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Member : Mr STONE

Status : Chief Minister

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Mr STONE (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, since becoming Chief Minister, I have moved throughout the Territory and met with many different community organisations, groups and individuals. I have listened to what my fellow Territorians have had to say. My meetings included land council representatives, employer groups, local government and community leaders, arts groups, the trade union movement, and industry representatives. Those meetings are continuing.

One thing that is very clear to me is that we are all intensely proud to call ourselves Territorians. Our greatest resource is our people - Territorians. Many of us come from disparate places and have resided here for varying lengths of time, yet we have a commitment that is hard to find in other states and territories throughout Australia. The aspirations of Territorians are straightforward - security, growth, progress, new wealth, the protection and enhancement of our lifestyle, a decent standard of living, a future for our children, and a society that recognises the rights of the individual.

The political party that has fulfilled those aspirations consistently has been the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party. Today, as parliamentary leader, I will set down the strategic blueprint for my government. It is built around 5 central tenets: support for the family, particularly women, and including child care, health, education, law and order; the continuing development and economic growth of the Territory; the future development of young Territorians; care for the elderly and disadvantaged; and the protection and enhancement of the Territory lifestyle. Within the framework of policy directions that have been made by the

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CLP - the most successful political party in Australia today - I intend to lead the Territory forward into an era of greater prosperity and social progress. We are now approaching a point

in our economic development and our history when we are able to take a major step forward.

Wherever I travel in the Territory, I am impressed by the desire, the eagerness and the determination to get ahead. Territorians are raring to go. My travels throughout our region and other parts of the world, as Minister for Asian Relations and Trade, have reinforced my conviction that the Territory is ready and ideally-situated for great things to happen. In order for this to occur, I intend to focus the collective effort and will of the government on providing the right tools, removing the constraints, and creating the necessary conditions for individual, corporate and community enterprise and initiative to thrive throughout the Territory. All Territorians must have the opportunity to share in the good life.

An overriding government objective will be to achieve an increase in the number of people and jobs in the Territory. Many of the initiatives I will outline are designed to bring that about. The Premier of New South Wales may agonise over having too many people in Sydney, but the suggestion that one of the largest continents in the world should turn its back on migrants when it has only one million people in its entire northern half is ludicrous in the extreme. In the Territory, we lack the critical mass of population needed to grab world attention and attract investment on the scale that our resources and strategic location should command. Attention will be directed therefore to making the Territory more attractive to southern Australians and migrants, especially those with the means to help the Territory grow and prosper.

Population ceilings may be worth considering for Sydney, Melbourne and south-east Queensland but, as a nation, we should be encouraging internal and external migration to northern Australia, and to the Territory and Darwin in particular. There should be a national policy supported by all political parties to develop a Territory strategy. People of vision have been talking about it for the best part of 2 centuries. At this late stage, with Australia's historic orientation towards Asia and an unbalanced concentration of people in the south-east of the continent, it is time to act. The federal government should make a commitment to build the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, along with better highways and other northern infrastructure. It should offer significant financial incentives for people to settle and to establish business in the north. I will be taking up these important issues at the national level and pressing them at every opportunity.

I noted recently that the federal Minister for Ethnic Affairs and Immigration announced that 83 000 places would be available in Australia's migration program for 1995-96 and that there is a small specially-targeted scheme providing up to 500 places for migrants sponsored to settle in regional and lower growth areas. I urge the federal government to increase this category to help build regional centres throughout the Territory. In my statement to the Assembly last month on ethnic affairs, I announced the government's intention to prepare promotional information to encourage more migrants to settle in the Territory. The importance of migrants, and people of different racial, language and cultural backgrounds, to the Territory's future can hardly be over-estimated. Our rich ethnic mix has helped to make the Territory the best place in Australia. It gives us a great advantage in building closer

links with the rest of the world.

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The government will find ways to make Darwin and Alice Springs attractive alternatives to south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales as places for retirement. There will be costs in terms of services, but targeted retirees from interstate would make a significant contribution to the Territory economy. I recognise that some Territorians would rather not see a substantial increase in population. However, the good news is that, as our numbers grow, we will not have to tolerate the people pressure and pollution that many other places have to endure. In planning to accommodate long-term growth, Darwin is virtually unique among the cities of the world. With a land use structure plan already in place to cater for at least one million people, the problems that plague other large cities can be avoided.

I propose to establish a separate Ministry of Lands. There is an acute shortage of both industrial and residential land that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgent priority by my government. A dedicated ministry, that has as its sole focus the management of the Territory estate, will set out immediately to identify suitable land to be turned over to industrial or residential development to cope with a rapidly expanding economic base and flourishing population. Subject to the federal government entering into appropriate financial arrangements, my government will pursue regional agreements with a view to resolving the outstanding and emerging native title claims. I emphasise the enormous importance of developing Cox Peninsula. With its relative proximity to existing infrastructure on Darwin peninsula and the central business district, Cox Peninsula is particularly attractive for urban development, with excellent beaches and less mangrove and other tidal wetlands to constrain development than other coastal areas in the region.

All governments around Australia are grappling with issues of law and order. The political rhetoric of getting tough on crime does not satisfy the public or, indeed, me. While I accept that a criminal justice system should focus on helping to rehabilitate offenders, the simple fact is that the victims of crime feel disempowered and the community at large has had a gutful of housebreaking, random vandalism, public drunkenness and the generally objectionable behaviour that has come to characterise our parks and beaches. You should not have to step over drunks and put up with abuse when you go to the corner store to buy your milk and bread. People should be able to go out at night confident that, when they return, their homes will not have been burgled.

We need to go back to the root causes of antisocial behaviour and crime, but it also requires an approach to sentencing that some will find unpalatable. That includes an examination of the sentencing discretion of magistrates and judges to reflect more accurately the aspirations and concerns of the community who pay their wages. There will be those who will attack this statement. They will say that the separation of powers ensures the independence of the judiciary, who know best how to do their own job. I am sorry, but the average citizen does not accept that any longer. The average citizen is at a loss to understand some of the

sentences handed down and rightly asks: 'What about the victim?' I will ensure that victims are considered more fully in the criminal justice system. Action will be taken to ensure that our criminal legislation is able to deal appropriately with criminal behaviour. The model criminal code being developed under the sponsorship of the Standing Committee of the Attorneys-General will be monitored to ensure that it provides critical powers to police, streamlines evidentiary law and balances individual rights with the public interest. Our reform program will ensure that the policy and methods of the police and courts are based on

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up-to-date crime research and theory, providing the best means of dealing with offenders while supporting victims of crime.

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Territorians want more effective policing to cope with crime, and the government will provide it. We have already committed an additional \$7.3m to bring the police service up to its establishment of 775 as soon as possible. A number of other key recommendations of the McAulay/Bowe report will also be implemented. Flexible closed-circuit television networks are being considered for the Alice Springs and Darwin malls and other trouble spots. Police operational procedures will be streamlined to achieve greater police availability and faster response times. A number of crime prevention initiatives are being worked on under the auspices of the Leaders' Forum of Premiers and Chief Ministers, and strong support for programs such as Neighbourhood Watch and school-based policing will be maintained. We will continue to move to self-policing of Aboriginal communities and will encourage the development of more night patrols and warden schemes. The number of Aboriginal community police officers will be increased from 34 to 50, and the police service will take on more recruits from non-English-speaking backgrounds to reflect more accurately the community at large.

Territorians can be assured that domestic violence will be kept high on the law enforcement agenda, and that includes violence against Aboriginal women. Police patrols in Darwin will be increased from the 2 major patrol bases at Casuarina and in the city. A police shopfront will be further developed for the residents of Nightcliff, with a number of squads to maintain a strong police presence in the area. Improved police facilities will be provided in Palmerston, and the need for further police facilities for the Darwin rural area will be assessed. The police need feedback on what people think of their efforts to make the Territory a safer and more secure place. Community surveys will be conducted to provide it.

A concerted effort will be maintained to encourage more responsible drinking and to curb antisocial behaviour through the Living With Alcohol program, the work of the Liquor Commission, the police, local council patrols, night patrols and other measures. We can overcome some of the excessive alcohol consumption problems in urban areas if more suitable accommodation is provided for people visiting from remote communities. I am taking this up matter with church groups and other organisations.

To underscore the importance that I place on the matter of law and order, I will be taking over the Ministry of Police, Fire and Emergency Services in the forthcoming Cabinet reshuffle.

The government's approach to correctional services will be one of commonsense. This means that all sentenced prisoners will be required to work both to reduce prison costs and to develop a work ethic among inmates. Minimum security prisoners will work on projects to enhance community assets. All prisoners should leave jail with a work ethic, better education and better equipped to lead a law-abiding life. For less serious offences, more cost-effective home detention and community service order programs will be introduced and expanded in outlying communities as well as in urban centres. Juvenile offenders will be involved in reparation programs that emphasise the needs of victims. Juveniles who continually reoffend will be left in no doubt that the Northern Territory community will deal with them severely, and the community will be left in no doubt about the government's attitude to recidivists.

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In the new fire and emergency services legislation, to be introduced later in the year, there will be harsher penalties for arson and the deliberate lighting of fires. Construction of the new Alice Springs Fire Station will begin at the end of the year, and planning will proceed for a permanently-manned fire station for the expanding Darwin rural area. It will become the Fire Service's major training centre.

If successful, a new response to emergency situations, currently being trialed in Katherine and Mataranka, will be introduced at other locations. It involves the combined resources, multi-skilling and cross-fertilisation of ideas of Fire Service auxiliary personnel and Emergency Service volunteers. This is a concept that merits broader consideration such as cross-training of paramedic staff so that they can respond to both fire and emergency medical calls.

During my term of office, Territorians can expect an even greater emphasis on business links with the Asia Pacific region and delivery of services to South-East Asia. Regardless of the outcome of the Wran Committee inquiry, all the initiatives the government put forward in its submission to the committee, to enhance Darwin's Asian gateway status, will be pursued. Participation in the East ASEAN Growth Area is a major priority of my government and I look forward to the conclusion of bilateral agreements over the next few months.

Increased trade prospects also will flow from our historic memorandum of understanding on economic cooperation with South Australia. Decentralisation will become a major tenet of my government. Regional development will be supported pro-actively, consistent with regional economic development strategies. My government, in partnership with the Manufacturers Council, will underwrite the development of a manufacturing sector strategy as a matter of priority. I will be placing increased priority on removing impediments to economic development, including the unworkable provisions in the

Aboriginal (Northern Territory) Land Rights Act and those in the native title legislation, the unacceptable management of Uluru and Kakadu National Parks, and the unconscionable ban on further uranium mining where uranium is to be used for peaceful purposes.

My government will be a deregulating government. Deregulation of the transport industry will continue and all business regulations will be reviewed. Power users can look forward to stabilised tariff structures as more private electricity and gas suppliers enter the market and our public utilities operate in an increasingly competitive environment. Future power supplies and competitive tariffs will be secured through continuing exploration for and development of gasfields, long-term supply contracts and greater use of existing facilities.

The current tax regime will be simplified and the government will look at introducing competitive advantages for the Territory in areas such as first home and principal home ownership, financial transactions duty and business taxes.

Workable industry assistance schemes will be further developed to encourage key industries. We will also investigate the development of industry along the proposed rail corridor. The Northern Territory Industrial Supplies and Search Office will be further supported and resourced to ensure its activities are truly Territory-wide. An electronic data interchange will be established for electronic commerce, using the government communications

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system to reduce costs for business. A global Internet access to disseminate public sector information and market the Territory will also be considered.

Research programs in primary industry and all other areas of government will be reviewed to ensure that they are targeted appropriately. Research will continue to be a priority of the government, with a much stronger effort directed to fields vital to the advancement of the Territory and our region.

One of the great successes of the CLP government has been the agency known as the International Project Management Unit (IPMU). Formed within the Ministry of Education and Training, it was transferred subsequently to the Ministry of Asian Relations and Trade when that ministry, the first of its kind in Australia, was first established. The IPMU has been enormously successful in winning projects related to education and training. It has been a trendsetter and has returned handsome profits to the Northern Territory taxpayer. However, it is time to revisit the way the IPMU does business. I foreshadow that the IPMU will be renamed to better reflect private sector involvement. Its charter will be broadened to include projects other than education and training, particularly in the construction and professional services areas. Although it will continue to be responsible to the trade minister, it will be at arm's length from that ministry with a view to its ultimate privatisation. If this agency is to compete competitively with organisations such as SAGRIC and other interstate counterparts, it needs a different vision, a different charter and the capacity to act commercially.

The provision of infrastructure will continue to be a priority of government, particularly in rural areas, as access roads are built to open up more land for agriculture, particularly horticulture. The single most effective step that we can take to develop and populate the Territory as a whole is to make Darwin a transport hub for our region. There will be even greater efforts to have the railway built, to get our new state-of-the-art port up and running, and to put other integrated transport links in place. Almost every Prime Minister in Australia, from federation to the present day, has had the chance to build the railway and go down in history as the statesman who made the most decisive contribution to the development and population of Australia's vast northern expanse. If the present Prime Minister does not do it, I wager that the next one will. The railway is the most important piece of infrastructure that the nation needs to link with the Asia Pacific region and to promote freer trade and regional cooperation.

To improve Darwin's stature as the gateway to Asia and the capital of Australia's north, there should be an acceleration of inner city commercial development. Exciting opportunities for redevelopment of the existing port area will open up after 1997 with the completion of the new port. In the next 18 months, 10 ha of prime land will become available next to the central business district under the agreement with the oil companies on the relocation of tanks to East Arm. A total of 100 ha will become available over the next 2 years. Other projects to be pursued include the long-awaited central business district department store and improved water recreational facilities in coastal areas. We should also start planning now for bold future initiatives to be undertaken when economic expansion permits. One such project is the construction of a communications tower to improve television reception and other communications. Such a tower will stand as a symbol of the advancement of northern Australia and our links with the Asia Pacific as we enter the 21st century.

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Mining has shaped Australia, but nowhere in Australia has mining been a more powerful and positive influence than in the Territory. With the commencement of the McArthur River Mine, the value of mineral production is likely to increase by about 30%. Over the next 20 years, the value of production of our mining and energy sector combined could more than treble. International predictions are that natural gas and nuclear power will become increasingly the major source of electricity generation. With rich uranium deposits on a world scale, the Territory is in a strong position to capitalise on the coming upturn in the uranium market when there is a change of federal government. Additional infrastructure expenditure on new mines will have a direct spin-off for the entire Territory economy, and thousands of new jobs will be created either directly or indirectly. The resources that the government has invested in making geological information available as quickly as possible, and in a form acceptable to industry, will be repaid many times over. As mining companies and Aboriginal traditional owners decide to share the responsibilities of developing mineral and petroleum resources, everyone will benefit.

The past year has seen a revitalisation of our offshore oil and gas industry as a result of a number of exciting discoveries in the Timor Sea and Timor Gap. Laminaria and Bayu are thought to be the biggest oil and gas fields discovered in Australia in years. The gasfields in the Bonaparte Gulf are undergoing evaluation for LNG development. Even if there is insufficient gas for an LNG plant, the results to date indicate that there is ample to justify the cost of bringing the gas onshore for domestic consumption. Nabalco, which has now extended its operations until the year 2034, would be a potential customer, as would Jabiru and the Ranger mine.

The government has been promoting the construction of an oil refinery in Darwin for some time and, during the past year, an American consortium has been investigating the relocation of a refinery from Alaska to Darwin. This is an encouraging project. Another project under investigation is the building of offshore construction facilities at the new port to take advantage of the anticipated demand when new oilfields are developed. I want to see our existing gas infrastructure used as a base for additional gas developments and I am hopeful that, as the national pipeline grid expands, we will be able to supply gas to the south-east of Australia.

There will be a continuing strong focus on tourism because this industry will have the greatest beneficial impact on the greatest number of Territorians - an impact that will be felt right across the Territory. With Aboriginal heritage more intact in the Territory than anywhere else in the nation, there are opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians to become much more involved in tourism. Under my administration, the Territory's Tourism Development Masterplan and the Tourism Aviation Strategy will be pursued with vigour. The Tourist Commission will continue to spend at least half of its budget on marketing. I will take full advantage of the fact that we are better placed than any other Australian state or territory, as well as many other countries, to attract visitors interested in nature-based tourism. Within our borders we possess what Australians and people around the world perceive to be the real Australia. My government will conserve and capitalise on our natural heritage by expanding and developing our national park network. Development of park facilities in the Mary River to Adelaide River wetlands area will be accelerated, and new destinations will be brought on line with the declaration of parks in the Davenport/Murchison Ranges near Tennant Creek and Limmen Gate on the Gulf of Carpentaria. There will also be further emphasis on the Katherine

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region. Extensive investigations will be carried out to determine whether to proceed with the bold concept of establishing 3 'greater parks' or park systems of international stature - one in the Top End and 2 in central Australia. Tourism promotion and development will not be confined to natural attractions and cultural heritage. Increasing attention will be given also to other tourism features and events. A major, international-standard tourist resort with an international golf course in the Darwin region is one of the goals. Both Darwin and Alice Springs have huge potential to grow in stature as national and international convention

centres. We will be looking at what is required to make this a reality.

Recent experience indicates that overseas visitors, including those from Asia, are finding good value in shopping in Darwin. The Darwin central business district has the potential to become a shopping destination for overseas visitors seeking a good-value, good-quality Australian shopping experience.

Greater attention will be given to the gaming industry as we are positioned uniquely to become the Nevada of Australia. The Lasseter's Indoor Challenge, to be staged in Alice Springs next January, has the potential to attract up to 500 participants. If the inaugural games are as successful as anticipated, they will be held every 2 years.

Airline deregulation has helped to make aviation the cornerstone of our tourism industry, and the Tourism Aviation Strategy will be pursued vigorously. In addition, emphasis will be placed on road transport to and within the Territory, through a road marketing strategy being developed in conjunction with regional tourism promotion associations.

In keeping with the success of efforts to assist and encourage amateur fishing, the government will implement a similar program for fossicking. A detailed plan is being formulated that will cover matters such as prospective land being available for fossicking, licensing, infrastructure, legislation, community and industry involvement, and marketing and promotion.

We will also look at developing a comprehensive tourism information system, providing full on-line data on tourism facilities, services and costs, and making it available in all centres, including hotels, malls and shopping centres. Some other projects to be investigated include greater emphasis on promoting the outback experience of the spectacular Victoria River region, accelerated development of the Darwin wharf area, an Arafura Arts Festival covering all art forms, and creation of a high-quality audiovisual information centre to turn the Territory's vision for the future into a tourist attraction.

The scope for developing and expanding our primary industries and fisheries is enormous if we produce what Asian markets need at a competitive price. Over the next 5 years, primary producers can look forward to the government implementing the broad range of initiatives already outlined in the Future Directions documents released by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. All Territorians can be proud of the fact that Darwin is now established as Australia's key port for live cattle exports. The government will give strong support to the development of the live trade in which growth appears to be limited only by our capacity to meet the demand.

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The Northern Territory has great potential in horticulture. There is very little that we cannot grow. In many cases, the market windows of opportunity are available in both southern

Australian states and offshore. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries will pay even greater attention to horticulture. In consultation with relevant industry groups, it will work to establish reliable forecasts on market share, access and potential, including value-adding. In addition, the department will underwrite further research on specific projects to assist growers. Consideration will be given to replacing the Horticultural Advisory Committee with a horticultural development board which will have very defined goals consistent with industry aspirations. Our horticultural industry is currently producing over \$40m-worth of fruit, vegetables and nursery products annually from only about 2500 ha of land. Output will rise dramatically as new plantings mature and as more suitable land is brought into production in the Darwin rural area and the Katherine/Daly basin, and as the Ord River irrigation area expands into the Territory.

The same growth prospects apply to a wide range of agricultural crops. In any areas where suitable soil exists, yields can be greatly increased with irrigation. Water investigations therefore will be undertaken progressively in the Katherine/Daly basin and other prospective development areas. I will also examine the feasibility of re-establishing the dud bore scheme. In particular, I want to assist the owners of smaller agricultural properties, and those who are battlers compared with the larger corporations.

Beyond plans already in hand for opening up land for farming, including horticulture, I intend to promote a policy of subdividing selective pastoral leases into smaller blocks to enable young farmers to make a start. This is in addition to what we are doing already in the Douglas/Daly.

The government will assist the fishing industry by developing clear directions for all stakeholders and by pursuing joint resource assessment and cooperative arrangements with Queensland and Indonesia. We will also assist the development of agriculture through continuing research, through land and water investigations and through package arrangements to attract new investors. Particular effort will be devoted to encouraging and assisting the development of Aboriginal rural enterprises and fisheries.

Whilst the shift in Australia's defence operational focus is clearly to the north, there has not yet been a similar shift in defence support and defence-related industries. The government will do everything possible to encourage this to occur. The opportunity exists for Territory-based defence support industries not only to supply and service Australian and visiting defence forces, but to export their services as well. Territory business can be assured that my government will promote maximum local involvement in the development of defence facilities and the strong support of defence operations. We will strongly support federal efforts to encourage foreign military units to exercise in the Territory both in joint operations with Australian forces and on their own.

Among the Territory's many strategic advantages, its proximity to the equator puts us in the running as a potential location for a space base for launching both geostationary and low earth-orbiting satellites. A space base would have a big impact on the economy. Facilities for

the large geostationary satellites could involve hundreds of people with expenditure of a similar magnitude to the army build-up within a few years. My government will continue to promote

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this project as a matter of priority. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Australian Space Office and other associated industry groups.

I turn now to the public service, a subject close to the hearts and minds of many Territorians. We should be very proud of our Northern Territory Public Service. We have a team of very dedicated Territorians who have contributed greatly to our achievements since self-government. There needs to be a greater focus on the core business of the public service. There needs to be a greater emphasis on strategic thinking that will help take us into the next century. Heads of departments and their deputies have the opportunity to contribute to the front line of Territory growth and development. They will be given specific projects to pursue in addition to their administrative responsibilities. Working together with their ministers, they can expect a sense of ownership in what lies ahead. Under my stewardship, there will be a concerted effort to give the Territory the best system of public administration this country has seen.

There is a need for continuing reform to ensure that our public sector can respond better to the challenges and opportunities ahead. There must be no structural barriers to the generation and implementation of better ideas. To sharpen the focus and produce results faster, the main driving objectives and directions of the government will be clearly articulated to all government agencies, and timely action will be taken when programs reach their use-by date.

Considerable thought will be given to changes to further enhance staff commitment and satisfaction. I would be happy to look at changes to current employment conditions, including leave and air fares, as part of enterprise agreement discussions, and even at a review of workers compensation and superannuation arrangements. There will be a more flexible approach to the increasing demand for permanent part-time work, job sharing and working from home. Recruitment advertising and the NT Government Gazette will be upgraded to reflect the challenging nature of Territory public sector employment, and the maximum resources possible will be allocated to staff training and development.

Our new Financial Management Act, which is regarded as the most advanced legislation of its type in Australia, will stimulate a number of reviews and reforms in financial management. Already a commercially-based approach has been taken to the management of a range of commercial activities such as the government vehicle fleet, the Darwin Bus Service, the Construction Agency, the Government Printer and the Power and Water Authority.

During the course of my recent meetings, I have picked up what I consider to be a very disturbing trend. I have long been a supporter and advocate of local government. My parents'

involvement in local government has greatly shaped my thinking in this regard, yet everywhere I go I am petitioned by community and industry groups that advocate the abolition of local government. This point of view is held most strongly in Darwin where there seems to be a crisis of confidence. I am uncertain whether the view held is well-founded or built on perceptions that Darwin City Council is essentially anti-business and uncaring for the community at large. There are similar concerns in Palmerston. This perception needs to be addressed.

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While there may be a certain duplication of services and effort, I am yet to be persuaded that local government should be abolished. The challenge for the Darwin City Council is to promote itself better in the wider community and to show that it does care about the people of Darwin and is responsive to their needs. The same applies in Palmerston. I propose to develop stronger links with the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, and to support local and community government where I can.

In the vital area of education, I want to build on the progress made already to assist our education system to become the very best that this country has to offer. We must equip our young people with the knowledge, and the technical and professional skills that they will need to achieve what they want in life and what the Territory needs to compete internationally. Among other things, this will entail greater emphasis on Asian languages and Asian studies and the ability to take advantage of the latest advances in computer and communications technology. It is not hard to imagine the edge that we would have over other states in the country in doing business in Asia if, in a few years time, most young Territorians entered the work force able to speak Indonesian, Mandarin or Japanese, or all of those languages.

The message I have been receiving loud and clear from Territorians is that they want more choice in education. I intend to give them that choice, not only between the government and non-governmental school systems but also a real choice between government schools. Within the curriculum guidelines, I would like to see each school evolve to a much greater degree the better to meet particular community needs. With the full involvement of parents, schools will be encouraged to lead in education reform. No school can hope to be all things to all people. If each strives for excellence in particular areas, students will have real choice, the Territory will have schools that are world-class, and acknowledged as such, and teachers will enjoy the high community standing that their profession deserves. In addition, schools and other education institutions will be encouraged to complement each other and work together to maximise the use of resources.

There needs to be further decentralisation of the bureaucracy in our education system. Education is about schools, students and their parents. It is not about a centralised structure. Many senior bureaucrats share this view and they will be encouraged in a process of decentralisation that will see a closer working relationship that is school-based.

There will be a concerted effort to improve access to education and training in remote communities and to address the poor health, housing and other problems that militate against educational achievement. While academic standards in Aboriginal schools are generally far below what I consider to be acceptable, it has to be recognised that progress has been made. With 4 Aboriginal principals in charge of Aboriginal schools, more in training, about 100 Aboriginal teachers and nearly 300 Aboriginal assistant teachers, we can expect the rate of improvement to increase significantly. In some isolated Aboriginal schools, the 'electronic classroom' is already a reality with students receiving lessons and tutorial support by computer from the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School. If education and training in Aboriginal communities are seen to be relevant, I believe that much greater progress will be made. From now on, training will be provided for the skills that communities require, not for jobs that do not exist and perhaps never will. Through the network of vocational education and training, communities will be able to select a training provider of their choice to conduct

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training programs in any area of need. This is an important step forward, and I point out that the Territory now has 64 private training providers in addition to the 4 public providers.

One of the next steps will be to offer formal training and nationally-recognised level 1 qualifications for much of the work that is carried out in communities with Commonwealth funding. Hopefully, this in turn will encourage some community graduates to go on to acquire higher qualifications and better-paid jobs. It is pleasing to see that the old artificial boundaries within and between the different levels of education and training are being removed. The momentum will be maintained as will efforts to make the Territory's training system much more open, competitive and industry driven. Young Territorians will be given the opportunity to acquire the broadest possible mix of professional, technical and management skills to equip them for their future in the work force.

Our university is already setting the pace nationally in integrating vocational education and training programs, and making them an equal partner with higher education. Under a trial program to provide management training for apprentices, those who finish their apprenticeships will be able to obtain relevant qualifications in business management by combining work and part-time study. Access to training in higher education will be extended throughout the Territory. Greater progress will be made also in extending our education and training links with other countries in the region, and exporting our education services.

I sense among the next generation of Aboriginal leaders an emphasis on inclusion rather than exclusion. One of the most divisive aspects of land rights has been the exclusion of other Territorians from parts of the Territory. Put simply, people in urban areas do not accept that, while Aboriginals can come and go freely in towns, urban dwellers cannot travel into the great expanses of the outback and along our magnificent coastline as they can elsewhere in

this great nation of ours. The next generation of Aboriginal leaders say to me that they want to share these resources and land with the wider community. There will be rules, but the people will be welcome. This is a welcome change in attitude.

I believe that, with many land rights battles largely behind us, the climate is now ripe for a far more cooperative approach by the Territory government and Aboriginal leaders to Aboriginal community problems and development issues. I commit the government to that fresh approach. By working more closely together in a spirit of cooperation, I believe a great deal can be achieved. Members of Cabinet will be spending considerably more time in Aboriginal communities listening to and talking to Aboriginal people about their problems and their expectations.

Under my direction, the government will rededicate its efforts to helping Aboriginal people acquire the knowledge, skills, resources and resourcefulness they need to create a better future for themselves. We will be looking for new ways to provide Aboriginal people with health, education and housing programs that better meet their needs. Wherever possible, we will enter into partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations to enable them to be responsible and accountable for providing services to their members and to ensure that results are achieved.

Greater priority will be given to Aboriginal economic development strategies that have been produced in a number of government agencies. A good example is the proposal being

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developed by the Department of Transport and Works for a joint approach to construction and maintenance in remote areas by Aboriginal people, the government and the Territory Construction Association. This would create local employment, provide continuing training and support Aboriginal enterprise.

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with Aboriginal councils and landowner associations to develop a range of partnership and joint management systems for conservation and park management. Many such examples are already in place, providing opportunities for controlled tourism ventures, and training and employment for Aboriginal people in tourism, land management and conservation. If we all work together in a spirit of cooperation, the way is wide open for members of Aboriginal communities to make much greater advances in the Northern Territory than are possible anywhere else in Australia. The lead-up to statehood gives us the opportunity to discuss, debate, negotiate and come to mutual agreement on how we will all work together, accommodate each other's interests, and protect and develop this great Territory that we share. We all accept that the health, education, housing and general living conditions in many Aboriginal communities must be raised. Today, I commit the government to greater efforts to improve those conditions and I call on the federal government to match our commitment.

All over Australia, health and community services are under pressure from increasing demand. While the government will be working to improve health and community services for all Territorians, our isolated communities will receive particular attention. We will start by defining standards for core services in remote locations and we will then set about achieving those standards. In addition to improving clinical health services for Aboriginal communities, the government will undertake a 5-year program to prevent ill-health, targeting nutrition, smoking, infant and maternal health, alcohol abuse and environmental health.

For most of us, the Territory is a great place to bring up kids and a great place to get ahead and enjoy life during your prime. The government will ensure that it is also a good place to enjoy retirement in the remaining years of life. Among other important initiatives, more attention will be given to the development of residential aged-care services and palliative care. The government will also consider formally establishing a Northern Territory board of health studies to help coordinate health education and introduce incentives to encourage cooperation between the private and public health sectors to minimise duplication, facilitate training and ensure that public sector patients have access to quality specialist services. We will develop our hospitals as clinical teaching schools for medical students and will consider establishing a chair in Aboriginal health education. The possibility of entering into cooperative agreements with Western Australia and Queensland for specialist health services in northern Australia will also be explored. We may also establish a fellowship in international health to initiate cooperative health planning at the international level and attract external funding.

There is a perception in the community that safety in the workplace is not all that it should be. Among immediate measures to improve the situation, my government will review the Dangerous Goods Act and work for national best practice in workers compensation. Better compliance with safety laws will be further encouraged by on-the-spot fines.

Sport and recreation will continue to receive the strong support that has always been a hallmark of CLP governments. We remain committed to establishing a sports institute before

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1998 and will ensure that talented Territory athletes have every opportunity to participate in the 1996 and the year 2000 Olympics. As a precursor to setting up the sports institute, we will help sporting associations to bring elite coaches to Alice Springs and Darwin for coaching clinics.

Most Territorians will recall the outstanding Women in Sport and Recreation weekend that was held last year. It will be held again next year. A pilot project will also be undertaken to encourage greater participation by girls in sport and recreational activities.

Racing is not only a major sport but a thriving industry in the Territory. It deserves the strong support of government in developing an overall industry strategy. That will be facilitated

through the appropriate government agency to ensure that the racing industry throughout the length and breadth of the Territory is able to plan for the future.

Those who live near sporting facilities will be pleased to learn that a good neighbour policy will be developed to assist sporting bodies and neighbours. As Territorians would expect from Australia's first Minister for Asian Relations and Trade, our sporting expertise will continue to be encouraged and assisted as an integral part of our government's efforts to stimulate and strengthen economic and cultural links with our northern neighbours.

It is clear to me from discussions with Territory women that their most pressing issues of concern centre on child-care services, access to and knowledge of legal services for women, superannuation and the development of women in business. These and other issues will be addressed enthusiastically by my government. A vision important to my government is that all people have full involvement in the Territory's future. In a few years time, we will not have to monitor where women are - they will be there. Women can expect a Territory where they will be grabbing the opportunities presented, participating fully in our developing economy and making decisions on boards, in government, in business and in politics. Their skills will be as visible in public as they have been in their families. They can look forward to a Territory where the culture is anti-violent and people-safe, and where services and programs delivered are sensitive to women's needs. They can expect a Territory that acknowledges their contributions and spirit of adventure, caters for the enrichment of their work life, their family and their leisure time, and ensures their involvement on the information super highway - a Territory where women's creativity through arts and culture is obvious. Let us be clear: women count every bit as much as men in every aspect of life.

Child care will become a major priority of my government. Because of the nature of the Territory population, we have many young mums and dads, with young families, making their way in the work force. The ideal situation would see only one partner working, but the simple facts are that, if they are trying to pay the mortgage and get ahead, invariably both work. That does not mean that people are any less caring as parents, but rather that they should expect the support of their government in partnership to create adequate child-care facilities, thus ensuring that their children are not disadvantaged in any way. As a parent of a young child, I am very much in tune with this thinking, and Territorians will see new initiatives in the child-care area promoted and funded in the time ahead.

Under my leadership, the government will be devoting more thought and action to maximising the Territory's artistic potential. I will be bringing the Office of the Arts and

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Cultural Affairs together with the museums and art galleries. This will be the first time that the Territory has had a single, dedicated ministry that has the carriage of most aspects of Territory cultural activity. Among initiatives that will be pursued vigorously are the development of a film and television production industry and the establishment of an arts and

cultural centre. Funding of regular tours by major Territory arts production organisations, such as the Darwin Theatre Company and the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, and the formulation of a touring unit to coordinate tours throughout the Territory are also on the list, together with the staging of a youth arts festival. We will consider establishing a centre for Asia Pacific visual and performing arts at Northern Territory University. I foresee a time when our capital city will be an arts and cultural centre of world stature. We can sense it happening all around us, and the government will be making every effort to hasten the day.

I appreciate the wide level of consultation that I have had with the Trades and Labor Council. The Northern Territory has enjoyed a low level of industrial disputation because commonsense has prevailed. This has been most evident on the Darwin waterfront. The trade union movement and its members have played an important role in the economic and constitutional development of the Territory, and I happily acknowledge that. Although there will be times when we will disagree, I will maintain a high level of consultation with them.

The Northern Territory has the best lifestyle in Australia and, as far as I am concerned, our lifestyle is sacrosanct. However, that does not mean that it cannot be improved. All Territorians have ideas on how this may be achieved, and I want to get on with the job. Among the many things that I will be promoting are more tree plantings and permanent watering along tourism routes and foreshores, plus many more shade trees and shade structures in Territory towns and communities. The tropical or oasis atmosphere is what helps to make Territory centres attractive to residents and visitors alike. The time has come for imaginative measures to reclaim Darwin's beaches from crocodiles and sea wasps, and to provide tree shade thereby enabling people to enjoy our beaches in more comfortable surroundings.

I will continue to promote and implement the Future Directions for Darwin blueprint. Anyone who can recall the state of the Esplanade in Darwin 5 years ago will recognise the enormous success of the program to date. It will continue to be extended out to the Stuart Highway and into the northern suburbs. As our population expands and tourism increases, many more magic outdoor places will be opened up to take the pressure off popular retreats and destinations. Territorians may rest assured that access to our wonderful waterways will be maintained, vast wilderness areas will be retained, and recreational fishing will be sustained.

With the push for a republic gathering momentum, it is now essential that our year 2001 target date for statehood be brought forward. The Prime Minister has foreshadowed a referendum. Referendums are determined by a majority of people in a majority of the states. If the Northern Territory has not become a state by the time that such a referendum is held, we will not be able to participate in this historic vote as one of the states. No federal government can justify the disenfranchisement of Territorians in that way. I call on the opposition to take a much more active and vocal role in promoting statehood, especially among their constituents in Aboriginal communities. I urge it to join the government in countering the dismissive comments made by the likes of the Premier of New South Wales that the Territory is too small to become a state. As we all know, the Territory has about as

many people as Tasmania and

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Western Australia had when they became states. I remind Premier Carr that, in area, the Territory is 50% larger than New South Wales. I also urge the opposition to abandon its demand for 12 Senators on day one and join the government's more flexible approach. Territorians want statehood now, not in the latter part of the 21st century.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr STONE: It is time that the opposition got behind the aspirations of Territorians and supported statehood in an unequivocal fashion.

Mr Ede: It is the first time you got out there.

Mr STONE: Territory youth are our investment in tomorrow. The average age in the Territory is 27 years. Demographics of that kind stand in stark contrast to the situation in other parts of Australia. It explains in part why the Northern Territory is such a vigorous, exciting and go-ahead place. Territory youth must share in the confidence that we all have in the future of the Territory. Policies will be developed that not only encourage the participation of young Territorians but ensure that they are major stakeholders in all government policy that impacts on them. This will be most evident in the areas of education, sport and the development of new businesses. For those young Territorians who are graduates of our schools and universities, and who wish to pursue a career in the public sector, there will be special programs to secure their employment. Such programs are already in place in the Department of Industries and Development and other government departments. We will build on our extensive scholarship and traineeship programs to promote the skills base of young Territorians.

In conclusion, as I said at the outset, we are all intensely proud of our Territory and we all have a stake in its future. Although we may be small in number, we can share a vision for the future. This statement is not exclusive or exhaustive in any sense of the word. There will be other important reforms that will be introduced during the term of my government that have not been foreshadowed here today. They will be worked up over time in a responsible, consultative way with the community. My point is that there needs to be a beginning. There needs to be a setting of the parameters for the future. Our Territory - The Future represents a new chapter in a new volume in the history of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is not a new chapter; it is not even a paragraph. I would describe it rather as the cover to a book: it carries a title, but there is no book inside. It is the start of the remake of the Chief Minister. He is trying to change his

ground from being arrogant and nasty to becoming warm and fuzzy. However, I believe 'fuzzy' is the operative word here. I received a copy of this statement. 'Longer than Mein Kampf' was the way it was described to me.

Mr Stone: At least I have a plan. You do not sound as though you have one.

Mr EDE: I put my plan before this parliament 4 years ago, and I have stood by it all this time. All yours contains is a set of truisms and weasel words.

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It is very fuzzy and it is quite warm in places but, when it is examined closely, the other Chief Minister can be seen. He talks about trade unions as though they are all friendly and working together, and he is a person who wants to have them working alongside him. He might have the odd little blue from time to time, but probably that will not happen. However, let us have a look at the other side of him. I understand that there was a meeting. I do not think he knew that the representative of one of the arts organisations was in fact a well-known trade unionist in this town. I do not think he knew whom he was talking to. People were talking about cooperation with the Trades and Labor Council. In relation to anything to do with putting money into anything associated with the Trades and Labor Council or workplace art or union art, the Chief Minister said: 'Let's get one thing clear. Unions are my enemies and I do not give money to my enemies'. That statement demonstrates that, when the warm and fuzzy exterior is stripped away, the arrogance and nastiness starts to come through. He went on to say: 'It is my money, and I will do with it what I want to do'. Apparently, the taxpayer has no say in it, nor do other government members. The money is his, and he is the boss now.

Mr Stone: Who told you this story?

Mr EDE: Didge McDonald. You did not realise that he is a top unionist in this town, as well as being involved in one of the ...

Mr Stone: You are quoting Didge McDonald?

Mr EDE: Yes. He is also involved with one the arts bodies in this town.

Mr Stone: He will be fascinated to hear that you have said this.

Mr EDE: That is your style. You come in here and start to work up an image of yourself as a warm and fuzzy person, a nice little person, but you cannot quite place him.

A member: Cuddly too.

Mr EDE: No, not cuddly, just warm and fuzzy, but underneath he is the same person who

decided to close all those schools. The warm and fuzzy one is the same person as the arrogant and the nasty.

What do we actually have here when we begin to work through this statement? He said that he intends to establish a separate Ministry of Lands. He spoke about the structure of government and establishing that separate Ministry of Lands which might, of course, serve to create a position for another backbencher to clinch another vote. However, he then said:

`There is an acute shortage of both industrial and residential land which needs to be addressed'. That is true. In the main, the shortage of industrial land has been caused by the establishment of the Trade Development Zone. Because that government land has been available at subsidised prices, it has meant that nobody has developed any other industrial areas. In terms of residential land, the government put the mockers on the development of new areas of land because it wanted to keep the prices up. That is why this shortage has occurred. It is not something new.

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I defy anyone to tell me what the following means. It relates to land. The Chief Minister said:

Subject to the federal government entering into appropriate financial arrangements, my government will pursue regional agreements with a view to resolving the outstanding and emerging native title claims.

What is he talking about? What is this plan? Where is the clarity of vision that is to be provided to us? The person who has this vision was to make a statement to the House explaining what it is all about. On law and order, he said: `The political rhetoric of getting tough on crime does not satisfy the public or, indeed, me'. That is what he said. What does he do? He embarks on a page of political rhetoric:

... the simple fact is that the victims of crime feel disempowered and the community at large has had a gutful of housebreaking, random vandalism, public drunkenness and the generally objectionable behaviour that has come to characterise our parks and beaches. You should not have to step over drunks or put up with abuse when you go to the corner store to buy your milk and bread.

That paragraph follows his statement that `the political rhetoric' does not sit well with him and that he will not engage in it.

It would be okay if that was all he did, but the problem is that he is pursuing this very dangerous direction to which this government has tied itself. I thought this was an opportunity for him to get himself out of the corner that the previous Chief Minister was in. I

thought he would move to the middle ground and give himself room to move in relation to the law-and-order issue. However, he has not done that. Rather, he says that he will pursue sentencing policy as a way of combating crime. I have said to him previously, and I will say it to him again, that it is not whether a person is likely to be sentenced to imprisonment for 5 years or 10 years that makes them decide whether or not they will commit a crime - it is whether or not they think they will be caught, and the social consequences of being caught. That is the deterrent that works. That is what can be used to apply some real pressure on people. For the Chief Minister to say that he will remove the sentencing discretion from magistrates and judges will not take us anywhere.

When he spoke about police, he said nothing of substance. There was nothing on the McAulay/Bowe report, and there were no time lines for anything that is to be addressed. The only information he gave was that, once again, he will close the Nightcliff Police Office. That is a great way to get a change going and a great help in fixing the problem - close down another police station.

Mr Stone: It is pretty bloody clear what I said.

Mr EDE: The fact is that, in relation to law and order, the prisons etc, the correctional services infrastructure cannot cope with the people involved now. If the numbers of additional prisoners that he foreshadows are to be accommodated, that infrastructure will be even less able to cope. However, he did say one thing that could be good. It is not much of a pat on the

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back for the current Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services although he has not held the portfolio for very long.

However, the Chief Minister did say that he will take it over himself. There is good and bad in that. I criticised the previous Chief Minister when he gave the portfolio to a more junior minister. I said that it should be with the Chief Minister, and I still believe that as a matter of principle. However, I have to acknowledge that the period when the police portfolio was with the previous Chief Minister marked its period of greatest decline. Whether that was because he did not have the ability or the range to keep on top of it along with his other duties, or whether this new Chief Minister will be able to do that, I do not know. I certainly hope that will prove to be the case. At this stage, the police need a very hands-on minister. The situation needs somebody who can put a great deal of time into it. When you move beyond the easy matters and start getting into the issues of equipment, facilities and rebuilding morale, it is a difficult job.

In relation to correctional services, he said - and this is total garbage: 'All prisoners should leave jail with a work ethic, better education and better equipped to lead a law-abiding life'. That is real 1970s leftie-Liberal rhetoric. It is garbage. All one needs to do is to read the

publications of the Institute of Criminology in Canberra, and they demonstrate that that concept was a total failure. It did not work. They indicate that the way to go is to try to find every alternative available to keep people out of jail but that will have the effect of bringing shame on them and will bring them to see that their behaviour is wrong. By putting them in jail, they may be accommodated in healthy, clean facilities but there is no way we should kid ourselves that that provides a process that will rehabilitate people. Jails do not rehabilitate people, nor do they develop a work ethic in jail. I invite the Chief Minister to tell me about anyone who has ever left jail better educated and with a desire to lead a law-abiding life. It does not happen.

However, I do not want to be totally negative. I said, and I will repeat, that there was one new idea in this statement. It contained 1 new idea, 1 backflip, 20 truisms, 60 weasel words and 1 line of hope. That was the way that I scored it, and I would like to point out the new idea. The new idea is the concept of 'cross-training of paramedic staff so that they can respond to both fire and emergency medical calls'. I have not heard that proposed before. That is a new idea. The Chief Minister said that it merits broader consideration, and that is true. Maybe it is not right at the core of government and the issues that face the Northern Territory, but the idea of cross-training of paramedic staff to enable them to respond to both fire and emergency medical calls is worthy of consideration. I will agree with the Chief Minister on that.

Nevertheless, he cannot help but show himself as being one of the same old mob, one of the people who is unable to change. I refer to the kick at the Land Rights Act and the aspirations of Aboriginal people. He speaks of 'removing impediments to economic development, including the unworkable provisions in the Northern Territory (Land Rights) Act and in the native title legislation'. Thus, Aboriginals in the Territory are the impediment, and the government intends to get stuck into them. He went further on Aboriginal issues. I will jump to those first because he showed himself to be absolutely and totally ignorant, as well as being arrogant, in the point that he tried to make about getting rid of the permit system. He said: 'One of the most divisive aspects of land rights has been the exclusion of other

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Territorians from parts of the Territory'. He claims that people in urban areas do not accept that, while Aboriginals can come and go freely to and from towns, urban dwellers cannot go where they like in the bush. However, Aboriginals coming into town do not have the right to free and unfettered access to backyards and around private land, and that is what the permit system is. If members do not accept that, I invite them to look at each issue of the Centralian Advocate as they are published because they will see notices in which pastoralists are demanding that people seek permission before they enter onto their land, and so they should. That is fair enough but, if it is fair enough for pastoralists, it is also fair enough for Aboriginal Territorians to ask that people obtain permission before they enter Aboriginal land. I will be very interested to hear the views of the member for Victoria River when he speaks in this debate.

The Chief Minister said that all of these things - the permit system, the veto etc - are disappearing. He said that the next generation of Aboriginal leaders say to him that they want to share their resources and land with the wider community, that they want to give away the veto, and give away their control over the permit system. Whom has he been talking to? I would be very interested to know. It was possibly a grade 3 class somewhere that he was able to dominate into putting their hands up when he put this proposal to them. I put it to him that anybody with more maturity than that would totally reject that notion. It is most unfortunate that the Chief Minister has not changed his spots in that regard.

When he talks about the shape of government, he uses words that flow with such beautiful simplicity - 'the current tax regime will be simplified'. Great! But, what does it mean?

Mr Bailey: We will charge everybody more. That is simple.

Mr EDE: It is a wonderful thing. Where will he simplify it? Perhaps the Treasurer will be able to tell us where he has deliberately complicated the tax regime, and the Chief Minister has told him he cannot do it like that, that he wants the simple way.

Mr Bailey: What about the fire service tax? They cannot even work it out as yet.

Mr EDE: That is their business. Perhaps they will simply turn it into a poll tax. That is nice and simple - everybody pays \$100.

Mr Bailey: Then there are the Housing Commission rents. They could not even get a computer to work them out.

Mr EDE: In relation to the railway, I agree with the Chief Minister's sentiments on that. If the present Prime Minister does not build the railway, the next one most certainly will. Kim Beazley is a very strong supporter of the railway. He is one of our strongest supporters in Canberra. Certainly, if you put a couple of tanks on it, he will drive the train up here for us.

Mr Coulter: They will be pulling it.

Mr EDE: I come now to the backflip, and I am glad to see it. I am glad to see that the Chief Minister now admits the need to have free and fair trade in gas across state and territory

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borders and that gas is not something that we hold on to ourselves. He has agreed with our policy of the last 4 years. However, when he says Nabalco is a potential customer for the gas, he must be talking a long time down the line because it has just spent \$12m on upgrading the facility at Gove for its ability to continue to use oil. I hope he is not holding his breath on that one.

As for the dud bore scheme, I would be interested to hear the member for Nightcliff's ideas on that. I think he had the lands portfolio at the time when the scheme was abolished, or did that happen under the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries with the current Treasurer? I am not sure about that, but I do recall that I held the shadow ministry position just prior to that happening. If anyone believes that reinstating the dud bore scheme will assist the owners of smaller agricultural properties, as the Chief Minister suggests, they must have rocks in their head. If we look at who benefited from the dud bore scheme, it is apparent that most were the large foreign-owned or interstate-owned combines in the Barkly.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: I think we should ask the Chief Minister to read the debates held on some of these issues more than 3 years ago. He will find them reported in the Parliamentary Record.

There is some serious business in this. It is not all simply a joke. I was very concerned when I heard what the Chief Minister was saying about local government. There was a very definite implied threat in that. He said that, everywhere he goes, he is petitioned by community and industry groups to abolish local government. When somebody is as arrogant and nasty as this person is, they start to build up hysteria in the community, and then they say that they are reacting to community pressure ...

Mr Reed: A mob of wimps.

Mr EDE: Wimps, are we?

Mr Reed: Yes.

Mr EDE: Oh, right. Is that because we will not abolish it?

Mr Reed: No, because you will not face facts.

Mr EDE: You would abolish it? The Deputy Chief Minister wants to abolish local government. But I am telling you, Deputy Chief Minister, and you can tell your Chief Minister, that members on this side of the House will fight that move. We are on the record as saying repeatedly that we believe that local government should be entrenched in a Northern Territory constitution. That is how strongly we support it. We support that in the same way as we support strong entrenchment provisions to maintain the Northern Territory as a constituent unit. If the Chief Minister wants to start winding up this kind of hysteria against local government, he will lay himself open for other places to wind up the same sort of hysteria

in relation to the Self-Government Act. I tell him that he must rise above it. He has to become rather more mature in his arguments.

The problem for the Chief Minister is that he carries an uncomfortable amount of baggage with him into this new role. I am not talking only about the fact that he was forced to stand down from his former position as Attorney-General. He has also a most unfortunate record on Aboriginal issues, and there is nothing in this statement that gives me any hope that he has changed his spots. He has a history of saying that he supports reform of the ...

Mr Reed interjecting.

Mr EDE: ... process, but fails to support such reforms when they come before the parliament.

He has said in the past that he supports freedom of information legislation in the Territory yet there is no mention of that in this statement. He needs to consider some of the changes that were made recently by his predecessor to limit the Ombudsman's powers. I would like to have seen something about that in this statement. He could have demonstrated some leadership by introducing legislation to establish an independent Electoral Commission for the Northern Territory. I would like to have seen that in here. Unfortunately, he showed last night that he is prepared to allow the Northern Territory to continue as the last vestige of the Bjelke-Petersen era in Australia. That was when he stood in this House and said that he supported government backing for ministers' defamation actions against their political opponents. That was a hallmark of Bjelke-Petersen, and the tool that he used to silence political criticism. That was supported last night by the Chief Minister. He continued down the Bjelke path with his acceptance of this Assembly continuing to be the only state or territory parliament not to operate with an estimates committee.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr EDE: At least when you became Chief Minister, you had a couple of positive changes to put in place - a couple of political reforms that were required. There is nothing in this, and you know there is not. You have read it.

Mr Hatton: I do not agree.

Mr EDE: You are just tying yourself back into the old straitjacket of the Perron years. It is a wasted opportunity. He has said nothing about the introduction of a code of practice for ministers and their staff, and top public servants. It is interesting that applicants for employment at the casino are asked to provide far more financial detail before they can expect to obtain a job than are members of parliament or ministerial staff. The police go vastly further in revealing their financial details than do ministers, members of parliaments or the most senior public servants in the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister needs to set a policy agenda which demonstrates a commitment to social justice. First of all, he could have repudiated publicly and explicitly the government's direction and belief under the previous Chief Minister who said that he believed social justice to be a dangerous concept. He could also have given a commitment that the policy that we

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have seen imposed in this last budget, of putting the hardest taxation bite on those people who can least afford it, would be eased. He could have stopped the belting that those people have been taking in the last month or so.

He could have told us also whether he intended to permit his deputy to continue this National Party crusade that he has been running against minorities, particularly the campaign against homosexuals. The Chief Minister needs to spell out whether he will continue to support the exclusion of homosexuals from the Territory's anti-discrimination legislation, and whether his government will continue to oppose the introduction of a methadone program in the Territory.

The Chief Minister has a considerable amount of work to do in the context of constitutional development. The unfortunate aspect is that, in relation to Aboriginal affairs in particular, the Chief Minister does not inspire much confidence. Last October, he said that he wanted to get rid of what he called absurd policies like the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. At that time, the now Chief Minister said that, if Canberra were to get its boot off the Territory's throat and get rid of absurd policies like the 3-mine policy and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, overlaid by the Mabo legislation, we could proceed with the business of making a dollar, paying our taxes and paying our way. The former Chief Minister supported the member for Port Darwin's comments. The former Chief Minister said: 'I have been quoted on many occasions, particularly talking about disposing of the Land Rights Act'. That is their policy; that is what they are on about. He is the Chief Minister. The previous Chief Minister said they were absurd policies. It may not be the member for Nightcliff's policy, but it is their policy.

Mr Stone: I know what I said.

Mr EDE: You are on the record. The problem is that they take every opportunity to attack the principles of the Land Rights Act.

Mr Hatton: Are you going to say that the act is perfect?

Mr EDE: It is one of the first areas that the ...

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: The Country Liberal Party is the only political party - and it is a very small party

that is far to the right - in government or opposition anywhere in Australia that still opposes the veto. It is the only one. The shadow minister for resources, a federal National Party member, said recently that a Howard Liberal government would not repeal the access provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. That further isolated the Country Liberal Party and the current Chief Minister who made that the hallmark of his Aboriginal affairs platform today.

Mr Hatton: He did not mention the word once.

Mr EDE: He said that 'access' was what stuck in people's throats. Last year, the Territory Minister for Mines and Energy, now the Deputy Chief Minister, said that, in view of

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agreements that were flowing through for exploration on Aboriginal land, he was prepared to reconsider his position on the veto and review his opposition to access controls. Within 24 hours, the minister was told that he had made a mistake and he was to change his tune. The then Minister for Mines and Energy was new to his portfolio at that time, and was only trying to be helpful.

Confusion reigns supreme when we look at what the Chief Minister said here. He was totally confused on some of the statehood issues. I have him on record from the Alice Springs news yesterday. When asked what we will gain from statehood, he said: 'Statehood means equal representation other Australians enjoy'. 'In the Senate?', he was asked. 'Well, it is not just the Senate'. Apparently, he was happy about it then. Today, he is knocking it on the head. In relation to the republic, he displayed total confusion. If he wants to bring on his idea and debate it, I would enjoy a debate on whether there should be a president, voted in directly by the broad mass of the people or appointed by a 75% majority of both Houses of parliament.

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

Mrs HICKEY: Mr Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to the Leader of the Opposition to enable him to conclude his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: That again is total confusion. If he believes that he is doing the right thing by jumping on a populist issue of that kind and knocking me for saying that we should not have the vote from three-quarters of the ...

A member interjecting.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, he did say that I was going against the will of the Australian people by saying that I wanted a president to be elected by a three-quarters majority. I am quite happy to debate that with him at any time.

To sum up, this is a confusing statement. It lacks direction and is marred by an almost total absence of any concrete decisions or programs. It is a mixture of admissions by the Chief Minister of past failures, inconsistent policy, criticism of his own ministers, indecision and the partial adoption of Territory Labor policy. He makes sense only when he adopts Labor ideas.

The Chief Minister has admitted to serious government failures and I will list some of these: the inadequate provision of land for housing and industry, the poor state of Aboriginal health, and poor ministerial supervision of research programs in primary industry and all other areas of government. The Chief Minister has now adopted some sections of Territory Labor policy that he had criticised previously. Obvious examples are his adoption of Territory Labor policy on access to national pipeline grids for the free and fair sale of Territory gas in the national markets, an accelerated program for soil and groundwater research to release suitable areas for horticultural development, and amendments to the Pastoral Land Act to facilitate subdivision for smaller, more productive holdings.

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In other areas, the Chief Minister has not adopted enough Territory Labor policy. For example, he has failed to set targets for the reduction of the unit price of electricity that remains among the highest cost inputs for Territory industry. The Chief Minister's statement fails also to make any mention of the Trade Development Zone, an authority over which the Chief Minister has had control for the last 3 years. In fact, as I said, he mentioned the very basic reason why it should not be there in that there is a shortage of industrial land which has been created, in the main, by the existence of the Trade Development Zone.

The statement also contains a rambling discourse on law-and-order issues, but fails to make any commitment to provide the resources needed to address those issues. The Chief Minister has failed to give a commitment to a timetable for implementation of the McAulay/Bowe report on police resources, and he also failed to say which recommendations of the report he will implement. I decry the fact that one of his first actions as Chief Minister is to say that he will close the Nightcliff Police Office. This is the person who says that he will stand up for law and order, and he will wear this, month after month and year after year. What was the first thing that Mr Law and Order did? He closed a police station.

The Chief Minister's statement is condescending to women and, when the platitudes are stripped away, the statement shows that women cannot expect any practical benefit from the change in occupancy of the Chief Minister's position. I am not regarded as one of the world's great feminists but, when I read what he said, my teeth grated. It is a total put-down. As I said, it is full of weasel words and cop-outs. His statement that the ideal family is one in

which the husband works and the wife stays at home and looks after the kids typifies the concept promoted in the 1950s. I know that he shares that view with Hon John Howard and certain other people. However, the fact is that there are many families today in which both spouses agree that they want an arrangement through which their kids are properly cared for and they are both free to work. I do not think that we should be judgmental and say that one way is ideal and the other is not, that one is first class and another is second class. I think we should recognise simply that they are different.

The total document is reflective of a minister bereft of ideas or principles. The single new initiative was that he will give consideration to cross-training for paramedical staff to enable them to respond to both fire and emergency medical calls. I said at the outset that there was one line of hope, and there was. It says, 'This statement is not exclusive in any sense of the word'. He said it a little more clearly later, but I cannot find it. He said also: 'There will be other important reforms that will be introduced during the term of my government that have not been foreshadowed here today'. All I can hope is that, somewhere along the line, they will come into view and we can have a look at them, because they were not included today.

Debate adjourned.