



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

11 March 1999

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Cornwell) took the chair at 10.30 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

**CONSIDERATION OF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS NOTICE RELATING TO
PREPARATION OF THE BUDGET
Suspension of Standing Order 69**

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (10.32): Mr Speaker, I move:

That standing order 69 be suspended on 11 March 1999, for the consideration of the Executive business order of the day relating to the principles for the preparation of the budget.

The effect of this motion is simply to ensure that the time limits that operated in this debate on Tuesday continue in the debate today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

STOCK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1999

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (10.32): Mr Speaker, I present the Stock (Amendment) Bill 1999, together with its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MR SMYTH: I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, this Bill will ban the feeding of certain mammalian materials to ruminants. Just in case members are uncertain, I would remind them that a ruminant is an animal with four stomachs and which chews its cud. Sheep, cattle and goats are the obvious examples. There is an unproven but potential link between bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, better known as "mad cow disease", and a variant form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or CJD, which affects humans. As a consequence, the World Health Organisation Special Consultation on BSE/CJD made some recommendations, one being that all countries should ban the use of ruminant tissues in ruminant feed.

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In response to these international concerns about the containment of mad cow disease, the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, ARMCANZ, passed a resolution agreeing to enact regulations banning the feeding of ruminant material to ruminants as a matter of urgency. With the passage of this legislation, all States and Territories will have enacted such a ban.

But, Mr Speaker, the matter does not end there. The USA, Canada and the European Union have all introduced legislation that bans the feeding of mammalian materials to ruminants. The new US rules are likely to become the de facto world standard and could have significant trade implications for Australia if not followed in Australian practice. Mr Speaker, failure to have this ban in place has the potential to undermine Australia's beef trade with the world, and especially with the European Union. With that in mind, a number of Australian jurisdictions, and now the ACT, are enacting legislation to ensure that this broader ban on the feeding of mammalian material to ruminants is in place.

Delegates from the European Union are expected in Canberra on 15 April 1999, and Commonwealth authorities are expecting to inform them that all States and Territories have legislation in place to at least ban the feeding of ruminant materials to ruminants. It is important that we in the ACT make our contribution in this regard. I should add that enacting this legislation will have no actual impact on producers in the ACT because such feed additives are not currently used here. Nevertheless, it is important that the ACT not be seen as the weak link in the chain of Australia's beef trade. Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the house.

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

PUBLIC HEALTH (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 1999

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer and Acting Minister for Health and Community Care) (10.36): Mr Speaker, I present the Public Health (Consequential Amendments) Bill 1999, together with its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MS CARNELL: I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, the details of this Bill are self-explanatory and are only minor and technical amendments, which I do not propose to go through in detail. The purpose of the amendments contained in the Bill is to eliminate unforeseen potential discrimination that may have arisen as a result of the passage of the Public Health Act 1997 - the Act - and the Public Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997. This potential discrimination has arisen due to the replacement of the term "infectious disease" with the more general term "transmissible notifiable condition". However, the sections of the Public Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 relating to transmissible notifiable conditions are yet to be commenced because work is being undertaken on a national list of notifiable diseases.

The various sections of the legislation specified in the Bill are being repealed or amended because of the potential for discrimination. For example, in practice, a bus driver or a swimming pool manager is not going to be aware if a person has an infectious disease. It is considered more appropriate that public health laws should be used to control the person's movements, if that is what is required. The Public Health Act has more than adequate mechanisms for doing this. For example, under section 102 of the Act, the treating doctor is required to give a patient with a transmissible notifiable condition, or infectious disease, information about the condition and how to prevent the transmission of the condition to others.

Also, the principles in section 99 of the Act place an obligation on a person who believes that they have contracted a transmissible notifiable condition to take all reasonable methods to avoid exposing others to the condition. The Chief Health Officer could, if he or she considered it appropriate, issue a public health direction requiring a person with an infectious disease not to travel on any public transport.

The Government is committed to having laws that are current, workable and do not discriminate or marginalise. I am sure that all members would support the Government's view on this. Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

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

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURE - STANDING COMMITTEE
Reference - Operation of Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting of Proceedings) Act 1997

MR CORBELL (10.39): Mr Speaker, I move:

That the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure inquire into and report on the operation of the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting of Proceedings) Act 1997 with particular reference to:

- (1) the authorisation of broadcast of Assembly committee proceedings including the provision of file footage;
- (2) the continued restriction on the broadcast of debates other than those determined to be of "landmark" significance; and
- (3) the authorisation of broadcast of Assembly and committee proceedings to locations other than government offices.

Mr Speaker, just very briefly, the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure has unanimously agreed to seek a formal reference from the Legislative Assembly to inquire into the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting of Proceedings) Act 1997. The reasons for the standing committee seeking this reference are that the attention of the

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committee has been drawn to certain deficiencies in relation to the operation of the Act, particularly in relation to committee hearings, but also, more importantly, to whether or not it is now appropriate to review the operations of the Act overall.

Since the Act was first introduced - following, I understand, originally a proposal by Mr Moore as a member then of the crossbenches - the Assembly has been able to broadcast certain types of its proceedings to the outside world, through either audio or video format. However, when the proposal was first put to the Assembly and agreed by the Assembly, it was certainly seen that the operations of the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting of Proceedings) Act were very much for a trial period and that after a certain period of time it would be appropriate to review the operations of the Act.

Mr Speaker, I am certainly of the view that the Act does need to be reviewed and that there are many activities that take place in this place which would be of interest to the media and to citizens outside of the Assembly if they were able to be broadcast, but which at the moment are not deemed to be matters of significant debate, or landmark debate, as we currently call it. Indeed, Mr Speaker, it seems to me incongruous that any citizen can walk into this place and sit in the gallery and observe anything that occurs in this place and that it is open and on the public record, yet only certain things are allowed to be recorded for broadcast to the wider community.

It strikes me as strange, Mr Speaker, that we have that inconsistency. So, I welcome the opportunity to propose to the Assembly that we review those guidelines and the form of the Act to see whether or not it is warranted to look at a widening of the ability of the Assembly to broadcast its activities outside of this chamber. I urge members to support the motion.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

EDUCATION - STANDING COMMITTEE Report on Preschool Education

Debate resumed from 22 September 1998, on motion by **Ms Tucker**:

That the report be noted.

MR STEFANIAK (Minister for Education) (10.43): Mr Speaker, this debate has covered a range of issues that are very important to the future provision of preschool education in the ACT. The Government responded to the report of the Education Standing Committee on preschool education, which was tabled on 24 November 1998. That quite clearly reflects our commitment to providing quality and accessible preschool education. I think it is also indicative of our commitment to applying responsible management strategies to preschool education. We are determined to make sure that quality and accessible preschool education in the Territory continues into the future.

One of the highlights of that particular standing committee report - and, I might say, a recommendation that is certainly heartily agreed with by this Government - is the call for a statement of purpose on the delivery of preschool services. Indeed, the high priority this

Government already gives to developing more cohesive strategies for providing early childhood services is demonstrated in the moves we have already made. For instance, forming the Children's Services Branch and including the Child Health and Development Service within the Department of Education and Community Services are indicative of more cohesive strategies for providing early childhood services.

I am pleased to say, Mr Speaker, on the question of preschool enrolments in 1999, that all ACT and New South Wales families who have applied for a place in ACT government preschools have been given a place. Most significantly, 97 per cent of families who registered by the census date got their first choice of a preschool place. I think that is an exceptional result there. It is evidence of a high level of accessibility to preschool education and an example of great service to ACT families. It contrasts starkly with what we see in other States, especially in New South Wales across the border. There, I think, only about 30 per cent of preschool age children actually go to preschool. There is little wonder in that, when the average cost to parents in Canberra is about \$4 a week. I must say, in terms of the contributions parents make, nearly all of them do make that contribution to the education of their children.

So, the average ACT family with a child in preschool will probably contribute about \$200 a year to the preschool, plus in many instances a lot of time and effort. In New South Wales, it is quite different. It is a very costly exercise there. I was reminded of it the other day. My eldest stepdaughter, in Wollongong, who has a four-year-old, is probably going to take her child out of preschool because the amount she pays is something like \$30 for a full day's session. It is a different set-up there. That has been increased now to \$47 a week. Quite clearly, that makes accessibility very difficult for many parents.

In the case of my stepdaughter, her partner is an itinerant taxidriver and they have between them three children, one by his first marriage. Obviously, there is not much money in the family, and it is very difficult. A lot of people are in that boat. The increase there to \$47 a week for that preschool education is in stark contrast to here, where it is \$4 and is affordable. That is exactly why I think that we have 90 per cent of preschool age children in the ACT accessing our system.

I would also remind members that the Government is finalising the process for conducting two very important projects concerning preschool education. Those projects will investigate both the future provision of professional support to preschool teachers and assistants, and the adequacy of support to children with special needs in accessing government preschools. Both those projects will be completed by August 1999 and will provide valuable information on the services we provide in these important areas.

There are a number of other issues on which we look forward to continuing to work with the committee in relation to further improving the delivery of preschool services. I noted during the debate last year in terms of just where preschool education should go that there was a realisation in the community that numbers certainly are not likely to increase. We do certainly have a lot of space in many of our preschools, and there is a real need to look at that issue.

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I think what the Government did last year was eminently sensible, in terms of minimising some of the effects of the Auditor-General's report. But it is important, I think, that, in an ongoing way, we look at some of the problems that will continue to arise in relation to the efficient delivery of preschool services and ways of doing it better. It is quite clearly one of the areas where we spend a lot more than any other State or Territory, in terms of delivery of that service, and it is a situation too where the numbers of kids who go into preschools will continue to decline over the next few years. Quite clearly, a number of steps need to be addressed there, and that is something we are very keen to do in conjunction with and working with the preschool community.

As I think I said before, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Education for the work they have done on this very important issue. It was an issue where I think the Government actually agreed with all the recommendations. I was quite happy to see the results of the work of the members and the report they brought down. I thank all members of the Assembly, too, for their contribution to this particular debate.

MS TUCKER (10.48), in reply: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak, for working with this report in a positive way. I am glad to see that you have picked up the last two recommendations in particular - the one asking the Government to look at ways of increasing the proposed level of professional support to teachers and assistants, and the recommendation regarding children with special needs. I hear Mr Stefaniak talking about responsible management. Of course, that is a useful thing to have in government; but we do always need to question how you define responsible management.

I was interested to see recently a paper that came out from the Federal Government. I think it was called "Pathways to Prevention". It was about addressing juvenile crime in Australian society. What was very interesting was that the focus of it was indeed prevention. One of the proposals that were put in that document was for an increased understanding of the importance of preschool as a vehicle for assisting children in troubled families, or troubled situations, or at risk in any way.

So, when we talk about responsible management of the preschool sector, we must understand the role that the preschool sector plays in this long-term planning in prevention and the opportunity for intervention within the preschool to actually assist these young people and their families. As I said, the costs that will be saved down the track are being acknowledged now by the Federal Government. It is absolutely critical that this be brought into discussions of what is responsible financial management. We must have that long-term view.

I am waiting to hear from the Minister about the process he is going to use to develop an overall strategic vision and plan for the preschool sector. That was obviously an important recommendation, and one that the Government was supportive of. The committee has written to the Minister asking that we have the opportunity to be involved in the development of that process with the community so that there is ownership of that felt by the community. Otherwise, we could end up having to have another whole inquiry looking at the Government's position and proposal for a strategic plan for preschools and do the consultation that way, which we just did with the work for the dole committee. It is a pretty wasteful way of doing it, obviously.

So, we do hope that the Government will include the community and the Education Committee in working out how it is going to develop that overall strategic view and strategy for the preschool sector. In that case, we will obviously have the opportunity to put to you the importance that many in the community feel about questions of access and the role that preschools have in these long-term benefits for society.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURE - STANDING COMMITTEE
Report on a Protocol for Government Interaction with Assembly Committees

MR SPEAKER: I present a report of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure, entitled “A Protocol for Government Interaction with Assembly Committees”.

MR CORBELL (10.52): Mr Speaker, I move:

That the report be noted.

Mr Speaker, this is, I think, the second report from the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure of this Assembly. The report that we are presenting today is an important report in that it deals with an issue which is a constant source of friction between the Assembly and the Executive. It is a healthy friction, I should say, Mr Speaker. On Thursday, 27 August last year, the Chief Minister presented “A Protocol for Government Interaction with Assembly Committee Inquiries” and moved that that paper be referred to the Standing Committee for the Chief Minister’s Portfolio for inquiry and report. That was amended to have the protocol referred instead to the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure.

Mr Speaker, the protocol presented by the Chief Minister dealt with the interaction between government officials and Assembly committees and also made some comment on the operation of Assembly committees in relation to their interactions with government officials and, to a lesser extent, with the Executive. The Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure has considered the report at a number of meetings and is happy to note the report and the advice provided by the Chief Minister in her presentation of her protocol.

However, the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure has come to the opinion that that protocol has been developed from a government perspective and, whilst it is useful to comment on the document and appreciate the perspective the Government has in relation to how Assembly committees should deal with government officials, the committee has come to the view that the Assembly already has a similar document from a committee perspective for the use of its members, and that is “Committee Procedures and Operations: A Guide for Committee Members”, which has been included as an attachment to the standing committee’s report.

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The standing committee has decided that it is most appropriate for the committee, and therefore this Assembly, to note the document, "A Protocol for Government Interaction with Assembly Committees", recognising the different perspectives the Government and the Assembly have on the operation of Assembly committees, and to note the importance of the Assembly's own guidelines in relation to the operation of Assembly committees and, more importantly, the standing orders of this Assembly which govern the operation of Assembly committees. It has been a useful exercise to compare the different perspectives, and I ask the Assembly to take note of the report.

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

CHIEF MINISTER'S PORTFOLIO - STANDING COMMITTEE
Report on Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 8 of 1998

MR QUINLAN (10.55): Mr Speaker, I present Public Accounts Committee Report No. 14 of the Standing Committee for the Chief Minister's Portfolio, entitled "Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 8, 1998 - Territory Operating Losses and Financial Position", together with a copy of extracts of the minutes of proceedings. I move:

That the report be noted.

Mr Speaker, this is a report prepared by the Auditor-General, principally based on observations by the Auditor-General of figures already in existence and proposals that have been put forward to address the Territory's operating position. It did not particularly canvass options beyond those that pre-existed. As we in this place are all aware, there was considerable debate during the ACTEW debate on how the Territory's operating position should be addressed. Options by the Australia Institute were brought forward by the select committee on the superannuation liability.

The PAC determined that there was not a lot to be gained by referring this report on and running around that debate again. We had a discussion on the contents of the report. We also discussed the report with the Auditor-General himself. We discussed questions relating to how depreciation is used within public accounting versus private accounting statements, a matter that I have discussed in the public forum since that time. I think I have been accused by the Chief Minister of attempting to fiddle the books; but, if she likes to read my latest press release, she will know that there is a body of academic debate centring on the differences between public accounting and accounting for private enterprises. Nobody disagrees that accrual accounting is the most appropriate method. However, there may be some differences at the edges.

That discussion was held as a result of this particular report, and I guess the conclusion of that was that we ought to look further into that matter and not rest on our laurels but continue to refine the public reporting within the Territory. Otherwise, I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

CHIEF MINISTER'S PORTFOLIO - STANDING COMMITTEE
Report on Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 5 of 1998

MR QUINLAN (10.59): Mr Speaker, I present Public Accounts Committee Report No. 15 of the Standing Committee for the Chief Minister's Portfolio, entitled "Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 5, 1998 - Management of Housing Assistance", together with a copy of extracts of the minutes of proceedings. I move:

That the report be noted.

Mr Speaker, this report covered the delivery of housing assistance, the provision of accommodation, Kick Start grants and rental bond loans, managed by ACT Housing as the provider and, as the purchaser, by the Department of Urban Services. The audit revealed a situation, as most audits do, much like the curate's egg - good in parts. The good parts were that delivery of public housing assistance had been effective and the Auditor-General had assessed that Kick Start delivered effective housing assistance. The not so good parts were that delivery of assistance through the provision of public housing had been inefficient, Kick Start grants had been ineffective in moving people from public to private housing, and rental bond loans assistance had been neither effective nor efficient.

The audit findings were pursued with the Minister responsible, Mr Smyth. Members will recall that he had a dorothy dixer on this very topic and this very report yesterday. The general tone of the Minister's response was that the shortcomings will be, or are being, addressed. I guess that this particular report exemplifies the ritualistic process that we have in this place in relation to audit reports. Audit reports come in. We report on that stuff which is pretty good. That stuff which is not so good we send to a Minister. The Minister then says, "We will take the compliments", as one would expect, "and we will look at the shortcomings", and the process has been satisfied. Occasionally, I guess, there is a return and a relook at some of the findings. I suggest that this may be another case where the Auditor would be advised at some future time to revisit the particular area.

I have to say that the general sentiment I get in moving around the town is that ACT Housing has lifted its game somewhat. It is to be commended for that. The Government is to be commended for its part in that. We trust that it continues.

In relation to Kick Start, it would appear again that the general consensus is that it did not do what it set out to do. It did not stimulate building particularly, and probably the major beneficiaries of it were real estate agents. I note, however, that the Government has either wound that back or discontinued it. Otherwise, I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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CHIEF MINISTER'S PORTFOLIO - STANDING COMMITTEE
Report on Conference of Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees

MR QUINLAN (11.02): Mr Speaker, I present Public Accounts Committee Report No. 16 of the Standing Committee for the Chief Minister's Portfolio, entitled "Report on the 1999 Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees 5th Biennial Conference", together with a copy of extracts of the minutes of proceedings. I move:

That the report be noted.

Mr Speaker, the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees, ACPAC, meets every two years in conference and is attended by public accounts committees of the States, Territories and the Commonwealth. This particular conference was attended by representatives from Papua New Guinea. There was the usual representation from New Zealand. Public accounts committees from various Canadian provinces have attended the last two conferences, and there is every sign that they will be present at future conferences. Mr Speaker, ACPAC has developed a truly international focus.

This conference coincided with the annual meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Auditors-General, and the conference benefited from their participation. I have to say that it really did. Auditors-General or their deputies were also present from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada itself and the Canadian provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba. I need hardly say that the conference dealt with a wide range of matters. I guess we could say that, if it is going to be a public accounts committee, it would be a boring couple of days that one might spend. But, genuinely, I have to observe that the conference did canvass matters of particular interest and of particular relevance today.

It brought home to me - it being my first of these conferences - the significance that is placed upon public accounts committees in other jurisdictions. We have the misfortune of being a rather small parliament. Everybody in this parliament has quite a number of hats to wear. We are either Ministers for a number of areas or shadow Ministers for a number of areas. The lone backbencher over there, Mr Hird, is on innumerable committees; and he is a great contributor, I might say, to government policy through his dissenting remarks from time to time.

I really have to say that it did bring home to me the importance of PACs and their role in maintaining government accountability, due to the fact that they are built on a bipartisan basis. Generally, it is the case that the chair of a PAC is a member of the Government, as opposed to how we operate here just by virtue of our numbers, but I think we have that little bit of an advantage, in terms of an edge, with a non-government member as chair of the PAC.

I very much commend this particular report. I have to report that there was discussion about formalising the international nature of this conference, with effectively what might turn out to be a Pacific Rim or regional-plus-Canada body to commence with. I did say earlier that the Assistant Auditor-General from the United Kingdom had also attended.

I think there is a lot to be gained by our participation - our participation, of course, according to our means - in however that international forum does develop. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

EDUCATION - STANDING COMMITTEE
Report on Work for the Dole Project in Primary Schools

MS TUCKER (11.06): I present report No. 2 of the Standing Committee on Education, entitled "The Work for the Dole Project in Primary Schools", which includes a dissenting report, together with a copy of extracts of the minutes of proceedings. I move:

That the report be noted.

Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table the report of the Education Committee on the work for the dole project in primary schools. This inquiry came about because the department put this proposal to the Federal Government without consulting first with major stakeholders in the ACT. The committee process allowed these stakeholders an opportunity to express their views on the proposal. The lack of consultation is the subject of the first two recommendations of this report.

It is alarming to see how the department disregarded the Government's own consultation protocol. It is doubly offensive because in this situation it is actually a requirement of the Federal work for the dole scheme that projects must enjoy full community support. There is no way that the department could have known that support was there when they put in this proposal, and it is clear from our inquiry that in fact it is not there. In a bizarre process the Government sought a letter of approval from the Chamber of Commerce only, not from the key community groups whose core business is education. The department wrote the draft letter of support for the chamber because, after all, education is not their core business and so they needed a little help. The first two recommendations require that the department comply with the Government's own consultation protocol and that, in future, compliance with this protocol be included as a performance measure in contracts of all senior executives.

Selection of participants was also obviously an important aspect of the discussion. The community wants to know processes are rigorous to ensure that only very suitable people work with our children in our primary schools. The committee was concerned to see that the Department of Education did not understand Centrelink's role in the selection process. The ACT department told the committee that they would negotiate with Centrelink to identify suitable young, long-term unemployed people to participate in the work experience activities identified by schools. However, Centrelink said their only responsibility was to ensure that participants meet the legislative requirements, such as age and length of time unemployed. The committee has recommended that the department develop detailed selection processes. This should have been a priority in their processes if the community were to have confidence in the proposal.

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The question of training is addressed in the fourth recommendation. This was also an important part of the inquiry. While work for the dole is not a traineeship, the question has to be asked: "If it is not a traineeship, where is it appropriate to be used?". That was one of the fundamental questions which came out of submissions. Is it appropriate to put untrained people into primary schools? What will the impact be upon existing staff? What will the impact be on the participants? What will the impact be on the students? Will it work?

Much of the evidence which came to the committee raised serious concerns about this, and once again the department's assertions were not adequately reassuring. For example, the capacity for on-the-job training was challenged by both teachers and other stakeholders. The lack of any accredited training was questioned by youth advocates, and the opportunities for training away from the workplace, as suggested were there at the O'Connell Education Centre by the department, are quite limited. Janitors were concerned that they did not have the skills to train participants, and these concerns were also expressed by administration staff. The committee has recommended that the training component must be reviewed so as to provide some accredited training. Schools should be resourced to provide on-the-job training and the per capita budget increased accordingly.

The fifth recommendation deals with how the applicants are supported in the workplace. Interestingly, there has been a similar program before in the ACT, the LEO program - the literacy enhancement officer program. However, this project was much better supported than the work for the dole scheme in terms of training and support. Even this project, with its greater support, when evaluated, was shown to be lacking, and some participants and support personnel found it a negative experience. The Minister has incorrectly used this project as an example of how the Government has successfully run such schemes before. It was quite a different scheme.

The original proposal also said that school counsellors would be available to support participants in this project, but this was withdrawn as our committee progressed and it became clear the proposal was unacceptable to many stakeholders. This is another example of how inadequate the department's proposal was. The committee has recommended that support needs must be reassessed and revised, and funding arrangements be negotiated with the Commonwealth to ensure that support is adequate.

The final recommendation of the report is that unless these previous three recommendations - that is, about selection processes, training and support - are implemented, the department must withdraw from the project. The majority of the committee clearly can say that the proposal was poorly thought out. Initially it even included after-school care programs. This was removed when it was realised that the P&C administer most after school-care programs and the department has no control. How can you have any confidence in this proposal when something as basic as that was overlooked?

There did seem to be an unseemly haste and enthusiasm for this idea, and I will not guess at the reason for that, but there was certainly not proper or rigorous analysis. The community were justifiably concerned about this proposal. I sincerely hope the Government will learn something from this report and the comments that have come from this process, but from the tone of the dissenting report I doubt that that will happen.

I will now address Mr Hird's dissenting report. It is quite obvious and of great concern to me that Mr Hird and, I suggest, most, if not all, of his Liberal colleagues are once again showing that they have no respect for the committee system. This dissenting report is another desperate attempt by the Government to create a diversion in order to avoid criticism. The committee have clearly shown in this report that the department's proposal was poorly thought through and that major stakeholders were seriously concerned that it would not deliver good outcomes for work for the dole participants, staff of schools or students.

During the committee hearing the officials changed their proposal as particular evidence was brought to light. I can see it is embarrassing for the Government and the Minister, but this dissenting report does not help their position at all. It makes it worse. For a start, it entirely contradicts the minuted proceedings of deliberation of the committee in which Mr Hird indicated support for four of six of the recommendations of this report. How can you possibly write a dissenting report which is in total contradiction of the minuted proceedings of deliberation within the committee? The dissenting report is written as if Mr Hird were not present at the hearings or private meetings. Now, how could that be, I wonder? Has Mr Hird been given instructions from upstairs? Did he even write the dissenting report?

We have already had similar concerns expressed in this place in debate on the superannuation committee, and I can tell you one thing - whoever wrote that dissenting report was obviously having a bad day or did not do their homework. I could take a guess at who it was in the Minister's office, but we are told that we are not supposed to mention names in this place; that it is bad form. Well, I can say I think it is very bad form to continually see what are important and well-understood conventions regarding committee processes in this place continually ignored by this Government.

I know that standing order 241 is loosely worded, but that does not mean it is okay to ignore it. What about the intent of the standing order? Does that not matter? This is, of course, a question of ethics. It is obvious to me that, because of this Government's approach and disregard for the obvious intent of standing order 241, we need to look at it in the Administration and Procedure Committee, and I give notice now that I will put such a motion on the notice paper. I actually did make these comments at the end of the last Assembly as well when a similar situation arose.

Mr Hird's dissenting report says:

I wish to record my dissent from the tone, content and conclusions of the report. I dissent from the report as a whole.

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How extraordinary it is to see in the minutes that Mr Hird in fact supported the majority of the recommendations. In fact, he only dissented from the first two recommendations which were that the department in future comply with the consultation protocol and that this compliance be included as a performance measure in contracts of senior executives.

Regarding the issue of consultation, are we really expected to take the Government's argument in the dissenting report regarding consultation seriously? I put it to members of the Assembly and judge for yourselves: This is the Government who spent considerable taxpayers' money on production of a consultation protocol and who continue to pay public servants to implement it. It might be useful for me to remind members of what that protocol says. On page 5, under "Timing of consultation", it says:

It is equally important not to leave consulting until so late in the process that citizens' views cannot influence the outcome.

The argument we get in the dissenting report is that consultation did not occur before the proposal went to the Federal Government because it may not have been successful and that consultation would occur after the proposal was accepted. So, let us get this straight. A proposal goes to the Federal Government. It is accepted. A particular number of participants are to be placed in our schools for a particular price; a contractual relationship is entered into; and then the Government consults with the community, with the stakeholders, with the people who have to work with this proposal.

What if the stakeholders reject it totally? Does the Government seriously believe it can say this is genuine consultation? What happens to the proposal? Is the contract renegotiated? Is there pressure put on the stakeholders to agree because it is a done deal? Why has the Government thought this was an appropriate approach? Did they only approach the Chamber of Commerce before the application went in and not the key stakeholders?

The dissenting report also claims that the report does not acknowledge the government arguments in defence of their consultation or lack of it. This is not correct. If whoever wrote the dissenting report had calmed down and read more carefully, they would have seen that government argument acknowledged on page 14.

The second point in the dissenting report regarding information on the selection process is also curious. The Government is arguing that a request from the committee for them to provide information on selection processes could not have been interpreted by the Government to mean we wanted to see the selection criteria. The selection of participants is obviously an important aspect of this proposal, as I have said, and I would have thought selection criteria used to assess suitability of applicants was pretty basic information in this matter. As I have already pointed out, government evidence given to the committee regarding Centrelink's role in selection processes was contradicted by Centrelink itself. It does once again not inspire confidence, really, in how well they are doing the job.

The third point is a complaint that the committee looked at training as an issue and that it was inappropriate to do so because the work for the dole scheme is not a training scheme. Once again, that is an incredible leap in logic. Let me explain to Mr Hird and the Government. That actually was one of the basic issues. If work for the dole is not

a traineeship, should participants be put into primary schools? Obviously those whose core business is education were seriously concerned that it may not be appropriate. That was one of the reasons the committee established the inquiry, responding to community concern about its appropriateness. Even the Federal Government reacted to the department's proposal that the participants would assist with numeracy and literacy and said that that aspect of the proposal had to be removed. Is the Government suggesting that we have no right to challenge where work for the dole participants are going to be placed in our community; that even if there is concern in the ACT community that ACT teachers, children and young unemployed may not benefit, we have no right to look at that?

The response to the section on support for participants and staff also disregards the evidence that came to the committee. It was extremely concerning to see the officials change their proposal regarding school counsellors being available for support of participants. For heaven's sake, we were hearing in the last Assembly in the Social Policy Committee how desperate the need is for more counsellors in the system, and then, without consulting them, they are given a further workload. The department did back down on this, as I have said, and it did highlight the serious problems of the process once again.

The dissenting report then asked, regarding the section on insurance, "Who is SoftLaw?". Mr Hird was part of the committee. He could have asked, Mr Speaker, who is SoftLaw. He could have challenged their opinions, but no, we did not hear one word. Instead of this absurd response we would have liked to have seen SoftLaw's concerns addressed by the Government, but I guess they thought it was easier to just attack the committee. Unfortunately, that is a rather common response from this Government which does them no credit at all. They are looking more and more desperate, using attack rather than argument or logic.

As I said earlier, I am particularly worried that the committee system may be a casualty of these desperate tactics. The Government's unsubstantiated assertions and attacks on this and other reports are not only a threat to the credibility of the committee system here but also an insult to the secretariat, who always work in a professional, thorough and rigorous manner.

Mr Hird: Hear, hear!

MS TUCKER: Mr Hird says, "Hear, hear". (*Extension of time granted*) How can he possibly say "Hear, hear" to that when he has basically fundamentally challenged the veracity of this whole report? This is a most unusual dissenting report. It actually is not that unusual, but more extreme than usual, even more extremely unacceptable, because basically the statements are either wrong or illogical and the dissenting report contradicts itself. I ask again: How can you dissent from a whole report, but then happily say that you indicated support for significant recommendations, and that it is limited. I think it is a farce, and I am extremely concerned about the implications for democratic processes in this place.

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MR BERRY (11.23): I would first of all like to thank secretariat staff for their assistance in developing this report. I think it is, contrary to Mr Hird's view, a damn fine report which deals with a very serious issue for the community. The first thing I want to deal with, Mr Speaker, is Mr Hird's dissenting report. It really is a piece of work that ought to be disregarded. The only reason that it ought to be brought to notice is the internal inconsistencies and the poor quality of its assessment of the report against the background of Mr Hird's involvement. Like Ms Tucker, I want to read a passage from Mr Hird's comments. He says:

The report distorts and misrepresents the views of witnesses, uses pejorative language, and is unbalanced in its conclusions.

Let me read this from Mr Hird's dissenting report. Referring to the report, he says:

... is the final nail which condemns this report as one of the greatest wastes of Assembly time and resources yet. In fact I am surprised that the committee bothered to call for submissions at all; the report could have been written before any evidence was placed before the committee. It is a reflection of the narrow ideological position which the majority members brought to this inquiry.

I would have said that that is a fairly strong passage of pejorative language and it strikes me as fairly odd. Maybe it is not odd that the writer wrote this, but it is rather odd that Mr Hird would allow it to be brought to the Assembly in its current form, given his involvement in the committee right throughout the process. I do not recall him using that sort of language at any time during the process. In fact, there was never a real contest of ideas as Mr Hird suggests in his conclusions and recommendation. So I find his report quite insulting on that score. If Mr Hird had taken such a strong position in the committee I would have been much more willing to accept the strong language that he has used in his dissenting report, but no such strong position was adopted. He then goes on:

I totally reject the entire report and reject all conclusions and recommendations. Whilst I acknowledge that the report does incorporate some of my concerns, and I accept that I indicated my support for some of the report's recommendations, the overall thrust and conclusions are unacceptable to me.

When it comes to unbalanced, I think that goes close, Mr Hird. He concluded by saying:

The poor quality of this report is reason enough for the Assembly to demand a much higher standard.

I would have said that that should have applied to Mr Hird's dissenting report. I should also draw members' attention to some comments that Mr Hird made in relation to SoftLaw who gave evidence to the committee. He says, in part:

Is the committee suggesting that the Chief Minister is giving false evidence or not coming completely clean?

We would not have been the first person to suggest that, if we had. He continued:

Who is Softlaw that “it was not satisfied by the Chief Minister’s explanation”?

I know we are all supposed to accept what the Chief Minister says without question, but surely, Mr Hird, you accept that members of the community are entitled to question it too, and there are growing numbers of people who question the Chief Minister’s evidence and her ability to come completely clean. I do not know that she would be that happy with you for raising that issue in your dissenting report. I think, Mr Hird, your dissenting report does you a disservice, and it does the Liberal Party a disservice because it does not go to the issues which you might, from your ideological position, reasonably argue against the conclusions of the report.

One of the most important issues which have been highlighted by this report is the failure of the Government to consult properly. We all recall the fanfare with which the consultation protocol was issued to the community in some sort of attempt to cause everybody to accept that the Government was a consultative and open government. Of course, it is not, and this is another example where the consultation utterances of the Government have been shown to be false.

The classic example of this was how the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the ACT and Region got itself tangled up in the process. It appears that the chamber was contacted by the department for an endorsement of the department’s position. Not everybody else was consulted to this extent. Then a letter was drawn up in the department and sent to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and, lo and behold, it returned to the department without a full stop being changed and on the chamber’s letterhead. I do not think the chamber even considered it. I think they just gave it the tick because the Liberal Minister suggested that it would be a good idea. Let us not forget that the chamber has been, almost without failure, an echo of this Government in the community. I do not think the chamber does its members any favours by this sycophantic approach in relation to this report.

Mr Hird referred to the ideological position of other members. I have a great deal of difficulty with the Federal Government’s work for the dole program. It is clearly a program which sets out to blame the victims, the victims being the unemployed. This work for the dole plan is an extension of that. It has its origins in that. What I found most difficult was to find out where it all began, where the idea first came from, who started this off. We were never able to get our hands on the original idea. Who was it who said, “This would be a good idea.”? Was it a telephone contact from the Federal Government to all State governments of their own persuasion, suggesting, “Look, we’ve got this work for the dole program and we would like to see it work. Can you help us?”. What was the level of political involvement in ensuring that this approach was taken? Who knows?

We never saw any evidence that would convince me, at least, that that did not happen. There is certainly not much evidence to suggest that this particular program was going to have any positive outcomes for the participants. First of all it was trumpeted as some sort of a training program, but the only training that participants are going to have, it appears,

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is orientation. If it was a genuine training program I am sure there would have been a lot more support about for it and there would have been people echoing the Government's view in large numbers. But it is not a genuine training program. This is a work for the dole program and that is the difference. This is an extension of the Federal Government's ideological position of blaming the victims. It does not create any jobs, it does not provide training which will be of use to participants in the education system, and it does not guarantee them any jobs in an education system.

Mr Speaker, I found the Minister's position in relation to this disappointing. I think the department's management of it was disappointing, though I think, on the face of it, that it was thrust upon them and that it is not something that they are particularly happy about because it does amount to the involvement of 140 participants across our education system and it does involve a great deal of management of those participants throughout the system.

If the Government decides to reject the recommendations of the committee I think there will be a great deal of concern amongst school staff about how they manage this because it will absorb a great deal of energy which will be a distraction from the main game - that is, the education of young people in our system. The report, I think, has shown that the whole idea has been badly put together and needs a lot more work before it would be acceptable to the education values of our society and acceptable to the treatment that young unemployed people, or unemployed people of any age, should expect from a government.

Mr Speaker, I support this report without question. It could have been a lot stronger, and it could have been a lot more vitriolic about the Government's position. It is a sensible report that charts a way forward if the Government is sensible enough to accept it. I must say that it seems that the Government has already established its view, if one looks at Mr Hird's strident criticism of the report. That is a pity. I would urge the Government to reconsider its position and not adopt the view which has been reflected in the report to the committee by Mr Hird.

It was only yesterday, Mr Hird, that we had to change the standing orders because of your involvement in committees and to provide some protection for the community. The community deserves to be protected from this sort of nonsense as well and I would urge you to reconsider your position when you are writing or taking advice in relation to dissenting reports. This report deserves a more positive response than you have given it. I think you have done yourself a disservice. I urge the Government not to mimic this line because I think it would show a contempt for the committee process. Sure, the Government does not like criticism, but I think the criticism in this report is constructive and it is worth proper consideration and implementation. Mr Speaker, I urge members to support this report in its entirety. It is most important that the Government do so.

MR HIRD (11.36): Mr Speaker, I acknowledge my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Education, the Chair, Ms Tucker, Mr Berry, and also the secretary, Judith Henderson. I also acknowledge the list of submissions received in the report, which appears at Appendix 1, and the list of witnesses at public hearings, which appears at Appendix 2, and I thank them for their contribution.

Mr Speaker, I find almost beyond belief the hypocrisy of some members of this place who constantly express their concern over perceived levels of youth unemployment. But, Mr Speaker, when the Government presents an option which will go some way towards alleviating those levels, those same members let their personal bias cloud their thinking and lead them towards the production of an unproductive, non-constructive report such as has been presented in this place today.

It was patently clear through the course of the committee's hearings that the Government was acting with great resolution to provide a workable option to the issue of unemployment. The work for the dole program put forward by the Department of Education and Community Services is not, and is not meant to be, the be-all and end-all solution. It is just one strategy designed to assist in the development of the work ethic and to provide a sense of direction, a feeling of usefulness and a degree of self-respect to its participants. The committee, however, as is clearly demonstrated in its majority report, has not endeavoured to consider this issue in a constructive and balanced manner.

Mr Speaker, I would be most happy if in presenting this report the majority attempted to provide some sensible, workable solutions in areas where they perceive problems. But they are not interested in being constructive and, consequently, the report is a simple expression of biases and prejudices. It is yet another example of what we see so often in this place - an ideological position taking precedence over the concept of working together to provide greater opportunities for the people of this great Territory and the region.

As I have stated in my dissenting report, it is quite obvious that the majority have accepted the evidence presented by those whose views reflect their own prejudices, yet they have all but ignored the evidence of the Minister, officials from his department, and others whose views do not coincide with their own. How can you present a balanced report when you are not willing to give equal consideration to all the evidence?

The majority report seeks to make much of the majority members' supposed anxiety over the consultation process leading up to the lodgment of the application by DECS to become a sponsor under the Commonwealth's work for the dole program. This section of the report ignores the information provided by the Minister for Education and by DECS officials in regard to the normal processes of lodging applications and expressions of interest in numerous programs which may be of interest to the department. Established process was followed, but the report fails to acknowledge this fact.

The majority report also criticises the lack of specific criteria to apply to the selection of participants in the scheme. Mr Speaker, the Minister gave detailed and comprehensive information in response to the request made to him by our committee. This request asked for details on processes, not on selection criteria. The Minister responded fully to the committee's request, yet the report rejects the response because it does not address issues which were not raised. How can you win, Mr Speaker?

The majority report also makes great play of the training aspects of the scheme. This is after acknowledging that the work for the dole scheme is not a traineeship program but is in fact a work experience program.

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In the section on support for participants and staff, the majority report has reached new lows in the distortion and misrepresentation of the evidence of departmental officials. If the committee members wish to call into question evidence given by officers they should do so directly, during the conduct of an inquiry, not by the use of innuendo or by selective presentation of evidence in the final report.

Mr Speaker, the majority report takes up nearly five pages on the issue of insurance. This is despite the fact that the Chief Minister has given an unequivocal commitment, and I quote:

The Australian Capital Territory accepts the financial responsibility for any requirements to effect and have specific insurances in place in respect of this project.

Does the majority report suggest that the Chief Minister is giving false evidence? It could appear so.

Mr Speaker, many persons in this place make much of the issue of the provision of job opportunities and of the return to the days of higher employment levels. At the same time they espouse political and ideological fantasies which favour the principle of choosing to live on the dole as a correct and proper lifestyle choice. Those members should take a long, hard look at the people of our Koori culture and at the way they adopt the notion of "sit down money". To them it is seen as proper that if you are getting paid you should offer some service in return. It is a pity we all cannot believe in that and follow that principle.

Mr Speaker, the negativity which has been displayed during the hearings, during the discussions, and in the preparation of this report is symptomatic of the attitudes of some members of this place. This Government is, and always will be, proactive, particularly when it comes to recognising opportunities which will create employment for Canberra and the surrounding region. An example of our ability to come to grips with the employment issue was our full support for the \$90m redevelopment at Woden Plaza. Mr Speaker, I remind you that certain members of this place were against this project. They were against the creation in one area of 1,100 jobs during the construction phase. They were against the creation of 300 permanent and part-time jobs once the new redevelopment was opened, and it opened today, or one section of it did. They were against the estimated 700 jobs which will flow from this project, and I am only talking in respect of the new Woolworths store in the Woden Plaza. There are other stores also involved in this project, such as Coles who have also created another 200 to 250 permanent and part-time jobs. Certain members seem to have a negative rather than a positive attitude, and now, Mr Speaker, they once again demonstrate their true colours by coming out against another project designed to assist the unemployed in this Territory.

Mr Speaker, the committee has presented a majority report which, despite its protestations, is clearly ideologically based and does not endeavour to find any solutions to the problems of youth unemployment. In appending my dissenting report I would like to give due praise to the Minister for Education, Mr Stefaniak, and his department for having the foresight and initiative to recognise the opportunities presented by this project,

and for having the will and energy to actively pursue the benefits which it offers. I trust that my dissenting report will point the parliament in the right direction in regard to this important initiative.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move an amendment. I have already spoken, but I seek leave to speak again.

Leave granted.

MR BERRY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I intend to move an amendment.

Mr Humphries: Can we see the amendment?

MR BERRY: Yes, you can. Mr Speaker, the performance of Mr Hird in the committee and outside is like a Jekyll-and-Hyde performance and I, as a committee member, feel quite offended by the approach that he has taken. I would not have minded if there had been such a strident approach taken during committee proceedings, but everything was warm and cuddly throughout the proceedings and we got on famously. Then we get this vitriolic attack on the committee, the heat of which was not evident in Mr Hird's involvement in the committee process. As soon as this amendment is circulated I intend to move it. It will have the effect of noting the report - - -

Mr Humphries: What does it say?

MR BERRY: Let me finish. It will have the effect of noting the report and rejecting the dissenting report by Mr Hird.

Mr Humphries: Come on. That is hardly fair. He is entitled to put his dissenting report forward.

Mr Hird: I am entitled to do that.

MR BERRY: I do not care if that is his view, but that is not the view that was expressed in the committee process in order that we could argue the position. We were not able to challenge in the committee process the things that Mr Hird has said. I do not mind somebody having a strong view on anything. I have had a strong view on a few things myself in the past, and I have stridently argued them. I have been passionate about them, and on occasions I have even been angry about them. But in the committee process we are entitled to be able to assess them.

Mr Humphries: Yes, and put your views without fear or favour, as Mr Hird has done.

MR BERRY: And put your views without fear or favour. These strident views were not put before the committee, and that is what bothers me mostly. I do not mind if somebody has a strident view about things, but I do not want it sprung on me after the event. It is much more important for committee members to know where everybody is coming from and to have a complete debate. If what Mr Hird has said in his dissenting report was relevant to the argument and it was necessary to be put in such a strident fashion, I am happy with that, I do not mind that sort of contest of ideas, but

I did not have the

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opportunity to challenge Mr Hird's ideas as presented in his dissenting report, and I think it reflects badly on the committee. It reflects badly on Mr Hird, but that is a matter of his own judgment.

I think this Assembly has to express a view to people who are likely to submit a dissenting report that they should at least argue some of the issues in the context of the committee's inquiry. I think this was an appalling episode, and I believe that the dissenting report ought to be rejected. If Mr Hird feels so inclined he can go away and write another one that is more in keeping with his participation in the committee process. Mr Speaker, an amendment has been circulated. I seek leave to formally move that amendment.

Leave granted.

MR BERRY: I move the following amendment which has been circulated in my name:

Add "and the dissenting report be rejected".

MR KAINE (11.50): Mr Speaker, I would not normally do this, but in this case I rise to support the amendment put forward by Mr Berry. I obviously have not seen this report until today and I have been reading through it. I very much suspect that the Minister had something to say. I have been reading the report while the debate on the motion that it be noted has been taking place. We have a committee structure which has long been recognised as one of the strengths of this place, but when a member of a committee who sat through the whole proceedings, presumably, of this committee on this issue comes along with a dissenting report in which he totally dissents from everything, you have to ask the question: "What is the point of his ever having sat on the committee in the first place?". I think he gives himself away, Mr Speaker, not so much by having any gross objections to the content of the report, because in his opening paragraph he says:

The report reflects the personal biases of the majority of the committee ...

That is a pretty strong accusation, Mr Speaker, and if he cannot sustain it I think we should be asking him why he is making that accusation. He does nothing to sustain it. He just makes the statement and lets it hang there. On the other hand, I note that on page 41 of the report there is a specific statement on that matter made by the committee. The committee says at paragraph 7.2:

... some have claimed that the committee wished to investigate the proposed project because some Members were opposed on ideological grounds to the concept of Work for the Dole.

That is the very point that Mr Hird is asserting. The report notes:

Any ideological differences have been set aside.

Are we going to accept that the majority of the members, having made that statement, are wrong, while one member who makes the directly opposite statement is right? Now, I do not accept that as a basis for a dissenting report at all. Mr Hird goes on:

... it reflects the prejudices of those who appeared before the committee who were opposed to the proposal ...

Well, I have skimmed through the report. I do not see the reflection of anybody's prejudices in this report, except perhaps those of the Government, and Mr Hird representing the Government rather than representing Mr Hird; so I find this dissenting report quite offensive, and I am not a member of the committee. I can understand that the other members of the committee would find it quite offensive that a member who participated, presumably, in all the proceedings, and took no objection, made no comment until the report is prepared, then dissents totally from everything that happened. No committee in my recollection in the 10 years of this Assembly has ever been so far off the beam that one of its members has totally rejected the entire report.

I also do have to ask, Mr Speaker: Who actually wrote this dissenting report? There has been some question in relation to a previous report about the comments of one of the members. It was pretty strongly asserted, and believed, I think, that the report was not written by the member who submitted it, and I wonder in this case whether Mr Hird can explain to us what the word "pejorative" means. He says that it uses pejorative language. If Mr Hird does not know what the word "pejorative" means you have to assume that somebody else wrote this for him, and I suspect they did. For that reason alone, Mr Speaker, I would think that the dissenting report ought to be rejected. If it has not been written by the member who has his name on it, it ought to be rejected as representing somebody else's views and not necessarily his own.

Mr Speaker, it is unusual to adopt the report and to reject the dissenting report, but I think in this case there is some justification for that, and I support the amendment.

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (11.55): Mr Speaker, I want to put to the Assembly in the strongest possible terms that they should reject an amendment of this kind. Members have sought to characterise what Mr Hird has done as unprecedented and is therefore a ground for moving an amendment like this. What is unprecedented, Mr Speaker, is not what Mr Hird has put in his report. I am sure I could produce at least three other reports of the Assembly which, contrary to what Mr Kaine says, have rejected the entirety of the majority reports which the reports have dissented from. What is unprecedented is the concept of the Assembly picking up, in the course of debating a motion to note a report, a rejection of one dissenting report which has just been put to the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, this is a 50-page report which has just been handed down to the Assembly, with one member of the committee exercising his right, his absolute right, in the processes of committee deliberations, to express dissent from the view of the majority, and to do so in strong language. It is Mr Hird's right to do so. It has been the right of many members in this place, in this parliament and the three preceding parliaments, to do precisely the same thing. The tradition of the Assembly, indeed, the requirement of the Assembly, is that the report be received by the Assembly and that a dissenting report be added to the report agreed to by the committee. That is provided for in standing order 251. It is dangerous in the extreme for the Assembly to be asked now to start to judge the content of a report - - -

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Ms Tucker: Okay. Adjourn the debate.

Mr Berry: Get somebody to adjourn it.

MR HUMPHRIES: I do not care whether it is done now or not. The concept of being asked to judge the content of a report when it has just been presented to this place is dangerous. Members have had no opportunity to read the 50 pages of this report or the report that dissents from it. They are being asked to judge the content of that report on the very first occasion. Are we supposed to be passing judgments on all reports that are handed down when they are handed down?

Ms Tucker: We can adjourn it. Fine.

Mr Berry: No, you can move to adjourn it. We are happy with that.

MR HUMPHRIES: All right; that is fine. You want to adjourn the debate. Okay, that is fine. If you want to adjourn the debate, that is fine; but the idea of doing this today would be quite repugnant. Are you going to move the adjournment or is somebody else?

Mr Berry: I cannot. Bill can do it. The Minister.

MR HUMPHRIES: Okay, I am happy. I have not read the reports. I would rather not be speaking today on this matter before I have read the report or the dissenting report. I think, Mr Speaker, we should ensure that a debate of this kind not take place today.

MR STEFANIAK (Minister for Education) (11.58): Mr Speaker, I am happy to adjourn the debate. That is the normal procedure on a report like this. We can take it up at another time. It is also normal for the Government to be given a chance to look at the report and to respond. Accordingly, Mr Speaker, I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

URBAN SERVICES - STANDING COMMITTEE
Inquiry into 1999-2000 Draft Capital Works Program - Statement by Chair

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, I rise as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Urban Services and I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, the purpose of my statement today is to inform the parliament about the work of the Urban Services Committee in relation to the 1999-2000 draft capital works program. The parliament referred the draft capital works program to my committee on 18 February this year. We authorised publication of the draft program and

associated documents. On Saturday, 20 February, we placed advertisements in the public notices section of the *Canberra Times* inviting public comment on the draft program. We also arranged for a similar advertisement to be placed in the *Chronicle*.

As chair of the committee, I also wrote to key organisations to tell them that the committee was considering the draft capital works program. I wrote on behalf of the committee to each person and organisation who appeared before the committee in the last year as well as to a number of other people in the community. My letter and the newspaper advertisements advised the public that copies of the draft program were available from the committee secretariat. I wish to inform the house that to date over 20 people have contacted the committee for copies of the program.

The advertisements also stated that the Urban Services Committee expected to hold public hearings into the draft capital works program on Friday, 12 March, and Tuesday, 16 March. Arrangements are well in hand for these public hearings. This Friday government officials will address the committee. Next Tuesday members of the public will have the same opportunity. In view of the public interest in the draft program, the committee wrote to the Speaker to ask him to authorise broadcasting of these proceedings, and I am pleased to advise that he has agreed to this request.

Members know that my committee has a very tight deadline for this inquiry. The parliament has directed that we report by 24 March, only two weeks from now. We expect to meet this deadline, but I would like to take the opportunity to mention the other activities of my committee. They include inquiring into the number of restricted taxi, multicab, plates. We have held two public hearings so far and another is planned for 26 March. We are inquiring into an appropriate tree management and protection policy for the ACT. One public hearing has been held and another is scheduled for 19 March. We are inquiring into draft variation to the Territory Plan No. 109, residential land use policies for the B11 and B12 areas of North Canberra. One public hearing has been held and another is to take place on Friday, 26 March. We are inquiring into the Motor Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. 4) 1998 and the amendments referred by this place to my committee on 9 December last year. We are inquiring into the code of practice for the placement of movable signs in public places, which was referred by this place on 19 November last year.

As well as these inquiries, the Urban Services Committee is also receiving briefings in public from officers on planning for community facilities at Kippax, and the use of planning approvals and associated matters in relation to the old Ainslie school. Of course, the committee also deals with routine matters that come to each of the parliament's standing committees, such as statutory appointments and requests by the Minister for comment on interstate agreements and other matters affecting the Urban Services Department.

I mention these activities not to compare ourselves with other committees but to demonstrate the large volume of work before our committee. I would like to thank my colleagues, Mr Dave Rugendyke and Mr Simon Corbell, for their willingness to take on new tasks and for their cooperative approach to the committee work, as well as the clerk, Mr Rod Power. I believe it is important to keep the parliament informed of what committees are doing, and I hope this statement has done this in relation to the Urban

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Services Standing Committee. Finally, through you, Mr Speaker, I extend the usual invitation from the Urban Services Committee to any interested members of the parliament who wish to attend our public hearings.

BUDGET PREPARATION - PRINCIPLES

Debate resumed from 9 March 1999, on motion by **Ms Carnell**:

- (1) That this Assembly and the Executive aim to ensure that the people of Canberra continue to enjoy a healthy, safe, diverse, inclusive and contributing community with a high quality of life, supported by a government which provides quality services now and into the future.
- (2) To assist in the Executive's preparation of a Budget which will meet the approval of the people of Canberra and their elected representatives the following principles must be addressed:

Responsible Financial Management

- (a) the respective roles of the Executive and the Assembly in ensuring responsible fiscal management of the Territory;
- (b) the social and economic criteria against which financial management strategies ought to be examined;

Budget Priorities

- (c) the level of revenue which the Territory should raise, and how that level should be achieved;
- (d) the level of expenditure which the budget should incur, and any specific priorities for expenditure;
- (e) what assets the Territory should maintain or sell, and the reasons why they should be maintained or sold;
- (f) the level of debt, and any new borrowings, which the Territory should incur;
- (g) the importance of the Territory retaining its current AAA credit rating;

The Operating Loss

- (h) whether current and future Governments should strive to eliminate the operating loss, and if so by what year; and

- (i) the level of operating loss which the 1999-2000 budget should incur. -

and on the amendment moved by **Mr Stanhope**:

Omit paragraph 2(a), substitute the following paragraph:

- (a) “the responsibility of the Executive to govern the ACT as defined in Part V of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 and the responsibility of the Assembly to hold the Executive accountable.” -

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (12.04): Mr Speaker, I resume the debate which we commenced on Tuesday. A number of members spoke during the debate on Tuesday about their views on this process, as well as the content of the motion itself. The motion before the Assembly is one that deals with the appropriateness of certain criteria being considered and debated by all the parties and members of the Assembly as we come to put together a budget. I think it was Mr Rugendyke who made the point in that debate that this is not just about the 1999-2000 budget; this is about budget processes, about a level of input and involvement. He made the point in that debate that it is impossible in the timeframe provided to sit around in this place and construct a budget between us; that is obviously out of the question. But, Mr Speaker, what is possible and I think what we should attempt to grasp, if not on this occasion then on future occasions if we repeat this exercise, is some endeavour towards coming to grips with the fundamental issues that underscore the pressures on the ACT budget.

The Chief Minister in her presentation of this motion spoke at length about what those budget pressures were. She made considerable reference to a whole series of pressures in different areas. The Leader of the Opposition in responding to that speech made the point that there was no particular value added to the exercise by repeating or listing those pressures on the ACT budget. I have to say that I think that that is simply a misconception of the way we stand at the moment. One problem, a very serious budgetary problem, that we have at the present time, one which every government that has sat on the treasury bench in the last 10 years has had to deal with, is making people, the community, aware of the pressures facing the community and the government of what has been over most of those 10 years a deteriorating budgetary position. It has been deteriorating because, during that time, our single largest source of revenue - that is, the Commonwealth grants which are made, both tied and untied, to all the States and Territories and which come to the ACT - has been shrinking at a quite alarming rate.

Our financing from the Commonwealth has reduced by approximately 50 per cent since self-government 10 years ago - 50 per cent. That is a very serious reduction in outlays. It represents a huge reduction in territorial capacity to spend and it has exacerbated the very sorts of budgetary pressures that the Chief Minister referred to in her presentation speech. That is not a side issue. That is a central issue in this exercise, one which we simply have to come to grips with and we need to talk about in this place and outside to make clear to the community that if we are to sustain the standard of living that we enjoy at the

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moment, the quality of lifestyle that this city enjoys, it is incumbent on all of us to educate the electorate and the community about how we address those problems. I think that that means that we have to be careful and cautious about when we advocate the expenditure of new money and careful and cautious about turning aside from new revenue-raising options because those things inevitably are part of any budgetary equation.

We have seen very much in the last few years a pattern of attack on proposals to decrease expenditure - to save money, if you like - and proposals to increase levels of revenue raising from particular quarters, particularly new taxes. In those debates there has been considerable dispute with the Government about those things, and the Assembly on occasions has come quite close to rejecting the Government's approach on particular measures in those areas. I think the purpose of this debate is to emphasise that we cannot get away from the need to address those issues and to say that, if we do not like the revenue-raising measures adopted and we do not like the expenditure reductions adopted, we have to accept that the alternative may be making decisions which are at least as difficult in other areas of expenditure reduction or revenue raising. When people say that they absolutely oppose a debits tax, they absolutely oppose an emergency services levy or they absolutely oppose the idea of reducing outlays on education, health, oncology departments, school buses or whatever it may be, I believe that there is an obligation that falls on our shoulders at least to acknowledge that the decisions made have not been easy decisions but alternatives might be hard to come by.

Mr Speaker, let me comment on the contributions of others in this debate. The approach of the Australian Labor Party I will give credit to. It at least has been consistent throughout this debate. The Australian Labor Party has maintained that it is not the role of the Assembly to contribute to providing answers to these difficult questions. I think that there has been some admission that they are difficult questions and the formulations are not easy to come by, but they have said consistently that it is the Government's role alone to produce that and, in a sense, the Opposition's role to attack it if they disagree with it. Indeed, I think they have suggested that, in effect, the Government has to get support for its budget through the floor of the Assembly or it has to experience the loss of government. That is at least consistent. They have opted out of the debate, in effect. They have opted out of the substance of the debate, which is to identify and talk about the particular pressures on the budget. They have said that they do not believe that they should be part of that process. Mr Speaker, I have to say that I characterise that as a very conservative approach.

It was quite funny, I thought, to see the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Assembly quoting from *House of Representatives Practice* and citing historical precedents for this approach. They are the party of radicals. They are the party of change, of innovation, of doing things differently, and yet they are very happy to take a very insular view about the role of government to produce budgets and nobody else. But I give them credit for that. That has always been their view. They have not changed from that. I have to say that it has also been, to a large extent, the Liberal Party's view, but the Liberal Party has responded to pressures in recent years that suggest that we should change the way in which budgets are brought about.

Mr Speaker, having said that about the Labor Party's position, I think it also has to be recorded that the Labor Party's position in opposition will obviously have to be very different from its position in government. The Labor Party, to the best of my recollection, has opposed every single taxation measure which the Government has brought forward in the last four years.

Mr Wood: And you never did that! You have got a short-term memory.

MR HUMPHRIES: I might be wrong about that. Mr Wood, who is yet to speak in this debate, might refresh my memory about the things that they have supported. I can list certainly about a dozen things that they have opposed; but, as far as things they have supported are concerned, I cannot recall.

Mr Wood: I am thinking about the things you opposed when we were in government.

MR HUMPHRIES: I will take up that interjection from Mr Wood.

Mr Berry: What about the education budget?

MR HUMPHRIES: The education budget is a good place to start; that is fine. We opposed the Labor Party's reductions in education outlays during the time that they were in government. We even moved a motion to amend the budget to prevent them from reducing the budget by cutting teacher numbers. In government, we have been consistent with our position in opposition because we have not cut teacher numbers and we have not reduced outlays in education. Indeed, we have increased our outlays in education quite substantially; in fact, well above the CPI.

Mr Berry: No, you have reduced them.

MR HUMPHRIES: No, that is not true. I will come back to that, Mr Berry, and I will prove to you that we have not done that. We have increased - - -

Mr Berry: Talk about your election promise and the result.

MR HUMPHRIES: We have increased in line with our election promise and beyond. I can demonstrate that, and I will, if you like, later today.

Mr Berry: No, do it now.

MR HUMPHRIES: I cannot do it now because I have not got the figures with me, but I will do it later today. Secondly, we have opposed reductions in teacher numbers except, obviously, ones based on reductions in enrolments. We opposed the Labor Party doing that when we were in opposition and we have been consistent in government about that.

Let us look at the situation about the consistency across the chamber as far as taxes are concerned. The Labor Party have opposed every tax we have brought in, but their position on taxation has inevitably changed whenever they have moved on to the government benches. Let me give you one example. In opposition, the Labor Party vehemently opposed the 3c a litre diesel fuel levy which was placed on ACT motorists by

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the Alliance Government. It attacked that proposal in the 1990 budget unmercifully, and yet when they came back into government in 1991 the tax was retained. There are a number of other taxes I could apply in the same way. They vehemently opposed the debits tax, and yet when they went to the last election, the 1998 ACT election, they took no steps towards promising to remove that tax, which would suggest to me that they intended fully, in government, to retain that tax.

I have to say, Mr Speaker, that it really is not consistent or sustainable in a logical way to say that you are opposed to a tax, but then not do anything to take it off when you have the opportunity to do so, either in an election context when you are outlining your program for the future, or when you are actually back in government. I would ask members simply to bear in mind that the Labor Party historically is the high-taxing party. The Labor Party believes in high taxation and high expenditure. That is fine; we accept that that is their position. It is a philosophy of government which is quite a respectable position in a sense. It is quite sustainable. You can argue for it very strongly. But to claim to be a party that wants to spend a lot on behalf of the community and therefore has to tax a lot to do so and yet oppose new taxation measures, particularly those in line with what happens in other States, is just not consistent and just not sustainable.

The Labor Party has opposed a very large proportion of the Carnell Government's expenditure reductions. Again, it is a party that proposes high expenditure measures and that probably wants to spend more per capita than the Liberal Government would spend, so there is some more credibility in that line. But the Labor Party's opposition to reductions in expenditure is consistent only if it is prepared to come back to this place when next in government and promise to reverse those decisions to cut spending. The experience in every case when the Follett Government took office from the Alliance Government in 1991 was that they did not do so. None of the reductions in outlays was ever reversed by the Follett Government. To the best of my recollection - I am happy to be corrected by Mr Wood - not one was ever reversed.

So, when we hear the Labor Party say that they oppose the reductions in expenditure and they oppose new taxes, the question has to be asked: "Are you going to change that position?". Almost invariably - there might be some exceptions, I grant that - in practice they will not do that. They have also opposed privatisation as a device, whether by that name or in some other way. They have characterised sale and leaseback, for example, as a form of privatisation. In fact, they have characterised corporatisation as a form of privatisation.

They say that those things are also to be opposed and they do not support them happening. That is fair enough; I can understand their position on that. I point out that Labor governments everywhere else in Australia have used those devices and the reason that many of those have been used is that in the case of sale and leaseback, for example, it has actually been a more desirable way of improving cash flows for government than borrowing has been. If they are saying, "No, we will not use that. We will not use these de facto privatisation things. We will borrow directly", then they have to be clear that what they are saying is that they want to increase government borrowings. That, of course, puts at risk our AAA credit rating. Mr Speaker, although I respect the ALP's position in this debate - they believe that governments and governments alone have to

draw up budgets - I think it is also very clear that the position that they take to the electorate is inconsistent and cannot be sustained in this sort of debate.

Let me take up a few points made by other members in this debate. Mr Kaine made a few comments which I think need to be rebutted. He said that there was no link between the ACTEW sale and the recurrent budget. That simply is not true. It simply defies what has been said extensively in this debate. First of all, Mr Speaker, the failure to sell ACTEW means that we now have to find money from the recurrent budget, since there are not any other sales which the Assembly particularly likes either, apparently, to fund our superannuation liabilities. There is a direct link between the failure of the ACTEW sale and future recurrent budget impacts. The other way in which the ACTEW sale would have impacted on the recurrent budget is through the retirement of debt. We proposed to spend \$190m of that sale to retire government debt and to reduce our interest payments per annum by \$10m. That would have had an impact on the recurrent budget from day one. I am, frankly, astonished that Mr Kaine would have failed to notice that particular aspect of the ACTEW sale proposal.

Mr Kaine has made the comment in other debates about the budget that the Chief Minister consistently failed to address in her previous budgets what he considers to be the big issues. He actually said in one of the other debates on this subject that that is not expenditure reduction and that is not revenue raising. I would like to know from Mr Kaine, if he is listening to this debate, what are the big issues if it is not looking at expenditure reduction or improvements in our revenue capacity. What are the big issues? It obviously is not asset sales because he rejected that in the case at least of ACTEW. What are the big issues, then, if it is not that? Mr Speaker, rather than quote at length, I table comments Mr Kaine made about the 1995 Carnell Liberal Government budget and the 1997 Carnell Liberal Government budget because the comments he has made there are inconsistent with what he has said in this debate about those budgets. He praised those budgets for addressing the big issues - he praised them extensively - and yet he now says that they did not do the job. I wonder why he has changed his view.

Mr Speaker, let me come back for one moment to this question of the ALP's views about expenditure and revenue issues and about privatisation. We are told that the ALP is opposed to privatisation. If the results of last year's annual conference are anything to go by, I can well understand why they would say that. It is obviously an accurate statement. But it is worth recording very emphatically for the record that the ALP itself proposed going into the last election, the 1998 election, to privatise - that is what they characterised it as - streetlights through the sale of streetlights proposal which they attacked in opposition but actually proposed to do in the "Working Capital" document. Members will recall that "Working Capital" was predicated on taking the Government's forward estimates and building on them for a number of other ALP initiatives. Those Government forward estimates included the sale of the streetlights. The ALP, therefore, adopted the sale of the streetlights as a way of meeting its budget target. So, when you hear them say that they are opposed to the sale of the streetlights, you have got to ask them why they have changed their mind.

Mr Speaker, I want to mention very briefly in this debate the pressures on the Justice and Community Safety portfolio. Clearly, we have a major cost pressure source from prisoner numbers. They have risen from 81 prisoners in New South Wales gaols as at

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1 January 1996 to 126 prisoners as at 1 January 1999. That is an increase of 56 per cent over three years. Given that we spend about \$60,000 per prisoner per year on that accommodation, there is an increase of \$2.7m per year from that source alone. Our remand centre has also risen dramatically in occupancy over that period. There has been an increase of approximately 95 per cent in its occupancy rate. There has been an increase of 55 per cent in the number of offenders under community supervision. We also have pressure to address the correctional health issue, which I believe is a major priority in the coming budget. The efficiency of the court has been drawn to attention by the Productivity Commission. Mr Speaker, I believe that we have to force through a process of review and change in that area as well.

The area of policing has been very interesting. The ACT's average annual expenditure per police member in 1997-98 was \$74,875, compared with a national average expenditure of just over \$61,000; that is, our police officers per capita were \$13,838, or 23 per cent, above the national average for every police officer. While it is true to say that the ACT probably has too few police on its streets, we also have a problem obviously in having a higher than average national cost for each police officer on our streets. That is a problem we simply have to deal with. We also have the problem of pressures which are one-off but which are very severe on our budget, such as the Conway murder investigation and the activities of certain motorcycle gangs, which have a huge flow-on effect on our budgets.

Mr Hird: Winchester.

MR HUMPHRIES: The Winchester case is another example of the pressures which are very hard to budget for in any kind of planned way.

Members are already well aware of the pressures from the criminal injuries compensation scheme. So far this year we have spent \$3.428m, already above the budgeted figure of \$3.1m, and we are only a bit over halfway through the financial year. We are now projecting an expenditure this financial year of over \$5m. That is a 63 per cent increase in the budgeted figure. We simply have to do something about that budget if we are going to contain the cost of that scheme and the sustainability of other parts of the budget.

The insurance levy I want to touch on very briefly. The insurance levy now raises 73 per cent of the running costs of fire services in New South Wales. Our \$10m levy is equivalent to 33 per cent of what it costs to run our emergency services. Mr Speaker, the comment has been made in this debate that the emergency services levy is inequitable. I do not think that I heard anybody say they would actually abolish that levy if they were in government. I detected a sense that they would change the basis on which it was levied. The suggestion has been made, for example, that people should be levied through their rates rather than targeting insurance policy-holders solely as the way in which to collect this levy. I want to address that issue very briefly.

Mr Speaker, there are approximately 100,000 ratepayers or sets of ratepayers in the ACT at the present time. Although the figures are not accurately available, it is my estimate that the number of insurance policy-holders is well above 100,000, that is, there are well over 100,000 people who insure in the ACT at the present time. That is not very surprising if you think about it. Every person who owns a house, with very few

exceptions, would insure either the building itself or the contents. It is, in fact, a requirement of any mortgagor that the mortgagee take out insurance. I should think that most houses in the ACT are subject to a mortgage of one sort or another, so every householder would be a mortgagee and therefore would be an insurance premium payer. Anybody with a car that is not particularly old would be in the same position. Anybody who is renting but has goods and chattels they want to protect through an insurance policy is likely to be paying insurance. It would not be at all surprising or, I think, to be doubted that there would be well over 100,000 people in the ACT who would be paying insurance policies.

Mr Wood: What are you bothered for?

MR HUMPHRIES: You are still here, Mr Wood. I appreciate that fact. Mr Speaker, what we have here is the proposition that if you transfer the emergency services levy from insurance policy-holders to ratepayers you are moving from a base which is, I suspect, much larger than 100,000 people to a base of only 100,000 people. What will you do by doing that? What you will do is, in the case of at least some people who are ratepayers in this Territory, substantially increase the amount per capita they have to pay to meet that \$10m target.

Do members seriously want that? Before members of the Labor Party go out to the next election and promise to change the basis on which this levy is worked so as to transfer it onto the shoulders of some other people they should be careful about what they transfer it to because, with very few exceptions, I cannot think of any population base in the Territory which is broader than those who have insurance policies. Ratepayers are certainly not a broader base than that; they are a narrower base than that. Be careful before you rush into that particular place.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude my remarks by just saying that I think that in this debate we need to be specific and we need to be courageous about how we are going to deal with addressing the ACT's budgetary problems. It is simply not good enough to condemn every new tax rise, to condemn every expenditure reduction, to condemn every use of accounting principles to deal with some cash flow problem or ruse - to renounce those sorts of things, either directly or by implication - and then wipe your hands of any constructive solution to the problem. There is a need for us to address these issues collectively. The Labor Party one day will be back in government on this side of the chamber. If they refuse to be constructive about this exercise, they will find it very hard to appeal for a constructive approach by the Assembly to their problems when they are in government. Mr Speaker, we have yet to see whether the short-term interest in scoring political points outweighs the longer-term interest in our community, collectively, addressing what is a massive problem for us all, that is, making our way of life in this Territory sustainable into the future.

Debate interrupted.

Sitting suspended from 12.32 to 2.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ACTEW - Merger Discussions

MR STANHOPE: My question is to the Chief Minister. In this morning's *Financial Review* the Chief Minister is reported as having had discussions with the New South Wales Government about the possible merger of ACTEW and Great Southern Energy. Will the Chief Minister inform the Assembly of the status of the discussions she referred to and when they took place? Can the Chief Minister tell us whether she has had any other such discussions with any other organisations? Can the Chief Minister inform the Assembly whether there is any commercial interest involved in the nature of the deal discussed?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I can guarantee that no deal on a merger arrangement with the New South Wales Government or anybody else has been done. I think we made it very clear after the ACTEW debate, and I hope before that as well, that this Government was not in the business of sitting on its hands. The Assembly has made it clear that ACTEW must stay in public ownership. We respect the Assembly's perspective, and that is what will happen. But we did make it very clear at the time, and I think Mr Quinlan also in a number of his comments, and certainly the Australia Institute, indicated that in areas such as electricity retailing we simply had no capacity to do nothing, because the risks involved, as pointed to by Mr Quinlan and the Australia Institute, were too large.

My Government, Mr Speaker, has had many discussions with numerous organisations, both government and non-government, about ACTEW's future in public ownership. These discussions have included meetings with various State governments, private and publicly owned power utilities from around Australia and, I have to say, even overseas operators. Mr Speaker, what we plan to do, though, by going to the media next month, is to seek expressions of interest from the community and from the business sector as part of strategies that are being developed by the board, and of course by the Government as well, to improve ACTEW's viability under public ownership.

There are lots of ideas out there, Mr Speaker. I spoke at a conference in Sydney recently about the need to come up with innovative approaches for power entities in public ownership, to minimise the risk, to maximise access to capital, to improve return on investment, all the things that any good government would do, Mr Speaker - I stress, in public ownership. We plan to go to the market to see what ideas are out there - many people have come to us already - and to assess those to determine what is the best way forward for ACTEW to ensure its viability, to ensure its future and to ensure that we do the best possible job we can with the major asset that the people of Canberra have, Mr Speaker. If we were not doing that, we would not be doing our job.

MR STANHOPE: Mr Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Can the Chief Minister tell the Assembly what are the terms of reference underscoring the expressions of interest that she will be calling for, and will she make a copy of the terms of reference available to the Assembly?

MS CARNELL: I am very happy to, because I will be going to the media. So, they will be available to everybody. They have not been signed off at this stage, Mr Speaker. We are aiming at early April to put that request out to the community. At this stage, the final document has not been finalised.

School Buses - McMillan Crescent

MR OSBORNE: My question is to the Minister for Urban Services and Stupid Ideas, Mr Smyth.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Please address Ministers by their correct titles.

MR OSBORNE: Sorry. I will withdraw that, Mr Speaker. I think he now knows what I am going to ask him. I have noticed with interest your department's and this Government's response to the concerns of both St Eddie's and St Clare's in relation to traffic and, more particularly, safety in McMillan Crescent adjacent to the schools. Is it true, Minister, that you, through your department, have suggested that the schools should just buy the road? Would it not be simpler and safer for this Government to just adopt the proposal, I think put up by the P&C from St Eddie's, to look at closing the road and diverting the buses along Wills Street, which has the room and the capacity to pick up the children and drop them off in the morning and afternoon?

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Osborne for his question. It is curious how these rumours just develop. The first I heard of this proposal that the schools should buy the road was, in fact, in a letter from the headmaster of St Edmund's, I think dated about 22 February, in which he says that it was suggested that the schools could buy the road. I asked the head of ACTION, Mr Thurston, to check on whether such a suggestion had ever been made, and to the best of Mr Thurston's knowledge no such suggestion was ever made.

MR SPEAKER: Do you have a supplementary question, Mr Osborne?

Mr Osborne: It must be the week for short answers, Mr Speaker. I will just go to a point of order first, before asking a supplementary; but I do not think the Minister answered the issue about closing the road off and diverting the buses.

Mr Humphries: I think he did.

Mr Osborne: No, he did not.

MR SPEAKER: Is this a supplementary?

Mr Osborne: No. That is the point of order, Mr Speaker. I have not asked a supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Right, thank you. That is your supplementary.

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Mr Osborne: It was a point of order. I was just saying that it was a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Smyth: I will answer the road closure with your supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: He does not have to answer the question; but, if you ask your supplementary, he may answer it when he is answering the supplementary.

Mr Osborne: So, what you are saying is that my question is no longer a question; it is now a supplementary because the Minister chose not to answer it?

MR SPEAKER: No. I suggest that you ask your supplementary, thank you.

Mr Osborne: I asked my question. Can he not just answer the question?

MR SPEAKER: He does not have to answer the question. The Minister can answer the question in any way he likes; but I think he will probably answer the question about the road when he answers your supplementary, if you have one.

Mr Smyth: Paul, ask your supplementary and I will tell you about the road closure.

MR OSBORNE: Okay; I will ask my supplementary. Minister, I have noticed with interest your department's response to the concerns - I am just going to read the question again, Mr Speaker - blah, blah, blah, blah. Would it not be simpler and safer for this Government - this is my question again, but it is my supplementary - just to close the road and divert the buses, I think, along Wills Street, as suggested by the P&C at St Eddie's? That is my supplementary, but it was really my question.

MR SMYTH: Yes; it has been suggested that we would close certain streets - McMillan Street that goes between St Edmund's and St Clare's. Given the way that that would impact on the total neighbourhood and the residents of Griffith and Narrabundah, we rejected that idea. What we have done, as I promised we would, is discuss these matters with the school. It is quite amusing to me, Mr Speaker, that this morning there was a story in the *Canberra Times* saying that nothing has been done. Clearly, somebody has been misreported here. Work was actually done at the school yesterday replacing signs, and there is more work to be done in having the bus bays clearly marked.

There will be another meeting, I believe, next week to look at the issue of the road and possible road closures. All those things can be discussed again next week. But the process that I said would be undertaken is being undertaken. It is important to remember that at the beginning of each school year the bus figures do vary. On some days you have large numbers, on the next day you have small numbers, and it does take some time for it to settle down. It has settled down now. We are doing the extra work that we promised. It is being done now. It started yesterday. I think there are some inaccuracies in the *Canberra Times* story this morning.

Bruce Stadium

MR QUINLAN: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister and it relates to Bruce Stadium. I would just like to get some information in relation to the sale of the membership packages.

Mr Osborne: How much were the hot dogs?

MR QUINLAN: And a small glass of red to go with it? I just wonder how the revenue from the membership package sales is distributed. For example, a double-diamond membership package includes entry to all Raiders, Brumbies and Cosmos games for five years. Is that money in any way then distributed back to those clubs, and according to what formula?

MS CARNELL: There is a whole raft of different membership packages available for the new Bruce Stadium, and a lot of these membership approaches are new approaches that have not really been available before. Gold or diamond members have access to a range of benefits, including grandstand seating for the Brumbies, the Raiders and the Cosmos games; first option for tickets to all other events; access to members lounge and the bar in the eastern stand; and car parking.

A wide range of differentially priced products has also been developed to meet the needs of the Canberra market, including some specifically aimed at existing Raiders' and Brumbies' supporters' bases. The take-up rate amongst these supporters has been terrific, because it is a new stadium with great facilities. It is a really good outcome generally, Mr Speaker. So, you can go from everything from the old, straight season pass all the way through to gold, diamond, double-diamond and all sorts of different products.

Mr Speaker, because these are new products, there is ongoing evaluation of market take-up and continuing reworking of these packages. The evaluation of the products' performance will be set against the revenue and expenditure targets of the stadium's business plan. After a test phase of the direct marketing program, it has been clear that Canberrans have been hesitant about investing in some of these more expensive memberships. They wanted to wait and see what the stadium would be like and how their teams performed. But, Mr Speaker, I am absolutely confident that, after the absolutely wonderful match on Friday night with over 20,000 Canberrans present and the Raiders performing absolutely brilliantly - even against my old team, Mr Speaker, very much my old team now - I am sure that people will be very interested in taking up those deals in the future.

Mr Speaker, with regard to how the actual dollars are allocated, I understand that gold memberships are \$5,000 plus \$300 a year and double-diamond memberships are \$3,000 plus \$600. I would assume that the way those dollars are allocated is via Bruce Operations. Of course, the general revenue from the operation of the stadium flows into Bruce Operations. Of course, expenditure comes out of Bruce Operations Pty Ltd and Bruce Operations handles the ongoing return to the investors and so on, Mr Speaker. That is the basis of Bruce Operations.

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MR QUINLAN: Maybe we are finding out why we have got a Bruce Operations. Bruce Operations is two senior public servants in the ACT.

Mr Humphries: Is this a supplementary question or a statement?

MR QUINLAN: Actually, I find myself pretty well in the situation of Mr Osborne, inclined to read my question again.

Ms Carnell: That is what you asked.

MR QUINLAN: What I did originally ask was: How is this money distributed? And what I got was: It goes to a company - and a company which has been set up and operated by two senior public servants. I suppose they are commercial-in-confidence, are they? You have got to be kidding!

Mr Humphries: Mr Speaker, we are having a conversation rather than a question here.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR QUINLAN: Can the Chief Minister then tell me: Did the Government seek or receive any external advice in structuring these particular membership packages? If she is not certain, could she let this Assembly know by close of business today?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it is my understanding - I think I have answered this question before - that the marketing company or the conglomerate of companies that the ACT has a contract with, or that Bruce Operations has a contract with, gives advice on these sorts of areas and is involved in the direct marketing campaign. Of course, that group of companies also is involved in the advertising of the stadium generally, Mr Speaker. That contract was awarded after going to a tender process.

Members interjected.

Employment

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, I am just waiting for them to finish.

Mr Kaine: We don't want any pejorative language from the member.

MR HIRD: I would watch out for those sour grapes, if I were you, Mr Kaine. My question is to the Chief Minister, Mrs Carnell. Can the Chief Minister advise the parliament as to how the ACT is currently performing in relation to employment?

MS CARNELL: Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, I really do thank Mr Hird for the question.

Mr Quinlan: What a fascinating question, Mr Speaker!

MS CARNELL: I am really interested to hear Mr Quinlan say that he is actually not interested in a question that is as fundamental as jobs.

Mr Quinlan: Did I say that I was not interested?

MS CARNELL: You did.

Mr Quinlan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have been misrepresented.

MR SPEAKER: Interjections are out of order, Mr Quinlan. If you were misheard, that is your problem.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I am happy to know, then, that those opposite are fascinated by this question. Earlier today, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the latest official employment figures for the month of February. I have to say that these figures did contain some bad news that will impact heavily on six people living in Canberra. Those six people are the same ones who sit opposite and are members of the Labor Party. However, Mr Speaker, for the rest of us, the news is all very positive.

I am very happy to be able to advise the Assembly that the ACT has again achieved its lowest unemployment rate for more than eight years - eight whole years. The Territory has also registered the lowest number of unemployed Canberrans since April 1991 - the lowest number of unemployed as well, Mr Speaker. The Bureau of Statistics reported that the ACT's trend unemployment rate fell by 0.1 per cent in February to 5.8 per cent. This is the lowest level since October 1990 and a full 1.6 percentage points below the national rate.

I am pleased to note that the trend unemployment rate has now fallen dramatically over the last 12 months from 7.6 per cent in February 1998 to 5.8 per cent last month. Mr Speaker, the ACT has also recorded the lowest number of unemployed - that is, 9,700 - for more than 7½ years. It is a really great outcome, Mr Speaker. Compared with February 1998, just 12 months ago, there has been a drop of 23 per cent, or 2,900, in the number of unemployed. In the last month, full-time employment rose by 700 and has been steadily increasing in Canberra since September last year.

But, Mr Speaker, wait; there is more. The total number of jobs in the ACT was 157,400 in trend terms during February. That is 700 more than the previous month. There are also 4,000 more jobs than for the same month last year - 4,000 more jobs in 12 months, Mr Speaker. I know that Mr Berry particularly will be interested to learn, too, that Canberra's population aged 15 and over was 235,900 - an increase of one per cent, or 2,400 people, over the last 12 months. Mr Speaker, Mr Berry has regularly said that everybody is leaving Canberra and that that is the reason why the unemployment rates were coming down. Well, there you go - 2,400 more people over the last 12 months.

In the last month alone, our working age population increased by 200, Mr Speaker. Mr Berry will be pleased, and Mr Quinlan obviously will be pleased as well, to hear that Canberra's participation rate of 70.8 per cent rose by 0.1 per cent compared to the previous month. So, there are more people participating in the work force as well.

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Mr Speaker, I am sure that they will all be delighted, as I was, to learn that the trend unemployment rates for males in February was 6.4 per cent, down from 6.6 per cent the previous month; and for females it was 5.1 per cent, down from 5.2 per cent.

Mr Speaker, what this means is that the ACT continues to have the second lowest trend unemployment rate of all States and Territories, second only to the Northern Territory. It shows that the employment outlook for Canberrans remains very positive. Indeed, Mr Speaker, the ANZ job advertisement series has shown that the average number of weekly employment ads in Canberra has remained at a high level for the past six months. I just want to remind members that not very long ago the Labor Party was telling anyone who cared to listen that our unemployment rate was going to skyrocket - I think that was the word - to 9 per cent and go through the roof. They were wrong again. In fact, how could you be so wrong?

Today's figures also demonstrate that the Government's efforts to promote a strong, vibrant and diversified economy are working. Remember, Mr Berry; when the rate goes up, it is our fault. In fact, when the rate goes up, it is usually my fault, personally. Mr Speaker, does that mean that, when the rate goes down, it is also my fault? Thank you very much, Mr Berry. I will take the congratulations at any time!

Mr Speaker, we have not let up on our efforts to foster the right climate for jobs and economic growth. We are certainly not sitting on our hands. We have not let up on our efforts to help those Canberrans looking for work to become more job ready as well. Members will recently have received information from this Government showing that we have expanded our job-readiness and training programs and have also brought them together under one, integrated package known as Pathways to Employment Opportunities. Again, Mr Speaker, I am very happy to have the congratulations of those opposite, but the silence has been somewhat deathly.

In summary, Mr Speaker, there are a lot of people who can take credit for this strong rebound in our economy and continued improvement in our employment situation. But I have to say, Mr Speaker, that none of those people who can take any credit at all sit opposite.

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, I am amazed and delighted to hear what the Chief Minister has just put to the house.

MR SPEAKER: Ask your supplementary question, but no preamble.

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, my supplementary is this: I was concerned with respect to the number of jobs that have been cut out of the ACT by the Commonwealth when it cut several thousand jobs out of the work force. Have we been able to improve the situation? I know that you have told us, Chief Minister, that the job market is coming up, to your credit. Is it also picking up that area of the Commonwealth losses?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I know that those opposite are embarrassed by this. It is patently obvious that they are embarrassed. In fact, I have to say that when one particular media outlet said to me today, "Well, Ms Carnell, the figures must be good because

Mr Berry can't find anything wrong with them", I thought that that really said it all. It is fascinating that not even Mr Berry can find anything wrong with the employment figures. It shows a real win for this Government.

Mr Speaker, estimates of how many staff were retrenched by the coalition Federal Government in its first term vary between 7,000 and 9,000 over a very short period of time. I can confirm that there are more jobs in this city now, even after this massive reduction in our work force occurred. So, even with between 7,000 and 9,000 jobs lost from the Commonwealth, there are more jobs in Canberra now. Perhaps the best way of answering Mr Hird's supplementary is to advise the Assembly that between February 1997 and last month the number of jobs in Canberra has actually increased by 4,600 - that is right, Mr Speaker; an increase of 4,600 jobs, even with the downsizing of the Commonwealth Government. Mr Speaker, the great news is that two-thirds of these are full-time jobs.

Bruce Stadium

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, I would just like to observe that the benchmark which the Government is striving for was that established by the Alliance Government in 1990-91.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Kaine, ask a question of somebody.

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to an answer that she gave to a question, which I think was from Mr Quinlan, back on 18 February, in connection with the sales operation at the Bruce Stadium. In her answer she said:

The stadium's sales team operates on a commission basis - that is, no sale, no commission. It is quite simple. I think I made the point yesterday ... no sale, no commission.

Chief Minister, is it not a fact that, in addition to the commission which this organisation receives, it also has received a very substantial up-front payment, and can you tell us how much that up-front payment was?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I will have to take that on notice. I have no idea.

Members interjected.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Kaine has a supplementary question, I am sure.

MR KAINE: Perhaps the Chief Minister will come back with the answer to confirm that it is of the order of \$2m. My supplementary question, Mr Speaker, is: Given that the Chief Minister made the point that there was no commission if there was no sale, can the Chief Minister tell us how much commission has actually been paid to this organisation for its efforts in marketing the stadium, and can she confirm whether the commission payments, if any, include commission for two sales to those great private sector enterprises, ACTEW and Totalcare?

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MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it is just a patently ridiculous question in the Assembly. Of course I would not have information about how much commission has been paid at this particular stage. Mr Speaker, I will take the question on notice. But I would have to say that you cannot but be concerned about this Assembly. Here we have one of the best stadiums in Australia - not according to me, Mr Speaker, but according to such people as Kevin Neil, Mark Sinderberry and, I have to say, a number of the commentators who commentated on Friday night. Mr Speaker, if we are to make this stadium work, do people in this place believe that they are helping? Do they believe that this actually helps our marketing approach?

Mr Berry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Chief Minister has taken the question on notice. She should be ordered to sit down.

MR SPEAKER: Please continue.

MS CARNELL: If you took those views, you could not have asked a supplementary when I took the first point on notice.

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Would you rule on my point of order?

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I will not rule that - - -

MS CARNELL: Can I answer the question how I want to?

Mr Berry: No. You said that you took it on notice, ma'am.

MS CARNELL: I took bits of it on notice. I took part of it on notice. I can take any parts. Mr Speaker, I understand why those opposite would be embarrassed here, and Mr Kaine as well.

Mr Berry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker - - -

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Mr Berry. Resume your seat.

Mr Berry: Our embarrassment or otherwise has got nothing to do with the question.

MS CARNELL: Mr Berry is just cross because he could not find anything wrong with the unemployment figures; that is all. Mr Speaker, this is a major investment for the ACT - one that those opposite, against all odds, say that they support. Mr Kaine has indicated in the past that he does support at least the Raiders. I do not know what else he supports.

Mr Kaine: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would have to say that I still support the whole stadium project; but I want to know how much it is going to cost the taxpayer.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, if Mr Kaine would like that question answered, he may like to refer back to the Cabinet meetings that he was part of, because the financing arrangements and the costs of the stadium were part of those. Also, Mr Speaker, if Mr Kaine wants to know the cost of the stadium, then he should ask that question.

Mr Berry: On a point of order: This is getting ridiculous, Mr Speaker. If the Chief Minister cannot answer the question - she took it on notice - let her go away, get the answer and bring it back.

MR SPEAKER: She has taken it on notice.

School Buses - McMillan Crescent

MR HARGREAVES: I, like Mr Osborne, would like to ask a question about the St Edmund's and St Clare's issue, and I hope that I would only have to ask it once. The Auditor-General's report No. 8 of 1998 - an authority greatly relied on in debate by the Chief Minister - makes a point that the ACT is asset rich. The Auditor-General argues that the Government could benefit from an examination of the sale of potential assets like public hospitals, schools, roads, public housing, parks, electricity, water and sewerage assets and many more.

Mr Smyth: Who is the question to?

MR HARGREAVES: My question, Mr Speaker, for those opposite who are so curious, is to the Minister for Urban Services.

Mr Smyth: Thank you.

MR HARGREAVES: It is a pleasure. The pleasure is all yours. Minister, will you confirm that you have no intention of putting those particular assets up for sale, and will you confirm or deny that you have commissioned a secret, independent report from Tim Shaw from Demtel Pty Ltd, suggesting that you can buy a bus stop, you can purchase a park, you can have your own hospital, you can gain a guvvie house or even perhaps snare a sewer. But wait; there is more, to use the Chief Minister's words. He even offers a free set of steak knives with every road you buy. Can you confirm or deny that?

MR SPEAKER: You cannot announce Executive policy or make an expression of opinion. So, I do not know how you are going to get on.

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I have no knowledge of Tim Shaw's firm being offered a consultancy. I would have to take that on notice and find out for the member.

MR HARGREAVES: I have a supplementary question - and, like Mr Osborne, I am going to have to ask the first question first. So, with your indulgence, I will do that. To make it without a preamble, I shall put a comma in between the two questions. The question is: Will you confirm that you have no intention to sell those potential assets like public hospitals, schools, roads, public housing, parks, electricity, water and sewerage assets and many more, and why have you taken so long to address the St Edmund's and St Clare's issue by putting up a mere bunch of signs saying, "Please don't park here"? Is this nothing more than a revenue-making exercise and you are actually not going to do anything meaningful at all there?

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MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, that was a broad-ranging supplementary question. The Government has made it quite clear that it will never say “never” on the sale of any assets. It is never in a position to do that. Let us look at the things Mr Hargreaves has asked about. Schools are Mr Stefaniak’s responsibility; hospitals are Mr Moore’s responsibility; other parts of the infrastructure are my responsibility. Mr Speaker, the Government will never say “never” on this issue, simply because these issues would have to go through Cabinet, and I do not have that approval.

In terms of Mr Shaw and this supposed secret consultancy, I have already offered to find out, and I will. In regard to the issue of St Clare’s and St Edmund’s, as I have said previously in this place, at the start of each school year we assess the numbers and we make adjustments. The traffic measures are being put in place. Sometimes the answer is as simple as putting up “no parking” or “bus stop” signs; but we will go further. There are signs that will go up that will show the students where to go for the different buses, to facilitate their getting on and off the bus. There are currently some signs up that are perhaps a bit misleading. They will be removed. What is more, we will have further meetings with the school next week to continue the process.

Methadone Program

MR RUGENDYKE: My question is to the Chief Minister as Acting Health Minister. Chief Minister, last week it was brought to my attention that the waiting time to gain access to the methadone program had blown out to at least five weeks. Yesterday I had a call from a constituent who has been waiting for four weeks and has just been advised that it will be at least another two weeks before he can gain access to the program. Could you please advise the Assembly how long we can expect the waiting time to be at five and six weeks and what is being done to reduce that waiting time?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it is always good to have sensible questions in this place. When we came to government, I think there were 350 places in the methadone program. In the last few days, there were 506 places, quite a significant increase over the term of our government, Mr Speaker. But there is no doubt that the waiting time at this particular moment is longer than we believe is appropriate. We believe that the appropriate medical benchmark is probably in the two to three weeks period, Mr Speaker. There should be, I believe anyway, at least a short waiting time to discourage people from coming in and out of the program. We want to encourage people to stay on the methadone program, not to leave it and then to come back on it at some stage when it may - - -

Mr Humphries: A lifestyle choice.

MS CARNELL: Yes. We want it to be an appropriate treatment program. So, some waiting period is appropriate, I think, from a medical perspective and also from a social perspective; but five weeks is too long. I think I announced a couple of days ago that we would extend the number of places in our methadone program to get back to a more appropriate waiting period of two to three weeks, Mr Speaker.

Mr Berry: In the public one or the private one - the free one or the expensive one?

MR SPEAKER: Order, please, Mr Berry! You did not ask the question.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it is hard to make a comment on how many places it will mean, but certainly it could mean an extra 50 places. The cost of a place on our methadone program, I think, is in the vicinity of \$1,000.

MR RUGENDYKE: I ask, as a supplementary question: Could you advise the Assembly what the timetable is for reaching the target of two to three weeks and how long it is likely to take to get there?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, starting immediately is the story. As soon as possible is the answer. Fairly obviously, we need to have the outlets available - outlets that are appropriate to the people involved. I do not think anyone could doubt my serious concern in this area, and I believe really strongly that we do need to have an accessible methadone program.

School Enrolments

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Education. The Minister has stated that he wants to encourage a community debate on excess space in government schools. In December 1996, Minister, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Government Schooling presented a report making recommendations for managing secondary schools with declining enrolments, recommendations which the Minister accepted. Will the Minister table that report - that is the first question - and now inform the Assembly whether those recommendations have been implemented and what was the outcome?

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Speaker, in relation to the first question, I will certainly have a look at the report and, if I think it is appropriate, I would certainly be inclined to table it. My understanding in relation to the second question is that there are a number of recommendations there and some of those indeed, I understand, have been taken on board. I would need to go back and have a look at the report to see exactly what they are.

It was a wide-ranging report, which looked at a number of issues relating to declining enrolments, including, might I say, issues such as capping, which was actually rejected as a result of the consultation. A number of other strategies were implemented. I recall some of the strategies, such as specific courses in certain colleges. I am not too sure whether that was in high schools, but certainly having specific courses germane just to certain colleges was recommended. That certainly has been the case in the last couple of years. I think I am accurate in saying that that was the recommendation.

Several colleges have got specific courses which are not available at other colleges. For example, Copland College has some courses in relation to media, and there is some equipment in there, and also some vocational education and training courses which no other college has. Certainly there are some specific courses. As we well know, both Dickson College and Erindale College have some talented sports programs which other people do not.

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So, to answer the question, a number of the recommendations I believe actually have been implemented, Mr Berry. I will have a look at the report to see whether there is any problem in tabling it or not tabling it. Obviously, if there is, I will get back to you on that.

MR BERRY: I have a supplementary question. Is the reason why the recommendations of the report have not been fully implemented that it is too independent? Would you reconsider your reluctance to table the report against the background of the possibility of a motion requiring you to?

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Berry, I will have a look at whether there is anything in relation to the report that would mean that it should not be tabled. That is an advisory committee. There might be some issues around that. My understanding is that there were some recommendations there. As I indicated, I think some of them have been implemented. I will go back and have a look at the report and see, if there are recommendations which have not been implemented, why that is the case. It is an advisory committee which still operates.

The Government, I think, is always very keen to ensure that we do what we can to manage declining enrolments. That is a fact of life, and that is also a reason, Mr Berry, why I think it is important to have this debate in relation to declining enrolments, certainly in large areas of Canberra right across the system - because that report really was just aimed at looking at colleges and, I think, to a lesser extent, high schools - including, of course, primary schools as well. So, I think it is important to have the debate now in relation to declining enrolments right across the school system, realising that there are certain areas of Canberra where, in fact, enrolments will increase - obviously, in the new area of Gungahlin and, to a lesser extent, South Tuggeranong.

Women's Information and Referral Centre

MS TUCKER: My question is to Mr Smyth, as Minister for Urban Services. Minister, in light of International Women's Day being celebrated this week, this is an important question. The Women's Information and Referral Centre provides support, counselling and a full referral service to women in crisis and those needing assistance. This service is widely used by other organisations in the community sector as well, particularly the Women's Legal Centre. I believe that there was a review undertaken into the Women's Information and Referral Centre and a report provided to government. Will this report be made public?

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, the report has been provided to government. I am still considering that report. When appropriate, if appropriate, I will release it to the Assembly.

Ms Tucker: I think that was a yes. Was that a yes?

MR SMYTH: If appropriate, yes.

MS TUCKER: If appropriate. So, we will have a motion if you do not think it is appropriate, like the last question. My supplementary question is: Does the Government intend to change this service from a counselling and supported referral role that provides a training calendar to a service that merely hands out information and referral telephone numbers? If so, is this why a librarian is currently acting in the coordinator's role?

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I would have to find out about the librarian position. As I have said, I have the report and will consider it and, when appropriate, will release it.

Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, my question is also to the Minister for Urban Services. Can the Minister confirm that he has broken a Liberal election promise to maintain sufficient funding to the Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra for a full-time director by refusing to provide \$55,000 annual funding for the council next financial year? What justification does the Minister have for breaking this election commitment to the community, and how does he intend to explain to the 37 member organisations of the council his failure to continue to support the activities of the peak environment body in the ACT?

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, it is quite curious that Mr Corbell always starts his questions with an assertion of some sort of fact. I checked on Liberal Party election promises with the man - - -

Mr Corbell: They are usually true. They are a bit like independent studies, really.

MR SMYTH: See, this is it; he just does not like it when we get to the heart of it. I checked with the individual who was responsible for environment policy in the lead-up to the last election - Mr Humphries will confirm this - and it is his recollection that he made no such promise.

MR CORBELL: I have a supplementary question. Can the Minister confirm that a review was undertaken of the funding arrangements for environment groups which justifies this decision to remove funding from the council on the basis that it currently is provided? Will he table, before the adjournment of the Assembly today, a copy of the review and the Government's response? Further, will the Minister indicate whether or not he believes that the conservation council will be able to continue to effectively operate in its key role as the peak environment group for the ACT with an effective budget cut of 50 per cent?

MR SMYTH: Again, Mr Speaker, Mr Corbell makes assertions. These are not facts. There was a review, and I think it was quite a public review, of environmental grants funding. It was so public that, when we finished the review, we called for applications under the outcome of the review. The review itself said that we should make grants available under five categories. It is quite clear, Mr Speaker, that there is a large interest, and I expect a large number of applications for these grants. What Mr Corbell is saying is that under a grants process he wants me to guarantee funding for one group over another.

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Under a grants process, which is assessed by an independent panel, it is quite inappropriate for me to interfere.

As to the concerns of the conservation council - and I acknowledge the presence of Katheryn Maxwell and Nicola Davies from the conservation council here in the Assembly today - the ability is there for them to apply under any of the categories for funding. There is a special category called "advocacy and promotion" that would clearly suit their aims. In regard to any other projects that they wish to carry out in any other sections, they could apply for them as well. The independent review panel, I think, is headed by Professor Peter Cullen. If I were Professor Cullen I would be quite upset if Mr Corbell were insinuating that the grants process is not independent. He should withdraw that assertion.

Mr Corbell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I asked the Minister whether or not he would table the review, and he has specifically refused to answer the question. He has not answered the question.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I have already said that the results of the review are out there in the form of applications. People are applying under this review for grants now. If Mr Corbell refuses to accept that, that is his problem.

Canberra Retail Study

MR WOOD: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the BIS Shrapnel report, entitled "Canberra Retail Study", which you released on 11 December last year.

Ms Carnell: And is public, yes.

MR WOOD: Yes, indeed it is. I have a copy. Chief Minister, is the report as presented an independent study?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, that particular study has had input from all sorts of people. It depends on what your definition is, I suppose. But, yes, it has had input from all sorts of people. All parts of government, I assume, would have had input to that study. One thing I can guarantee is that I have not had input to the study yet, but I certainly plan to.

MR WOOD: The question then needs to be asked, Mr Speaker, as a supplementary: What was the extent of any doctoring or massaging of the report specifically to suit the Government's own purposes?

Mr Quinlan: That is a jolly good question.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, the process with BIS Shrapnel was the same sort of process that happens with all of these sorts of reports. There was input - - -

Mr Quinlan: Are you saying that it happened?

MR SPEAKER: Would you be quiet, please, Mr Quinlan. Thank you.

MS CARNELL: There was input from many groups into the BIS Shrapnel report - from community groups, from parts of government, from the retail sector. All sorts of people have had input to that document. If those opposite perceive that an independent report is one that nobody has input to except the consultants, then I have to say that there probably is not such a thing as an independent report anywhere, ever, under any government, at any time.

Mr Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Women's Information and Referral Centre

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I have further information for Ms Tucker. The report into the Women's Information and Referral Centre, I am reliably informed, was requested by Ms Gerdina Bryant and it was released to her apparently on International Women's Day last year. So, that report currently has been released to some individuals.

Manuka Car Park Development

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, I have an answer to a question, taken on notice, from Ms Tucker about dust at the Manuka site. According to officers from Environment ACT, dust suppression on site has met requirements and emissions have been observed to be at acceptable levels for a construction site. Kindergarten management has advised officers that dust was previously a problem but not in the last few weeks. Environment ACT was not made aware of the dust problem when it occurred. It is now difficult to determine what caused the problem, but current dust control on the site is satisfactory.

CityScape

MR SMYTH: Further to Mr Hargreaves' inquiry yesterday about CityScape and redundancies, I advise that the manager of CityScape Services, Mr Phil Grace, has briefed staff about the outcome of the recent tender process for horticultural and cleaning services in the Woden-Weston Creek area. He indicated to staff that restructuring of the CityScape work force would need to continue to reduce the number of full-time permanent staff and rely more on seasonal workers. The restructuring would continue to be achieved by way of voluntary redundancies, the cost of which would be borne by CityScape. Mr Grace did not advise staff or unions that approval had been given to borrow funds to cover the redundancies.

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Rural Residential Development

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, further to Ms Tucker's interest in Melrose Valley, I advise that the Government's response to the Rural Policy Taskforce report was prepared within the context of the then draft ACT and subregion planning strategy. The subregion planning strategy contains strategies for providing for rural residential development, in particular to limit and cluster growth of rural residential areas around specific nodes and to integrate rural residential development into the urban and rural settlement patterns to encourage servicing economies and assist in maintaining the viability, both economically and socially, of towns and villages. The areas identified by the Government in its response to the task force report for further planning detailed studies form an arc around the existing urban areas of Canberra, consistent with the above-mentioned substrategy.

Public Housing Tenants - Water Bills

MR SMYTH: Mr Wood asked a question about metering on ACT Housing properties. ACT Housing currently receives water consumption billing, including excess water, from ACTEW. ACT Housing then bills the tenant for any excess water charges. ACT Housing advises tenants of details of the excess water consumed if they request it. ACT Housing, in fact, authorised ACTEW in August 1998 to provide details of excess water consumption to tenants who request it. ACT Housing is considering authorising ACTEW to bill government tenants for excess water consumption directly.

Canberra Injectors Network

MS CARNELL: Mr Osborne asked a long question in the Assembly yesterday with regard to peer support for IV users. As Mr Osborne is not here, I seek leave to incorporate the response in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The response read as follows:

MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

10 March 1999

Mr Osborne asked the Acting Minister for Health and Community Care:

Recently the Minister for Health stated in the Assembly that funds will be for peer support to IV users. Could you please provide information on the program, how it works, the guidelines, names of people in Health Department who are involved in the program and involved in its

assessment? Could you tell us what process was involved for this tender and what other organisations tendered. Have you got a copy of the report referred to yesterday in the Assembly and could you provide a copy? I am really interested in the Survival report and whether it can be provided to the Assembly.

My answer is as follows:

Tender documentation was developed by the Department of Health and Community Care, following significant consultation with stakeholders in the alcohol and other drugs field. This documentation contained Selection Criteria which underpinned the selection of the successful tenderer for this service. This criteria included areas such as organisational structure, proposed program, ability to meet the standards set by the policy on peer drug support and education, and accountability measures.

The tender document also included information about the service to be offered, including specifications outlining the type of organisation and management structures, the outputs expected to be offered and the funding available to the successful organisation.

The tender document stated that "A peer based service is one in which intravenous drug users (IDU' s) have control over the direction of the service and at all levels of the organisation - not one just managed by health professionals or alcohol and drug workers which simply employs IDUs." The selection criteria reflected this statement in parts.

ACT Department of Health and Community Care received two submissions for this funding from Canberra Injector's Network Incorporated (CIN) and Assisting Drug Dependents Incorporated (ADDinc). Both were assessed on the advertised criteria through a series of three tender panel meetings, including a presentation by each of the agencies.

The tender panel considered that CIN met the criteria to a greater extent than ADDinc. Both agencies proposals offered a comprehensive range of programs, but the CIN proposal met the overall criteria to a greater extent and specifically the criteria reflected above, around the involvement of peer IDUs in the organisation.

All tenders conducted by the Department of Health and Community Care, follow the purchasing guidelines set out in the ACT Government Purchasing Policy, September 1994. These guidelines include criteria for selecting the tender panel. The composition of the panel is outlined below:

.Maarten van der Kleij - Chairperson and Voting panel member
Manager Community Services Purchasing, DHCC.

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.Fran Barry - Voting Panel Member - Health Strategies Development Unit, DHCC.

.Megan Rive - Voting Panel Member - ACT Justice and Community Safety, Corrective Services

.Carol McNiven - Non-voting Member (Industry Expert)
Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia.

Tania Shaw, Community Services Purchasing, DHCC was also in attendance as scribe for the panel.

The panel made a unanimous recommendation to the delegate, Mr Gordon Lee Koo, who subsequently granted the preferred provider status to the Canberra Injector's Network.

Both organisations have publicly expressed their satisfaction with the probity of the tender process, as reflected in The Canberra Times, Letters to the Editor, 5 March 1999 from ADDinc, and The Canberra Times page 12, 10 March 1999 from CIN.

The successful organisation, Canberra Injector's Network, is an incorporated organisation, and as such is guided by the rules of incorporation. The organisation has a management committee of 6 members who are responsible for managing the organisation. A reference group of relevant ACT community organisations will be established to advise the organisation.

CIN is currently developing a number of relevant policy and procedural guidelines for their workers which will ensure that the workers have a clear understanding of their roles, limitations and expectations. CIN will also be required to submit quarterly reports on their performance and expenditure to the Department, as is a requirement in all funding contracts over \$10,000 per annum. The contract with CIN will be managed by staff in the Financial Management and Contracting section of the department, who manage other contracts funded by the AIDS funding program.

CIN will offer a range of services relevant to their target group, including education and support in a range of venues, peer training, a needle and syringe exchange program, and outreach to IDUs not living or accessing the Civic based service.

An evaluation of the service will be initiated after it has been in operation for 12 months. This evaluation will be commissioned by the Department of Health and Community Care using an external consultant.

The "Survival" report was not commissioned by the Department of Health and Community Care. Requests for copies of this report should be directed to Assisting Drug Dependents Inc, the owners of the report.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation under standing order 46.

MR SPEAKER: Proceed.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, yesterday I heard Mr Corbell on ABC radio saying that I, as Minister for Planning, had introduced a draft variation to settle the route for the John Dedman Parkway. That was what was said, and we have a transcript coming to say that. It was what was said. I thought so.

Mr Corbell: I am not sure, but if you have got a transcript I will believe you.

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes, I am sure of what you said, Mr Corbell. It was said that I had introduced a variation. I did no such thing as Minister for Planning - - -

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Are personal explanations not generally in relation to matters which have occurred in the chamber? This is about something which was said outside of the place.

MR SPEAKER: Standing order 46 reads:

Having obtained leave from the Chair, a Member may explain matters of a personal nature, although there is no question before the Assembly; but such matters may not be debated.

It makes no reference to where this was. Please continue, Mr Humphries.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, in a press release, Mr Corbell has equated my announcement in 1997 as Minister for Planning that I supported the recommendations of the Maunsell study, that there should be a process put in place to settle the route for the road, with the decision announced this week by the present Minister for planning, Mr Smyth, that the Government will introduce a draft variation to the Territory Plan to effect that. But they are quite separate matters, and it is quite false to say that I did what Mr Smyth has already done this week.

MR CORBELL: I seek leave to make a personal explanation under standing order 46.

Leave granted.

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MR CORBELL: If it is the case that I indicated that Mr Humphries had introduced a draft variation in 1997, I apologise because that is certainly not the case. However, I understand, I may be corrected, that Mr Humphries indicated his intention for the Government to introduce a draft variation at a later stage and that Mr Humphries also indicated the Government's support for the route for the John Dedman Parkway - sorry, Gungahlin Drive extension - which was reannounced by the Minister for Urban Services yesterday. That was the intent of my statement yesterday.

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services): I seek leave to make a personal explanation, Mr Speaker.

Leave granted.

MR SMYTH: What I announced yesterday was not a reannouncement of the route. What I announced yesterday was that we would now proceed with the draft variation. In fact, if Mr Corbell paid attention, Ms Tucker asked a question about this subject in probably November or December of last year. She clearly understands the difference between announcing a preferred route and announcing a draft variation.

MR BERRY: It is the season for personal explanations, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to make a personal explanation pursuant to standing order 46.

Leave granted.

MR BERRY: During question time the Chief Minister accused me of being unreasonably mean spirited, I think, for not offering her congratulations on the recent employment and unemployment figures and on not finding anything wrong with them. I welcome the unemployment figures today, but I must say that I am yet to find a good reason to congratulate the Government on them because everywhere I go people say, "When are you going to get rid of this Chief Minister?". That is what happens with ordinary people in the street. Business people say to me - - -

MR SPEAKER: That is not a personal explanation. Sit down, Mr Berry. You may use the adjournment debate if you wish, and you will have five minutes there.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, I was accused of being unreasonably mean spirited. I can only base my judgment on the facts as they come to me, Mr Speaker. The facts are that people have no confidence in this Government. The unemployment figures are improving despite this Government. The people do not deserve a horror budget.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Sit down, Mr Berry.

Mr Humphries: Is he off his medication or something?

Ms Carnell: I agree. Mr Speaker, I will make an offer to Mr Berry. Mr Berry, I still do have my pharmacy. If you would like me to fill the prescription, I would be very happy.

Mr Berry: Not on your sweet life, not unless you taste it first.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Before we go on to the presentation of papers, it has been indicated to me that somebody made an interjection in that exchange that a member - namely, Mr Berry - is off his medication. If that is the case, I ask that it be withdrawn, please.

Mr Humphries: What, the medication?

Mr Berry: No, the accusation.

Mr Humphries: All right, I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Humphries.

PATIENT ACTIVITY DATA Paper

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister, Treasurer and Acting Minister for Health and Community Care): For the information of members, I present the information bulletin relating to patient activity data for the Canberra Hospital for January 1999.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE Paper

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer): For the information of members, I present the ACT Administration of Justice statistical profile for October to December 1998.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COUNCIL Paper and Ministerial Statement

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services): For the information of members, I present the National Environment Protection Council's report for 1997-98, including financial statements and a report by the Australian National Audit Office. I seek leave to make a short statement.

Leave granted.

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, under the ACT National Environment Protection Act 1994 the Government is required to table National Environment Protection Council annual reports within seven sitting days of the council's adoption of the reports. The 1997-98 NEPC annual report was adopted by the council at its meeting on 11 December 1998. NEPC describes 1997-98 as an historic year, with the making of the first three national environment protection measures, NEPMs.

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The NEPM for the national pollution inventory will lead to a significant database on emissions of specified pollutants to air, land and water and will ensure that both local communities and governments have information on emissions. It is expected that this will lead to a reduction in emissions to the environment. The NEPM for air quality sets Australia's first national air quality standards and the NEPM for the movement of controlled waste between States and Territories will ensure that the transport of waste across borders will not lead to illegal dumping. The involvement of stakeholders and the community will be enhanced by the NEPC review of the processes for the development of all future NEPMs. Another achievement was the release of the discussion paper on the assessment of contaminated sites and on used packaging materials.

LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) ACT - LEASES Papers and Ministerial Statement

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present the schedule of lease variations and change of use charges for the period 1 October 1998 to 31 December 1998 and the schedule of leases granted for the same period, pursuant to the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991. I ask for leave to make a short statement.

Leave granted.

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, section 216A of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991 specifies that a statement be tabled in the Legislative Assembly each quarter outlining the details of leases granted by direct grant, leases granted to community organisations, leases granted for less than market value, and leases granted over public land. The schedule I now table covers leases granted for the period 1 October 1998 to 31 December 1998. I am also tabling two other schedules in relation to variations approved and change of use charges for the same period. Mr Speaker, a record of all new leases and applications to vary Crown leases is available for public inspection at my department's shopfront at Dame Pattie Menzies House, 16 Challis Street, Dickson.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE A.C.T. - DISCUSSION PAPER Discussion of Matter of Public Importance

MR SPEAKER: I have received letters from Mr Hird and Ms Tucker 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 Ms Tucker be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The inadequacy of the discussion paper on rural residential development in the ACT released by the Government in September 1998.

MS TUCKER (3.33): Mr Speaker, I have put forward this matter of public importance because I do not think that the censure motion that was debated yesterday really addressed the actual problems with the discussion paper on rural residential development.

My intention is not to continue the debate from yesterday regarding the independence of this study, or to reflect on the debate in May of last year on whether the Assembly supports rural residential development. Today, I want specifically to examine the contents of this paper to see whether it really addresses the aims of the document which are stated at the beginning - to investigate the potential for rural residential development in the ACT and the identification of possible suitable sites. I should like to point out, though, that the debate in May of last year was primarily about the proposed rural residential development at Hall/Kinlyside and occurred before this discussion paper was released.

Now that we have this discussion paper that goes into the issue in more depth and describes the application of rural residential development from an ACT-wide perspective, it is legitimate for the Assembly to take the time to consider the issue of rural residential development again. I am not really concerned whether, at this point in the discussion, it is called an independent study or it is just called ACT Liberal Party policy. I am not involved in that part of the discussion. I am critiquing this document at the moment to see whether it does the job that it says it was supposed to do.

Firstly, there are a number of parts of the discussion paper where it appears that the conclusions do not match the text. For example, on page 5 the report says that this study has identified that there is a demand for rural residential development in the ACT, but when you look at the relevant section of the report there is no clear analysis of such a demand. In fact, the report says that there is already a substantial supply of land in the rural residential market in the surrounding region, with a 10-year supply in the pipeline. The report says that rural residential development in the ACT would be competing directly for the same market. In fact, the paper talks about how to create a demand for rural residential development in the ACT by offering a market niche of fully-serviced blocks.

While the executive summary states that the ACT and subregion planning strategy did not propose any rural residential development for the ACT, it did not say that it was inappropriate. That is a rather peculiar interpretation of the regional planning strategy. On page 12 of the report there is a contrasting description of the regional strategy. It states that the strategy was premised on the basis that rural residential development was not expected to be provided in the ACT. That is because relevant land in the ACT has been set aside for the expansion of Canberra or is already being used for rural purposes. The strategy recommended avoiding the proliferation of rural smallholdings outside designated areas by limiting and clustering growth around specific nodes and integrating rural residential development into existing settlement patterns.

What the Government is proposing in the discussion paper is completely at odds with the regional planning strategy. In fact, the focus of this paper is not on meeting an existing demand for rural residential development in the ACT, but on how we can out-compete the surrounding New South Wales region in the supply of rural residential land. That is totally contrary to how we should be relating to the surrounding region. Surely, the whole point of the ACT and subregion strategy was to develop a cooperative approach to development in the region to provide for the most efficient use of the land and to avoid negative environmental impacts.

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The paper admits that rural residential development in the ACT would be a new policy direction, but there is no discussion of what is wrong with the old policy of excluding this development, apart from the fact that the Government thinks that we are missing the opportunity of attracting here a few people who may be thinking of buying a rural property in surrounding New South Wales. There is certainly no discussion from a planning perspective of why the existing policy needs to be changed. It is of concern when you see political decisions made in a planning void. The Government needs to provide stronger justification for the change in policy.

Turning to the financial aspects of the report, the executive summary makes general references to the financial considerations that need to be taken into account, but the financial discussion in the body of the report makes clear that there would be a significant financial loss to the Government if it proceeded with rural residential development in areas that could have been used for standard residential blocks. Professor Max Neutze of the ANU has calculated from the figures provided in the study that there would be a government subsidy of between \$14,000 and \$31,000 per rural residential block. I find it amazing that, on the one hand, the Government is talking about the ACT's major budgetary problems yet, on the other, is prepared to accept a significant cost for the development of a relatively small number of rural residential blocks in the ACT. It should also be noted that the paper admits that these costs may be understated as it did not analyse the costs that would be imposed on future generations. That is a major oversight.

The paper noted that the low density of rural residential development means that there would be a lot of "dead running" in road travel and infrastructure services which could impose significant ongoing costs on the future community. It should be noted that these costs are all the more likely as the paper proposes that the blocks should be fully serviced, whereas in other rural residential developments many of the services, such as water and sewerage, are provided on site. In addition, rural residential areas would be too low density to justify local services, such as shops and schools, so the residents would have to travel elsewhere for these services. However, there is no analysis in the paper of the social impacts of this type of development and how they would be managed.

On the topic of infrastructure services, the paper makes no mention of whether ACTEW was consulted in the preparation of the paper. I do find it amazing that the paper recommends that the blocks be fully serviced and yet the organisation that most probably would provide the water, sewerage and electricity transmission services was not asked about whether that would be feasible and what the costs would be. I also note that there is no mention of how waste collection from these rural residential areas would be provided and what the cost would be. There is also no indication of what increased costs may arise from the increased fire services that would be needed in these areas, as I am sure that whoever moved into these areas would want their houses protected from fire.

Regarding the environmental management of rural residential development, I am concerned that the paper places more emphasis on the visual aesthetics and infrastructure requirements of rural residential development than on the environmental impacts of such development. The paper notes that much of the area identified for rural residential development contains yellow box and red gum grassy woodland, which is a declared endangered ecological community, but does not address how the conservation of these areas would be achieved. I am very concerned that, given the proposed block sizes are

very small, if blocks were located in this woodland environment the woodland would be destroyed by both the initial development activity and subsequent human pressure from the new occupants. We could expect to see the destruction and further fragmentation of habitat, the predation of native fauna by domestic animals, the introduction of weeds, the destruction of wildlife corridors, noise disruption to wildlife and increased road kills. The clearance of native vegetation around houses for fire control and the tendency of residents to want tidy lawns would have further impacts on nature conservation.

The paper suggests that property management agreements which are currently applied to rural leases could be applied to rural residential blocks to provide a means of ensuring appropriate land management practices, but I have serious doubts about whether that would work. I doubt that Environment ACT has the resources to develop property management agreements for over 200 rural residential blocks, let alone monitor and enforce them. I believe that the paper too easily dismisses these environmental problems by stating that more environmental evaluations and the development of environmental standards would be undertaken for the potential sites. That is the wrong approach to environmental impact assessment. Comprehensive environmental assessment should be an integral part of any preliminary feasibility study into particular land uses and should not be left until after a decision on the use of that land has been made, otherwise environmental assessment just becomes a process of trying to fix up the problems arising from decisions to proceed with a development that, perhaps, should not have been agreed to in the first place. It is becoming a common theme in debate in this place that the Government takes this approach.

Regarding the locations identified for rural residential development, there are a number of inconsistencies in these assessments which lead me to believe that the locations were determined not by a rigorous and comprehensive assessment process, but according to a predetermined government agenda. Melrose Valley has been identified as a preferred location for rural residential development, yet in the body of the report it is stated that extensive areas of the valley are steep, rocky and subject to land management problems and that providing an access road would be difficult and expensive. Pages 47 and 48 of the report basically give all the reasons why Melrose Valley is not suitable for rural residential development, yet they appear to have been overridden in the conclusions. Of course, the selection of Melrose Valley just happens to coincide with the Government's response to the Rural Policy Taskforce report, which pre-empted by some nine months the release of the Government's discussion paper.

Melrose Valley stands out particularly because it is currently a working rural property and in the Rural Policy Taskforce report it was recommended that such properties be given 99-year leases. However, in the Government's response to the task force's report, the Melrose Valley was the only location that was excluded from consideration for a 99-year lease because of the Government's intention to undertake a study into rural residential development. Mr Smyth did give me today an answer to a question I asked some time ago regarding that matter; but once again, unfortunately, the answer has not actually been to my question. Basically, the Government is saying that the areas identified by the Government in its response to the task force report for further detailed planning studies form an arc around the existing urban areas of Canberra. I was asking about the area that was actually excluded, which was Melrose Valley.

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Another site identified in the report is North Gungahlin, but the actual location and size of the site appear to be a movable feast. A failing of the paper is that the map provided does not indicate the actual areas being identified; it just indicates the general location with a star. The public is given no indication of the scale of the rural residential areas relative to other land uses. On page 49 the paper states that the North Gungahlin site is currently zoned for broadacre use. If you look at the Territory Plan, there is indeed an area to the north of Gungahlin and surrounded by open space that is zoned broadacre. However, on page 57 the paper states that the North Gungahlin site is identified for broadacre or low-density residential uses. Then on page 59, the North Gungahlin site is described as having an urban long-term use. The alternative use of this site for broadacre purposes seems to have been progressively ignored.

The other site identified is Kinlyside. Of course, we have already had much debate in this place about rural residential development there. The previous debate, however, was more about the process by which the site was given over to one developer rather than the suitability of the site for rural residential development. However, I am sure that to save some face over its past bungling the Government was keen to ensure that the paper identified Kinlyside as a good site for rural residential development. Despite this imperative, the paper still raises sufficient doubt about the acceptability of Kinlyside. I find it odd that Kinlyside has been identified for rural residential development when the table on page 55 indicates that there are many issues where further information is required for full assessment. In fact, the table indicates that environment, heritage and bushfire management issues require considerably more assessment as the paper was not even able to indicate whether these issues are likely to be an impediment.

In conclusion, the inconsistencies in this report make it ineffective as a comprehensive discussion paper on this controversial issue that will radically change the planning of Canberra's urban edge, if adopted. The paper indicates that pursuing rural residential development in the ACT does not make economic sense and that non-economic reasons would need to be drawn on to justify this type of development. However, the discussion paper fails to make a strong case that there are sufficient good reasons for why this type of development is appropriate in the ACT and fails to explain how all the environmental and other problems with rural residential development will be overcome. You just have to wonder how the Government made its original decision to promote rural residential development. This discussion paper, which was produced after the Government announced its intention to pursue rural residential development, certainly does not provide a good justification.

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (3.47): It is curious that, if there are so many flaws in this report, not a single member of the Assembly bothered to put in a submission during the consultation period, but we will take on board what Ms Tucker has raised on this issue.

I might start by saying that the Assembly has, in fact, played a role in shaping the rural residential study. Following commencement of the study by TBA Planners in early April 1998, the Assembly passed a resolution - on 28 May 1998 - supporting the Government's commitment to rural residential development in the ACT. The consultants were then requested to extend, and agreed to the extension, the existing engagement to accommodate recognition of the Assembly's resolution.

Mr Speaker, the additional work

also included further discussion of the range of possible infrastructure and servicing standards available for rural residential development and further sensitive analysis in the financial areas. The study was extended to reflect that and is highlighted by the executive director of Planning and Land Management in the report's foreword. This, therefore, was an independent consultant's report about where rural residential development might proceed, not about whether or not it should proceed.

Mr Speaker, I have total confidence in this report and the high level of professionalism that the consultants brought to the study and to its preparation. It is a discussion paper. It is meant to raise issues. It is meant to look at things such as planning issues, environmental issues, bushfire management, landscape issues, heritage and cultural values, and servicing and access issues, and I believe that it addresses those adequately. Mr Speaker, the report provides an assessment of the issues for the Territory, given that it was a stage 1 report. Further development of detailed planning policies and environmental guidelines will occur for any site selected to become a second stage study.

Mr Speaker, I have to make the point that the preparation of this report is being done and was deliberately amended to reflect the decision of this Assembly. In other words, this Assembly has already spoken on the matter and the Government is responding. I gather from events in the Assembly yesterday that the position of support for rural residential development has not changed. Mr Speaker, the study proceeded under standard working relationships between the consultants and their client. Indeed, the report was put together in the standard way that such things are done, through consultation between the consultant and their client, who was, of course, the department. The public servants that were managing the project in PALM ensured that the report addressed the terms of reference and the Assembly's position. That is their proper role. This they clearly did.

Mr Speaker, I then made a ministerial statement to the Assembly announcing the release of the discussion paper for community consultation and made it clear to this Assembly that the study was undertaken in the context of the Assembly's resolution of 28 May 1998 supporting the Government's commitment to rural residential development in the ACT. As I have said, the study investigated the suitability of a range of sites for rural residential development in a comprehensive way which addresses those issues - issues of planning, issues of the environment, bushfire management, and landscape, heritage and cultural issues, as well as the issues of servicing the blocks. Based on this assessment, the study recommended three potential sites for further detailed assessment. It also included a broad-brush analysis of the benefits and disbenefits of this form of development in terms of providing new housing and investment opportunities, the financial implications for the Territory and environmental management issues, and how these factors vary with different location choices. The study was prepared as a discussion paper for community comment, as was the Government's stated position.

Mr Speaker, the discussion paper was released for consultation on 29 October 1998 for an initial six-week period. That was extended to 8 January, due to a large amount of community interest in this issue. PALM officers held several meetings with key stakeholders throughout the consultation process, to provide opportunities for informed discussion. Some 31 submissions were received from individuals, interest groups, neighbouring New South Wales councils and government agencies. The issues raised in

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the submissions can be grouped under eight headings - planning policy, environmental management, financial implications, infrastructure, regional planning, heritage, landscape, and community.

It is curious, Mr Speaker, that we now have what is classed as a matter of public importance and yet, in the consultation period, it was not that important, because none of the Assembly members opposite took the opportunity to have their say and to reveal what they thought of the report. It is curious that we are in the position today of having this matter of public importance debate about the adequacy of a report that nobody managed to comment on or bothered to comment on. A report on the results of the consultation process is currently being prepared, in line with the Government's protocol. But, Mr Speaker, it is a discussion paper. It put out the issues as a first cut, and I think that it deals with the issues quite clearly.

The fact that the criteria used in examining potential sites are clearly reflected in the comments made by the 31 submissions would show that the community has a good understanding of this issue and in many cases has opinions on it. It is quite clear from the amount of rural residential development that goes on around the ACT that there is an extraordinarily large interest in having this sort of lifestyle available to individuals. We simply believe that there should be some access by ACT residents to it in the ACT.

The paper is a discussion paper. We have heard nothing from the crossbench or Labor on this issue, Mr Speaker. It will be interesting to hear what my colleague Mr Corbell says when he gets up to sing or damn the praises of this report. The report clearly sets out that it looked at a number of potential sites and discounted or included those sites, based on the selection criteria. It ranges from the Cotter Reserve and Casuarina Sands to Hall, Kinlyside, the Melrose Valley, North Gungahlin, the Pierces Creek forestry settlement, South Belconnen, the Stromlo forestry settlement, Tharwa, the Uriarra forestry settlement and West Belconnen, as well as the West Jerrabomberra Valley. Because of the analysis done, some sites have been discounted and some sites have been included, but before such sites could be released, Mr Speaker, further work would be done, and the Government has said that it will do further work before it proceeds with this. That will not happen overnight. It will take some time and it will follow the full planning process.

As a discussion paper, Mr Speaker, this discussion paper is more than adequate. The discussion paper clearly canvasses the areas of interest. It clearly, as a discussion paper, can lead debate and, as a discussion paper, has been responded to by the community.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe that what we have before us is a matter of public importance. We have an absolute lack of interest in this matter from the crossbench and the Labor Party, except for Mr Corbell, simply because they know that this debate is a con, this debate is a put-up. The discussion paper canvassed the issues very well and it is quite capable of leading the debate that would lead to any further development of future sites for rural residential purposes. We will now go through the submissions that we have received to make sure that there is nothing we have missed or need to address. Mr Speaker, rural residential development will happen in the ACT. I believe that there is a desire from the community to live in a rural residential setting in the ACT and this Government is very pleased to provide that.

MR CORBELL (3.56): Mr Speaker, the Labor Party does believe that this is a matter of public importance.

Mr Humphries: You do, anyway.

MR CORBELL: We can say the same thing, Mr Humphries, about why the Chief Minister is not here, but we are not, so do not be so childish. Mr Speaker, we do believe that this is a matter of public importance because it is a significant change in direction of the overall planning of the metropolitan structure of Canberra. The development of rural residential estates in the ACT would be a major departure from the built form of our city should rural residential go ahead, so it is entirely appropriate that Ms Tucker put on the agenda today a matter of public importance about the inadequacy of the Government's discussion paper.

I notice that Mr Smyth, throughout all of the comments he just addressed to this Assembly, did not mention one word once - and that word, of course, is "independent". He did not in any way mention the word "independent". That, Mr Speaker, is why this report is inadequate. It is inadequate, Mr Speaker, because it is not independent.

Mr Smyth: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order. Mr Corbell is out of order on relevance. He is not discussing the MPI. He is discussing the use of the word "independent". I think we all understand the importance of being correct in the usage of a single word. He should address the topic, if it truly is a matter of public importance, instead of fudging around the edges.

MR SPEAKER: Just get back to the topic.

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order: I am discussing the inadequacy of the discussion paper. One of the inadequacies of the discussion paper is that it is not independent, Mr Speaker, so I will continue to make reference in that regard.

Mr Humphries: I wish to speak to the point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR CORBELL: I do not like the Government taking up my time in the MPI debate on frivolous points of order.

Mr Humphries: I am sorry, you should not breach standing orders. Mr Speaker, standing orders have been breached. When Ms Tucker introduced this matter of public importance she made it very clear that she was not referring in the way she had drafted this proposal to the debate that took place yesterday. She was referring to the adequacy or otherwise of the contents of the report.

MR CORBELL: Is there anything that excludes that? There is nothing that excludes that.

Mr Humphries: The words exclude it.

MR CORBELL: Under what standing order does the debate yesterday exclude mentioning the same comment today?

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Mr Humphries: The standing order relating to relevance, Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: The inadequacy of the discussion paper.

Mr Humphries: The inadequacy of the discussion paper, not the process used to put the discussion paper together.

MR SPEAKER: Under standing order 51, a member shall not allude to any debate or proceedings of the same calendar year unless such allusion is relevant to the matter under discussion.

Mr Rugendyke: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order relating to the fact that I believe that we need a quorum to discuss these many interesting points of order and this matter of grave importance to this Assembly.

A quorum not being present, and the bells being rung -

MR CORBELL: Are you going to rule that it is not relevant to discuss independence?

MR SPEAKER: I just read standing order 51, Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, if I say to you that it is inadequate because it is not independent, is that out of order?

MR SPEAKER: I will reread standing order 51. It says that a member may not allude to any debate or proceeding of the same calendar year unless such allusion is relevant to the matter under discussion. That is standing order 51.

MR CORBELL: Is it your view that it is relevant?

MR SPEAKER: No, what I am saying is that you have explained your reference to “independent” in relation to this debate. I think it is different from what Mr Smyth thought you were referring to.

(Quorum formed)

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, the discussion paper has many inadequacies. One of those is that the Minister presented it as independent, and clearly it was not. Therefore, it is an inadequate presentation of the Government’s position. It is inadequate in that regard, Mr Speaker.

Last year I attended a forum on the development of rural residential estates in the ACT, held by the urban research program at the Australian National University. It was a very interesting discussion because, without exception, every speaker at that forum condemned this paper - condemned it as an ineffective analysis of rural residential development in the ACT; condemned it as completely unable to address the complex social, environmental and planning issues surrounding rural residential development. Mr Speaker, among the points that were made in that discussion was the fact that the discussion paper flew in the

face of the development of the ACT and subregion strategy, ignored the five or six years of work put into the development of the subregion strategy, which was premised on the basis that rural residential development would not occur in the ACT and that demand for rural residential development from the ACT would be met by the surrounding shires.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, this paper has so compromised that element of the subregion strategy that there are now shire councils surrounding the ACT which are contemplating allowing development in areas of land that were previously reserved for future metropolitan expansion of the national capital. That is what this planning Minister has done. He has, effectively, jeopardised the future metropolitan structure of the national capital by his decision and by this Government's decision to pursue rural residential development in the ACT.

Let me explain why. If the ACT Government thinks that the subregion strategy does not matter and that it can just go ahead with rural residential development in the ACT, then why on earth should shire councils that surround the ACT continue to freeze parts of their land which they could quite effectively use for rural residential development just in case the ACT wants to expand? Clearly, those councils are going to say, "The ACT is going ahead and doing its own thing. We will, too, because we will get some money from this land". I refer to land such as Gooromon-Jeir to the north of Hall which has been set aside on a longstanding basis for the future expansion of the ACT urban structure.

That is what this planning Minister has done, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. Some planning Minister! The planning Minister jeopardises plans that extend way beyond the life of self-government - back into the days of the NCDC - about the future metropolitan structure of the ACT, plans that are still accepted as part of the subregion strategy about the future urban development of the ACT. But he does not care about that. He just wants to release a few blocks of land quick smart, get a bit of cash and forget about the long-term planning consequences. That, unfortunately, is what has occurred through the strategy.

The independence of this paper is a matter of inadequacy. The Minister presented it as independent, the Minister argued that it was an independent assessment of the Government's policy approach; yet we have been able to reveal that it was far from that - that it was massaged, that the report was biased to suit the Government's position. It has been released on that basis, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. It has been released on that basis and it has been responded to by community organisations on that basis. That, to me, is a misleading of the community as to the independence of this study.

There is one final point that I want to make, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. It is in relation to the Minister's comment that, if it was so inadequate, why did not any Assembly member take the opportunity to comment when it went out for consultation. That is a bizarre and naive comment. It is bizarre and naive because everyone in this place knows that, unlike a citizen in the community, members of this place have far more opportunities to influence the policy approach - to influence the policy approach for government, to influence proposals put forward by government - through this Assembly and through its committees. We are in a privileged position in that regard. It is appropriate that the community provide the input and the comments that they believe are appropriate at the stage the Government provides that opportunity to them, as it should,

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and that the members of this Assembly provide their comments once that community comment has come in. That is not an unusual process. So, for the Minister to stand up in the Assembly and say, "You did not comment; therefore it is not inadequate", is absurd and naive and an approach which I hope no other member of this place would accept.

This report is inadequate. The Government should start again and produce a report with real independence and real integrity rather than the doctored and massaged report we have before us today.

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (4.06): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I will be quite brief in this debate. Frankly, I have to agree with my colleague Mr Smyth that it is hard to see how the inadequacies contained in a document, which is what Ms Tucker raised in her MPI - the inadequacies, so-called, of a particular document put out by the Government with input from a consultant - somehow constitutes a matter of public importance that should detain the Legislative Assembly of the ACT for an hour's worth of debate. Perhaps I am underestimating the importance that we should attach to this matter, but I have a feeling that it really does not deserve that kind of focus.

I think Ms Tucker and probably Mr Corbell and others would like to use a debate like this to come back and disguise what they really want, which is for us somehow not to proceed with the advent of rural residential development in the ACT. We have been as honest and up front about this issue as it is possible to be. We went to the last election saying, "We want to have rural residential development in the ACT". We put that to the electorate. The electorate supported us on that basis - interestingly, even communities which would be quite severely affected by this particular proposal. For example, it has often been suggested that the people of Hall would be particularly badly affected by the concept of rural residential development in and around that village. The fact is that that development was proposed, it was talked about, before that election, and the Liberal Party won more votes in the Hall Village polling booth - - -

Mr Berry: Because you kept it a secret.

Mr Corbell: It was an exclusive grant.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I can hardly hear myself think.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hird): Order! The Minister has the call. I heard Mr Berry interject and interjections are not allowed. It is unusual for Mr Berry to interject, I know. You would be surprised.

MR HUMPHRIES: I would be surprised, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. I would have thought that if there were any place in the Territory where you could take a barometer on the view about rural residential development, Hall was the place. Hall, like just about every other booth in the Territory, swung to the Liberal Party. (*Quorum formed*) I have forgotten where I was, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. Yes, we were reflecting on the inadequacies, so-called, of the discussion paper. Mr Corbell saw fit to raise the question of the independence of the discussion paper. I simply want to make an observation about the processes that are followed here.

It has been the practice of governments from both sides of politics to ask consultants to prepare certain papers and documents for them. When a government does so, it gives the particular consultant terms of reference and then, when the terms of reference are considered by the consultant, a report comes back. Sometimes, as the purchaser of a service, a department may feel that what they have got from the consultant does not live up to what they have bargained for. It is quite natural - in fact, it has been a process extensively used by governments of both persuasions - to have some discussion with consultants, as papers are being finalised or prepared, about the content of those papers. If you characterise that sort of discussion about what the commissioning party has sought from a document and the consultant's effort to meet that expectation as a doctoring of reports, then we have been guilty of doctoring reports and you have been guilty of doctoring reports, because you - - -

Mr Hargreaves: When? Name it. When?

MR HUMPHRIES: When you were in government.

Mr Corbell: Which report?

MR HUMPHRIES: I will produce them if you want, Mr Corbell. I can guarantee you that every report the Government - - -

Mr Corbell: I rise to a point of order, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. Mr Humphries has suggested that Labor Party members have doctored reports in government. He has made an allegation without any proof. It is grossly disorderly to impute an improper motive, which is what he has done, without evidence.

MR HUMPHRIES: Not to an individual. Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I have not imputed any motives to Mr Corbell and Mr Hargreaves - in fact, mostly to people who are not in this place any longer.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Mr Corbell, interjections are highly disorderly.

Mr Corbell: He is making imputations, which is highly disorderly.

MR HUMPHRIES: I will take up your challenge and I will produce the evidence. How about that, Mr Corbell?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure the Minister will.

MR HUMPHRIES: I can assure Mr Corbell that the practice that he so railed against is a practice that is used extensively, not just in this Territory but by every other government, and, if you think about it logically, so it should be, because it is about making sure that what you do - - -

Mr Corbell: Not when you call it independent.

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MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I have hardly had a moment without interjection from Mr Corbell, and I ask for your protection.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

MR HUMPHRIES: Thank you, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. It has been the practice of governments and departments to make sure that what they commission is what they get. That is not a question of doctoring or interfering, in the emotive language used by the Opposition; that is a question of making sure that the taxpayers' money which is expended in this process actually produces what the commissioning party or department happens to want. You can characterise that in all sorts of emotive language, for example, undermining the independence of consultants, but consultants only in a very few cases are being sought for their unadulterated views on a particular subject. The views of the Ombudsman, for example, on a particular issue, or the Commissioner for Health Complaints, or perhaps the Discrimination Commissioner, reports of that kind - - -

Mr Corbell: They are not consultants; they are statutory office-holders.

MR HUMPHRIES: Indeed they are. That is the point I am making. Those sorts of people produce reports which are independent in that sense. But the work consultants do in the sense of producing reports for the Government, for example, to produce as its own work in due course - in this case a discussion paper on what the Government proposes by way of rural residential development - is a collaboration between the consultant and the Government or a government department. In that respect, there is a requirement, there is an expectation, that the two parties to that contract will work together, will discuss, will negotiate what is in the document. There is nothing illegitimate about that; nor, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, is there anything exceptional about it, because the Labor Party did the same thing in government.

Mr Corbell: Prove it.

MR HUMPHRIES: I will prove it. I hope, Mr Corbell, that when I do prove it, you will be prepared to be forthcoming with some sort of retraction of what you have said.

MR HARGREAVES (4.16): I was not going to speak in this debate; but, I must admit, I was led to it. Mr Humphries spoke with his usual eloquence. I must congratulate him on his eloquence. It is absolutely phenomenal; I am really impressed with it. But it was a bit like a piece of Swiss cheese on this issue. We are talking about a particular report. Nobody would ever deny the Government's right - any government's right; indeed, anybody's right for that matter - to commission a report by an expert and then put out that report and say, "This is the gospel according to St Gary". That is fine; that is great. Where honesty comes into it, though, is in the portrayal of it as something entirely different, portraying it out there in the public arena as an independent report. Interested parties who pick up such a report believe it to be, by that title of an independent report, an unbiased document which in fact contains the expert's view, because that is why you engaged that consultant, and the Government's view, because the Government commissioned it and says, "We want you to say X".
But, in the provision of it with an

independent label, the interested observer may very well want to see a counterargument sitting up there, and then a judgment about which one of the two arguments actually holds the cup full of cold water.

This report has been disowned by its author because of the amount of interference that has been put through it. When it went through the Government's massage parlour, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, it came out completely different from the way the author intended it to look. The author was not just telling the Government something it already knew; he was supposed to be telling the general public out there what the situation ought to be.

Mr Corbell: What he thought.

MR HARGREAVES: What he thought. Thank you very much, Mr Corbell. Not what the Government felt; what he felt, because he is an expert and he has been portrayed as an independent expert. Indeed, his position as an independent expert has been so compromised that the report has notations in the margins saying, "This bears no relation to my original report". He has totally disowned it. He has exposed it for the fraud and the sham that it is. Why on earth did the Government waste so much money, instead of just sitting down and writing its own report and saying to the people of the ACT, "Here is what the Government feels about the issue."? Instead, the Government went through the sham, an expensive exercise, of commissioning an independent report, labelling it as an independent report, and sending it through its own massage parlour to come out the other end absolutely and unadulteratedly wrecked.

I agree with Mr Humphries that the Government can put forward any reports it likes and it can have a significant amount of input. Indeed, it can change the flavour; I have no problem with that, either. It is the portrayal of the report as an independent one or as a government one. This one was portrayed as an independent one; so much so that the Minister for Urban Services has retracted the word "independent", for which I congratulate him. Let us not snow anybody here. Let us not put up smoke and mirrors here. This report, now, is not worth the paper it is written on. It is not worth the paper it is written on because it is now shrouded in so much suspicion. It is an absolute product of the Government's massage parlour - I cannot emphasise that enough - that nobody in his right mind would pick it up and say that it is an unbiased look at a particular subject. That will not happen. Either you change the whole nature of the thing and put it out as your own report or, if you really are genuine about having an independent report so that we can all see that there is an unbiased approach to the subject, chuck this one away, learn the lesson and get another one.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: The discussion is concluded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, on a point of clarification, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

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MR SMYTH: In the absence of the *Hansard* of earlier today, I want to clarify something that I said at the end of question time. I am not quite sure whether I made myself clear. I just want to clear up the chronology of the review of the Women's Information and Referral Centre and the provision of the report from the review. The report was presented to the department in October 1998. The Chief Minister made a speech on 12 November 1998 supporting the continuing work being done by the centre. On 25 November 1998, I received the consultant's report and noted that the report would be released shortly to relevant parties. Importantly, and this is the matter on which I am unclear about what I said earlier today, the letter to Gerdina Bryant from the department which provided a copy of the Women's Information and Referral Centre report was signed on 9 March 1999. I think I actually said that it was released on International Women's Day last year when, in fact, I should have said International Women's Day this year, last Monday. I am not sure what I said, but wish to clarify it so that we are all quite clear.

BUDGET PREPARATION - PRINCIPLES

Debate resumed.

MR BERRY (4.23): Much has been said in relation to this matter and in many ways it is difficult not to repeat many of the claims and the criticisms of the Carnell Government's approach. Those criticisms have been quite legitimate. Today's debate is a sign that this Government has lost its way. On Tuesday I was amused to hear the Chief Minister say, "This is not about a 10-second media grab". I thought, "Gee, that is a relief. Tonight when I watch the television there will be no sign of the Chief Minister. We will get the night off". But when I watched the news at 6 o'clock on Tuesday evening, sure enough, the whip-wielding Chief Minister was there for the 10-second media grab. So we were misled again, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. You can always expect this Chief Minister to say whatever comes into her head if it suits the situation.

This is a government that has run out of ideas and it is now faced with the perils of populism. This Government has now discovered that it is unpopular and it is trying to shift the blame onto other people. It wants to pass the responsibility of governing to other people and to switch the blame.

In proposing this motion the Chief Minister has attempted to misrepresent the role of the Assembly and her own role. It is the role of the Executive to develop budgets, and the role of the Assembly is to scrutinise them. Under our system of government there is a range of roles and responsibilities of the Executive. In the ACT many of the powers of the Chief Minister include powers similar to those which might be exercised by the Governor-General or Governors in other jurisdictions. The Chief Minister is the head of the ACT Executive. Let us have a look at the power of the head of executive government as stated in *House of Representatives Practice* at page 14:

- . choosing, summoning and dismissing Members of the Federal Executive Council.

The Executive here, of course, is a mirror image of that. It continues:

- . establishing departments of State and appointing (or dismissing) officers to administer departments of State (these officers are Members of the Federal Executive Council and known as Ministers of State) ...

- . directing, in the absence of parliamentary provision, what offices shall be held by Ministers of State ...

- . appointing and removing other officers of the Executive Government ...

And on it goes. Thankfully, this Chief Minister does not have the role of acting as commander in chief of the naval and military forces. That would involve the handing over of far too much power to this slaphappy, can-do Minister. We have had enough explosions and accidents in this Territory to assure us that that would be a very risky move.

Let us see what the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act has to say about the Executive in Part IV. At section 37, under the heading “General powers of Executive”, it says:

The Executive has the responsibility of:

- (a) governing the Territory with respect to matters specified in Schedule 4 ...

Tempting though it is, I will not read out all of those responsibilities, but there are dozens of them, ranging from Territory insurance, sales and leases of goods, registration of instruments, education, and so on. That is the role of the Executive. Section 37 continues:

- (b) executing and maintaining enactments and subordinate laws; and
- (c) exercising such other powers as are vested in the Executive by or under a law in force in the Territory or an agreement or arrangement between the Territory and the Commonwealth, a State or another Territory; and
- (d) exercising prerogatives of the Crown so far as they relate to the Executive’s responsibility mentioned in paragraph (a), (b) and (c).

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, what this Chief Minister wants us to do is make sure that she is able to maintain these powers and the perks that go with it, but give the responsibility to us for providing her with the money to carry out her functions. She wants us to do that without the resources which these Ministers have to back them in the

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preparation of the budget. For us to take on that role would be irresponsible. It would be impossible for us to come up with a comprehensive, complex budget without the resources which are available to Ministers. There are 17,000 public servants out there, available to Ministers and to the Executive, to assist them in the preparation of the budget and to carry out their functions under the self-government Act.

I am surprised that Ministers would support moves by the Chief Minister and try to encourage this smoke and mirrors act. What they seem to be doing is saying, "Our jobs are redundant. We do not need to be here any more. We could hand it over to others in the place who would probably be more competent". Well, on the last point they are correct, but the fact of the matter is that they hold the role at this point and should perform the role in accordance with the duties laid out under the self-government Act.

I think you also need to have a look at standing orders 200 and 201. They make it very clear. I quote:

An enactment, vote or resolution for the appropriation of the public money of the Territory must not be proposed in the Assembly except by a Minister. Such proposals may be introduced by a Minister without notice.

Limitations on amendments

A member, other than a Minister, may not move an amendment to a money proposal, as specified in standing order 200, if that amendment would increase the amount of public money of the Territory to be appropriated.

That is consistent with the self-government Act. Again it makes it clear that this nonsense motion that the Chief Minister has put up is merely a public relations exercise, quite contrary to what she said when she opened the debate on Tuesday - that this is not about a 10-second media grab. Well, that is probably true in one sense. It is not about one 10-second media grab, it is about many; but mostly about shifting the responsibility from her to others. That has been the hallmark of this Chief Minister's reign, if I can call it that, here in the ACT. Quite clearly, she is asking us to do her job for her.

To look at it another way, the Chief Minister, as I said earlier, is trying to shift responsibility. As I said earlier, it is the role of the Executive to develop budgets and it is the role of the Assembly to scrutinise them. Ever since the Chief Minister stopped being a member of the Opposition we have seen her anger over scrutiny. She has attacked not only the Estimates Committee but the individuals on it. It is not the role of the Opposition and the crossbenchers to develop budgets. The Opposition would, of course, offer itself for government, given the opportunity, and I am quite confident that the Opposition, Labor, would do a far better job. We certainly would not try to divest ourselves of the responsibility to deal with the matters given to us under the self-government Act.

I have been through the issue of staffing and have made it clear that the resources that are available to these Ministers make it a joke to suggest that the responsibility should be handed over to others. Of course, the Chief Minister would like everybody to come up with wild suggestions in relation to the budget so that she could wander out and take a few more 10-second media grabs, criticising them. I have no doubt that the Chief Minister will be saying time and time again, "Look, I gave them the opportunity and they couldn't come up with anything".

We always hear the rhetoric of the ACT living beyond its means, but one has to reflect on the budgets which have put us there. Many of those budgets have been the work of this Treasurer. This Treasurer should have thought of the bottom line when she played fast and loose with taxpayers' money on several occasions. Many of those have been raised throughout the period of this Assembly. The Chief Minister and Treasurer seems to think that it is her role to spend and our role to find the money - you know, the all care and no responsibility trick.

We have had an ad hoc government. Decisions are made on the hop, without consideration of the implications. Now we are being asked to provide the answers. The trouble is that the Treasurer has left us nothing but questions. We have had questions about public money spent on the failed Kinlyside deal, something which haunts this Government and will continue to do so. We have had the Minister responsible for rural residential policy in the ACT criticising himself in recent times, expressing grave concern in himself about his performance, and all of his colleagues agreeing with him, all voting for a motion which expressed grave concern in the Minister. They sit there barefaced and say, "We are competent". They do not think the Minister is competent, the Minister himself does not think he is competent, and still they go through this pretence of being able to govern the Territory.

Then, of course, we think about all of the monuments of the Chief Minister, Kate Carnell, the moving of Craft ACT into Ainslie Primary and questions about the futsal slab. We could ask further questions about what we got out of that. What did we get out of the futsal slab? We made a donation to the futsal people. The Chief Minister went to Rio de Janeiro. We saw her on television, wandering the streets of Rio de Janeiro with one of her staff members and the head of her department, and she came back and the result of it was a futsal slab. I do not know anybody in the Territory who would be too happy about that. That is an example of the way that this Chief Minister and this Government have steered the Territory.

Sure, people will say that the futsal slab cost only a small amount of money. It started off as a very small amount of money, but it grew. I think the quotes were \$80,000 to start with. It ended up costing about \$250,000 and every time somebody uses it they have to spend another \$30,000. For example, it was used for futsal. I think the last game of the first tournament was washed out because the slab really needed a roof over it. Then players were dissatisfied with the surface because they used to suffer injury, so a \$30,000 mat was put on it to make it safer and then stored away when they were not using it. I rather think it should be checked for silverfish at the moment because it has been stored away for a long time.

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Then it was decided that another use might be appropriate, blade skating, and a little fence was put up. I understand that cost about \$30,000 and that is stored away somewhere. Pretty soon we will have a huge debt accruing because of all these storage places used for storing these bits and pieces that we stick onto the futsal slab from time to time. In the scheme of things, it is not much money, but it tells you all you need to know about the way the Government operates. That is what it tells us. If they are prepared to do that with a little bit of money, well, you can back it in that they are doing it with a lot.

Yesterday one of my colleagues mentioned the Acton-Kingston land swap. All that has ever done is cost us money, continuing money, and there is more to come. It will not stop. We heard much about the Feel the Power campaign. It may have had its last whimper, although I did glimpse a couple of Feel the Power badges around here on the other side. Where is yours, Mr Hird? Have you got on Feel the Power? No, you have not got it on. That is a bit disloyal.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, this Feel the Power campaign has had its last whimper, I hope, because it has been one of the most unpopular things impacted on this place. The Feel the Power aeroplane had difficulty making all of its flights and, as was mentioned by my leader, there was the Woodies match. I think I said at the time that the sponsoring of the Woodies by ACT Forests seemed to be a natural placement. They fitted well together - Woodies and forests. I said at the time, "It is just as well they never got Pat Cash to play a demonstration match here, otherwise the Treasury would have been involved", and you would never know how much money was going to be spent if that was the case. Then there was the Sydney office. The latest tourism initiative from the Chief Minister is to offer to climb the flagpole naked if that will attract two or three. I could tell the Chief Minister that I think that would be about as popular as the Feel the Power numberplates and I would not try it on. It would be a waste of her time. She would be better off knitting or something like that.

In all of these cases taxpayers' money was spent on ill-considered projects that were seen as favourites of this Chief Minister who does not worry about the bottom line and who has been supported by others in the Assembly. We have also had questions about taxes and charges and how unfair some of those have been, and the bad management, the lack of consultation, and ignorance of their own charter to the community on consultation. How many times have we seen that fall apart, notwithstanding the 10-second media grab to launch it? There were cuts to youth centres which dared to raise questions or to disagree with the Chief Minister.

We have also heard the cries of those in the community affected by the insurance levy, which I mentioned earlier, and the emergency levy, and these people are often the most vulnerable, people on fixed incomes and on pensions. Then there were the increased bus fares for certain school students. That still lingers for this Minister for Urban Services who has had some difficulty with the matters which he has had to deal with. He has had difficulty with buses. He has had difficulty with Feel the Power numberplates. He had no difficulty voting for a motion of grave concern in himself yesterday. He voted for that fairly enthusiastically, which was quite puzzling. Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I think what we see here is essentially a rabble.

Today we heard news of good figures for unemployment in the ACT, but I have to say that it is my view, given my constant contact with the community, that these things are happening despite the actions of the Government, because nowhere in my travels does anybody come up to me and say, "Gee, they are doing a good job. Gee, they are doing a good job in there. We love them. We love them". When you go over here to the shopping centre somebody comes up and says, "When are you going to get rid of that Government?". When you go down to the service station you see people shaking their heads. Go onto a building site and you see people shaking their heads. They say, "When are you going to do something about these people?". I say, "Well, it's not up to me. It is up to others who have responsibilities. If I had my way I would change it tomorrow, but there are others in this place who have supported the Government and it is their responsibility more so than mine".

Mr Osborne: I did not vote for her.

MR BERRY: Well, at the end of the day, the responsibility has to be shared around. Our colleagues from the crossbenches who supported the instalment of this Chief Minister have to share the responsibility, too. It is not much good saying, "It is nothing to do with us", because it really does have something to do with you. That is your choice and you are welcome to it. I guess you have to live with it. There are a few other things which concern me, too. One is the education system.

I would like to foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to the motion which - - -

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hird): Order! Mr Berry, we are dealing with Mr Stanhope's amendment at the moment, as I am sure you are aware. I just bring that to your attention.

MR BERRY: You may have missed what I said, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. I wish to foreshadow that later on I will be moving an amendment to the motion which goes to the issue of the Government being held responsible for its election commitments. The last matter I want to deal with is education. Education, I think everybody agrees, is the basis for our society. At the last election I think Mr Osborne said that 200 people should go out of central office into the schools. Well, 75 have gone out of central office and guess what? Not one of them went into the schools. Twenty-five teacher classifications have gone and that is all because the Government breached its election promise.

Mr Osborne: What is going to happen to the education budget?

Mr Smyth: The Government has not breached its election promise.

MR BERRY: The Government said that it would maintain its budget in real terms. It did not.

Mr Smyth: It has absolutely maintained it in real terms.

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MR BERRY: It did not. It provided CPI funding for education and then funded its election promises out of the CPI increase, as well as taking \$1.9m to fund its bottom line. If you call that fulfilling an election promise you have got a twisted view of the world. The fact of the matter is that you did not fulfil your election promise.

Mr Smyth: We certainly have. We are very proud of the maintenance of the real terms guarantee.

MR BERRY: You should be embarrassed. You did not fulfil your election promise. In fact, you cut funding to education by about \$3.8m, almost all of the money which was given to education to cover the CPI. Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, this is a government that has shown its style over and over again. It is a government that is wasteful of community resources, is scornful of community services, and bleats that it is time that somebody else took responsibility for it.

I see that the Chief Minister, the former Health Minister, has made some comments about health costs in the ACT and how much over national standards they are. That suggested to me that she wants to play the lowest common denominator game and bring us back to the lowest standard in Australia. Well, I am not going to be in that, and neither will most members of this Assembly. At the end of the day, health costs in the ACT have grown because of this Chief Minister. This Chief Minister has caused health costs to grow, so she cannot blame us for that. We all recall the \$80m extra that went into health over the last term when she was Chief Minister. We now have a situation where the new Health Minister is dealing with a budget blow-out of a magnitude which is yet to become clear.

When it comes to the crunch we have a situation where we have a Chief Minister who is saying to the Opposition, "Look, you have to give me the ideas. I just spend the money. I spend the money to make myself look good. You give me the ideas about how to get it. I spend the money to keep myself secure. So Mr Moore gets a ministry and all the trappings that go with it. You have got to provide it for me. I have a need to spend all this money. I need to keep the community happy, but you have to take the blame for providing it. If you cannot come up with the answers, anything that I do is your fault". Well, Chief Minister, if you cannot hold down your job responsibly and in accordance with the self-government Act, and in accordance with the way that we have been conducting self-government here in the ACT over three-plus terms now, it is about time you gave it away and gave it to somebody else who can.

Labor is in a position to provide responsible government for the Territory. We can do it in accordance with the usual standard expected of responsible government. It is clear now that the Chief Minister cannot. It is clear now that her populist approach has caught up with her. She cannot deal with unpopularity and she cannot manage. The latest example of that has been the Government's vote of grave concern in one of their own Ministers, and he is still there.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, the Government has no case to argue here. This motion has inevitably been a waste of time which has led us nowhere. They would be better off dealing with the budget in accordance with the first paragraph of their motion, and that is deliver a budget which fulfils the community's needs.

MR OSBORNE (4.48): I am tempted to incorporate my speech in *Hansard*.

Mr Humphries: Yes, go on. We will support that.

Mr Wood: You can. I see your point.

MR OSBORNE: No, I will read it.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Osborne, you have the call.

MR OSBORNE: Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I think it would be easy for us to be a little bit cynical about this exercise today. I recall that when we spoke about it a number of days ago certain members of the Opposition and the United Canberra Party chose to do that, pointing out that perhaps this was an attempt by the Government to embarrass this Assembly for refusing to rubber-stamp its plans for ACTEW, but I think this is a challenge that we, as an Assembly, should be prepared to take up.

Instead of standing in this chamber today and being negative, I think we should at least be positive that today is a step forward. I do not think it is good enough just to say, "You cannot do this, you cannot do that", without at least giving the Government some idea of what is acceptable to this chamber. We are a small parliament and the reality is that there will probably be minority governments for the foreseeable future, so we should embrace change and over the next year or so refine the budget process.

I think the reality is that the sale of ACTEW was a financial mirage. It did not solve the underlying problem in the ACT budget - that we spend more than we earn. It would be the equivalent of hocking the family silver to pay the electricity bill. Selling ACTEW was the easy way out. What this Government has to do, and what this chamber has to allow it to do, is to make sure that we cut the gap between what we earn and what we spend so that one day we can earn at least equal to what we spend. That is good financial management. That is making the really hard decisions. There are only two ways to do that - raise more money and/or cut costs - and, as I said, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I believe that we have all but exhausted our revenue-raising options. If the Government honestly wanted our input into specifically addressing the points of this motion, they would put the resources of their departments at our disposal. I could come up with a budget too.

Mr Wood: I think age is catching up with you. Do you want to borrow these?

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: You might wish to borrow Mr Kaine's glasses, Mr Osborne.

MR OSBORNE: No, my speech has been printed on letterhead paper, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker.

Mr Kaine: The trouble is that someone else wrote his speech, Harold.

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MR OSBORNE: I actually wrote this speech, Mr Kaine. I could come up with a budget too if I had the Office of Financial Management writing it for me. I could look like a genius if every word written down and proofread by a bevy of public servants was available, but I and other non-government members do not have that luxury. I am prepared at least to be positive and to take up the challenge. At the same time I make the point that we on the crossbenches and, to a certain extent, the Labor Party do not have access to all the information in making our points. For example, I do not know where all the money comes from because the Government chooses not to make that clear, one example being the issue that we spoke about in the Assembly the other day, the arbitrage system.

If there is one section of the budget where both major parties, and the Government in particular, really ought to know better than their present policies it surely must be in the area of education. I have singled out the Liberals for special criticism, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, because I believe they really do know better, while I am not sure that the penny has actually dropped for the other side. The days of "Let's keep every school going just the way it is, no matter what the cost" have well and truly gone. I think those days actually passed us by some time before the beginning of self-government, but, as I believe the Alliance Government found out the hard way, actually closing a school in defiance of the local community's wishes is a nasty business. To give Mr Kaine and his cohorts some credit, however, they did take action, and take it within the context of having only a short timeframe to react to budgetary pressures.

In the ensuing eight or nine years though there has been no obvious planning put into coping with the falling student enrolments. Most of Canberra's schools north of Woden were built at the direction of the Commonwealth during times of boom growth in this city.

Mr Kaine: It is better to put it on the back of the page, Paul.

MR OSBORNE: I am going to have this problem every five minutes or so, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, as I get to a new page.

Mr Smyth: Perhaps Mr Osborne's staff could bring down a reprinted speech, for his convenience.

MR OSBORNE: Without the letterhead. Too many schools were built and it has been only a matter of time ever since before the critical mass of students in some of those schools fell below the level where what most people would refer to as good education could be expected. After seeing how hard it was to close schools in the past, nothing or very little has been done since then about planning ahead. Some of the vulnerable schools from a decade ago are now on the borderline of being too small, with no hope of recovery. It seems that the present Government's approach is to wait until the student body is too small and then strangle it by stealth.

The point I would like to make is that no school should have to wait until it is at the point of extinction before being told that a hard decision needs to be made. With some forward planning, decisions that hard should rarely have to be made. It has been speculated over the last couple of weeks that a wholesale slaughter of primary schools is on the horizon, and I would like to put on the record that I do not support that. But let us put some of

those schools which are vulnerable out of their misery now and stop kidding them that everything is going to be all right. The Minister has enrolment projections covering the next five years and schools can be identified now as being natural candidates for merging or for sharing facilities with other schools. In cooperation with their communities, let us identify their options now and start them on a process so that they can begin to cope with the realities of changes which are about to happen. If we do not, at some time in the near future a hard decision, even a courageous decision, is going to have to be made, and who likes making those in the face of community backlash.

As I said before, I raised this issue during the last election in the light of a policy for school mergers and a greater degree of school-based management, and I was hammered by everybody, including the present Education Minister. I remember it well. I remember the Health Minister saying that I should stick to football. Mr Moore is not here today, and I think it is lucky for him because I can stand up here today and say that I have been consistent in relation to my stance towards education. God alone knows how he will be able to describe his stance in relation to education. I would like to hear from the Chief Minister, given what she said in the last couple of days about cuts being made, whether she intends making a cut to the education budget given that I believe one of her Ministers will vote against the no-confidence motion in himself.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, during the ACTEW debate it was stated over and over again that ACTEW was our biggest asset. I do not believe that this is true. If you pick up the last set of budget papers and turn to the section on housing you will find that the biggest asset this Government owns is its housing stock. Eleven per cent of all housing in the ACT is owned by the Government. This is yet another example of an overhang left over from the days when the Commonwealth ran this town. Back in the 1960s and 1970s people virtually had to be bribed to come and live here, and one of the bribes on offer was a government house.

Today we have the highest percentage of public housing of any jurisdiction in Australia. I am sure that Mr Smyth will correct me if I am wrong, but it is my understanding that our hands are tied to some extent with this stock by the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. I understand that if we sell any of this stock we can only use this money to buy more public housing, a catch-22 situation. Well, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, it is time that the public servants who had so much success convincing the Grants Commission that the ACT needed more money because of the special circumstances had a go at changing the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. No, we cannot just sell great slabs of housing because we will flood the real estate market. However, I think we should be prepared to support the Government in innovative moves to start off-loading housing stock. Perhaps we could come to some similar arrangement as the Government did with the car fleet. Perhaps we can get a private sector company to manage some of the stock and start collecting the rent, as we also have the largest percentage of tenants in the country who are in arrears.

Mr Smyth: Not true anymore.

MR OSBORNE: Not true? Not true anymore.

Mr Smyth: Was.

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MR OSBORNE: Was. It is still a problem though. I would also like to see the rule of efficiency laid over the Government's business incentive scheme. If the Government truly wants my help in formulating a budget then it can come clean and give this place a complete account of what has been spent so far, in what ways and to what effect. I believe a significant amount of money has been wasted on business and welfare and it is time to stop throwing good money after bad. I would like a complete cost-benefit analysis of this section of the Government's business.

Moving on to roads, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker: Is it my imagination or is every square inch of road in Canberra being repaved at the moment? I know that maintenance is better than letting the asset run down completely, but I question the amount that we spend on roadworks in this Territory. It may be that we have to put up with streets that are a bit more like those of Sydney and Melbourne in the future to try to save some money.

Finally, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, before the last election I proposed significant changes to the way this place was run. I proposed that we look at a number of options for using the complete talents of this place more completely in the budget process. I proposed a draft budget and was ridiculed by the Government for not having every element of how the proposal would work in place before floating the idea. As I have said, I wish I had the Government's resources. This is an issue that has been covered in the review of governance committee. I was interested recently to see the Business Council of Australia proposing a more open budget process nationally where business could have an input into the way the Federal budget was formed. I have found in my four years here that things - - -

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It being 5.00 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Smyth: I require the question to be put forthwith without debate.

Question resolved in the negative.

BUDGET PREPARATION - PRINCIPLES

Debate resumed.

MR OSBORNE: I have found in my four years here that things are shouted down as impossible only when the Government does not want them to be done. Letting this parliament have a meaningful say in the budget process is not a novel idea. The

United States Congress has a big say in the formulation of that country's budget process, a process that is more complex than doing the numbers in the Territory. If they can manage it, so can we. I have been saying this for a couple of years now, but, hopefully, today is a first step forward.

Our present budgetary system, I am sure, works fine for a typical Westminster majority parliament, but, as members may have noticed, we do not have one of those and all the expectations are, as I have said earlier, that we probably never will. If that is to be the case, this Assembly needs options to come forward with a new budgetary system, one that by its nature will work within the constraints that a minority government finds itself in, and I believe that a draft budget is one such option.

During my time as a member each budget has been presented as a "take it or leave it" package. Until now I have supported these budgets even though I think all have contained some ideas that I have not been completely comfortable with. One day, however, the answer from the parliament may well be "leave it" at a time when reasonable adjustments could be made to keep the majority of members happy.

A draft budget will see the Government retain its prerogative to set the bottom line, but everything above that could be adjustable so long as the net outcome remained the same. In other words, if the Government proposed to reduce the deficit by \$10m from the previous year and chose to do this by introducing a certain levy to increase revenue, then this could be adjusted to, say, having a combination of a smaller levy, an increase in rates, and reducing the level of a service. All of this could be done with the help of the wider Canberra community. The downside is that this style of budgeting would require a lot more cooperation than we usually see from the major parties on financial matters and a far greater acceptance by them of the realities of minority government. The message for you both today is that, for the time being at least, this is as good as it gets; so, the sooner that you adjust the budgetary framework, the better the people of Canberra will be served.

My final point today, Mr Speaker, and it is very relevant, is that I strongly believe that there are programs in the budget which just need to go, especially those for single-issue, self-interest groups. I guess it is easier for the Government to pass out a few brown paper bags to these vocal groups than it would be to put them in their place. I question why these self-appointed, puffed-up windbags should be given any taxpayers' money at all. Groups such as the Conservation Council are no more than lobby groups. They are no more than publicly funded lobbyists who run around like hysterical Chicken-lickens, crying, "The sky is about to fall". While we have an annual operating loss of \$150m, why do they deserve government funding ahead of such things as hospital equipment, nurses, schoolteachers and buses? Surely the time has come to do more than just rock the boat in dealing with this type of group. It is time to hack a hole in it. I understand, Mr Speaker, that the Government has chosen not to give the Conservation Council \$54,000 this year, and I fully support it. That is one of my election promises, Mr Speaker, that has been kept.

Let us be positive, as I said earlier, Mr Speaker, and I ask members again to work towards a better model. I am happy to be involved in the process, Mr Speaker. Obviously, today and on Tuesday, the Government did not receive what they hoped for from the Labor Party, but I did not expect the Labor Party to come forward with too

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much, given that they do not have the resources of the Government. I think we should look forward, Mr Speaker, and find a better way to do the budget. I am sure that all of us in the Assembly will be big enough to put our hand up and be accountable for the decisions that are made.

MR WOOD (5.05): Mr Speaker, Mr Osborne made a fair point, both at the beginning and the end of his speech, when he said that the Government has the resources and crossbenchers and the Opposition do not. Of course, that makes a vast difference to the way you can attack issues.

The insincerity of the Government's approach in presenting this motion has become quite clear. So far I have heard three Ministers speak, the Chief Minister, Mr Humphries and Mr Stefaniak, and they did much the same, each one of them, in their prepared texts. They were done, of course, with the resources of their considerable departments. Each one of them has presented the problems we face. Well, I think we all know those problems in pretty good detail. Each one of them has presented the problems.

Mr Humphries, earlier, said to the rest of the Assembly, "Be specific". That is what he said, "Be specific. Tell us what you would do". Only one member, so far, outside the Labor ranks has made any indication of what might be done to reduce costs, and that was Mr Osborne, a moment ago. So I give him credit for that. Mr Humphries wanted us to be specific. Was he specific? No, I never heard a word. Notwithstanding all the resources of his department, we heard not a word of what he would suggest to raise revenue or to reduce costs. It was the same with Mr Stefaniak, who said, from his prepared departmental text, "There are problems. We have to find solutions". Mrs Carnell spent nearly an hour on that same theme. Not one of these Ministers indicated any specific step.

So what is this motion all about? It is spurious. It is just a political attack on the non-government members in this Assembly. It is simply designed to set the stage for when they present a budget. The Chief Minister and Treasurer will wash her hands and say, "None of you people provided us with anything". Well, if they want us to be specific, I think the onus starts with them to come up with some proposals. There was not one that we could debate. They have one rule for themselves but a different rule for the rest of this Assembly. I repeat, because it bears repetition, "Be specific", said Mr Humphries. "You be specific", says Mr Humphries, "but I will not be". So this is not a genuine motion. It is not to be a real debate because the Government never intended that it should be.

I have listened to the debate - I have been in the chamber for almost all of this prolonged debate, and it seems to me that the Government is saying, "Well, it is all too much for us. It is too hard". The Government seems to be saying, "It is beyond our capacity". If that is the case, there is one clear solution. They should resign. They should get out, toss in the towel, and leave it to someone who can handle the challenge.

I want to go on and provide some balance to this motion - the Government's motion is rather one sided - and in doing so reflect on last year's budget and the speeches attached to it. Remember, it was the clever and caring budget. "Caring" was repeated all through that discussion. I do not think it was such a caring budget, but let us take the

Government at its word. "Caring", they claim. Well, of course, it was done to suit the purpose of the day. It was the model that they wanted to present last year. But on Tuesday, when this debate started, it was clear that they have put that aside.

The purpose of the day now is for the Government to say how hard up they are but how well off the ACT community is, and we have been following that rhetoric now for some time as the Government sets the scene for the time when it brings in its budget. We are affluent. We are paid more. The documents the Chief Minister gave us the other day show that. We know that. The statistics have shown that for years. We are an affluent society, so when the budget comes down we can bear the increased costs. We are comfortable. Does it mean that we are selfish? Figures are given for the extent of private housing ownership. Does this mean that we are going to dispose of housing stock? Employment figures were given again today, so we are so well employed that we can take any hardships that this Government imposes upon us.

Clearly, what is happening in this period is that the Government is setting the scene for its next budget. Broadly, we are going to be moving from a clever and caring society to an opulent society that can pay more. That is what it is all about, and that is what this motion is all about. But the motion needs to be about more than that. The motion that we are debating, given to us by the Chief Minister, ignores the difficulties that many people face. Certainly, there is a broad reference to services, and to be fair I will quote it. In part it says:

... supported by a government which provides quality services now and into the future.

There are all the lines, in a motion nearly a page long, that make any comment on difficulties that may exist on the part of many in our community. There is nothing more specific than that. There is no reference to what those services need to be. There are plenty of other references about tightening the belt. That was certainly the case. It was reinforced in that folder that the Chief Minister gave us with a lot of supporting documentation. There is not a thing there about the difficulties that many face. There is no reference to those in need, no reference to poor people or to people in difficult circumstances. Yet, if the motion and the presentation are to be credible, that document needs a full range of statistics about poverty and need - the condition of poverty that many have in this community and the circumstances of need that people have.

Let me reflect briefly on that. Last year the Smith Family pointed out the plight of thousands of families in the ACT. It was wintertime. Let me quote what was said:

The Smith Family, one of Canberra's leading welfare agencies, is facing an unprecedented demand for its services this winter.

That was on 23 June last year, as quoted in the *Valley View*. Further on in that report it says:

"Demand for our service this winter has been higher than ever before and without assistance we face the sad prospect of not being able to help all the people who are coming to us".

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That was said by the director. Many more people were going to their doors. Many more people were in need. This document needed to reflect that situation. Do we have now a theme coming through here that signals a budget that will hit those who can least afford it? Last year's budget, last year's caring budget, put rents up for people in ACT Housing properties - those who can least afford it. Last year's budget made it harder for people with old vehicles who cannot afford something a bit newer by increasing registrations. What might we see in this year's budget? I wonder if the claim for it will be "a caring budget".

I want to acknowledge that the Government, encouraged by ACTCOSS, is undertaking a poverty inquiry. I think that is good and proper, and we will all be very interested to see the outcomes of that. But let us see that concern expressed in this debate on this motion and in the budget that we are talking about. What about people with disabilities who I think need more and more, not less? They face very significant hardships, and those who care for them face significant hardships.

Ms Carnell: I actually said that in my speech and I actually said how much money should go to them.

MR WOOD: Let me indicate just one example, and I am pleased that the Chief Minister will want to pick it up. Exiting from Koomarri in the next few years will be quite a number of students. At this stage most of their parents cannot see where they will be going. They need to know and we need to provide the programs for those students as they move into adulthood and into the need for further care. We expect to see something happening with that.

I can go through a whole list of areas, such as dental health services. I think we need more rather than less to overcome the problem when the Commonwealth removed its interests. What about alcohol services? I will leave drugs aside because that is a whole debate on its own. There are people exiting the alcohol services we have here that are very good, though not enough, and yet they are reverting to their poor behaviour in terms of consumption of alcohol. They are dying because they are leaving after short-term attention at some places and going out into the community without support. What about counselling services for all sorts of groups of people, such as families in crisis? They are finding it difficult to get the advice, help and support they need. Respite services remain the most critical issue, I think, in this town. The committee I chair is about to look in detail at that.

These are some of the needs that we have, and around all that we have to look at the infrastructure for these services, the community support for them and the ability of the community to support them. There is a vast amount there that has to be attended to, and these are some of the things that have to be factored into the budget. Notwithstanding the difficulties and putting aside all the rhetoric, these are some of the matters we have to attend to. I want to put that firmly on the record today.

When the opportunity arises, as we deal with matters arising from this debate, I now foreshadow that I will move a further amendment which will read:

... the need to provide appropriate assistance to those whose circumstances require government support.

We will debate that a little further down the track. Let us not forget the situation of those in need. Let us not forget those who are poor. Let us put aside the rhetoric and put aside the stag-setting for the budget and see that we come up with firm proposals for those people.

Amendment (**Mr Stanhope's**) agreed to.

MR SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Mr Wood: Well, do you speak before I move my amendment?

Ms Carnell: No. I want to finish right at the end. I want to close the debate.

MR SPEAKER: We have an amendment circulated by Mr Wood and we have an amendment circulated by Mr Berry, I understand. Mr Wood, I think you foreshadowed that you had another amendment, did you?

MR WOOD (5.19): No. I have circulated an amendment and I will move that now. I think this is the appropriate time. I move:

After paragraph 2(g) insert the following paragraph:

“(ga) the need to provide appropriate assistance to those whose circumstances require government support;”.

Mr Speaker, I believe I have spoken to that so I will say no more than to emphasise to members in the chamber the importance of including this in the motion.

Amendment (**Mr Wood's**) agreed to.

MR BERRY (5.20): I move the amendment circulated in my name, which reads:

After paragraph 2(g) insert the following paragraph:

“(gb) the need for the Government to be held responsible for its election commitments;”.

I do not need to speak further to that. I have already made some comments in the course of the debate, and I think everybody understands the motion.

Amendment (**Mr Berry's**) agreed to.

MR SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Mr Berry: Has Mr Stanhope's amendment been moved?

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Mr Wood: It was moved and passed.

MR SPEAKER: Yes. You will close the debate now, Chief Minister.

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (5.21): Mr Speaker, I thank those members who made a positive contribution to this debate, and there were a couple. I do thank Mr Rugendyke and Mr Osborne for that positive approach. I suppose one of the tragic parts of the rest of this debate is that you would have to say that it has been littered with pretty gratuitous abuse. I have to say that the level of debate has been extremely disappointing.

Mr Wood: Well, you set the pattern.

Mr Stanhope: Yes, we can sympathise.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, most people have been heard in relative silence, apart from me.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, and I would like to see the debate - - -

Mr Stanhope: Whilst they were throwing insults in the chamber.

Mr Hargreaves: What a hypocritical piece of garbage. You came in here and had a go instantly.

MR SPEAKER: Order, please! I would like to see it end in that manner too, please.

MS CARNELL: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I think this is all a bit tragic, taking into account that this is the same Legislative Assembly that has demanded to have a higher level of involvement in government decision-making. I give Mr Osborne and Mr Rugendyke credit here because they have certainly been urging more input into the budget process. They actually treated this debate sensibly. But, Mr Speaker, other members have also been seeking greater input into government decision-making, yet they proceeded to claim in this debate that this was the Government abrogating its responsibility. As I said in my initial speech, the Government is more than happy to bring down a budget. Yes, it is the role of - - -

Mr Berry: You certainly told us it was not about a 10-second media episode the same night on television.

MR SPEAKER: Just be quiet, Mr Berry, please!

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, the Government has said categorically that we are very happy to bring down a budget and to stand by that budget, to sink or swim with that budget in the community generally; but, unfortunately, the Labor Party has opposed every single one of our budgets, unlike our approach in opposition. We certainly argued our position with regard to their budgets, but at the end of the day accepted a government's

right to have their budget. Those opposite have argued the whole way through this debate that it is the Government's responsibility to bring down a budget and to stand by their budget, but in the last four years they have opposed every budget. Mr Speaker, that is just not logical.

The budget certainly is an extremely important part, in fact, probably the most important part, of any government's role, but we will have minority governments in this place, certainly more often than not, and maybe always. That means that our capacity to maintain anything like stable government will be based upon guaranteeing the government in power their budget. Certainly, there are no problems whatsoever for oppositions, if they happen to have the numbers, to run no-confidence motions in the government; but not to give the government their budget, by the very nature of that, will either produce chronically unstable government or, alternatively, budgets that never make some of the decisions that need to be made in this place. This is something that this Assembly has to come to grips with.

Do we really want to make sure on our tenth anniversary of self-government that we step forward into another century, into the next 10 years of self-government, with an Assembly that is stable and that represents the community? We do not want to end up with the sort of instability or lack of hard decision-making that the approach that is being taken at this stage will inevitably produce; that is, oppositions, this Opposition, opposing budgets every time, regardless, while at the same time arguing, as they have for the last day-and-a-half, that the Government has absolute total responsibility for their budget. How logical is that, Mr Speaker? It is not very logical, I would have to say.

I urge all members of this Assembly to go back and have a look at this debate and accept that, yes, it is the role of the government of the day to bring down their budget. Certainly, the role of the Opposition is to pick holes in that, to scrutinise that budget; but at the end of the day, Mr Speaker, if it is the role of the Government to bring down the budget, then it is essential, for stable government, for this Assembly to also pass those budgets, or, alternatively, to bring down the Government. Now, there is another way to do that. You can do that by a no-confidence motion. That is the way it should be done.

Mr Berry: No, it can be done either way.

MS CARNELL: Yes, it can be done either way. It should happen via a no-confidence motion.

Mr Berry: Either way is acceptable.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Please, Mr Berry.

MS CARNELL: Not via a budget. If the rules are that the opposition will always oppose a budget, always, regardless, then I suppose the budget is being used as a no-confidence motion every year. That is a stupid scenario and it is one that will undermine this place in the future. It will cause ongoing problems. It will mean that whoever is standing in this spot will obviously have to rely on the crossbenches and do whatever it takes to bring the crossbenches on board with any budget. I am quite
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to work with the crossbenches and always have been, but is this a sensible approach for good government? I would have to say no, and I think it is about time we came to grips with it.

Mr Speaker, I was very interested to hear a number of the comments made in the debate. Some of them were curious, to say the least. You could almost say curiouser and curiouser, particularly some of the comments made by Mr Quinlan. He did speak about a number of important areas and did suggest the sort of approach that he might take if he was Treasurer. He committed the Labor Party to the abolition of 14 taxes which the Productivity Commission has concluded to be regressive. He indicated in his speech that the Labor Party does not support regressive taxation and therefore would get rid of it. Mr Speaker, I found that interesting. I went to the Productivity Commission's report - - -

Mr Stanhope: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Quinlan said no such thing.

MS CARNELL: He did. I promise you he did.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MS CARNELL: He did, Mr Speaker. He said the Labor Party does not support regressive taxation. He indicated - - -

Mr Stanhope: Mr Speaker, in no way did Mr Quinlan suggest that the Labor Party would be getting rid of any such tax.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Stanhope, if Mr Quinlan wishes to seek to correct what he regards as a mistake, he can use standing order 46.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it was certainly my understanding of Mr Quinlan's speech that he committed the Labor Party to the abolition of 14 taxes which the Productivity Commissioner has concluded to be regressive.

Mr Smyth: And urged us to do the same.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I think he said - - -

Mr Smyth: All power to your arm!

MS CARNELL: More power to my elbow, I think he said, to do the same. His words. Those 14 taxes are very interesting. I looked them up in the Productivity Commission's report. They are such taxes as land tax, a tax that the Labor Party put on, conveyancing duty, BAD, a marketable security duty, a loan security duty, stamp duties generally, and some of the ones we cannot levy any more, such as the franchise fees. Quick arithmetic reveals that these 14 taxes raise \$237m. As I said, they include land tax, franchise fees, stamp duties and BAD tax.

Mr Speaker, it is quite an extraordinary commitment from Mr Quinlan to abolish \$237m of Territory taxes. This is at a time when we have an operating loss. This would blow out our operating loss to more than \$300m, unless, of course, Mr Quinlan is planning to

raise an equivalent amount of revenue from the remaining taxes or, to use the obvious extrapolation of his comments, to find progressive taxes that would raise the same amount of money. Those would be, I suppose, taxes such as land tax. It is hard to think what they could be at this stage. I thought it was an unusual approach. Even if we leave aside the taxes that are earmarked for abolition in the national tax reform process, we are still left with Mr Quinlan planning to abolish taxes worth about \$115m. To recoup the same amount of revenue from other taxes would mean doubling rates or doubling payroll tax, to give just a couple of examples.

Mr Quinlan also seemed more than a little confused about borrowings. On one hand, he said we should minimise borrowings. Indeed, he said the Government should not force ACTEW to borrow to provide a capital return to the Government. But hang on, Mr Speaker; this is the same Mr Quinlan who is urging the Government to take \$300m out of ACTEW as a capital repayment. Does he think that ACTEW has \$300m sitting in a bank account somewhere or other that he can just hand on to government without borrowing it? Mr Speaker, I have to say, we wish; boy, do we wish, but it is not the case. The only way ACTEW can make such a capital repayment is by borrowing the money.

Mr Quinlan made an equally inexplicable comment when he said we should be using our AAA credit rating to borrow lots of money, straight after he said we should not be borrowing. I can confirm one thing that Mr Quinlan alluded to. If we run up massive borrowings, our AAA credit rating will certainly be in doubt. Mr Quinlan's other contribution was to suggest that we fiddle the books by picking and choosing which accounting standards we should apply in order to get the budget result that we want. I have to say that we have come to expect these sorts of practices from Labor governments. I would have thought that a former accountant of the year was reasonably keen on using all accounting standards, not just some of them.

The view was that you could get rid of depreciation by not fully implementing accounting standard AS4 on depreciation. I think, as Mr Quinlan said, once we put money into such things as roads and capital works, we should not depreciate that asset. I have to say that that would solve the problem. There is no doubt about that. That would overcome probably very close to all, certainly a significant amount, of our operating loss.

The problem is, Mr Speaker, that the Auditor-General who audits our accounts would qualify probably all of the ACT Government's accounts and, again, I would have thought an accountant of the year would not have been too keen on that approach. Certainly, I am not too keen on having our accounts qualified. I am also not too keen on picking and choosing which accountancy standards we might use this year.

Mr Speaker, I have to say that there is one other way we could overcome our operating loss tomorrow, and that is by taking on board the Australia Institute's approach to the ACTEW sale. Maybe Mr Rugendyke would be keen to know this. Say the ACT Government decided that ACTEW was worth the \$1.7m that the Australia Institute suggested it was worth. Say we put into our accounts \$1.7m for the actual value of ACTEW, that we use the return on investment that the Australia Institute suggested we should use when they were arguing against the sale of ACTEW, and we also did what

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they suggested we do with our unfunded superannuation liability, and that is to pull it back to the levels that they suggested. You know what happens? We get rid of our operating loss. Done. No trouble.

Unfortunately, I wrote to Mr Quinlan, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, and suggested this and he said he did not think it was such a good idea. Fancy that. What does this tend to tell you? Yes, that the figures were rubbish. Anyway, we will not get into that right now, Mr Speaker. So there are a number of ways we can get rid of the operating loss: Fiddle the figures; get rid of depreciation; use the Australia Institute's figures for the sale of ACTEW, their valuation of ACTEW, and their view on return on investment. But, Mr Speaker, all of those approaches are simply rubbish. They do not address the issue at hand, and that is that we spend more money than we raise. In the end we would still end up where the Auditor-General said we would, and that is with the quality of life being undermined for our kids; in other words, significant debt in the future.

Mr Speaker, I will comment very briefly on Ms Tucker's contribution. She claimed that the Government had issued an environmental accounting discussion paper in 1997 and little else had happened. Well, Ms Tucker, for the record, on 23 September 1997 I did table this discussion paper in the Assembly and I specifically asked for input from the community and the ACT Greens. Guess what happened, Mr Speaker? Well, we have received nothing from the Greens since that date. I guess that speaks volumes for the commitment generally to environmental accounting. Yes, it is a tough issue, Mr Speaker; no doubt about that. We have the discussion paper on the table, but the silence is deafening.

Mr Berry, in his speech, made some comments about real terms funding for education. I think it is really important, Mr Speaker, to use this opportunity to show, but again, that Mr Berry is simply wrong.

Mr Berry: Tell us about the flagpole.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I would do just about anything to promote the ACT. Funny about that.

Mr Berry: Do not do it. It would not work for you.

MS CARNELL: I am not sure it would work either, but I would still do just about anything. Mr Speaker, we were elected to government in 1995. If real terms CPI increases were now allocated to our education budget over those years since we came to government, Mr Speaker, it turns out that we have actually funded education some \$26m more than real terms funding. Why is that so, Mr Speaker? Some members may not have realised that over the past three years the actual change in our consumer price index has been considerably lower than the rate we have incorporated in each budget.

For example, in 1996-97 the Government used a CPI figure of 2 per cent to adjust funding upwards for schooling, as that was the estimate at the time the budget was put together. However, the actual CPI figure for that year was 0.7 of one per cent. Because of this difference, we have calculated that over the past three budgets government schooling has received an additional \$26m above what it should have if the Government

had used actual CPI figures. In other words, Mr Speaker, had the Government stuck to actual CPI outcomes, education would have received \$26m less than it has over the past three years. Indeed, Mr Speaker, in 1997-98 the actual CPI was minus 0.7 per cent. If the Government had used that figure it would have reduced funding for schooling by a significant amount. Instead, we increased funding by 1.8 per cent during that time. Again, Mr Speaker, it shows that Mr Berry is wrong. These are important figures and, yes, it does mean that education has ended up with significantly higher figures than the real levels of CPI over that time.

Mr Berry also had a bit of a go on health costs. I assume that what Mr Berry was saying was that he thinks we are spending too much on health and therefore should be reducing expenditure. I could not agree more, Mr Speaker. But it seemed at the same time that Mr Berry was being somewhat negative about our health outcomes. Again, Mr Speaker, you would have to wonder what on earth he was talking about.

I would like to finish, Mr Speaker, by urging the Independents and the crossbenchers to listen and to read the speeches of those opposite. They made it very clear that were they in government they believe that the role of the government is to bring down a budget. We agree. But they also made it very clear - this afternoon Mr Berry made it patently clear - that they do not believe it is the role of the Assembly to input into that budget process. He made it extremely clear - it is in black and white in *Hansard* - that he believes that the Government should bring down the budget, that the Assembly should not have any input into that, and basically the Government should sink or swim on that basis. If the crossbenchers believe for one moment that they will have any input into future budget processes under a Labor government they should read, particularly, Mr Berry's speech and some of the other speeches given by members of the Labor Party.

Mr Speaker, this Government does believe in input into the budget process. We have done that every year since we came to government. We are quite interested in looking for better and more efficient ways to do that. Unfortunately, this budget debate has shown, quite categorically, that a large number of the members of this Assembly are simply not willing to tell us what they think we should do. They are only willing to tell us what they think we should not do. I think that is pretty tragic.

Mr Wood said in his speech that we had not put up one idea. Mr Speaker, that is simply ridiculous. During this debate we have indicated that we should be looking at increasing taxes for larger clubs. That is quite a specific proposal. I suggested in my speech that I believe that there needed to be more money for disabilities. I think I even used a figure for that extra money. We have indicated that we believe that we cannot move away from looking at school amalgamations and closures. I indicated in my speech that we had to cut staffing in areas such as medicine and administration in our hospital system. The list goes on. These are all very specific proposals on both the revenue and the expenditure sides. Mr Speaker, the Government has put our credentials on the table. It is just a pity that those opposite have not done the same.

MR STANHOPE (Leader of the Opposition): I seek leave to speak again, Mr Speaker.

Ms Carnell: I have closed the debate.

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MR STANHOPE: I have just sought leave to speak again, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Ms Carnell: Jon, before I say yes or no, is everyone going to speak again?

MR STANHOPE: I am going to correct the mistruth you just told, Chief Minister. I am going to quote back to you from *Hansard* what Mr Quinlan said so that we can correct the record.

Ms Carnell: But you do not have to do that in another speech.

MR STANHOPE: You were completely and totally wrong, Chief Minister. I seek leave to speak again, Mr Speaker.

Leave granted.

MR STANHOPE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The very sneering conclusion that the Chief Minister just gave to this debate put the lie to any suggestion that she was anything other than mischievous and entirely political in this stunt. She just made a completely sneering, negative, carping speech. Add to that the extent to which she was simply wrong. The extent to which the Chief Minister, in her speech just now, attributed to Mr Quinlan suggestions that she claims he made in his speech can be put to the test here and now.

We all heard the Chief Minister say categorically that Mr Quinlan had unequivocally advocated that the ALP would be repealing 14 taxes. Let me read the paragraph. This is what Mr Quinlan said. When we take this in the context of what the Chief Minister has just put on the record in this place, we can treat her entire speech with the contempt it deserves. When you lead off your speech by making this sort of allegation against the shadow Treasurer and then carry on with the sort of garbage that went on, the body of it has to be tested by the head of it. This is what Mr Quinlan said:

When we look at the taxes that we levy in the ACT you may be surprised to find that the Productivity Commission concluded that 14 of the different taxes we levy in the ACT are either highly or mildly regressive. This puts the lie to some extent to the Treasurer's claim of this being a clever and caring capital.

Administration and compliance is largely self-evident and relates to how much the Government can keep and what the costs are of administering those taxes. We recognise on this side of the house that a lot of work has been done within the ACT administration to bring in tighter legislation on tax, and for that the Government should be congratulated.

The shadow Treasurer, with absolute graciousness, was acknowledging that the Government has done some good work in this area. What did the Chief Minister just throw at us in relation to what she suggested the shadow Treasurer said? Absolute nonsense. The rest of the speech should be treated in exactly the same way, with the

contempt it deserves. That is all I wish to say, Mr Speaker, other than that it does put the lie to just what a stunt this whole escapade was. It was a stunt from start to finish, and the finish of it actually is the proof. The proof is in the pudding in those concluding remarks. They were scurrilous. That is proof that this was never meant to be a serious debate. It was always meant to be a stunt, and that is how it has ended up, a meaningless stunt.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Ms Carnell**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Judgment Debt for Streetlight Damage

MR BERRY (5.47): I wish to raise a matter which I hope the Government will take notice of. I had a call earlier in the month from a person who was in a mild panic about a judgment debt that he had just received. This judgment debt was for \$5,573 and it was from ACT Roads and Stormwater. Apparently, it had been through the Small Claims Court and a judgment debt had been found against him. I made some inquiries on behalf of this constituent and it did not seem to fit together. It was said, Mr Speaker, that the debt had occurred as a result of a collision the constituent allegedly had had with a streetlight, causing about \$3,362 damage. Since the debt had not been paid, it had grown with interest, court costs and so on to \$5,500-plus. When I recontacted the constituent, I said, "Did you have a crash in your car?". He said, "No, I have never had a crash in my car. I have never made an insurance claim on the car. I do not know what this is about". He was still quite upset about the matter, because some people cannot immediately put a hand into their pockets for \$5,000. He was planning to travel as well; so, if it had not been settled before he went, he would have come back with an even bigger debt.

It turns out, Mr Speaker, that this constituent was not the person against whom the debt should have been found. He was an innocent person who had the same name and a similar initial. For some reason, there has been a very serious mistake that has caused a lot of disquiet for the individual and his family. I will not mention the constituent's name, but I am happy to pass it on to the relevant Minister, which in this case seems to be Mr Smyth, in order that the matter can be examined to ensure that this does not happen again. I am confident that the officers that were handling this issue did not do so with malice, but the mistake has caused a lot of disquiet for a constituent. I understand that the matter has now been sorted out and settled. Again, I repeat that I think there is a need for the Government to take this issue into consideration in order that these sorts of administrative mistakes do not occur and cause such disquiet for members of the community.

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Dennis Street, Garran - Traffic

MR CORBELL (5.50): Mr Speaker, I rise in the adjournment debate this evening to raise an issue of concern to residents in Dennis Street, Garran. I was contacted earlier this week by a number of residents who live in that street and they indicated to me then that the Department of Urban Services is proposing to remove a traffic calming measure installed at one end of their street. I understand that the residents have had a number of discussions with the Minister's office about this matter and with officials of his department. I rise in the debate today because I was informed today, having visited the site earlier today and spoken to one of the residents concerned, that the department is proposing to remove the traffic calming measure next Tuesday. I urge the Minister for Urban Services to reconsider his department's decision.

Residents of Dennis Street have been subjected to a lot of traffic travelling along their street as a short cut to Hindmarsh Drive. That issue is one of legitimate concern to residents in that street and they are concerned that the removal of the traffic calming measure will lead to a restoration of the previous levels of traffic. The installation of the traffic calming measure, I am told and having viewed the data that the residents themselves have obtained from the Department of Urban Services, shows quite clearly that there has been a significant reduction in vehicle movements and a reasonable reduction in the speed of vehicles travelling along their street. They live on a normal suburban street with a 60 kilometres an hour speed limit.

Mr Speaker, I would ask that the Minister review his decision to remove the traffic calming measure. I understand that the department has undertaken a survey to seek the views of residents in that suburb. The residents of Dennis Street and the accompanying streets have indicated to me that they have some concerns with how the department has interpreted the findings of that survey. They have walked around a number of the streets affected and have indicated to the Minister that they believe that his survey is not the most effective or representative one in relation to their specific area of concern.

I think it is only appropriate that the Minister not proceed with the removal of that traffic calming measure until at least there is an opportunity for other options to be considered as alternatives. If the department believes that the traffic calming measure on Dennis Street is not the most appropriate course of action for controlling traffic movements, I would urge them to do something else before removing it. I understand that the only proposal at the moment is to put in place a sign saying, "Local Traffic Area", instead of the traffic calming measure. Clearly, a sign is not going to deter a vehicle from taking a short cut along Dennis Street to get to Hindmarsh Drive, nor is it necessarily going to result in people slowing down. Clearly, the traffic calming measure has achieved those outcomes and I think it is appropriate that the Minister investigate other options before simply removing this measure and, basically, taking the street back to the circumstances it was in before the calming measure was first installed.

Burnie Court - Working Bee

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (5.53), in reply: Mr Speaker, I would like to read into *Hansard* a letter that was in the *Canberra Times* this week. The letter appeared under the title “It could only happen in Canberra”, and says:

Burnie Court, Lyons, that large complex of government flats opposite Woden Plaza on Melrose Drive, was the location of a highly unusual Saturday-morning activity which clearly falls into the category you wouldn't expect (unless you were in Canberra).

Working bees are not uncommon, but one that has three Cabinet ministers and the Speaker of the Assembly actually doing work alongside senior bureaucrats, serving police officers, TotalCare workers and government tenants - and has no television or press media teams in evidence - must be against every principle of politics. The spin doctors should have been salivating. I was and I'm not a spin doctor.

In what I'm told is stage one of an ongoing program of community-involved maintenance and amenity-improvement activities at the complex of some 264 residential units, the picture of Gary Humphries (ACT Attorney-General) running a wheelbarrow full of mulch that had been filled by police officers from Community Relations and government tenants to be spread out by senior officers of ACT Housing working alongside more government tenants; or Greg Cornwell (Speaker of the Assembly), tall as he is, having trouble pruning the tops of some shrubs and having to throw down the gloves he had been wearing to a local resident should have been flashed around the world (well, around Canberra at least).

Bill Stefaniak (Police Minister) was there, as well as Brendan Smyth, who did his stint early. I understand Brendan had the 8 am to 10 am shift and, although I wasn't present, the locals told me he was “a bloody good worker”.

There would have been photo opportunities galore, so I asked Barbara Norman, the executive officer of ACT Housing, why all these people were there actually doing work with no media presence and she replied, “Because they care, want to show encouragement to the tenants and they don't want publicity”.

Maybe Canberra politics is coming of age: in any event, it really is something that could really only happen in Canberra and one more reason for all Canberrans to be proud: and it does deserve some recognition.

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The letter was written by Will Storer, who is, I understand, a resident at Burnie Court. Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the people involved - the Ministers, you and, of course, the senior public servants - for showing significant community spirit and, obviously, doing exactly what they planned to do, that is, to show encouragement and support for the tenants at Burnie Court.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 5.57 pm until Tuesday, 23 March 1999, at 10.30 am

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Health Complaints - Conciliator (Question No. 87)

Mr Wood asked the Minister for Health and Community Care, upon notice, on 2 February 1999:

In relation to the role of conciliator carried out by the Commissioner for Health Complaints, for each of the last three financial years:

- (1) How many claims were considered for (a) public health services and (b) private health services.
- (2) How many agreed outcomes were reached for (a) public health services and (b) private health services.
- (3) What was the total sum of money of claims agreed for (a) public health services and (b) private health services.

Mr Moore: The answers to Mr Wood's questions are as follows:

- (1) During the 1995/1996 financial year 6 claims were referred to conciliation concerning public health services and 7 claims were referred to conciliation concerning private health services.

During the 1996/1997 financial year 4 claims were referred to conciliation concerning public health services and 11 claims were referred to conciliation concerning private health services.

During the 1997/1998 financial year 3 claims were referred to conciliation concerning public health services and 6 claims were referred to conciliation concerning private health services.

Most, but not all, claims concerning public health services related to hospitals whilst most, but not all, claims concerning private health services related to individual providers.

- (2) Sometimes resolution is achieved through conciliation without a written agreement being formulated. The complainant may be given a satisfactory explanation, for example, or accept an assurance that a change in practice will be implemented.

During the 1995/1996 financial year agreed outcomes (in the form of written agreements) were reached in relation to 2 claims and other resolutions were reached in relation to 2 other claims concerning public health services. Agreed outcomes involving the payment of money were reached in relation to 3 claims and other resolutions were reached in relation to 2 claims concerning private health services. There is one claim concerning a private health service which is still in the conciliation process.

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During the 1996/1997 financial year agreed outcomes were reached in relation to three claims concerning public health services, two of which involved the payment of money. An agreed outcome was reached in relation to one claim concerning a private health service outside the conciliation process. Three claims concerning private health services and one claim concerning a public health service are still in the conciliation process.

During the 1997/1998 financial year an agreed outcome was reached in relation to a claim concerning a private health service which involved the payment of money. There are five claims concerning private health services which are still in the conciliation process.

- (3) Financial settlements totalled \$97,432 for private patients and \$64,250 for public patients. It should be noted, however, that financial settlements were also reached between the parties outside the conciliation process on several occasions and that a number of matters are still open.

**ACT Housing - Properties in Ainslie
(Question No. 88)**

Mr Corbell asked the Minister for Urban Services, upon notice:

In relation to ACT Housing properties in Ainslie, as of 3 February 1999:

- (1) What is the total number of properties.
- (2) How many are houses.
- (3) How many are vacant.
- (4) How many have been vacant for more than 6 months.

Mr Smyth: The answer to the member's questions is as follows:

- (1) 590
- (2) 420
- (3) 19 as at 17 February 1999. This information is not available as at 3 February 1999 as ACT Housing's computer system does not retain historic data.
- (4) 7 as at 17 February 1999. This information is not available as at 3 February 1999 as ACT Housing's computer system does not retain historic data.

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**ACTION - Zonal Fare System
(Question No. 90)**

Mr Hargreaves asked the Minister for Urban Services, upon notice:

In relation to the promotion and marketing of the new zonal fare system.

1. What was (a) the name of the company that was used to promote and market the new zonal bus system and (b) where are they located.
2. How much did the promotion and marketing cost, excluding television costs.
3. What was the production cost of the pamphlet that was sent to every ACT home.
4. How many pamphlets were posted to Canberra homes?
5. What was the postage cost of sending the pamphlets to Canberra homes?
6. What was the cost of television advertisements promoting the new system?

Mr Smyth: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

1. (a) Grey Advertising
(b) Wentworth Avenue, Kingston
2. \$232 102.00
3. The content of each letter box drop delivery varied according to the number of bus routes provided to each suburb. The total cost of printing individual timetables was \$131 148.00. These were used for the letterbox drop, Bus Packs and are available on request.
The cost of assembling the letterbox drop and delivery through Australia Post was \$29 000.00.
4. 115 240 letterbox drops were delivered to Canberra residences. 334 298 timetables were delivered to Canberra residences.
5. \$12 500.00
6. \$51 326.00

**Collection of Levies for Charitable Organisations
(Question No. 92)**

Mr Corbell asked the Chief Minister, upon notice, on 9 March 1999:

1. Does the ACT Government currently collect any levies or charges on behalf of any private or community organisations, and if so,
 - i) what are these organisations, and
 - ii) how much is collected for each of these organisations.

Ms Carnell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

1. Yes
 - i) The NRMA.
 - ii) \$50 m per annum for 3rd party motor vehicle insurance collected by the Department of Urban Services.

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**Bus Routes - Palmerston
(Question No. 95)**

Mr Corbell asked the Minister for Urban Services, upon notice:

In relation to the bus routes which service the suburb of Palmerston.

- (1) What are the average patronage levels for the respective routes introduced as part of the new network (a) during peak times and (b) outside of peak times.
- (2) What were the average patronage levels for routes which serviced Palmerston prior to the introduction of the new network (a) during peak times and (b) outside of peak times.

Mr Smyth: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) 966 and (b) 1 372.
- (2) (a) 987 and (b) 1 244.

These figures are average daily weekday totals. Peak figures have been virtually unchanged while offpeak patronage has increased by around 10%.

Cash Flow
(Question No. 96)

Mr Quinlan asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 9 March 1999:

Recognising that Governments use the short-term money market for cash flow management including both the official and unofficial short-term cash markets and the equity markets In relation to the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 January 1999, specifically the cashflow statement table on page 21 of the January monthly consolidated financial management review -

- (1) What are the sources of the cash used to purchase investments projected to be worth \$2.049b for the full year, and being \$790.151m for the Year to Date.
- (2) What is source, or who are the providers, of all borrowings received in the table.
- (3) What investment products were bought with regard to the cash in (1).
- (4) Does the ACT Government provide financing to any other entity than the Reserve Bank on
 - (a) a one-to-one basis,
 - (b) through any other Government agency,
 - (c) through the equities market, or
 - (d) through the unofficial money market, and if so who are those entitles.
- (5) How are the short falls between investments purchased and sold reconciled in the financial statements.
- (6) Does a short fall get recorded in the balance sheet if the projected borrowing received exceeds the projected repayment of borrowings as projected in the table.
- 7) What are
 - (a) all of the investment products, current and non-current, being used by the ACT Government and
 - (b) who administers the portfolio.
- 8) What are
 - (a) all of the debt instruments, current and non-current, employed by the ACT Government and
 - (b) who administers them.
- (9) For (7) and (8) what are the values of all products listed.

Ms Carnell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

(1) One of the main functions of the Central Financing Unit (CFU) is to invest the surplus cash from the operating activities of the government on a daily basis as a means of gaining investment returns for the ACT. This active cash management arrangement results in either new investment purchases or withdrawals of invested funds on a daily basis. The result is a high gross turnover of investment purchases through the statement of cashflows. This is off-set by gross sale/maturity of investments (ie. investment withdrawals).

As well as investing the surplus daily cash of the government (taxes, fees, fines, commonwealth funding, surplus agency funds etc) the CFU has also undertaken arbitrage trading transactions for a number of years now. This is a process whereby the ACT issues commercial paper from its commercial paper program for maturities averaging approximately 80 days and then reinvests the proceeds in highly rated commercial paper, promissory notes or bank bills to the same maturity.

The CFU has well defined exposure limits including monetary limits and rating limits (minimum A2 Standard & Poors) within which all investments, including arbitrage related are restricted. Again, the result of these transactions is such that there is a high gross turnover of investment purchases through the statement of cashflows which is off-set by gross sale/maturity of investments (ie. investment withdrawals). The arbitrage program is wound down by the end of the financial year such that there is a nil effect on the balance sheet for the components relating to arbitrage.

The investment purchase transactions in respect of externally placed investments for Superannuation Provision Fund's are also included in the consolidated territory statement of cashflows. Superannuation Fund investments are managed within the CFU general government funds until such time that a large enough pool has accrued so that the funds can be placed with one of the specialised external managers.

The following table details the investment purchase transactions as per the January financial statements (Statement of Cashflows). Investments (excluding arbitrage related) are separated into two groups; General Government Investments (managed externally by National Mutual Funds Management) and the Superannuation Provision Fund Investments (managed by five various fund managers).

Investment Type	Source of Funds	YTD 31/1/99 \$'000	Projected Outcome \$'000
General Government	Surplus taxes, grants & agency funds	516,782	1,199,984
Arbitrage	Borrowings through commercial paper program	273,369	800,000
Superannuation (a)	Budgeted funds for Superannuation	0	50,000
		790,151	2,049,984

(a) The budget estimate provides for the placement of \$50m of superannuation funds with external managers. This placement is subject to a review by consultants of the strategic asset allocation which is currently underway.

(2) Another of the main functions of the Central Financing Unit (CFU) is to undertake all new borrowings on behalf of the government through the financial markets. Historically new borrowings have been undertaken for the general government by way of inscribed stock issues, a samurai bond issue, a retail bond issue and through the ACT's commercial paper program. Any borrowings which are funded through the commercial paper program are generally for terms of approximately 90 days and require refinancing on a regular basis. The effect of this is a relatively high gross turnover of borrowings received. This is off-set by gross repayment of borrowings. The net increase or decrease will be dependant on whether there is a need to raise new borrowings in the year or if existing borrowings will be repaid.

In respect of the commercial paper program, the ACT has a dealer panel comprising Commonwealth Bank, National Bank, Bankers Trust and JB Were Capital Markets who arrange funding for the ACT when it wishes to issue commercial paper. In these instances a tender process is utilised to gain the lowest cost of funds from these dealer panel members. Other new borrowings (inscribed stock issue, samurai bond etc) have been undertaken by way of seeking expressions of interest for an arranger/manager and selecting the financial institution which best meets the appropriate evaluation criteria including the ability to provide funding, cost of funds and product for example. These borrowings have generally been sourced by the selected manager from the Australian wholesale financial market, the Australian retail market and the Japanese retail market. Arranger/Managers have included Commonwealth Bank, Bankers Trust and Chase AMP Bank Limited.

As outlined in question 1, arbitrage related transactions comprise of two transactions:- the raising of new borrowings through the commercial paper program, and then reinvesting the proceeds of these borrowings. The transactions relating to the borrowing element of arbitrage trades results in a high gross turnover of borrowings received, off-set by repayment of borrowings. The arbitrage program is wound down by the end of the financial year such that there is a nil effect on the balance sheet for the components relating to arbitrage.

Non GGS or PTE entities are able to invest surplus funds with the CFU. These include the ACT Workers Compensation Supplementary Fund, Rental Bonds Fund, Canberra Hospital Trust and most trust accounts are also classified as external entities. For the purposes of the consolidated territory financial statements, these transactions are classified as a receipt of borrowings. When the investment is returned to these entities, the repayment transaction is classified under repayment of borrowings. A high activity of investment deposits and withdrawals will result in high gross turnover figures. These transactions are off-set in the investment purchase transactions. The CFU reinvests dollar for dollar all agency investment deposits.

1998-1999 Budget Paper Number 3 pages 207 to 212 provides a full summary of ACT Government borrowings and debt.

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The following table details the year-to-date Borrowings Received transactions as per the January financial statements (Statement of Cashflows):

Borrowing Type	Source of Funds	YTD 31/1/99 \$'000	Projected Outcome \$'000
General Government			
Refinanced Cwlth Debt	Commercial Paper	18,753	37,500
Hsg Home Loan Program	Commercial Paper	86,399	162,500
InTact	Commercial Paper	9,757	80,000
ACTEW	Commercial Paper	0	99,555
Arbitrage	Commercial Paper	273,415	800,000
InTact Finance Lease	Lease Facility	0	35,000
External Entity investments with CFU	Rental Bond Fund, ACT Workers Compensation Fund, Cnb Hospital Trust	5,924	53,007
		394,248	1,267,562

(3) As per the response to question 1, there are very strict guidelines within which investment purchases must be restricted. The general government investment funds are managed on behalf of the ACT by National Mutual Funds Management (NMFm). The investment mandate with NMFm details the limits which are placed on the ACT's investments. For the year to date (31 January 1999) NMFm has purchased a range of investments of the following type; cash, bank bills, promissory notes, floating rate notes and fixed interest in a variety of counterparties. The ACT mandate is such that short term investments may only be in counterparty's rated A2 or higher as per Standard and Poors Australian Ratings. Long term investments may only be in counterparty's rated AA minus or higher as per Standard and Poors Australian Ratings.

Investments purchased by the CFU for arbitrage related purposes are also restricted to the same ratings limits. Investments purchased during the period 1 July 1998 to 31 January 1999 comprised of bank bills and promissory notes in a variety of counterparties rated A2 or higher. There is currently no outstanding transactions in relation to arbitrage.

Superannuation Fund investments are managed currently by five specialised funds managers. Each manager has a specific investment mandate within which they manage these funds. The investment portfolios include; Australian Equities (County Investment Management), Property (Commonwealth Financial Services), Australian Fixed Interest (NMFm), Overseas Equities (Clay Finlay) and a balanced fund manager (Bankers Trust).

(4) No. Outside of internal loans to ACT Government Departments, Authorities and TOC's, the ACT only undertakes investments for the reasons and in the manner outlined in 1 and 3 above.

(5) The movement in investment balances on the balance sheet, current and non-current, for the year to date period ending January 1999, is \$60.285m. The movement is reconciled as follows:

	\$'000
Purchase of investments	790,151
Sale of investments	767,410
Net Movement	22,741
plus:	
Net Market Gains	14,921
Purchase of liquid investments (a)	25,884
less:	
YTD consolidation variation (b)	3,261
	60,285

(a) As highly liquid investments are classified as cash, for the purposes of the cashflow statement, movements in this category of investment do not appear in the cashflow statement.

(b) This represents year to date variations in eliminations balances between agencies.

(6) The projected movement in balance sheet indicates an increase in borrowings of \$135.049m. A reconciliation of borrowings is provided below:

	\$'000
Borrowings Received	1,267,562
Repayment of Borrowings	1,058,729
Net Movement	208,833
less net movement in:	
Finance lease (a)	14,462
Repayment of external loans receivable (a)	59,897
Repayment of external overdraft	118
YTD consolidation variation	693
	135,049

(a) These items roll into the two summary levels relating to borrowings in the cashflow, but roll up into Finance Leases and Loans Receivable in the balance sheet.

The projected increase of \$135m in borrowings relates to the budgeted borrowings of \$100m for ACTEW and \$80m for Information Technology, off-set by principal repayments of \$45m primarily relating to historical commonwealth debt and home loan program.

(7) The following table details the current and non-current investments of the ACT Government as per the 31 January 1999 Consolidated Territory Financial Statements.

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Investment Type	Product	Manger	YTD 31/1/99
<i>Current</i>			\$'000
General Government	Refer to Question 3	NMFM	268,987
Arbitrage			0
Superannuation	Refer to Question 3	Various Refer Q3	314,358
ACTEW	Cash, Bills, Term Deposits	ACTEW	43,606
CIT, Public Trustee, Legal Aid	Cash, Bills, Term Deposits	Each Authority	6,350
			633,301
<i>Non Current</i>			
ACTEW	Fixed Interest	ACTEW	11,465
Canberra Cemeteries	Term Deposits	NMFM	130
CIT	Term Deposits	CIT	20
			<u>11,615</u>

(8) The following table details the current and non-current borrowings of the ACT Government as per the 31 January 1999 Consolidated Territory Financial Statements.

Borrowing Type	Product	Administered by	YTD 31/1/99
<i>Current</i>			\$'000
General Government	Commercial Paper	CFU	55,321
Cwlth Historical Debt a	Debt attributed to ACT at self-gvt	CFU, ACTEW	9,636
OAM	O'Draft & Other (Joint venture related)	OAM	850
			65,807
<i>Non Current</i>			
General Government	Inscribed Stock	CFU	118,011
	Samurai Bonds	CFU	71,092
	Retail Bonds	CFU	55,000
Cwlth Historical Debt a	Debt attributed to ACT at self-gvt	CFU, ACTEW	337,508
OAM	Other (Joint venture related)	OAM	59,585
			641,196

a At the time of self-government, notional debt was attributed to the Territory. This debt was subsequently apportioned to ACTEW, the general government and housing. There are various repayment schedules for each type of debt including differing interest rates and terms to maturity.

(9) The tables provided in questions (7) and (8) include the values of the investments and borrowings.

**Mugga Lane Tip - Police Calls
(Question No. 105)**

Mr Wood asked the Minister for Justice and Community Safety, upon notice:

On how many occasions since 1 January 1998 have police responded to calls to attend the Mugga Lane Tip following complaints from officers of the Department of Urban Services.

Mr Humphries: The answer to Mr Wood's question is as follows:

AFP records indicate that police attended Mugga Lane Tip on 22 occasions between 1 January 1998 and 30 November 1998 in response to complaints.

Following changes to Australian Federal Police Information Technology systems which took effect on 1 December 1998, it has not been possible to ascertain whether or not police have been called to the Tip since that date.

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**Meetings of Ministers and Senior Staff at Kurrajong Hotel
(Question No. 120)**

Mr Quinlan asked the Chief Minister, upon notice, on 25 March 1999:

In relation to meetings held between Ministers and senior staff at the Kurrajong Hotel, during any of the meetings were any facilitators engaged other than Ministers or senior Ministerial staff and if so,

1. Who were they; and
2. Were they excluded from any portion of the discussion.

Ms Carnell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Yes, two facilitators were engaged for these meetings.

1. The facilitators were Mr Robert Webster and Mr John Walker.
2. Yes.