to see TAFE as perhaps a better outcome for them than a university.

To conclude, I am not sure that I can help Mr Cornwell with pronunciation. Maybe that will come over time. Whether it is to be "sit" or "kit", I do not know - - -

Ms Follett: It is Canberra, not Sanberra.

MR WOOD: I can tell Mr Cornwell what it was not going to be. It was not going to be the ACT Institute of Technology.

MR DE DOMENICO (12.00), in reply: Madam Speaker, I shall speak briefly, mainly because it was I who moved the motion to take note. Had I had an opportunity then, I would not have spoken today; but I have to do so now out of respect for the Assembly. Let me take this opportunity to endorse most of Mr Wood's remarks and, obviously, all of Mr Cornwell's. I agree with the Chief Minister that the acronym has to be pronounced "kit"; the name is Canberra.

I mention briefly the experience I have had with one of the schools. Whilst I believe that all the schools have done a fantastic job, I had a lot to do with the School of Tourism and Hospitality, ably run by Lyn Smith. There is no doubt that Canberra's School of Tourism and Hospitality is world class by anyone's standards. They ought to be congratulated for the calibre of graduate they send out. As people are probably aware, all of Canberra's best waiters and most of Canberra's best chefs at one stage in their careers have gone through a course at the Canberra School of Tourism and Hospitality. A lot of the fine chefs and waiters from all over the country have also had their instruction at the Canberra School of Tourism and Hospitality.

I am also very gratified at the success of the overseas program. Perhaps one thing the change of name to the Canberra Institute of Technology will do is tell the world at large that the old ACT TAFE has come of age. The Canberra Institute of Technology will be recognised as a world-class educational institution, which has to be good for its future. With those very brief remarks, Madam Speaker, I am happy to endorse what my colleague Mr Cornwell has said.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

PUBLICATIONS CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992

Debate resumed from 24 June 1992, on motion by **Mr Stevenson**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.02 to 2.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Department of Education and Training - Secretary

MR KAINE: I direct a question to Mr Wood, the Minister for Education and Training. Three of the members of the panel that led to the appointment of the new secretary of your department are generally well-known names. As I understand it, they are Professor Roger Scott, Ms Helen Williams and Mr Jeff Townsend. There is a suggestion that there was a fourth member. Can you confirm whether or not there was and, if so, who that member was?

MR WOOD: This is a very disingenuous question by the former Chief Minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, whose term may be long on that side, although not long as Leader of the Opposition. There were not three generally well-known names on that panel; there were four generally well-known names, and he knows that. He knows those four names; and he has asked that question in a deliberately spurious way, to cast further doubt on the process, which was a decent and proper one.

Mr Kaine: So, there were four?

MR WOOD: You are being deliberately misleading. You know that there were four names and you have always known that there were four names. To say otherwise is simply untrue. Three of the four names are the three he has given; and the further name is an officer in my office, Ms Peta Beelen, as Mr Kaine well knew.

MR KAINE: I ask a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I did not know that, and I asked the Minister the question to get confirmation of some information that was passed to me - not by the Minister. Since he has now confirmed that suggestion, will the Minister indicate to me whether or not he considers it normal practice to have a Minister's staffer sit on an interview board for appointment of an officer at agency head level in the ACT Government Service?

MR WOOD: I can tell Mr Kaine that in the context of what happens in the ACT, in relation to this and other appointments, it is normal practice.

Global Warming

MR STEVENSON: My question is also to Mr Wood, but this time in connection with his responsibility for the environment, land and planning. I ask: How much money has been expended by the ACT Government on matters relating to the claim of an increase in global warming? Was the Minister aware before I mentioned it earlier today that NASA, in taking satellite temperature measurements globally since 1979, found no significant increase or decrease in global temperatures until the last year when, according to NASA figures released last week, there was a sharp drop in global temperatures of 0.7 of a degree?

MR WOOD: There has been no specific expenditure in any of my departments on issues relating to greenhouse. Certainly, officers with responsibilities stay informed of the various views on this and other scientific issues. For example, they prepare documents for me; they attend meetings here and across Australia from time to time - all as part of their duties. Those duties include a whole range of matters, and we do not isolate the cost of what they do in connection with greenhouse, nor would it be possible or desirable to do so.

In relation to the second part of the question, I have not seen that NASA data. I suppose that in time Mr Stevenson will table what he has. It is the case that you can always get someone to support your view - - -

Mr Stevenson: NASA?

MR WOOD: I will come to that. Mr Stevenson can always find someone to support a variety of his views. Even the other day, coming from my point of view, I see that someone is telling me that it is now safe to eat chocolates. It is in a national paper, so it has to be right. The person has "doctor" in front of his or her name, so it has to be super right. I am told, after some study, that I can eat chocolates. I like that idea, so I can believe in it.

Mr Stevenson has not even said - this is in response to his interjection and his laugh - what NASA is. It may be a significant American body; more likely, it is the National Association for Stupid Assessments. It might be Never Accept Stevenson's Authorities, or perhaps Nondescript Assumptions Sadly Askew. We could go on in this vein. Mr Stevenson did not identify particularly what he meant by NASA, nor did he say what NASA did with this documentation. I can well accept that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration would be monitoring it and might well have brought out information about temperature changes over the period that it has done this. I would like Mr Stevenson, when he tables the document, to indicate what it has actually said about that information, other than the fact that there might be that bit of information there. I do not know that NASA, or any scientific body, would draw a conclusion in this area based on just 13 years, which is a relatively short timespan, or on one year, which is the point Mr Stevenson made.

Mr Stevenson, if he wants to expound these ideas, might table that document. I guess that he has it there somewhere. He might also table a vast range of other documents - hundreds of them; perhaps thousands - on this subject. Because they may not support his point of view, I do not expect that we will see them tabled. There is a whole range of other information about what we are doing in

the ACT on greenhouse. Basically, it is too important an issue and too likely an outcome not to be doing something. It is sensible of us to act with great care and to treat the matter seriously. If there is compelling scientific evidence over a longer period, obviously scientists and governments behind them will act accordingly.

MR STEVENSON: I ask a supplementary question. The Minister said that he was not sure what NASA meant. When I referred to taking satellite temperature measurements globally since 1979, one would have - - -

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question cannot have a preamble, Mr Stevenson. Would you please ask the question.

MR STEVENSON: It was just a slight preamble.

Mr Kaine: Not nearly as much as - - -

MR STEVENSON: I was just about to mention, Mr Kaine, that to include in the answer such things as other definitions that not even someone within Mr Wood's Education Department would mention, perhaps, was a waste of time. I just wonder why it is okay for Mr Wood to do it. I ask: Is Mr Wood aware of any members of the responsible ACT government departments attending a meeting I put on in Canberra some year or so ago where all this data was presented and where John Daly, who was the author of - - -

Mr Lamont: Is this really a supplementary question?

MR STEVENSON: Yes, it is, indeed.

Mr Lamont: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. It gets to the point where Mr Stevenson is debating an issue. I would draw his attention, through you - - -

Mr Kaine: Which standing order are you taking your point of order under?

Mr Lamont: I am allowing the Chair to rule on a range of standing orders, Mr Kaine, which obviously preclude Mr Stevenson from continuing in the fashion he was.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, I ask you to put your question promptly.

MR STEVENSON: Is the Minister aware whether or not any members of the Government, their staff or members in any department associated with this area in the ACT attended a meeting I put on where John Daly spoke on the matter in detail and answered all the questions that were necessary, and where a video was shown, which has been shown on SBS twice since, called *The Greenhouse Conspiracy*?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, you are sorely testing the patience of the Speaker. Supplementary questions are under standing order 119. I urge you to read it and not to test that standing order again. Mr Wood, you may choose to answer, but I am very tempted to rule it as a new question and therefore out of order.

MR WOOD: I bow to your ruling, Madam Speaker. I will be as brief as Mr Stevenson was long. I do not know whether any government officers attended that meeting.

Tilt Train Proposal

MR DE DOMENICO: My question without notice is directed to the Chief Minister and concerns the tilt train proposal. Has the Chief Minister spoken formally to anyone in the New South Wales Government about the tilt train proposal? Besides agreeing publicly about the benefits of it, what has been her Government's commitment so far to the proposal? In her opinion, if she has done a feasibility study, how viable does she think it will be for the future of the ACT?

MS FOLLETT: I thank Mr De Domenico for his question. The tilt train proposal is one to which this Government has given support. I think all members would agree that the train service between Sydney and Canberra has been abysmally inadequate for quite some time. Unfortunately, it is the responsibility of the New South Wales Government to provide that service, and at this stage they have not completely fulfilled that responsibility.

Clearly, I am interested in the tilt train proposal. It offers a high speed and relatively low cost transport option between Sydney and Canberra. I believe also that train travel is environmentally sound and therefore should be supported. I have not personally spoken with the New South Wales Minister, Mr Baird, although I have had correspondence with him. That has been the limit of my involvement. In my correspondence I indicated support for the proposal and a willingness to further explore it by calling for expressions of interest from the private sector and so on. I understand that my colleague Mr Wood's officers have had discussions with New South Wales officers involved in the project, and there is a joint committee operating to further progress this proposal. It is a proposal I support. I hope that it will come to fruition. At the stage of development we have reached to this point, I cannot indicate whether or not it will come to fruition; but it is one the Government will support.

MR DE DOMENICO: I have a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I ask very briefly: As all this work is going on, will the Government be entertaining a feasibility study to make sure that investors, before they are asked to invest money, have something to go on?

MS FOLLETT: I believe that that is part of the process that is going on. Certainly, it would seem to me to be only sensible. I am not able to report to the Assembly in detail on this. Perhaps it would be advisable if I were to get some more detailed briefing and come back to Mr De Domenico and the Assembly as soon as I can.

Housing Finance Statistics

MR LAMONT: My question is also directed to the Chief Minister. Bearing in mind that the pre-eminent economic activity indicators were released this morning in relation to the finance statistics, what do the housing finance statistics show about the local economy?

MS FOLLETT: The housing finance statistics that have been released are for the month of August 1992, and I think it is fair to say that they are good news for the ACT economy. They suggest that there is a continued strong performance of the ACT residential building industry that is far above the level of improvement recorded nationally. During August, the month that has just been reported upon, the total value of commitments in the ACT was \$86.4m, which is up by 7.2 per cent over July and by 56.5 per cent compared to August last year. That is a very significant improvement. Increases in housing finance commitments were recorded in all categories other than alterations and additions. The total number of dwellings financed increased from 869 in July to 926 in August. This represents the highest monthly level since June 1988. So, it is a significant achievement indeed.

I think it is fair to say that over the past year the ACT has shown a degree of resilience in the national recession, and housing has been one of the particularly strong areas. It has been very important for local job creation. The August figures, I believe, confirm that the outlook is for a continuation of this strength in the housing sector. I consider it to be a very positive outcome for employment in the ACT and for our economy generally.

Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra - Accommodation

MS SZUTY: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Mr Wood. I note that conservation councils in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland are all housed in National Trust properties, while the current accommodation of the Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra is in derelict asbestos sheet clad buildings on the fringe of the ANU campus. They are said to be an embarrassment and an occupational health and safety hazard for both volunteer workers and staff. Will the Minister give the Assembly an undertaking to ascertain whether more appropriate accommodation is available for the council, if possible in a building of some heritage value and at a rental the organisation can afford?

MR WOOD: The Conservation Council is a much respected body in this town and encompasses 20 or 30 different environmental and other groups. They are not all purely environmental and the Conservation Council does not confine its comments to purely environmental matters. I repeat that the Government respects the Conservation Council. We take note of their advice, though we may not always accept that advice.

For some months now, I think understandably, the Conservation Council has been running a campaign claiming that it is short of funding. I do not dispute that fact; I am sure that they could do with a lot more money. I was a little disappointed with the council when they questioned the appointees to the new ACT Heritage Council on, I think, wrong criteria, simply because they did not think it was loaded enough their way. I have spoken with the council, and with other people carrying this campaign for the council, indicating the tightness of the ACT budget. We are in a time when funds are being constricted, and I am not able to make any promise to them of increased funding, though I listen sympathetically to their claims. I would, if I were able to, amongst all the competing claims on our money, find some little extra for them.

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We do provide them with accommodation at minimal cost. It is quite substantial in space, if rather poor in quality. I have not heard that they would like to move, but I suppose that anybody in the Childers Street buildings would like to move. It is not the best standard of accommodation around the ACT. I can only advise Ms Szuty that I am aware of their anxieties and that I must consider their claims in the context of all the claims we get.

Emergency Rescue Services

MR WESTENDE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Urban Services, Mr Connolly. Will the Minister consider establishing a single, but jointly manned, ACT rescue service?

MR CONNOLLY: Madam Speaker, we consider a lot of proposals. This is one that was foreshadowed by Mr Kaine yesterday afternoon. There are some problems with it, the principal one being that the AFP is a peculiar agency in its relationship with the ACT Government. It is not a public service agency over which we have the standard public service controls. Quite apart from the traditional non-intervention in police operational matters, it is a Federal agency operating under Federal law with which we have a contract to provide community policing services.

I can say to the Assembly that we will look at all options that provide the result the community wants, which is the best rescue service. I do not see any inherent problem in two services providing that, just as I do not see any problem, in the amalgamation we have done of fire services, in retaining the separate identities of the rural fire service and the urban fire service. That degree of healthy competition and esprit de corps with a competitive edge can be healthy. It is unhealthy when it breaks down into the sort of open rivalry we have seen over the last few days. I guess that it is one option that could be considered, although it is not one that is actively being pursued.

Building Inspections

MS ELLIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Urban Services. Can the Minister inform the Assembly what action has been taken on building inspection operations in the ACT?

MR CONNOLLY: There were some concerns this morning, on the Matthew Abraham show, that a leaked confidential document disclosed some plan by the Government to radically alter Building Control. In fact, the document that was being referred to, a copy of which I am able to table, was a minute to all staff in Building Control that was a follow-up to discussions we had had a month or so ago as a result of some public concerns about Building Control. I asked the Building Controller to consult with unions, with the industry and with his own staff about possible improvements to ensure that we provide a good quality service. As the Chief Minister indicated in answer to an earlier question, the home building sector is very strong in the ACT and is a vital part of our economic growth.

One constant theme that seems to have come back to the Building Controller as part of this consultation is the possibility of some degree of private certification of work, with an audit role for the Building Controller. That includes the comments from his own staff. He has indicated to his staff that those comments and others will be put together as a broad consultative document for the community. I expect to be publishing that in due course so that we can, as a community, consider the best way to run Building Control. The goal at all times will be quality assurance, so that this vital sector of the economy is well protected, and no change will occur until a full process of consultation has been complied with.

I table the document that was referred to this morning as the leaked confidential document but which is a report on a consultation process.

Health Services Consultant

MRS CARNELL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Taking into account that Ms Annie Austin is listed in the ACT Government telephone directory as Acting General Manager (Corporate) and in that position is heading up one of the divisions of the Board of Health, and as such is one of Mr Berry's most senior staff, can Mr Berry now answer my question: Noting that Anne Austin and Associates have been employed as consultants in the hospital redevelopment for some \$113,000 in the last financial year, is Ms Austin occupying the position of Acting General Manager (Corporate) as a consultant or as a regular officer of the ACT Government Service?

MR BERRY: Madam Speaker, that question was taken on notice yesterday and an answer will be filed in due course. Why are you so impatient? Can you not think up another question?

MADAM SPEAKER: That is right. The question was taken on notice and it will be answered in due course.

Crennigan's Hut, Gungahlin

MR LAMONT: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning. The site of Crennigan's stone hut at Gungahlin is significant. What is being done to protect it?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, the attention of members has been drawn to this site by family members, and it is true to say that it is an important enough site. The hut does not stand any more. It is only a collection of rocks, but with some significant plantings around it. Officers of the ACT heritage unit are assisting the descendants in the preparation of a heritage citation for the place. This is the first step in the nomination of the place to the interim Heritage Places Register. The area of Gungahlin which includes these historic ruins is presently the subject of a full cultural resource survey commissioned by the department. The report from this survey will record and assess its significance, and ultimately we will have a plan for the future which will protect that area, giving due recognition to its importance.

Housing Trust Properties - Rents and Values

MR CORNWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing and concerns the Minister's recent public claim that the rents of non-rebatable Housing Trust tenants could not be brought into line with rents in the private sector because the Housing Trust properties were of poorer quality. Why does the Minister continue to claim, for example, in the 1992-93 annual report - we do not have any page numbers for this - that public housing rent levels are based on market rents? Further, in the publication *Buying your ACT Government Home*, which is a Housing Trust publication, it is stated:

The Housing Trust retains first option to buy back your property. Of course, this will be at the prevailing market value.

Does the Minister not agree that these quoted statements about market rents and values convey the impression that non-rebated Housing Trust properties' rents and values are the same rents and values as in the private market? If so, what does the Minister intend to do to correct this quite misleading impression, judging from his earlier comments?

MR CONNOLLY: "Misleading" is an apt word, because that is what this debate is all about. We did go through this at some length in the Estimates Committee. Mr Cornwell distinguished himself as a shadow spokesperson who actually attended the Estimates Committee throughout the period in which his shadow portfolio was being debated, and I commend him for that. A fine example he set to the rest of his colleagues.

The nub of this, as he said in the quote from the unpagged document - I am pleased that it is not only the Government that occasionally is unable to provide page references - is that rents for non-rebated houses are based on market valuations. We assess what an independent valuer assesses as a market rent for those properties. I did not say that the Housing Trust has poorer quality housing stock; I said that it is different housing stock.

It is quite misleading to compare the average price for private sector dwellings, which include the rental for three-bedroom Kingston special townhouses as well as ordinary private rental stock, with the average market rent that is charged by the Housing Trust. The Housing Trust properties are of a different standard from what you could call the market average. They do not have, generally speaking, twin bathrooms and all the extras; they are not all fully carpeted. They do not necessarily have all those features. That is not to say - and we have had this debate with Mr Cornwell before - that public housing should necessarily be low-quality housing. It is not. But it is housing of a different standard from the average available on the private market.

Our view, our policy, is that the Housing Trust rent should be a fair market rent. Rebated tenants then get an additional benefit and are getting truly subsidised housing; non-rebated tenants should be paying a market rent for that house. It is true that that average market rent is lower than the average market rent for private sector dwellings in the ACT, but that can be explained because of the difference in the housing stock.

The Liberal Party's suggestion that we should be jacking up the rents for non-rebated Housing Trust tenants - I think the press release referred to \$35 to \$40 - would impose a major slug on those moderate income earners in non-rebated Housing Trust accommodation and would not be based on taking the fair rental of that property up to a market basis. Our policy is that individual Housing Trust properties should reflect the fair market value of that property. That is not to say that they equate to the average market value of private rental accommodation, because we are looking at different housing stocks.

Cultural Development Consultant

MR KAINE: I address a question to Mr Wood in his capacity as the Minister for the Arts. As a result of earlier questions, we have ascertained that Mr Roy Forward has been engaged as a consultant on a package of about \$90,000 a year. Can you confirm to the Assembly that that consultancy was referred to and approved by the Chief Minister's consultancy review committee, the responsibility of which is to approve all consultancies that cost more than \$25,000?

MR WOOD: I cannot give a clear elaboration on that specific aspect of the process. It was my understanding that the process was followed through most thoroughly. I will inform myself as to whether it was done to that extent and advise Mr Kaine and this Assembly.

Patient Advocate

MRS CARNELL: My question is to the Minister for Health, Mr Berry. In the \$100,000 budgeted this financial year for the Independent Complaints Unit, has financial provision been made for the proposed patient advocate position?

MR BERRY: The budgeting for the Complaints Unit this year is for its first year of operation and it will include a range of positions. I do not have them all in front of me by name, but the positions will be provided for within the framework of the Independent Complaints Unit.

Mrs Carnell: Not many for \$100,000.

MR BERRY: Do you want to wait and listen? You were too impatient to wait for the answer on the earlier question you asked. Just wait, and I will let you know a little more about this one. In terms of the Independent Complaints Unit, it is most important that it is adequately staffed. It has been done within a framework we consider is affordable. As I have said, I do not have in front of me the range of individual classifications. A lot of work will be carried out between now and the implementation of that Complaints Unit because it is now out for public consultation. It may well be that reasonable suggestions could be made to change the names and classifications of those people that are involved in the - - -

Mrs Carnell: You must have budgeted for something.

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MR BERRY: It is a notional budget for the Independent Complaints Unit in its early stages. It has been put out for public consultation and comment in good faith. We are not fooling around. If there are suggestions which aim for different classifications, then that might well be the outcome in the final analysis. But it is genuinely up for public consultation and comment, and if you do not like any of the classifications which you say are proposed you can propose something else and we will listen to you.

Australian Construction Services

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, my question without notice is to the Chief Minister. Is she aware that Australian Construction Services is tendering for work in competition with the private sector in the ACT? If she is so aware, will she make representations to her Federal colleagues to cease this, as it is affecting work opportunities in Canberra?

MS FOLLETT: That is an extraordinary question, Madam Speaker, the point of which, I am afraid, is somewhat lost on me. I am not responsible for Australian Construction Services; it is a Federal body. It has always been my impression, Madam Speaker, that when they successfully tendered for work they employed people to do it, in the same way as, for the most part, the private sector does. Additional work given to that body is additional work in the construction industry, just as if a contract had been given to a private body. I think the answer to Mr De Domenico's question is that I do not have it in mind to make representations along the lines that he has requested; nor do I think it appropriate that I should do that.

Proposed Lanyon High School

MR CORNWELL: Madam Speaker, my question is directed to Mr Wood, the Minister for Education. Has any decision been made about the proposed Lanyon High School which I understand was under consideration following the decision not to proceed with a high school in the Monash area? Could you comment on the status of the Lanyon High School proposal?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, it is an issue of which I am well aware because the member who sits behind me, Ms Ellis, never stops talking to me about it.

Mr Cornwell: She never stops talking about anything about Tuggeranong. But go on.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR WOOD: No; but she is a very effective representative for Tuggeranong. She keeps this issue well before me. The Department of Education at present is working up a proposal on this issue, which I will see shortly. I expect that Cabinet will consider it and make a decision in the appropriate period of time.

MR CORNWELL: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question. Could you tell me what you regard as the appropriate period of time, Minister?

MR WOOD: Obviously, if a high school is to be constructed we well know the timeframe in which it has to be built, and we would need to provide funds in the next budget in order to do that.

Ms Follett: I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper, Madam Speaker.

PAPERS

MR BERRY (Deputy Chief Minister): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

ACT Electricity and Water annual report for 1991-92, pursuant to section 79A of the Electricity and Water Act 1988, including the financial statements and the Auditor-General's report;

Australian Capital Territory Ombudsman annual report for 1991-92, pursuant to section 21 of the Ombudsman Act 1989;

Australian Capital Territory Treasury annual report for 1991-92, together with annual reports for 1991-92 from:

Commissioner for ACT Revenue, pursuant to section 11 of the Taxation (Administration) Act 1987;
Registrar of Co-operative Societies, pursuant to section 12 of the Co-operative Societies Act 1939;
Bookmakers Licensing Committee, pursuant to section 54 of the Bookmakers Act 1985.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Discussion of Matter of Public Importance

MADAM SPEAKER: I have received letters from Mrs Carnell, Mr Cornwell, Mr De Domenico, Mr Kaine, Mr Stevenson and Mr Westende proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, I have determined that the matter proposed by Mr De Domenico be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The Follett Labor Government's failure to address the unemployment crisis.

MR DE DOMENICO (3.06): Madam Speaker, the September figures show that the ACT unemployment level is at 8.3 per cent, up from the August rate of 7.8 per cent and up from September last year when it was 6.2 per cent. Of more concern is that the figures also show that the September youth unemployment in the ACT was 56.1 per cent, up from 28.7 per cent in August and up from 17.2 per cent in August last year. Whilst conceding that the figures perhaps are not as reliable as they should be, a figure of 56.1 per cent, or anywhere near 56.1 per cent, is of great concern, and should be of great concern to all of us here in this Assembly. In fact, with those figures, Madam Speaker, the ACT happens to have the worst youth unemployment level in Australia.

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Madam Speaker, the Government is committed to job creation in this Territory, it seems, by providing training and various schemes of one kind or another. Both methods, I am suggesting, have been discredited from time to time, and in fact have been discredited most of the time, for not providing real employment. Just to vouch for that, Mr Barry Lowe, writing in the *Canberra Times* and having had a good look at all training schemes and so forth over the years, has had a lot to say about them. He wrote:

They may persuade the electorate that the Government cares about the unemployed but in economic terms they represent a poor return from a very substantial outlay.

He mentions the very infamous YES scheme of the Whitlam Government, and others, costing \$92.5m and returning very little in terms of full-time jobs. Another gentleman has been involved in assessing all these training schemes, and so on. A Mr Mograby did a PhD thesis on it. He had a look at all the schemes. We had the NEAT scheme, the RED scheme and the WPP scheme, under both Mr Whitlam and Mr Fraser, I might say; not just under Labor governments, but also under former Liberal governments. The bottom line is that there was a lot of waste. Not many jobs were created that lasted long term. Programs like this, Madam Speaker, are obviously quick-fire solutions that get people off the dole queue for a little while, and off the unemployment list; but they do not create real jobs.

Direct job creation schemes are fundamentally remedial measures to address a serious economic, social and, obviously, political problem; but they do very little in creating real, long-term jobs for our young people. They do not address structural factors in the labour market which have created the shortage of jobs, and the existence of a marginalised group of long-term unemployed workers. Madam Speaker, what I am saying is that it is not good enough just to sit here and say, "Listen, we have had all sorts of job creation and training schemes, but not one real job has been created in the ACT". The fact that we have such a high level of youth - - -

Ms Follett: Rubbish!

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister says "Rubbish". The figures speak for themselves. The ACT has the highest youth unemployment level in this country, and you have done nothing about it. You sit there and you say "Rubbish". It is about time you started doing something, instead of mouthing platitudes. Madam Speaker, real job creation is about building a healthy economy. There is no doubt about that.

Let us have a look at the other thing. Look at the *Canberra Times*, which says that for the first time in a very long time even retail figures in the ACT show a minus figure. For the first time in a very long time even the retail sector of this Territory has a figure of minus 0.1 per cent. We are one of the States and Territories in this country once again showing a negative growth in the retail industry. For the Chief Minister to sit here and say "Rubbish" to me is beyond comprehension. The figures, as I have said, Madam Speaker - - -

Mr Lamont: Most things are beyond your comprehension.

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, I am going to ignore the interjections from the monkeys at the back. Figures show that retail growth in the ACT is flat.

Mr Berry: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. That sort of language is unparliamentary and uncalled for.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is stretching parliamentary language a little, Mr De Domenico. I would ask you to refrain from making such comments and perhaps to withdraw.

MR DE DOMENICO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Figures show that retail growth in the ACT is flat. Even the Government's own forecasts on employment predict rising unemployment well into 1993. That is the Government's own forecast.

Mr Berry: Which figures?

MR DE DOMENICO: Let me quote, Madam Speaker. This article says:

Unemployment in the ACT is likely to continue rising until at least mid-1993 despite an improvement in employment prospects, according to long-term forecasts prepared for the ACT Government.

Mr Berry: That is a newspaper report; it is not the Government's.

MR DE DOMENICO: I will table it, Mr Berry. Just relax. Sit down and relax. I know that it is not good news, but sit down and listen anyway. It continues:

In its forecast of ACT population changes to the year 2005 and employment changes for this financial year and next, the Chief Minister's Department's economic development division forecasts an unemployment rate for the ACT of 7.9 per cent in June 1992, rising to 8.4 per cent by June 1993.

They are not my figures, Madam Speaker; they are not the paper's figures, Mr Berry; they are from the Chief Minister's Economic Development Division. Would you like me to table that?

Mr Berry: No.

MR DE DOMENICO: It was available in the *Canberra Times* the other day. So, the Government's own - - -

Mr Lamont: It was available in the *Canberra Times*?

MADAM SPEAKER: Continue, please, Mr De Domenico.

Ms Follett: You have put him off.

Mr Lamont: I am sorry.

MR DE DOMENICO: You did not put me off. It is like being hit over the head with a warm spinach leaf, honestly.

Mr Lamont: I do apologise for making him miss his beat.

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MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Continue, please, Mr De Domenico.

MR DE DOMENICO: Thank you. Even the Government's own forecasts on employment, as I have shown, predict rising unemployment well into 1993. The Government's budget aimed at jobs; yet the first legislation it introduced at this sitting, the occupational health and safety legislation, is really aimed at getting rid of jobs. That is still under debate. It will get rid of jobs.

Mr Lamont: What an absolute load of nonsense!

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Lamont says, "What an absolute load of nonsense". The Canberra Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Canberra Visitor and Convention Bureau, the tourism industry and every other small business that has written to you and to other members of this Assembly, Mr Lamont, disagree with you vehemently.

Mr Lamont: Exactly the same people who said the same thing when the 20-employee designated work groups came in; exactly the same group of people who now support that legislation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I suspect that that interjection was invited a little, but Mr De Domenico does have the floor. Please continue, Mr De Domenico.

Mr Lamont: I do apologise, Madam Speaker. It is just so easy to refute his arguments.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Lamont, perhaps you could desist from interjecting.

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, thank you for your protection. The Government really is not fair dinkum. Ms Follett is laughing and Mr Lamont continues to interject; but the real fact of the matter, Mr Lamont, is that the ACT, under your Government - - -

Mr Lamont: Madam Speaker, I take a point of order. Would you ask the speaker to address the Chair on this, as opposed to other members of the Assembly?

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. If Mr Lamont continues to interject, perhaps you should do your job and make sure that he is not in this house doing that all the time. I ask you to rule on that point.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr De Domenico, that is really not a point of order but a point of advice, and I accept it readily. Standing orders 55, 61 and 39, I think, ask people not to interject. Perhaps people could remember that.

MR DE DOMENICO: Notwithstanding what Mr Lamont and others might say from time to time, the facts are that the ACT's unemployment continues to rise under the Labor Government that Mr Lamont so proudly wants to be a part of. The Government has failed. It is not fair dinkum and it has failed to attack the problem. There is no doubt about that. The Government's own Economic Priorities Advisory Committee in May recommended retail hours deregulation and a review and alteration of award conditions in the retail, hospitality and associated service industries. That was issued in May. At page 3 of that report the committee said this:

EPACT is of the view that moves toward a deregulation of retail trading hours, at least in line with those of New South Wales (and Queanbeyan in particular) would be a significant stimulus to the generation of further part-time job opportunities.

We all know, Madam Speaker, that the two industries that employ the most youth in our community are the retail industry and the tourism industry. Madam Speaker, the Government has done nothing six months down the line. It has its just desserts. Youth unemployment, Madam Speaker, as I have said, is 56 per cent. Why bother commissioning reports if you have not the guts to take the medicine and implement the recommendations? What a waste of money and what a tragedy for all those young people out there on the dole queue! That committee, by the way, estimated youth unemployment at 3,000. It is not as if last Thursday's figures should have come as a surprise to the Government. Everybody has been saying, "Listen, let us have a look at youth employment; it is going to blow right out of proportions".

In presenting the report the Chief Minister said:

Our young people are amongst the Territory's most valuable assets and my Government wishes to ensure that they are given every opportunity both for their own personal development and to maximise their contribution to the community over the coming years.

That was from page 1 of the Chief Minister's statement on youth unemployment. Madam Speaker, I suggest respectfully that the Chief Minister has to do more than just wish. The Chief Minister went on to say that one of the ways the Government was going to increase youth employment was by "immediately" pursuing the recommendations of the report, including the following:

referring the issue of penalty rates and associated award conditions to the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee.

That was in May, Madam Speaker. What has been done so far? If any action has been taken, I suggest that it is not working, because youth unemployment in the ACT, let me stress again, is 56 per cent.

What has been done about reducing labour costs in the Territory, Madam Speaker? The answer is nothing. This Government has failed. It pays the highest average salary in Australia to its public servants, and what kind of leadership is that? Under a Federal Labor Government, Madam Speaker, labour costs increased in 1991 by 6.9 per cent. Once again, they are ABS statistics, not mine. Under a local ALP Government, public servants in the ACT are paid an average of \$40,040. In sunny Queensland - Goss territory - public servants are paid, on average, \$31,653. I ask you, Madam Speaker: Why does it cost more to employ a public servant in the ACT than it does in Queensland?

The greatest increases in the cost of labour are now recorded in our vital tourism industry. The cost of labour in our tourism industry, Madam Speaker, was up by 14.2 per cent. The unemployment figures in the ACT obviously reflect the economy in the ACT. To steal a phrase of Dr David Chessell's, and as many

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others have said, the economy in the ACT is doing the dead cat bounce. There is no doubt about that. We have seen unemployment figures remain around 7.5 per cent to 8.3 per cent over the past few months, and they are not getting any better, because this Government has done nothing at all about them.

Madam Speaker, perhaps it is easy for people to stand up and say that things are going bad. I am not saying that it is an easy job, Madam Speaker; but there are a lot of things that the Government can do. The most important thing that governments of all political persuasions can do in times of high unemployment is to make sure that they create the atmosphere where the private sector can flourish, and they can do that in a number of ways. Premier Lawrence, for example, in Western Australia, recognised the problem of payroll tax. What did she do recently in her budget? She reduced payroll tax in relation to small business. Why could not this Government have done that? What did Ms Follett do in her budget? I will tell you what she did. She did nothing. This Government has done nothing.

What about formally recognising registered partnerships within the ACT Payroll Tax Act, thus exempting payments to subcontractors? Mr Connolly stood up in this house not 10 minutes ago to say how important the housing industry is to the ACT, and so it is. So, let us make it easier for the housing industry, and other industries, to employ more people by reducing the cost of labour. What about abolishing the 3c per litre petrol tax as was promised?

Of course, they are hard things to do, because you have to find the money from somewhere. Someone will say, "Where will you get the money?". You can get the money by reducing expenditure. We have seen some of the rorts that go on in places like ACTEW from time to time when people are given illegal payments. With respect to Mr Connolly, he is trying to do the right thing by making sure that that sort of thing does not happen. What happens to Mr Connolly when he does that? He is censured by the left wing of the party, and Mr Berry walks out while the vote is being taken. He is kneecapped for doing the right thing. Shame on this Government, Madam Speaker! There has to be more of that sort of thing. There has to be a reduction in costs. There has to be a reduction in the cost of labour before anybody else can employ any more people. Madam Speaker, these and other measures the Liberal Party will carry out when it is in government. I know that some of these decisions are very hard to make, but it is those tough decisions that are going to fix the economy.

Madam Speaker, the Follett Labor Government has failed utterly and completely to introduce any meaningful reform process which will create real jobs. Instead, it remains, like a broken record, pumping out the same ideological claptrap which is out of step with reality and desperately aligned to union interests. Madam Speaker, it is a shame that our youth unemployment level is the highest in this country. We have 56 per cent youth unemployment. Our unemployment level this month has gone up from 7.9 per cent to 8.3 per cent. Ms Follett had a wonderful opportunity in this last budget, and the budget before, to do something about it. She has done nothing to reduce the cost of labour. As colleagues on this side of the house will realise, the only way that the private sector can employ more people is if the costs of labour are reduced.

MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (3.21): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Mr De Domenico for putting forward what is, in fact, a matter of public importance. I am only sorry that he has done so very little with it. All we have heard, really, is a political diatribe, and one which really fails to recognise the realities of life. Madam Speaker, the fact is that unemployment in the ACT consistently has been well below the national rate. Mr De Domenico ignores that. The fact is, Madam Speaker, that the youth unemployment rate put out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is put out with an asterisk beside it which means that it is not a reliable figure. I made that point when youth unemployment figures put out by the ABS were at 11 per cent. I repeat the point when they are put out at 56 per cent. It is not a reliable figure. It is a very small sample, and the Bureau of Statistics is the first to acknowledge that.

Madam Speaker, we heard a diatribe from Mr De Domenico about labour costs. He pointed to Queensland as a place where labour costs are low. What he failed to recognise, of course, is the rate of unemployment in Queensland, which, the last time I looked, was around 11 per cent - one of the highest in the country. The argument is absolute nonsense, Madam Speaker. He made a number of blunders like that, which his bluster really failed to disguise.

I totally reject any suggestion that this Government has not done everything possible to address the current unemployment difficulties that we have in the ACT. I acknowledge that we are having difficulties. The difficulties are national; but I do repeat, Madam Speaker, that unemployment in the ACT has been and remains well below the national average. While the ACT has had the benefit of a large and relatively stable Commonwealth employment base, we are part of that national economy and we are clearly not immune from the national recession. Mr De Domenico seems to think that we are.

Compared to the rest of the country, the major impacts of the recession in the ACT, I think, could be described as fairly moderate. In fact, strong employment growth over the last three months indicates that the ACT economy is recovering from the effects of that national recession. That recovery will not be smooth or even, or certainly not dramatic; but I think we are recovering. With 153,400 employed in the ACT, there are now more people employed in the ACT than ever before. That is a fact. There are now more people employed than ever before. The growth in employment is consistent with the trend in job advertisements in the *Canberra Times*, with a 5.5 per cent increase in advertisements between July and September of this year. The continuing job growth figures for both males and females indicate that the ACT economy is accelerating, with some increased business confidence and renewed investment and hiring of employees.

Madam Speaker, whilst the rate of unemployment has gone from 7.8 per cent to 8.3 per cent over the past month, it is, as I say, still well below the national rate, which is 10.8 per cent. The increased rate is explained by a significant increase - I hope that members will listen to this - in the work force participation rate. That increase has been from 72.3 per cent to 73.7 per cent. That compares to a national participation rate of 63.2 per cent. So, we are significantly ahead of the rest of the nation on the participation rate, Madam Speaker, and I believe that that reflects a growing optimism and a growing desire by people to join the work force.

As with other State and Territory governments, there are limited opportunities for the ACT Government alone to have a large and immediate impact on unemployment. We have to recognise -

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Mr De Domenico: Why ask your Federal mates for help?

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, I think you were courteous enough to protect Mr De Domenico.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was ready to intervene right at that point, Ms Follett.

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, we have to recognise that we are not able to reverse the effects of a national recession by ourselves in one small Territory. Our approach has been both to equip unemployed people with the skills and experience necessary to compete for jobs and to stimulate the development of specific projects which will have beneficial employment effects. In the 1992-93 budget the Government, as I am sure members have heard me say before, has given job generation and training the highest priority. In formulating new policy initiatives the Government has maximised the contribution to employment and to training. In particular, a strong emphasis has been placed on those who are disadvantaged in the labour market, namely, youth, long-term unemployed people and women.

There is a total of over 1,200 easily identifiable new jobs or work experience and training positions provided for by the budget. That is made up as follows: There are 220 new places in government work experience and training. There is an increase in capital works expenditure of \$32.8m, which will support in the order of 300 jobs in the building and construction industry, and a flow-on of around 220 jobs in other industries such as wholesale, retail and finance, property and business services. There is funding for more than 500 additional student places as a result of a significant increase in Commonwealth funding under the Australian National Training Authority agreement and other Commonwealth and ACT Government training initiatives.

Madam Speaker, government training and work experience initiatives comprise a range of complementary programs. These include funding for 100 places in an ACT Jobskills program to provide paid work experience and training for the long-term unemployed people over 21 years. Secondly, there is the provision of additional employment and development opportunities for youth in the 15 to 19 years age group through a work force development scheme providing employment for 30 young people, including 10 part-time, 10 additional places under the Australian traineeship scheme, and nine additional apprentices. There is also the establishment of the ACT Youth Conservation Corps, providing 40 places in 1992-93 and 80 places in subsequent years for young unemployed people to gain workplace training and experience. It also includes the establishment of the mature age women's traineeship scheme to provide women who are over the age of 30 and who have been out of the work force for two years with work experience and training to assist in gaining employment. There will be 20 places offered in 1992-93.

There is additional funding for the new enterprise incentive scheme to enable the establishment of an additional 12 self-employment ventures by unemployed persons, and increased funding under the employment and training grants program to provide additional support to community organisations that provide employment and training opportunities to the disadvantaged people in the labour market. Madam Speaker, this program is particularly effective in providing training opportunities. While the actual number of placements is difficult to estimate, it is additional to the 220 places that I identified earlier.

In addition to that, there are a range of economic development initiatives which have been designed to stimulate employment growth. That stimulation of employment growth is in the medium to longer term and will enable the private sector to take advantage of emerging opportunities. These initiatives include, firstly, the establishment of a tourism development unit within the Tourism Commission to attract and develop new events and to identify gaps in existing tourism infrastructure, resulting in increased visitor numbers and the likelihood of improving employment prospects, particularly for young people; secondly, the instigation of studies aimed at the development of Canberra as a centre for regional and national freight distribution and warehousing; thirdly, investigating the establishment of an ACT centre for training in waste management at the ACT Institute of Technology, to offer specialised training for people working in waste management in both government and private industry, and offering longer-term employment development prospects.

The initiatives also include support for an international hotel management project with the aim of establishing an international hotel management school in the ACT to train hotel managers to the highest international standards. They also include coordinating and marketing ACT training through the cooperation of public and private sector providers with the local business sector. Madam Speaker, in keeping with the Government's commitment to social justice, the budget provides growth funds to community organisations in recognition of additional demand for services and increasing costs. These community organisations are, themselves, significant employers. We heard that from Ms Szuty yesterday. This action will, thereby, assist employment in what is a very labour intensive area.

These initiatives build on the wide range of existing government programs, such as those relating to Jobline, Involve, the innovative venture and development assistance scheme, the women's employment strategy, the tradeswomen on the move program, and revised Government Service recruitment practices to enable youth to compete more effectively for ASO1 and ASO2 positions. I am sure that Mr De Domenico will be interested to note that that last point that I mentioned was a recommendation of the EPACT report that has, in fact, been implemented forthwith.

The ACT Government, Madam Speaker, is committed to supporting the ACT private sector. Indeed, the future prospects for Canberra are fundamentally linked to the private sector. In this context there are a range of private sector initiatives that the Government has been pursuing over the past year. They include, obviously, the decision to build a casino in the ACT. That will result in the creation of 280 jobs in the construction phase and approximately 500 permanent jobs on completion. The interim casino will provide an estimated 350 to 400 jobs, and that will be commencing operation in mid-November of this year. The other initiatives include the Harcourt Hill tourist resort in the Gold Creek area; telecommunications projects with both Telecom and Optus; support for the development of ACT cooperative research centres and the clinical school; and an enhanced commitment to marketing and promotion through the South East Economic Development Council, particularly in the areas of communications and technology.

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Madam Speaker, the Government's economic development strategy is focused on real jobs and real training. It is a comprehensive and carefully targeted strategy which comprises direct funding of job creation through training and work experience, increased capital works, and support for the private sector to promote the growth of local industry. Through these measures, Madam Speaker, the ACT will be well placed to take advantage of emerging opportunities as the country moves further out of recession.

Madam Speaker, I put that approach in stark contrast to the Liberals' approach to employment in the ACT. I have no doubt whatsoever that under a future Liberal Federal government, which is a remote possibility, the ACT would deliberately be turned into a ghost town. We know, Madam Speaker, that it is the stated objective of Dr Hewson and his colleagues to move entire areas of employment out of the ACT. Members opposite, of course, would give a knee-jerk tick of approval to that; but they recognise, as all of us do, that the private sector and the public sector in the ACT are interrelated and must work in cooperation. If you removed large numbers of public sector jobs from the ACT as proposed by Dr Hewson, and I presume supported by members opposite, the private sector would suffer at least as much. The ACT would be a ghost town.

Mr De Domenico also failed to mention Mr Kaine's agenda, which he had a chance to implement in government. To do him credit, he did not implement it. That was to reduce the ACT Government Service by some 3,000 jobs. Madam Speaker, at a time when Mr Kaine was in government unemployment was an issue in the ACT, yet he had as a policy that he would reduce the public sector employment by that many jobs. It was his stated objective, Madam Speaker. I think members opposite are not serious about this issue. They are wishing to pose and posture about it; but, in fact, we have had nothing of substance from Mr De Domenico. We have, in fact, a very good government record on this, and that is what is irking the members opposite.

MR KAINE (Leader of the Opposition) (3.36): Madam Speaker, this is indeed a matter of public importance and it is a subject that needs to be aired fully. In the budget speech delivered only a month ago the Chief Minister asserted bravely that there is a growing economy in the ACT and that unemployment is starting to fall. Only a month ago the Chief Minister said that. She claimed that there are areas of strong growth in our economy, although she was very non-specific about where they were to be found. Since that time, of course, and following Mr Keating's expansive claims that the recession is over, the Chief Minister has continued to be very bullish about the ACT economy. Even today she said, "The ACT economy is accelerating". Sadly, she did not tell us in which direction. As any teenager looking for a job or struggling to stay alive on the streets will tell you, the recession is far from over, and it is certainly far from over here in the ACT.

Economic indicators all indicate a flat economy for the rest of this financial year at least. Nationally, sales of manufactured goods have marginally increased for the first time since March 1990, but at the same time stocks have continued to fall and they are now at levels below those of 1988. Motor vehicle registrations are flat. Expectations of private new capital investment have not changed substantially since December of last year, remaining at about \$5.5 billion seasonally adjusted. Retail turnover trend estimates remain stagnant, with monthly changes in 1991-92 nationally of less than 0.5 per cent. Not surprisingly, Madam Speaker, household

disposable income has changed by a meagre 0.1 per cent in the year ended June 1992. National average weekly earnings have increased by 2.9 per cent to June, although inflation has cancelled that out, meaning in fact no real wage growth. This is not an economic picture that should encourage anyone at the national level, certainly not Mr Keating.

In the ACT, average weekly earnings have increased by only 3.5 per cent since May 1991 - again, no real wage growth. In fact, we are probably going backwards. In the June quarter of 1992 private final consumption expenditure rose by only 0.3 per cent, against a national increase of only one per cent. Motor vehicle registrations remain at 1990 levels, and in the June quarter new registrations fell by 3.5 per cent. Activity in the construction industry here is a major economic indicator and a potential stimulus. It is volatile, with several encouraging quarters showing increases in financial commitments and in building approvals, but stagnant sales in many months. Commitments often reflect increased housing prices rather than numbers of houses that are being built, so I do not see any encouragement there. Mr De Domenico referred to the average retail trading figures in the ACT, and they do not sound too healthy either.

In all of this, Madam Speaker, I find no cause for optimism about our economy. I do not share Ms Follett's enthusiastic claims - perhaps they are just her expectations, real or unreal - for job growth in 1992-93. She seems to maintain these enthusiastic claims despite her own department's figures showing increasing unemployment into next year at least. Recent unemployment figures confirm the general trend shown in the quarterly report for June 1992. Unemployment was 17 per cent up as compared to June 1991. The job vacancy index trend is down, both in the ACT and nationally. The duration of unemployment is increasing, and participation rates for men, women and young people are all falling.

The unemployment rate rose in July by 1.1 per cent to 8.4 per cent generally, but youth unemployment rose from 11 per cent to 27 per cent. By September the unemployment rate had remained static at around 8.3 per cent. Comparison with the September quarter of 1991 shows that unemployment then was only 6.2 per cent. Even blind Freddy can see that there has been an increase of 2 per cent in the unemployment rate over the last year. For the Chief Minister to assert that the general unemployment rate is better than everywhere else, no matter how bad it is here, is simply unacceptable, and to use that as the basis for doing nothing is reprehensible.

The real scandal in the September figures is the increase in unemployment for 15- to 19-year-olds, referred to already by Mr De Domenico. It has risen to 56 per cent. I remind members that in June the rate was only 11 per cent. The Chief Minister has, of course, shrugged this off, saying that the statistics are quite imprecise; but this represents hundreds of unemployed youth. It is not just a statistic of 56 per cent or 11 per cent. No matter how imprecise the figures are, it ranges somewhere between 600 and 1,200 unemployed kids.

Mr Cornwell: She is not even here to listen to you.

MR KAINE: No, and she does not care about that. She just shrugs it off; the statistic is imprecise, so it does not matter. To the hundreds of young people that the statistic represents, these are cold hard facts. They are not just the rhetoric that the Chief Minister and Mr Lamont like to engage in.

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Members interjected.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR KAINÉ: Madam Speaker, I will continue to shout over the top of Mr Lamont. He is the one who complained a little while ago about people cutting across his debate. Madam Speaker, these figures that we have been talking about do not take into account the additional people in the 15 to 19 age group who, over the next six months, are going to come into the work force and will be looking for both part-time and full-time work. So, if it is 56 per cent now, what on earth is it going to be like by next February?

The picture here, Madam Speaker, simply is not one of improvement or growth; yet we hear the Chief Minister talking about our great economy and the fact that it is accelerating. If ever the word "rubbish" was appropriate, that is it. It is a picture of continuing despair and social dislocation about which this Government, despite its rhetoric, is doing nothing. The parlous state of the economy and the long-term damage that unemployment represents to our community's future is hardly a secret. Even the Labor Party recognised the importance of unemployment as an issue in their election platform, but at that time they only promised to create 100 training and work experience places for six months and to create 250 Jobskills places. The Chief Minister's budget strategy statement in May again recognised that unemployment was a major issue and that the recession still lingered, but offered no significant solutions. Where was there a single solution in her budget strategy? There was hardly a reference to it. In fact, neither did her recent budget refer to it, and we will come to that.

Unemployment in the ACT obviously warranted more detailed attention in May than it was given, but there was no sense of crisis or even a sense of urgency on the part of the Chief Minister in May. She was happy to say, and she now makes light of it, that teenage unemployment had fallen to 11.7 per cent, and that was good. Now, when it is 56 per cent, she wants to shrug it off and say that they are only statistics. While the Government was claiming to be committed to giving priority to youth training and employment, job creation opportunities were limited by financial constraints. This was in May, and of course it is reflected in the budget. The Chief Minister apparently still had not become aware, from the dark recesses of her impregnable bunker, that there was in any way a crisis or any sense of urgency. How the obvious could be so easily missed by somebody so open to the community, so consultative, so well informed, and so sensitive to the plight of the common person is absolutely beyond comprehension. The signs were plain enough to see.

Labor Party policy and her own speeches dealt, however fleetingly and inadequately, with the problem. Even her own Economic Priorities Advisory Committee made it plain and said that youth unemployed are at risk of joining a core group of long-term unemployed; hence, they deserve special treatment. In her budget the Chief Minister did not reflect any changed attitude to resolving or addressing the unemployment crisis. There was still no sense of urgency. She merely increased expenditure on the training and short-term temporary work experience schemes announced in May, and which she still talks about as though they are producing jobs. Well, they are not. The Chief Minister has gone through all the initiatives that she claims are producing jobs and I will not traverse

them again now; but if - as the Chief Minister claims - all of this that she claims to be doing is generating jobs, how is it that there are so many people still unemployed? One would think that they would all disappear if the initiatives that she claims were really having any effect.

Madam Speaker, what we need is some short-term initiatives, not initiatives that are going to pay off in five or 10 years' time. They are fine and they will have their effect, but we need some short-term initiatives that create jobs now. Today's unemployed are not interested in jobs that are likely to eventuate in five years' time. Madam Speaker, the EPACT report, her own advisory committee's report, listed a whole range of things that she should be doing. I suggest that she start doing them now. I call on them to listen to their own advisory sources and to get together a strategy that can deal with this problem, and to stop talking about it as though it does not exist.

MS SZUTY (3.46): Madam Speaker, the topic of the matter of public importance discussion before us today is the unemployment crisis in general terms. A large part of that is adult joblessness which, according to the figures issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is rising despite the fact that the employment participation rate is increasing, according to those same figures.

However, by far the most alarming aspect of the unemployment figures is the estimation of the level of youth unemployment, which Mr De Domenico has referred to this afternoon. The Government has been on notice since the 15 February election that reducing youth unemployment was a high priority for Canberrans. However, to date, we have had no quantifiable model of the problem, nor the solution. In the past, in this Assembly, I have unsuccessfully asked for the issue of youth unemployment to be considered for a select committee inquiry, or that the Social Policy Committee be asked to take on, as a term of reference, a detailed investigation of youth unemployment and possible job creation measures. But what I feel is a difficult task, which would benefit from maximum input, has apparently been seen as just too hard by both the Liberal and Labor parties, who seem unwilling to work together to resolve this issue.

The Chief Minister has said often, and continues to say often, in public, that the Government is addressing the problem. However, in five months the youth unemployment rate in the ACT has risen from 25 per cent in April to 56 per cent in September. While I recognise the volatility of the figures, this in itself is a major concern. Since acknowledging that the unemployment figures for Canberra are unreliable, because of the smallness of the sample, the ACT Government appears to have done nothing to ascertain the extent of the real unemployment problem among Canberra's young people. Thankfully, at least the Australian Bureau of Statistics has agreed to increase the sample size used for Canberra's statistics gathering, but this move will take a further period to assess.

Madam Speaker, I wonder what the Chief Minister's Youth Affairs Section feels about this lack of a quantifiable problem. In some respects it must make it easier for the Government to ignore the youth unemployment problem and to hope that it will go away until the next ABS survey. Canberrans have no reason to believe that our population of young people is experiencing any fewer problems getting jobs than their counterparts interstate. But what has resulted from all this publicly expressed concern? A few jobs have been created, as reflected in the

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higher employment participation rate; but the casino recruits alone could perhaps account for that change. The Chief Minister has informed the Assembly that the EPACT report has gone to individual government departments to ascertain whether there is anything within its recommendations that can be adopted to boost the employment of young people in each of the ministerial portfolios, but there is no word yet from the Chief Minister on the results of those examinations.

What, apart from the increased funding for Jobline and the introduction of several training schemes, can the Government identify as a real and lasting contribution that it has made to the employment of our young people? I have heard some reports in the media that we should ban young people from Garema Place because they are effectively making it look untidy. Perhaps we should encourage them to frequent the plaza in front of the Legislative Assembly building so that the Government will identify these statistics as real people.

The Chief Minister, in responding to Thursday's unemployment figures, used a line which has been made infamous by her national political leader, Mr Paul Keating, who, when chided about the recession, said that technically it was over and that the economy was recovering. Ms Follett claimed, if the article which appeared in the *Canberra Times* is correct, that Canberra has had strong employment growth for three months, indicating that the economy is recovering from the recession. The story also cites the Chief Minister as saying, with regard to the employment statistics:

... the figures bespoke an accelerating ACT economy, with increased business confidence, renewed investment and hiring of employees.

Madam Speaker, if Canberra's level of youth unemployment is only in line with the national average, it is still growing. Where is the increased business confidence? Where are the renewed investment and the hiring of employees taking place? Ms Ellis, in an interview reported in the *Valley View* in June this year, stated:

Ambitious plans by the ACT Government to help the young unemployed will be of special benefit to the Valley's youth.

Commenting on the release of the EPACT report, Ms Ellis stated that the key aspect of the report was that job generation was to be seen as an issue both for the Government and for the community, and she endorsed the need for job creation. Four months after the release of that report I again ask: What has been done? Where are the concrete figures of what is defined as the problem? What are the achievable outcomes, and how far have we gone towards achieving these goals?

Ms Ellis spoke of community involvement. As a member of the community, I would like to know what proposals exist for involving the community in finding jobs for our young people, and what input the community has into the establishment of the programs that have been announced in the budget. The *Valley View* report went on to say that the Chief Minister was interested in public comment and provided an address for the Industry Policy Coordination Branch of the Economic Development Division. What is the division doing to find out the extent of youth unemployment in Canberra? If there is to be a policy unit involved in decisions affecting this group, should not the target group be quantified so that we as an Assembly know how much of our available resources

need to be committed to improving the situation? What is the problem with establishing a forum where as many minds as possible attack the problem of a lack of jobs for young people, which can then produce many and various responses to the multitude of factors which keep young people out of employment?

Madam Speaker, the Government has been too insular and precious with its agenda for young, unemployed people. While it may well feel that it is doing as much as it can, how does it assess this? The Chief Minister has her Youth Affairs Section located in her department to liaise with; but other members of the ACT Legislative Assembly have access to other youth forums, parent groups and various organisations who can also generate ideas. Finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to remind members that an inquiry reference to a select committee, or the Social Policy Committee, would provide the forum in which to gather these ideas and would provide a range of outcomes to help create the jobs that our young people need and can fill.

MS ELLIS (3.53): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ms Szuty on her constructive contribution to this debate. I am wondering why she was not able to get this up as an MPI, rather than Mr De Domenico. I consider that her contribution has been incredibly constructive in contrast.

Today I would like to address two areas where I believe the Government has shown great initiative in tackling the problems of unemployment of women and youth. Before I do so, I would like to make some general comments.

Mr De Domenico: There is 56.1 per cent of youth unemployed.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MS ELLIS: Before I do so, I would like to try to make some general comments. We have heard a lot from Mr De Domenico about the ACT's youth unemployment rate. However, Mr De Domenico has deliberately been mischievous in his use of the figures. He is well aware that the small sample size in the ACT makes monthly unemployment figures very volatile. A few months ago youth unemployment was at 11 per cent, but because of the volatility of the figures the Chief Minister did not then claim the credit for that low figure.

Mr De Domenico: Yes, she did.

MS ELLIS: She did not. Neither should this Government accept the blame for one month's statistical aberration. If Mr De Domenico was being honest he would look at the long-term trend in youth unemployment and acknowledge that in the ACT youth unemployment has constantly been well below the national average. In addition, I would suggest that Mr De Domenico more carefully read the Economic Priorities Advisory Committee's report on the ACT youth labour market. The report recognises two broad categories of youth unemployment - youth looking for full-time vocational jobs and youth looking for part-time vocational and non-vocational jobs.

The majority of youth seeking part-time employment are in further education and are seeking non-vocational employment for income supplementation. For these youth it is the availability of positions with flexible working hours in predominantly the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors which is critical.

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For August - the latest figures available - the percentage of youth unemployed, excluding those in education, is actually 21.7 per cent - well below the national average of 26.6 per cent for the same group. Nevertheless, the Government considers this rate unacceptable and has put into place over the last two budgets a number of initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment, through both job creation and training schemes to raise skill levels.

These initiatives included the ACT Youth Conservation Corps, a 1992-93 budget initiative, which will provide 80 places in a full year for young unemployed people to undertake a combination of structured workplace training and experience in the areas of conservation, the environment, and natural, historical and cultural heritage.

Mr De Domenico: How many jobs will it provide, though?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Cornwell: What, digging holes for trees?

MS ELLIS: Madam Speaker, I showed the Opposition the courtesy of hearing them in silence, and I would appreciate it if they would do the same for me.

Mr Cornwell: I mean, really! It is training, not jobs.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MS ELLIS: The special youth employment initiatives package will provide \$560,000 in 1992-93 and will assist unemployed youth in the 15 to 19 years age group through a workplace development scheme providing temporary employment for 30 young people, including 10 part-time for six months, 10 additional places under the Australian traineeship scheme, and nine additional apprenticeships. There is an enhanced program of pastoral care and career advisory services to assist students in making a successful transition to post-school life - that is, \$145,000 in 1992-93 and \$290,000 in a full year.

An initiative of the 1991-92 budget was the expansion of Streetlink by two workers to enhance the program's employment and training focus for young people. This also provided for the co-location of the Streetlink program with the Commonwealth Youth Access Centre to better provide services for unemployed young people in Belconnen. Streetlink has commenced operating from the co-located premises this week, with the Youth Access Centre commencing in November.

A further initiative of the 1991-92 budget was the expansion of the funding to Jobline and Involve, providing a greater capacity for meeting the needs of unemployed young people. Jobline has, as a result, opened a southside office in Tuggeranong. There is also the venture and development assistance program. This year funding under this innovative program has been expanded to \$200,000. This program provided 230 training places in its first year of operation, and already this financial year 46 training places have been provided. Further projects with a job creation focus are currently being developed in conjunction with a range of community groups and organisations.

These programs are in addition to the Commonwealth initiatives announced by the Prime Minister in July, which included an offer to all long-term unemployed youth of a six-month vocational training course with a Jobstart card on completion; the creation of a career start traineeship to target early school leavers; and the expansion of SkillShare and JobTrain with a link to a wage subsidy for a job beyond training. There is also the land care and environmental action program, offering young people employment experience in environmental and conservation projects. There will be a high level of coordination between this program and the ACT Youth Conservation Corps.

There are also increased subsidies for traineeships and extra support for apprenticeships; a further 12,000 pre-vocational training places nationally for TAFE in 1993; and funds for the development of the Australian vocational certificate recommended in the Carmichael report. The rapid implementation of these initiatives in the ACT is being carefully monitored by a high-level ACT Government task force. Funding has been made available through the job placement and employment training program for two years to link accommodation and personal support with supported job placement, structured training and work experience for young homeless people.

Madam Speaker, let me now turn to initiatives to help unemployed women. In the last two budgets there have been a number of initiatives aimed at assisting women who wish to enter or re-enter the work force. I am pleased to say that these initiatives are proving very successful. The Government's employment and training policies aim to create opportunities for women to equip themselves with the skills and experience necessary to successfully compete for jobs and to pursue their career choices. The Chief Minister is advised by the Women's Employment Advisory Committee, which has close links with the community and is well placed to advise on the priorities which women in the community themselves identify. Government initiatives for women include Jobskills, under which 370 long-term unemployed people will get paid work experience and training through the Commonwealth and ACT Government Jobskills program. Women will receive their share of these placements.

The employment and training grants program received an additional \$120,000 in the budget. High priority for funding in 1992-93 was given to programs which assist women wishing to re-enter the work force. This is reflected in grants to Sistertrust to provide financial and mentoring support to assist low income women in choosing careers and participating in relevant study; to Caloola Farm to run pre-vocational training courses for women in Tuggeranong; to Caloola Farm and Tuggeranong Link to provide pre-vocational training through community houses in Tuggeranong; and to other organisations such as the Work Resources Centre and the Community Company for programs to assist those disadvantaged in the labour market, including women.

The women's work force development scheme is another initiative announced in the budget this year. It will provide 20 women with six months' work experience and training within the ACT Government Service and targets women over 30 years of age who have been out of work for over two years. The Government is sponsoring a major event on women's employment, education and training in November this year which will provide practical hands-on advice for women considering entering or re-entering the work force or changing career direction. Madam Speaker, I find it quite shocking that the Opposition can degrade such an initiative. When you speak to the women involved, it is that sort of care and mentoring that they need to get back into the work force in the first place.

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There will be seminars, workshops, information booths and videos, all providing women with a wealth of information and encouragement. An information handbook will be launched during this event, with an emphasis on employment, education and training issues for women. It complements existing material and will provide information which has not readily been available in the ACT. It will be available through community organisations, libraries and the Commonwealth Employment Service. Both will provide women with invaluable help in seeking and gaining employment. The Business Services Centre runs regular seminars which provide a comprehensive overview of the issues and steps involved in starting a business. They have specifically targeted women for a number of these courses and have run a number for women only.

The Government established the women's employment strategy grants as a formal grants program from 1992-93, as earlier pilots had proved extremely successful. This means that the Government is now able to offer grants of \$60,000 per year for work in relation to women's employment, education and training, in addition to the priority given to women under the employment and training grants program. Grants were given in 1991-92. The Tuggeranong Link and the Migrant Resource Centre have been funded to organise business seminars for women. Approximately 25 women in Tuggeranong attended the seminars which ran weekly over nine weeks. The Migrant Resource Centre is providing useful information in their own languages to migrant women wishing to establish their own businesses. A grant was given to the BPW Blundell Club to develop a register of women and a program of activities, both aimed at assisting women who own their own businesses.

In addition, the Government is committed to long-term changes which will benefit women's employment. Business women's seminars, run jointly with Ernst and Young, have been extremely successful. The women attending are benefiting not only from hearing the speakers but also from the opportunity to network together. A full-time coordinator has been appointed to the tradeswomen on the move program, which provides school students with information to enable them to consider the broad range of career options available to them today. (*Extension of time granted*)

Madam Speaker, let me briefly contrast this Government's achievements with what John Hewson and the Liberals promise for the ACT - a loss of thousands of jobs in the public service in the ACT, with the resulting decimation of the private sector; increased workload and imposts on business as a result of the paperwork required for the GST; no compassion at all for the unemployed, as shown by cutting off unemployment benefits after nine months; industrial relations chaos resulting from the Liberals' Thatcherite view of industrial relations; and increased costs and hence lower profits and employment levels as a result of the GST. Madam Speaker, this Government has a record of which it can be justifiably proud.

MR STEVENSON (4.04): Madam Speaker, the real question is: How many people are unemployed? A number of members have tried to address this matter, but let me give some details that some of us may not have heard about. Professor Judith Sloan of Flinders University said that the figures are misleading. Why are they misleading? She said that, as we know, officially less than one million people are supposedly unemployed; yet 1.7 million people are receiving money

for what are termed unemployment benefits. I do not think there is any benefit from being unemployed. I repeat that 1.7 million people are getting benefits, when the figure, we are told, is less than one million. We talk about local figures of 8.3 per cent unemployed, and an unemployed youth figure of 56 per cent. I suggest that the figures are being fudged, to put it nicely.

How can you get a figure of less than one million when 1.7 million people are collecting money? I suggest that you could say that anybody is employed if they work two hours or more a week. That is one way. You can also say that anyone is employed if they are working for no money within a family business. In various other ways you can say that people are employed when they are not employed. There are many people who want to work part time. At least 7 per cent of the work force in Australia have indicated that, while they are on part-time work, they want full-time employment. If you add that 7 per cent figure to the supposed 11 per cent figure in Australia, or the 8.3 per cent figure in Canberra, you find an alarming result indeed. That is just for that 7 per cent figure. In reality, there appears to be far more. With the grave concern we have about youth unemployment - - -

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! The time for the MPI has expired, Mr Stevenson.

ELECTORAL BILL 1992

MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (4.07): Madam Speaker, I present the Electoral Bill 1992.

Title read by Clerk.

MS FOLLETT: I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Members will recall, Madam Speaker, that on 8 September I outlined to the Assembly the Government's timetable for the implementation of the Hare-Clark electoral system. This will be in two stages. Stage one involves the Electoral Bill 1992. The second stage will include the development of comprehensive electoral legislation for the ACT during 1993 which will provide in detail for the conduct of elections. The passage of the present Bill will allow determination of electoral boundaries to be carried out while the necessarily complex further legislation is developed.

Madam Speaker, the development of the ACT electoral system must occur within the parameters set by the Commonwealth self-government Act and the ACT Electoral Act. Some elements of the ACT legislation are dictated by the Commonwealth legislation, and others are only guided by it. For example, the ACT is bound by the quota formula set out in section 67D of the self-government Act and by the list of topics that the substantive electoral legislation will need to cover. These are set out in section 67B of the self-government Act.

I turn to today's Bill. The Electoral Bill establishes an Electoral Commission for the ACT and sets out an independent procedure for the determination of electoral boundaries. It is largely modelled on the Commonwealth Electoral Act. There has been some public discussion about the need for a separate ACT Electoral Commission. However, as a legislature we should remember that we are

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developing an electoral system for the Territory. Of necessity, the body responsible for the implementation and maintenance of this system should be responsible to the ACT parliament, not that of the Commonwealth or any other jurisdiction in Australia. This was acknowledged in the recent report by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on the conduct of elections.

Also, it is not appropriate to legislate to allow the electoral function to be contracted out. Such an approach would give the government of the day enormous discretion as regards the hiring and firing of the contractor. That said, it is possible to establish an independent ACT body accountable to this Assembly. That is also economical. Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Government's proposal achieves this result. In developing this Bill the Government has consulted with the Australian Electoral Commission and the Commonwealth Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories. The comments received were supportive, and suggestions made by the Commonwealth commission have resulted in refinements of the process in light of Commonwealth experience.

This Bill is essentially in two parts. The first part establishes the Electoral Commission and the second part provides for the determination of electorates. The Electoral Commission will consist of three members - a chairperson, another member and an Electoral Commissioner. The chairperson will be either a current or retired judge, a retired Commonwealth departmental secretary, a retired head of an ACT department or a former member of an electoral authority of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory.

At this stage the powers and functions of the commission will be limited to specific statutory powers and to reporting on electoral matters. The commission's role will expand with the completion of the substantive electoral legislation next year, which will see the full implementation of the referendum result. Some of the matters I envisage the commission being ultimately responsible for include a range of specific functions such as the development of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections, as well as broader research and educative functions. In light of the commission's initially limited role, it is envisaged that appointments to the commission will be part time.

The boundaries process established under this Bill is designed not only to be independent of the government of the day but also to allow the involvement of the community. An integral part of the boundaries process is the Redistribution Committee comprising the Electoral Commissioner, the Chief Planner, the Chief Surveyor and another member. The fourth member of the Redistribution Committee will be appointed by the Electoral Commission and will be a person with expertise relevant to the matters the Redistribution Committee is required to take into account in determining boundaries. I will set these out in a moment.

The Redistribution Committee will have to work within a particular legal framework. For example, the legislation provides for the ACT to be divided into three electorates, two of which will elect five members of the Assembly and one of which will elect seven members of the Assembly. Members will be aware that this framework was set out in the options description sheet given to voters prior to the referendum. Further, the Bill adopts the options description sheet suggestion that a redistribution occur within 12 months of a general election. This is over and above the requirement in the self-government Act that a redistribution must occur at least once every six years.

I see the community's involvement in the boundaries process as fundamental to the legislation. I will briefly outline the way in which the initial distribution and subsequent redistributions will work. At the outset the Redistribution Committee is required to call for suggestions from the public in relation to the proposed redistribution and for comments on any suggestions made. After the Redistribution Committee decides on a proposed redistribution it will be available for public perusal at the Electoral Commission's office, and objections will be accepted at the Electoral Commission within 28 days. Objections will be considered by the Electoral Commission. In considering objections, the Electoral Commission will be required to hold public hearings unless, in the commission's opinion, the matters raised by the objection are frivolous or vexatious or the objection raises the same matters as were raised by suggestions or comments received in response to the initial advertising process.

Having considered objections, the commission is required to make a public announcement of any proposed redistribution and, if this proposal is significantly different to that of the Redistribution Committee, further objections will be accepted from anyone. In this respect the Bill differs from the Commonwealth model, which accepts further objections only from people who have previously contributed to the community consultation process. This modification was supported by the Australian Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will then consider any further objections and, after considering these, the Electoral Commission must give written reasons for its decision on a redistribution and determine the electorates. To conclude the process, the Electoral Commission is required to submit a report on the entire process to me for tabling in the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would now like to return to one of the crucial parts of the Bill which I adverted to earlier. In preparing a proposed redistribution, both the Redistribution Committee and the Electoral Commission must have regard to the following matters: Community of interests within the proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests; means of communication and travel within the proposed electorate; the physical features and area of the proposed electorate; the boundaries of any existing electoral boundaries; and the boundaries established under the Districts Act 1966.

The referendum options description sheet provides that the criteria for drawing boundaries be as nearly as practicable the same as those used for Commonwealth redistributions. The above list is the same as for the House of Representatives, with the addition of the reference to the Districts Act, which sets local boundaries within the Territory. In addition, a proposed redistribution will have to comply with the quota formula defined in section 67D of the self-government Act. This quota provides the mechanism for determining the optimum number of electors for each electorate.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Bill provides for regard to be had to future projections of the number of electors enrolled in each electorate. This is done by the Redistribution Committee and the Electoral Commission endeavouring to ensure that, at the time of the next election, the numbers of electors enrolled in each electorate will not be less than 98 per cent or more than 102 per cent of the quota set out in section 67D. This will ensure consideration of the demographic

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trends in Canberra. This is modelled on the Commonwealth legislation - although the benchmark for Commonwealth elections is average divisional enrolments, whereas for the ACT it is the quota. Obviously, an average is not appropriate for an electoral system where the electorates are not the same size.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the first part of the legislation establishing our electoral system provides the ACT community with a reliable, independent and public process that will result in fair electoral boundaries upon which to implement the Hare-Clark electoral system in the Territory. I present the explanatory memorandum for the Bill.

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

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992

Debate resumed from 13 October 1992, on motion by **Mr Berry**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MR LAMONT (4.17): It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise to address this matter this afternoon. I am, however, somewhat surprised that these most worthwhile propositions have generated the level of vitriol and debate evident from those opposite. I need to refute a number of the allegations which have been made erroneously by a number of the speakers from the other side of the house who have commented on this matter.

Let us have a look at the first simple principle. I believe that there is a common objective across this Assembly to reduce the level of accidents that occur in industry - in any industry. We all recognise that by reducing those accidents there is a direct cost benefit to the employer and a direct benefit to the community in terms of the costs associated with health infrastructure, et cetera. If we start from that premise and look at the Bill before this house, there can be no objection to the way in which the Government is proceeding. Indeed, to object to the way in which the Government is proceeding is to reject the simple premise on which this whole legislative program is based.

Let us look at what has been established in the ACT. We have established an Occupational Health and Safety Council. The model for that council arose out of the South Australian legislation, which was recognised as probably the best occupational health and safety legislation in Australia at the time. The council was supported by the employers, the Government and the trade unions. It has a range of powers. It can determine, as it has done, the training providers. It must give its approval to organisations before they can provide training in the ACT, and it has done so. It also determines the type and style of training. When the matter of reducing the designated work group size from 20 to 10 was before the OH and S Council, the representatives of the business community said absolutely nothing about changing the training requirements provided for - - -

Mrs Carnell: They just said that they did not want it. They just said that it was garbage.

MR LAMONT: That is simply not the case. They said nothing about changing the training requirements that were provided for people covered by the Act. There may be an argument that the level of training which is required for an employee in a pharmacy at Red Hill is different from the style and scope of the training required to be provided for a person working, say, in the transport industry. Not one of the employer representatives on the Occupational Health and Safety Council raised one word about that supposed difference. They did not say that the level of training should be reduced, amended or altered so that there would not be as great a cost impost.

Mr De Domenico: What did all the employers say last week?

MR LAMONT: They have said nothing on the Occupational Health and Safety Council, the forum where these matters are usually discussed.

Mrs Carnell: They have said something. What did they say?

MR LAMONT: They have said nothing in relation to the level and type of training.

Mrs Carnell: What did they say?

MR LAMONT: They have said nothing. You on that side of the house can carp for as long as you want. They have said nothing. But let us go back to when this legislation was originally introduced into the house some three years ago, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Labor Party most certainly indicated at that time that it was its intention to reduce from 20 to 10 the number of employees required for the establishment of a designated work group. It was quite clear that that was the intention. Your former colleague, Mr Leader of the Opposition, one of your number who is no longer with you, Mr Collaery - - -

Mr De Domenico: Who? He was not one of us.

MR LAMONT: He certainly was.

Mr Kaine: He was not a member of the Liberal Party.

MR LAMONT: He was part of your Alliance Government. Even he, your own deputy, recognised that there would need to be a review.

Mr De Domenico: And you saw what happened to him. The same thing will happen to you. He was a oncer.

MR LAMONT: Do not talk about that. We do not want to have to tell you the next time how to count to get yourself up to No. 2 on the ticket, either. Let us get down to what this matter really addresses, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let us get down to what it really means. We have heard that there is not a real necessity for a reduction in the size of designated work groups because we do not really know what happens where employers have fewer than 20 employees.

Mrs Carnell: That is what Mr Berry said.

MR LAMONT: That is what you have said. You only have to reread Hansard. A concern that has been continually raised is that there is not proper compliance by employers with the requirement to notify injuries. Bib and Bub at the back over there were laughing and tittering yesterday, producing a list of accidents

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and saying, "Somebody slipped over. Ha, ha, ha. That is an accident. Ha, ha, ha". Accidents that have not been reported by employers have resulted in amputations. The first the OH and S compliance people were aware of some accidents was when the insurance companies actually wrote to them. The employers failed to notify the accidents, as they are required to do. That is the type of non-compliance there is.

Mr De Domenico: How many times has that happened?

MR LAMONT: Twice in 12 months where amputations have occurred, Mr De Domenico. That is nothing to laugh at, nothing to sneer at, as you were doing yesterday. It is something of great concern to this Government and should be of great concern to every employer.

I come back to training. Some of the people who have mouthpieces opposite have said that they do not want trade unions to be involved in the training that is provided. The legislation does not require that. If there is not an appropriate union, then an appropriate union is not involved in the process. It is as simple as that. The people opposite also say, "But what it boils down to is that the Trades and Labour Council has a training cell and they will get to know what employers are up to, because when employers want training they will send their employees off to the Trades and Labour Council occupational health and safety training centre". But there are others. That is but one organisation authorised by the OH and S Council.

Mr Kaine: What are the others?

MR LAMONT: The National Safety Council. I understand that applications either have already been submitted or are about to be submitted by other organisations that wish to become recognised trainers. I am quite proud of the fact that after I left the Transport Workers Union in July 1991 I spent five months helping to establish the occupational health and safety training centre of the Trades and Labour Council. May I place on record that that body is regarded throughout Australia as one of the most pre-eminent occupational health and safety training centres in Australia.

Mrs Carnell: Because you set it up?

MR LAMONT: No, not because I set it up, Mrs Carnell; but because of the level of expertise which has been developed by the employees of that organisation. They have developed such expertise that employer organisations are now seeking to become involved in the information systems that they have devised. Employers singularly have also sought to use the resources of that training centre to inform their members and their managers of their obligations and, indeed, the necessity for any proper business to take care of its employees.

I have absolutely no difficulty in placing that on the public record, Mr Deputy Speaker, and there should be absolutely no concern by any employer in Canberra over the style and type of training provided by the Trades and Labour Council occupational health and safety training centre or, indeed, by the National Safety Council. I have also participated with one of the trainers in the National Safety Council's training program. The back-up facilities provided by that organisation are not as comprehensive; nevertheless, its training program has been authorised by the body established and recognised as the appropriate body to approve such courses.

Employer organisations in Canberra are party to the Occupational Health and Safety Council. I will tell you what really rankles. I do not mind that the Opposition trot out ACIL again or find an issue that they think they can take an opposing view on. But neither of us can afford to adopt a political position on occupational health and safety. We are talking about the lives and livelihood of men and women working in the ACT. We are talking about trying to put into place a regime of proper practice in occupational health and safety in the ACT. This will ensure that nobody can get up and say, "Well, we are not totally sure of all the statistics in a particular area". It will ensure that statistics on accidents such as those resulting in two amputations in the last 12 months are available and do not suddenly come out of the woodwork.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Mr Lamont, we are going to have another amputation. It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Berry: I require that the question be put forthwith.

Question resolved in the negative.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992

Debate resumed.

MR LAMONT: Any reasonable-minded person must support what we are proposing here.

Mr De Domenico: What about Wayne Goss?

Mrs Carnell: Or New South Wales or Victoria or South Australia or Western Australia?

MR LAMONT: I hear Bib and Bub once again saying, "What about Queensland? What about South Australia?". Do you want to talk about South Australia? Do you want to talk about the other States? Do you want to talk about where they are getting to?

Mr De Domenico: No, we want to talk about the ACT.

MR LAMONT: That is exactly what we want to do, Mr De Domenico - talk about the ACT and make sure that it is exemplary in relation to occupational health and safety within Australia. This legislation will further reduce the level of accidents in the ACT. We have heard a lot about the extra impost of \$450 per training period putting people out the door backwards. What an absolute crop of rot!

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Mrs Carnell: How do you know? Why don't you go and ask the employers?

MR LAMONT: You are not going to stand here and tell me that Red Hill pharmacy is going to go out the door backwards because it has to pay \$450 in a year for an industry-recognised training program. If that is how borderline your business is, Mrs Carnell, then I suggest to you that it is absolutely critical that we get somebody in there to check your occupational health and safety. It is also a matter of public record that the level of compliance diminishes as employers become closer to the margin, if you like. It is not acceptable for businesses coming close to the margin, as yours obviously is because it cannot afford the \$450, to put its workers at risk. We are not prepared to let that happen. We are not prepared to pander to some very small sectional interest groups. *(Extension of time granted)*

This legislation proposes that the number required for the establishment of a designated work group and the election of a safety representative be reduced to 10. When the number was established at 20 the business community argued that it was inappropriate. They said that there would be no discernible reduction in the level of accidents; that there would be no discernible reduction in the level of compensation premiums payable. That has not been the case, Mr Deputy Speaker. In fact, premiums payable by employers in that category in the main have dropped, and what in fact has happened - - -

Mrs Carnell: And employers in all categories.

Mr De Domenico: In all categories - across the board.

MR LAMONT: I suggest to you that that has happened because there has been a lesser impost across the board because of fewer accidents where there are more than 20 employees. The number of accidents has dropped. That is absolutely irrefutable. The continual carping in the background from Bib and Bub not only will do them a disservice but, on the public record, also will show the people of Canberra where their vested personal interest lies.

MR KAINE (Leader of the Opposition) (4.35): Mr Deputy Speaker, I nominate Mr Lamont as the workplace delegate for the 17-member work group of the Legislative Assembly. If elected, he can take one of those training courses - and I hope that the training course is a long one.

MR WESTENDE (4.35): I rise to speak on this matter with nearly 40 years' experience in employing people. It utterly amazes me that this Government can be extraordinarily defensive about what it claims to be doing for the unemployed and for the unemployment situation, yet the legislation that this Government has brought forward for consideration by the Assembly will do nothing to improve the employment situation or the local economic environment. The Occupational Health and Safety (Amendment) Bill 1992 is a case in point. In fact, if anything, this Bill works against employment. I have recently been overseas. All the overseas economies talk about the major problem being not wages but add-on cost to wages. Here we have another add-on cost to wages.

As I said, I have considerable experience as an employer. Mr Lamont and his colleagues opposite say that what you can apply to a company with 20 people you can equally apply to a company with 10 people. That is utter rubbish. If you have a certain expenditure, you can divide it by 20 much better than you can divide it by 10. If you divide it by 10, your individual cost goes up. Mr Lamont

also mentioned very low margins. Let me tell Mr Lamont that businesses, including some that I know of and am associated with, are selling today at 1988 prices - not because they want to, but because they have to. The economic situation is such that the buying power of the general public, as well as that of business, has been so eroded that people simply will not pay, or cannot pay, 1992 prices. That not only goes for business that I am associated with but is the situation generally.

You only have to read the financial pages. Large retail companies such as Coles Myer all complain about the erosion of the margins that they have to work on. Whilst competition will always work to make the margins as low as possible, there is no way that by bringing in this legislation you will increase the opportunity for business. You will send some businesses employing 10 or more people down the drain or cause them to shed employees. I speak from personal experience. I began in 1968 with four employees, but before that I had run other business, not my own, that employed more people. I can assure you that if you can spread the cost over only four people you have to watch every single penny.

This measure is simply government interference at its worst. The Government should be trying to create the climate that provides jobs. There is only one way to provide employment, and that is to create the business climate that is conducive to growth in the work force. Until an economically viable situation exists, no prudent employer can hire people on the off-chance that the economy as a whole will improve. The Occupational Health and Safety (Amendment) Bill is a disincentive to small business. I am not speaking selfishly, because I am one of the businesses with 20-plus employees and I can assure members on this side and the opposite side that the legislation has added to costs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we do not need this legislation, for other reasons. Any well-meaning employer will take his own actions. We had safety measures in place long before the 20-person provision came into being. In fact, we won the Insurance Council national award for providing the safest workplace. We have not had a single accident in our business since we started, in one of the industries most vulnerable to these types of accidents.

Mr Lamont: And what were your insurance premiums, Mr Westende?

MR WESTENDE: Our insurance premiums were always the lowest for the particular type of business that we are engaged in. But may I add that my oncosts - workers compensation and so on - are among the highest. It is the oncost that kills business. If you people want to create employment, let me warn you that by imposing another oncost - we are not talking about wages; we are talking about oncosts - you will create further unemployment instead of creating employment.

Mr Lamont: Lou, you should be over on our side. You are supporting us.

MR WESTENDE: No. I am telling you what you should do. You should forget about this legislation. It is as simple as that. To assume that this legislation will prevent all accidents is a delusion. Even though we have not had an accident, there will always be the human factor of imperfection. You can create the safest place on earth and people will still be hurt. They can still trip over, walk into things, or be momentarily distracted for all sorts of reasons. Our time in this debate should not be taken up by talking about this Bill; it should be taken up by trying to create a climate for business growth.

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What does the Canberra Chamber of Commerce have to say? I heard a comment before that business organisations have not complained. The Canberra Chamber of Commerce, in its September 1992 bulletin, after explaining what this legislation does, says that it has been introduced "without consultation with the private sector - - -

Mr Connolly: Rubbish!

MR WESTENDE: It is in print, my dear friend. It says that the legislation has been introduced:

Without regard to employment ceilings which may be thrust onto small business to avoid the oncosts of forming Designated Work Groups! Without regard to increased administration and staff time required by small Business.

I warn members on the other side that the employee often loses his job, but he still has a roof over his head. The employer, on the other hand, may go down the drain. What we have to try to do is to keep both in place. That is the only way we are going to get jobs.

Many on the opposite side might be thinking that this is an extreme response to the Bill. However, we have all heard the saying about the straw that broke the camel's back. This Bill, I am suggesting, does exactly that. It is just one more impost on employers. It is one more thing to abide by, or look out. It is one more reason not to expand or even to get into business. Have you talked to those businesses that now employ nine people? They would think twice about hiring an additional one or two people. This Bill is one more spoke in the wheel of the employer-employee relationship.

Mr Connolly: That is what they said about stopping kids going down the mines.

Mr Berry: "We'll all be rooned", they said as we took the kids out of the pits.

Mr Connolly: Exactly. They have been saying this for 200 years.

MR WESTENDE: I can hear members jumping to the conclusion that I am advocating jobs at all costs, even at the risk of safety. I am not. In fact, I am advocating the opposite. This Government, by the very nature of this Bill, is saying that employers are stupid; that you have to tell them everything; and that, if they do not do what you want, you must punish them. Members opposite would not know what it was to run a business, so it would be fair to say that they do not know about the repercussions of overregulation and taxation. In the pursuit of looking after the interests of the workers the Government is blinkered when it comes to the big picture, for in the end the main interest of the workers must be continued employment.

The problem with the labour movement is that it has lost its plot. It used to be interested in the working conditions of its members, and that was a just cause. However, it has come a long way now, and it is time for the labour movement to take stock of its agenda. When unemployment is running so high, surely jobs must be its No. 1 priority. But, no, this is not always apparent. The labour movement still likes to push, push, push the employer, who is the risk taker. The employer is the one who really puts everything on the line - and I mean everything.

It would be interesting to analyse who, in fact, has come off worse in terms of the effect of the recession we had to have. I am talking of illness or even suicide or indeed loss of personal property among the unemployed or those business people whose businesses have failed due to continued pressures of overregulation or taxation. When the risk taker or employer loses, it often loses everything. I urge members opposite to think twice before they vote in favour of this legislation.

MR BERRY (Minister for Health, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Sport) (4.47), in reply: There are a few inaccuracies that I need to address at the outset, before dealing with some other important issues in this debate. Mention was made of the review of workers compensation premiums. I want to make it clear and put it on the record that that review was initiated by the first Follett Government. It showed that insurance companies were making huge excess profits at the expense of ACT business. According to the Insurance Council of Australia, there was a 20 per cent reduction following the report. In reality, average premiums have halved since then, with a total average reduction of 40 per cent. The 20 per cent is only a small part of the overall reduction. The insurance companies, as is well accepted, were also exploiting ACT employers and of course - - -

Mr De Domenico: That is rubbish. That is absolute garbage, absolute rubbish.

MR BERRY: Thank you very much for your comment. Therefore, the occupational health and safety legislation has been very successful.

There was some talk at one point about how many people were employed in the ACT. Since 1988 the private sector work force has increased by 20 per cent, and still we see plummeting rates of accidents because of the occupational health and safety legislation. The number of accidents reported by insurance companies is down by 20 per cent. There is reason to believe that businesses without DWGs are not reporting accidents to the OH and S Office, even though it is compulsory to do so. As has been explained, two amputations were discovered from solicitors' letters. There have been four deaths in the ACT over the last couple of years, and two of them were from the smaller side of business.

Mrs Carnell: In what areas?

MR BERRY: I am not going to go into the detail of those sorts of things. What is important is the requirements of the Act in relation to reporting. If a worker has an accident in the workplace and the worker is off duty for seven or more days, the accident has to be reported. If there is a dangerous occurrence in the workplace, that too has to be reported. "Dangerous occurrence" is set out in the regulations as follows:

- (a) damage to any boiler, pressure vessel, plant, equipment or other thing which endangers or is likely to endanger the health or safety of persons at a workplace;
- (b) damage to, or failure of, any load bearing member ...
- (c) an uncontrolled fire, explosion or escape of gas ...

(d) any other occurrence involving imminent risk of -

... ..

(ii) death or serious personal injury to any person; or

(iii) substantial damage to property.

There are substantial penalties if employers are shown to have failed in their duty of care in relation to compulsory reporting. The only prosecution which has been successful under this legislation was, in fact, in relation to a dangerous occurrence. It is most important that we improve the reporting rate in order that we can encourage a safer workplace as a result of the examples exposed in reports. Of the 200 or so reports received by the OH and S Office in 1991-92, at least 53 have been clearly identified as coming from employers with fewer than 21 employees. This is of the order of 25 per cent of all reports. Of the dangerous occurrences recorded - - -

Mrs Carnell: How?

MR BERRY: People count them.

Mrs Carnell: But you said previously you did not know; you had no input.

MR BERRY: This is the most recent advice. Just sit there quietly and listen. Of the dangerous occurrences recorded, 28 per cent came from employers with fewer than 21 employees. That is indicting evidence.

Mrs Carnell: But you said at the meeting that you had no idea. Mr Berry said it. He said that he had no idea, at that public meeting.

MR BERRY: We are down the track a bit further than that. There are some other misleading things that I wish to point out to the Assembly which came up in the course of the debate. There was a most disgraceful effort yesterday by Mrs Carnell, with her pharmacist's hat on. She referred to a number of injuries, which were from the records of a single insurer.

Mrs Carnell: Who insures every pharmacy in the ACT except one.

MR BERRY: You did not tell us that yesterday either. She pointed to 30 injuries within pharmacies in the ACT, and she treated them all fairly lightly.

Mrs Carnell: No, I did not treat them very lightly at all. I said that I did not believe that the new legislation would stop any of them.

MR BERRY: Yes, you did, and I will point out shortly something else you did that you may wish to resile from. "Slipped on step leading from dispensary - paid to date, \$2394". I suspect that that is a fairly serious injury. Would you not like a safer workplace? Mrs Carnell said that she would be prepared to sack workers in her pharmacy, sack some of her staff, to get herself to a level below that at which she would have to provide a safer workplace. That is the sort of person we are dealing with. The kind, caring presentation does not fool anybody. Beneath it all is a steely cold Liberal heart. That is what it is all about. She will sack workers to bring herself down under the level.

Mrs Carnell misled this Assembly yesterday when she said:

The vast percentage of those happened on the way to work or on the way home, and therefore would not be covered.

She got caught, because she was then forced to table the document. There were 30 accidents recorded on the piece of paper, and there were four - - -

Mrs Carnell: I did not say "motor vehicle". I said "on the way to work or on the way home".

MR BERRY: You said:

The vast percentage of those happened on the way to work or on the way home, and therefore would not be covered.

We have here, "Motor vehicle accident on way to work", "Motor vehicle on way home from work", "Motor vehicle accident on way to work", "Worker had bad fall on way to work".

Mrs Carnell: What about the ones that were not motor vehicle accidents? What about the people who sprain their ankle at the bus stop?

MR BERRY: No, we are talking about travel injuries, are we not?

Mrs Carnell: I did not say that. I said "on the way to work or on the way home".

MR BERRY: They are travel injuries.

Mrs Carnell: But I did not say "travel injuries". I said "on the way to work or on the way home".

MR BERRY: They are travel injuries, in work terms. "Motor vehicle accident on way to work" - is that one of them? "Motor vehicle on way home from work" - that is one of them. "Worker had bad fall on way to work" - that is one of them. That is three. "Motor vehicle accident on way to work" - No. 4. Those are the only four.

Mrs Carnell: Do you know that for a fact?

MR BERRY: You said it. You waved the piece of paper around. You said, "The vast percentage of those happened on the way to work or on the way home". Your piece of paper said four. There are 30 on it. I say that you misled the house. This just shows how ridiculous the argument in relation to this matter has been.

This proposal is put forward to improve the lot of workers and businesses in the Australian Capital Territory. It will ensure from the outset that we have a safer workplace, that we will not have bereaved families at home because workers have been killed, that we reduce the number of injuries in the workplace, that we reduce the impact on our health system, and that we make businesses more profitable. The amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out to do that. It is a piece of legislation about which there have been no secrets. It has been on the agenda for a long time.

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Not one business person came forward to me in the course of the election campaign, when this was clearly part of our agenda. I ask you: If there were businesses concerned about this legislation, would they not have come forward and screeched about it? Not even the Liberal Party were concerned about it in the election campaign; they did not screech about the legislation then. One would have expected that they would support an extension of safer workplaces to smaller employers. Slick business men and women know that, when you have a reduction in accidents, businesses are more profitable. Mrs Carnell is prepared to sack her workers so that she does not have to have a safer workplace - - -

Mrs Carnell: I have only six employees.

MR BERRY: But she said yesterday that she would be prepared to sack them. She made it clear.

Mrs Carnell: I said that I would be prepared to rationalise my staff to keep the business going.

MR BERRY: That means sacking them, getting rid of them.

Mrs Carnell: Quite honestly, if you do not do it - - -

MR BERRY: You ought to blush. The cost to employers is minimal. Another Liberal jumped up and complained about the cost to him. He was in the plus-20 range, and we know that he can claim it under the training guarantee levy. Another Liberal tells us something that is not quite accurate. Where do you people get off? Nobody is fooled by this sort of rhetoric. People understand that this sort of legislation is progressive. It will bring better conditions to workers and to employers and it will be more profitable. There will be fewer people with serious injuries.

Let us look at some of the injuries. How would you like to have these things happen in your business? "Bookbinding and stationery manufacturer - cut off tip of right index finger". That could be a small employer. "Courier - crushed fingers". That could be a small employer. "Retail clothing - seven and a half centimetre head wound". That could be a small employer. "Food outlet - amputation of top middle finger on right hand". That could be a small employer. "Milk deliveries - severed tendons in right hand, wrist and minor cuts"; "Baking - back strain". The list goes on. In the timber industry, and this happened well back, somebody cut off his right foot. These are horrifying statistics, and any government that has in mind the interests of the people and the workers of the ACT, as well as the profitability of business, would err in its duty to the people of the ACT if it did not proceed to make the sorts of improvements that are necessary to expand not only business but also worker safety in the ACT.

I interjected with some emotion, Madam Speaker - I lost control for a moment - and said, "They said, 'We'll all be rooned when we take the kids out of the pits'.". That is the same old echo we hear from over there every time something improves for workers in the workplace. They ignore the benefits to employers. Every time something happens in the workplace which is of benefit to workers - that is, workers are empowered, along with management, to jointly look after their workplaces - these people bleat. They are terrified, for some reason - Mrs Carnell is terrified, for some reason - that a union official will walk up to the front door. He might want to inspect your wages book and make sure that you are paying your wages in accordance with the relevant award. I would not have any problem with that if I were an honest business person.

Mrs Carnell: Nor would I.

MR BERRY: That is right. There has been a certain paranoia generated about the involvement of unions, to try to distract people from the real issue. All that has to occur is that unions have to be notified. There is nothing wrong with that. Indeed, their involvement in and acceptance of this process is one of the main reasons why it has been so successful. If the parties to these sorts of arrangements do not accept them, they do not work, and that has been one of the successes of the occupational health and safety legislation. Employers know that if they work with their employees in a legislated framework, with reasonable regulations, they can reduce their costs, provide a safer workplace for their employees, and have more profitable businesses.

Mr Lamont: That would reduce their oncosts, Mr Berry?

MR BERRY: They would reduce their oncosts significantly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail Stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole

MS SZUTY (5.02): I move:

Page 1, clause 2, line 6, omit the clause, substitute the following clause:

Commencement

"**2.(1)** Sections 1, 2 and 3 commence on the day on which this Act is notified in the *Gazette*.

"**(2)** Section 4 commences on 1 July 1993."

In putting forward this amendment, I am attempting to give small business in the ACT breathing space prior to the amending legislation coming into effect - breathing space to establish their designated work groups, elect their occupational health and safety representatives, and provide for their training and the employment of casual relief staff, if needed.

The Government may argue that this change is a minor issue. However, it can be argued otherwise, in that it affects an estimated 8,500 employees and 750 workplaces - a not insignificant number of people in our community. I have therefore proposed the amendment to give business time to come to terms with the changes to the Act. By making the implementation date the first day of the next new financial year, small business is given a chance to make necessary changes and to budget for them. It also gives the economy eight more months of what we are all hoping will be an economic recovery. The requirement for the

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formation of designated work groups in a workplace with 20 employees has been in place since the introduction of this legislation in 1989. After three years, I feel that we can wait a further eight months to allow the small business sector to adjust to this change and organise its affairs to embrace it.

I have spoken during the in-principle debate about the problems employers perceive in the level being set at 10 employees rather than 10 full-time equivalent positions. In the industries most affected by the amendment proposed by the Government - the building and construction, retail and hospitality industries - there is a high proportion of casual and on-demand staff who work part time or full time at peak periods. These staff also take an interest in their workplace safety and can contribute positively to the constructive implementation of designated work groups. Many, particularly in the hospitality industry, use part-time work as a springboard into their chosen career, combining study and work. They deserve the same consideration under this legislation as do other employees, particularly in industries where professionalism and expertise is expected from the staff, despite their temporary or part-time status.

I have outlined the fact that the most prevalent injuries in these occupations are overexertion and strain, tripping over, and injuries caused by being hit by objects or bumping into objects and fixtures. These accidents happen to workers, whether full-time, part-time, casual or itinerant. After all, an employee's pay or wage status has no impact on his or her susceptibility to injury. As a current employer of two staff and a former employer of a large and more varied work force, I can personally attest to the impact on employers of the occupational health and safety legislation introduced in 1989. In my former workplace, the Weston Creek Community Service, which I referred to yesterday, there were not only paid full-time and part-time workers to be mindful of but also casual staff and volunteers, who gave their time to assist with the running of programs and the provision of services to the community.

Another issue that must be considered from the point of view of my own experience is the difference between a system that relies on inspectors for implementing the regulations and one that relies on employee-based designated work groups. Without doubt, for employers who care about the welfare of their employees the designated work group that empowers the workers to have input into their workplace safety is far superior to any system that relies on outside officers to come in and assess working conditions. There is no State or Territory budget in Australia that can afford to keep on staff the number of inspectors it would take to ensure that all workplaces in their jurisdictions are inspected, made to comply with regulations, and visited on a regular, effective basis.

Who knows better what is and what is not safe in their workplace than the employees who work there? Once those employees have been given access to appropriate training courses to help them identify occupational health and safety issues and mechanisms to raise these issues with their employer to resolve any difficulties, they actually make everyone's job easier, including the employer's.

Madam Speaker, given my enthusiastic endorsement of the designated workplace group structure, members may well ask: Why delay the introduction of the Government's amendment Bill? While I support the change, I return to my earlier remarks about giving small businesses time to consider the effect of the legislation. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MR DE DOMENICO (5.07): Madam Speaker, the Opposition will not be supporting this amendment. Ms Szuty has said to businesses, "The bad news is that you are going to go broke. The good news is that you will not go broke today; you will go broke tomorrow". It has been clearly said by the business community that they are against this legislation holus bolus. Ms Szuty, in moving this amendment, is living in cuckooland. For that reason, we will not be accepting Ms Szuty's amendment.

MR BERRY (Minister for Health, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Sport) (5.08): In relation to Ms Szuty's amendment, the changes made by this legislation would normally be brought into effect by notification in the *Gazette*. In the timing of the *Gazette* notification, I have already indicated that I would have regard to the need for a period during which employers affected would be advised of the new requirements. I can indicate now that the Office of Occupational Health and Safety will be providing free advice to employers to assist them in setting themselves up for the implementation of these changes. By gazettal action, we would delay the implementation of the legislation to a point that is reasonable.

The intention of the amendment Ms Szuty has moved is consistent with what I intended and, accordingly, in the interests of gaining the widest possible support for this important legislation, the Government is prepared - - -

Mr Kaine: Support at any price.

MR BERRY: Some people are reasonable on these sorts of things and some people are not. When this legislation was originally introduced, people were given time to ensure that they were up to speed on the legislation; they were given every support. I have to say to you that, whilst businesses originally opposed the initial legislation, they now support it fully.

Mr Kaine: Do they? Can you give us a few names?

MR BERRY: All the business representatives on the Industrial Relations Advisory Council support it wholeheartedly. They know the benefits because they are on the record. We are prepared to assist business. We are not prepared just to be narks, like the Liberals. We are about assisting business and implementing important, progressive legislation. For those employers who already accept the desirability of adopting the workplace OH and S arrangements the Bill provides for, there is nothing to prevent them from moving in advance of July 1993. In fact, I recommend that they do so.

The Government will support the amendment moved by Ms Szuty because it parallels the process we originally intended, and we are thankful for her support in this respect. We look forward to the passage of this legislation because we know, as has been proved, that it will provide a safer workplace and more profitable businesses. Even Mrs Carnell's business, if she avoids sacking those workers whom she said she would sack, could be safer. I urge her to take advantage of the excellent opportunities that will be provided as a result of this legislation. There will be adequate training for her staff under the legislation. She, too, can avail herself of the training opportunities that are provided at the Trades and Labour Council, and I am sure that she would be a better businesswoman as a result.

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We saw in the course of debate the spectacle of the Liberals accepting that one of their members had misled the house in relation to this matter. I am happy to conclude by saying that I think this legislation will be applauded out there in the workplace, in the first place by workers who are affected by it, but eventually by business people because they cannot help but see the benefits of it.

Question put:

That the amendment (**Ms Szuty's**) be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 9

Mr Berry
Mr Connolly
Ms Ellis
Ms Follett
Mr Lamont
Ms McRae
Mr Stevenson
Ms Szuty
Mr Wood

NOES, 5

Mrs Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr De Domenico
Mr Kaine
Mr Westende

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Question put:

That the Bill as a whole, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 8

Mr Berry
Mr Connolly
Ms Ellis
Ms Follett
Mr Lamont
Ms McRae
Ms Szuty
Mr Wood

NOES, 6

Mrs Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr De Domenico
Mr Kaine
Mr Stevenson
Mr Westende

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Berry**) agreed to:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Assembly adjourned at 5.16 pm