

1991 Cabinet Minutes

Selected highlights

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Civil rights

In February 1991 the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC) delivered the report of its review of Queensland's public assembly laws, which Commissioners argued ran counter to internationally recognised civil and political rights. Prior to coming to office the Labor Party had committed to redrafting the laws to fully reinstate Queenslanders' right to peaceful assembly and protest. In October Cabinet considered a joint submission from Premier Wayne Goss and Attorney-General Dean Wells in which they suggested new legislation be drawn up largely in line with EARC's recommendations, bar certain 'substantive departures' – principally, to categorise the right to peaceful assembly as a 'qualified right', potentially subject to restrictions 'in the interests of public order and public safety'. Cabinet twice deferred the submission awaiting further consultation on what the proposed legislation should define as a 'public place' (local councils had expressed reservations about allowing protests in pedestrian malls) and which court – District or Magistrates – should hold responsibility for authorising a public assembly (Decisions 1627, 1689). In November Cabinet approved preparation of a Peaceful Assembly Bill that would 'give consideration to ensuring that legitimate public safety concerns are met' (Decision 1715).

Conservation

Acting on an election commitment to consolidate the state's existing framework of environmental protection and national park management, in September the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Pat Comben, sought Cabinet approval to prepare 'comprehensive' nature conservation legislation. The proposed laws would allow creation and enforcement of protected environmental areas and wildlife habitats, in addition to the state's network of marine and national parks; they would also provide for protection of rare and threatened species, as well as for sites of natural and cultural (including Indigenous) heritage. Furthermore, the laws would introduce Interim Conservation Orders enabling government officers to cease any development activity deemed environmental 'vandalism'. As noted in the Cabinet Office briefing paper attending the submission, industry groups had voiced reservations about the laws' 'wide-ranging powers' and constraints on land use. Cabinet initially deferred the submission to allow further consideration of the proposed legislation's implications for economic development activities and land use in Queensland (Decision 1523). A fortnight later, after government departments and relevant industry bodies had relayed further concerns over the draft laws' provisions, Cabinet duly approved preparation of the Nature Conservation Bill (Decision 1566).

Criminal justice system

Boggo Road prison site

In March Cabinet considered the matter of the future use of the Boggo Road prison site in Dutton Park, in Brisbane's inner south. After the earlier Kennedy Review of Queensland's corrective services system had assessed Boggo Road's facilities as 'hopelessly inadequate', the Goss government looked to finalise the review's recommendation that the prison be fully decommissioned (its No. 2 Division having been shut down in November 1989). The matter was given some added urgency after the dramatic escape, and equally dramatic recapture, of four Boggo Road inmates some days prior to Cabinet meeting in Maryborough ('Two Qld jail-breakers still free', *Canberra Times*, 18 March 1991). The joint submission from Minister for Justice and Corrective Services, Glen Milliner, and Minister for Administrative Services, Ron McLean, recommended the prison's women's section be retained while expressions of interest were sought for redevelopment of the remainder of the prison site. Cabinet's preferred approach was to close and redevelop the entire site (assessing any buildings that might be



of heritage value), but allowed the question of the Boggo Road women's prison to await resolution of the cost assessment and feasibility analysis of that facility's relocation (Decision 1108).

Judicial discretion in sentencing

In the first half of the year Cabinet noted the contents of an interim report of a comprehensive review of Queensland's Criminal Code (Decision 1152). Cabinet also decided on the matter of judges having authority to impose indeterminate or renewable sentences upon identified 'dangerous offenders', which could be justified by 'considerations of public safety' (Decision 1298). In August the Attorney-General sought approval to prepare legislation that would repeal certain sections of the Criminal Code, largely in keeping with the interim report's recommendations. Chiefly, the proposed legislation looked to abolish mandatory life sentences for convictions of certain serious crimes (the interim report had suggested abolishing mandatory sentencing for *any* crimes). The legislation would also repeal 'outmoded' statutes allowing for extended detention of habitual reoffenders as well as introduce provisions for indeterminate sentences, as decided on 'in principle' by Cabinet earlier in the year. Cabinet initially deferred the Attorney-General's submission to allow for revised provisions to be included following additional legal consultation (Decision 1448). Shortly after, Cabinet authorised that new legislation be drafted – the Sentencing (Reinstatement of Judicial Discretion) Bill – that would restore judicial discretion in sentencing in certain cases (Decision 1493).

Economy

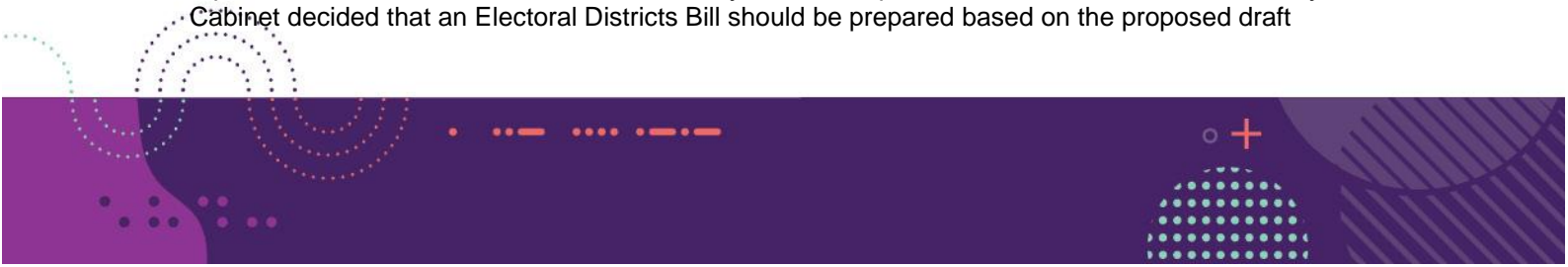
From the outset of this year Cabinet received several reports on the performance of Queensland's economy (see Decision 1287) and considered proposals to counteract negative economic conditions impacting the state. In January Cabinet noted the contents of an information paper, 'Response to the Economic Downturn', submitted by the Administrative Services Minister, which suggested prioritised government projects and private sector activity that could help boost Queensland's economic standing. In particular, the information paper outlined an accelerated capital works program, authorised by Cabinet in the previous December, by which government projects would be brought forward or expanded to promote 'short-term countercyclical stimulus to the state's economy'. Cabinet approved additional or advance funding required for the capital works program's acceleration and requested further updates on its progress (Decision 987; also Decision 1157). In due course Cabinet noted reports detailing the work schedule of government projects and options for expediting expenditure on elements of the capital works program (Decisions 1000, 1398). On one such occasion Cabinet registered disquiet at indications of 'large discrepancies' in estimated costs of Police Department capital works projects and authorised a Treasury audit to 'ensure that errors of this nature will not be repeated' (Decision 1224).

Education

In April Cabinet endorsed an enhanced program of HIV/AIDS education and prevention initiatives for Queensland schools (Decision 1128). A joint submission from Minister for Health, Ken McElligott, and Minister for Education, Paul Braddy, argued that existing education programs were inadequate and becoming obsolete in light of new research and knowledge of the virus' spread. With more than one thousand Queenslanders (as of January 1991) identified as HIV positive – ten per cent of those under the age of twenty-five – the Ministers' submission noted 'significant' community support for continued and improved AIDS awareness initiatives for the state's school students (there having been school-based AIDS education programs for senior high school students since mid-1987). This support, the submission suggested, reflected changing societal attitudes and 'increased community awareness regarding the need for school-based prevention programs' targeted at adolescents. Additional costs of the enhanced School AIDS Prevention Program Strategy were a recurring \$75,000 per annum (but would not be incurred until the 1992-93 financial year), with the program drawing upon existing resources of the Departments of Health and Education along with contribution from the grant-funded National Centre for HIV Social Research at the University of Queensland.

Electoral reform

The Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC) had delivered the much-anticipated report of its review of Queensland's electoral system in the previous November. In March of this year Cabinet decided that an Electoral Districts Bill should be prepared based on the proposed draft



legislation contained within the EARC's report, with some procedural amendments. Cabinet also agreed that the existing Elections Act be amended to reflect the EARC's recommended establishment of a Queensland Electoral Commission with a new Electoral Commissioner (Decision 1088). As noted in a joint submission from the Premier and the Justice and Corrective Services Minister, there was need for a full-time Commissioner given the considerable 'amount of work [then] developing on electoral matters' in Queensland. Next month Cabinet decided on which of the EARC's electoral system recommendations were agreed to unchanged – including introduction of optional preferential voting – or with variations; the Premier was also authorised to draft a resolution to be moved in Parliament that the EARC's report be adopted (Decision 1156). This allowed the EARC to proceed with its revision of the state's electoral boundaries, on which it reported in late August; days later, Cabinet approved a draft Elections Amendment Bill to allow the state electoral roll's publication to be deferred until after an electoral redistribution (Decision 1513).

Environment

Keeping an election commitment to develop a coastal environment protection strategy, in March Cabinet approved public release of a green paper on the issue, subject to revisions to resolve the concerns of various members of Cabinet (Decision 1112). The draft green paper outlined measures to 'conserve and enhance' the state's coastal environment through preparation of detailed coastal management plans and, among other objectives, 'to allow orderly and environmentally responsible use of the coast having regard for long-term community benefit'. In July Cabinet sought to resolve land use issues in Central Queensland's coastal region relating to sand mining leases and declaration of national parks. In a submission jointly prepared by the Environment and Heritage Minister and other relevant Ministers (reflecting multifaceted policy issues involved), several national parks were proposed in coastal areas where sand mining interests also sought granting of leases – an area of particular interest was Byfield, north of Rockhampton, which had received a pre-election promise of protection from sand mining. Cabinet issued a lengthy decision approving the gazettal of stages of Byfield National Park plus other national park areas, also seeking relinquishment of impacted sand mining leases while allowing some lease applications in other areas to proceed (Decision 1416).

Film and literature classification

The Labor government in the previous year had carried out a commitment to abolish Queensland's Films Review Board and Literature Review Board. Following community complaints about the display of 'sexually explicit' material in retail outlets, in March the Minister for Justice brought a submission to Cabinet outlining options for classifying films and literature, as well as regulating the display and sale of adult publications, in line with national standards. Cabinet's preferred approach was a partial adoption of the Commonwealth model of classification, also noting its desire to impose restriction (or banning) of certain adult material from shop-front sales in Queensland (Decision 1104). In May the Justice Minister submitted proposed draft laws providing for film and literature classification in line with Cabinet's directives. Initially Cabinet authorised preparation of draft legislation based on the Minister's submissions (Decisions 1230, 1231). However, when a week later the Minister sought Cabinet's approval to introduce the prepared Bills into Parliament, at the Premier's request both submissions were deferred (Decisions 1254, 1255). At its next meeting Cabinet referred both Bills to a Parliamentary Committee for consideration of 'a raft of concerns about clauses in the Bill(s)' prior to their consideration by Labor's Caucus (Decisions 1271, 1272).

Fraser Island inquiry

In May Tony Fitzgerald QC delivered his findings from the public inquiry into the conservation and land management of K'gari (Fraser Island) and the Great Sandy region. Most notably, Fitzgerald recommended the island and surrounding region be protected 'in perpetuity' and given World Heritage listing. Days after the inquiry report was tabled in Parliament, Cabinet agreed to two oral submissions from the Premier to establish Special Purpose Cabinet Committees to examine firstly the financial and then environmental implications of the report's recommendations (Decisions 1289, 1290). In July Cabinet approved public release of a government statement on its policy position regarding certain (mainly environmental and land use) issues arising from implementing the report's recommendations (Decision 1409). A week later Cabinet considered several submissions from members of the Special Purpose Cabinet Committees dealing with matters ranging from protection of K'Gari's old growth forests; to rehabilitation of cleared Crown lands, to industry development initiatives for the region

(Decisions 1418-1430). Cabinet again considered these and similar matters in September, culminating in confirmation that logging on K'Gari would cease by the end of the year and committing the government to a multi-million dollar financial assistance package for the region's 'displaced' forestry industry workers (Decisions 1534-1551).

Freedom of Information

In the latter months of this year Cabinet considered the matter of enacting freedom-of-information (FOI) legislation allowing members of the public a right of access to government agency documents. The EARC in the previous December had provided a report on this issue and proposed draft legislation modelled on FOI laws operating in other Australian jurisdictions. Cabinet accepted this as basis for a draft Bill to be prepared subsequently, while noting some rejections of the EARC's recommendations and several amended provisions to be incorporated into the draft laws; Cabinet also authorised establishment of an FOI Implementation Unit (Decision 1608). The joint submission from the Premier and the Attorney-General recognised this transparency initiative comprised part of the 'Fitzgerald reform process' yet suggested that certain government agencies and records – interestingly, Cabinet matter and ultimately Fitzgerald Inquiry records among them – still be exempt from the full range of FOI provisions recommended by the EARC. After a range of interested parties had been consulted on proposed FOI provisions, Cabinet later authorised preparation of FOI legislation subject to further amendments of the EARC's original recommendations (Decision 1717). In December Cabinet approved that the Freedom of Information Bill outlined in the Attorney-General's submission be introduced into Parliament (Decision 1782).

Gaming machines

Over the course of this year Cabinet decided on proposed legislation enabling the introduction of gaming (poker) machines in Queensland and on regulations governing their operation. This followed intensive deliberations and investigation of the matter in the previous year by the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and a Cabinet Special Purpose Committee, looking to allay concerns over criminal links to the gaming machine industry. Confident that appropriate safeguards could be established, in February Cabinet approved of the draft Gaming Machine Bill in a joint submission from Deputy Premier Tom Burns, Treasurer Keith De Lacy, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, Bob Gibbs, and Minister for Family Services, Anne Warner; Cabinet also directed that the draft laws be considered by Labor's Caucus and the CJC (Decision 1029). Next month Cabinet agreed to minor amendments to the Bill's wording prior to it being passed in Parliament days later, against animated Opposition disapproval (Decision 1090). Mid-year, Cabinet approved appointments to a new Queensland Machine Gaming Commission to provide oversight of the gaming industry (Decision 1259); in May and December, Cabinet decided on interim and then permanent regulations for the industry ahead of installation of the first poker machines in licensed premises (Decisions 1219, 1784).

Health and hospitals

Townsville Hospital inquiry

In the previous year the government had established a public inquiry, headed by William Carter QC, into the Townsville General Hospital's psychiatric unit following repeated complaints of 'improper' clinical practices. In February of this year Cabinet noted the findings within the inquiry's report and endorsed implementation of Commissioner Carter's recommendations (Decision 1044, marked 'Secret'). Chief among these recommendations was that the Attorney-General examine whether the law relating to assault should be amended to take account of circumstances where it might be deemed 'necessary to subject mentally ill patients to non-consensual treatment'. As noted in the Health Minister's submission, a supplement to the inquiry's report presented details of complaints cases where the Commissioner believed 'sufficient evidence to prosecute or to take disciplinary proceedings exists'; while the inquiry report would shortly be made public, this supplementary section would not.



Queensland Ambulance Service

After receiving the initial report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services in Queensland, in March Cabinet recorded its determination of the government's position on the future management of ambulance services in the state. In line with the proposed response and recommendations contained in the submission from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Terry Mackenroth, Cabinet confirmed that a single state-wide ambulance service would be formed – a new Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) – replacing the prior Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigades (Decision 1082). Cabinet additionally authorised 'in principle' for legislation to be prepared to give effect to the change, which would centralise administration of ambulance services from within the Emergency Services portfolio. According to the Minister's submission, this move would greatly improve the efficiency of Queensland's ambulance services and provide the QAS with access to resources and initiatives of the Bureau of Emergency Services, such as 'computerisation, training academy, critical incident stress debriefing [and] joint communications'. Two months later Cabinet approved the draft Ambulance Service Bill submitted by the Emergency Services Minister (pending some minor amendments), which would establish the QAS ahead of an intended operational date of July 1 (Decision 1240).

Heritage preservation

Having enacted interim heritage protection laws in the previous year, and assessed a green paper detailing proposals for 'full and comprehensive historical heritage legislation', in October of this year Cabinet considered proposed draft laws to fully realise the ambition of heritage preservation. A submission from the Environment and Heritage Minister sought to repeal the *Heritage Buildings Protection Act 1990* prior to its expiry in March 1992, replacing it with a Heritage Act which for the first time in Queensland would fully protect and 'promote the conservation of places having cultural heritage significance'. The proposed legislation would establish a Heritage Council comprising one dozen qualified persons responsible for assessing sites' cultural heritage and recommending to the Heritage Minister their entry on a Heritage Register. The legislation would also contain review and appeal provisions relating to property owners' objections to sites' heritage registration or regarding works applications on registered places. Cabinet approved that a Queensland Heritage Bill be prepared in line with the contents of the Minister's submission, and that the Solicitor-General and relevant Ministers be consulted regarding the legislation's implications for planning, development, land valuation and other related matters (Decision 1659).

Indigenous affairs

With proceedings in Eddie Mabo's High Court case continuing in the background, Cabinet this year considered the matters of government policy and legislation pertaining to Indigenous land rights in Queensland. Having been briefed in April on land rights frameworks operating in other Australian jurisdictions (Decision 1170), Cabinet agreed to the Premier's proposal in an oral submission to establish a Special Purpose Cabinet Committee to consider a draft Cabinet Memorandum on the matter (Decision 1175, marked 'Secret'). Cabinet subsequently confirmed the government's preferred negotiating stance on land rights policy, outlining that claims would be permissible only on vacant Crown land that (apart from land claimed as inalienable freehold title) could be resumed for 'specified public purposes' (Decision 1180). Next month Cabinet authorised preparation of draft land rights legislation specific to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Decisions 1256, 1257, both marked 'Secret'). Against a backdrop of criticism of the government's handling of the issue, in June the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act came into force. Later in this year Cabinet approved a series of regulations and amendments to land rights provisions and decided on certain outstanding land rights issues (Decisions 1598, 1623, 1700, 1806, 1856).

Industrial relations

In April Australia's Industrial Relations Commission delivered a surprise national wage case ruling when it awarded a 2.5 per cent pay rise to most workers. In so doing, the Commission had departed from the principles of the Accord Mark VI agreement (of which the Queensland Government was supportive) and appeared to negate enterprise bargaining. Two months later Cabinet decided on the government's position at a forthcoming state wage case. Of concern to the government was an application by the Queensland Confederation of Industry – one of the forerunners of Queensland's

Chamber of Commerce and Industry – for a flow-on of the national wage case decision to apply to Queensland workers through the state wage case. As noted in the submission from the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Nev Warburton, a Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) ruling to award the state's public sector workers a similar 2.5 per cent pay rise rather than the government's preferred \$12 per week increase would be considerably more costly to government. Cabinet agreed and directed that the government's submission to the QIRC indicate 'support for Accord Mark VI outcomes in relation to the \$12 per week increase' (Decision 1341).

Industry development

As part of planning in the previous year for Queensland's Multi-Function Polis (MFP) bid, a collaborative scheme – the Queensland Pacific Technology Program (QPTP) – was launched involving university research groups pursuing regional industry development initiatives in conjunction with industry partners and government officers. In January Cabinet was asked to consider the QPTP Committee's progress report on six concept proposals identified during the state's MFP bid process. These proposals included a Centre for Advanced Design and Construction, a Centre for Advanced Materials Processing, and a Pacific Film and Television Complex among other regional project concepts. The Premier's submission noted that these three project concepts in particular had achieved 'significant' progress toward 'developmental strategies and programs for each of the industry sectors pursued by their investigation teams ... [delivering] well planned projects which can make effective use of the government's support programs for trade and investment and research and development activity'. Cabinet decided that QPTP project proposals be further supported 'in principle' and that required funding of \$443,000 be referred to the Budget Review Committee for consideration (Decision 993).

Infrastructure

The matter of a new multi-purpose entertainment complex for Townsville had been the subject of Cabinet deliberation in the previous year, when a government financial contribution of up to \$5 million was agreed to. After the collapse of the initial proposal, a new consortium comprising Townsville and Thuringowa City Councils and Breakwater Island Ltd (proprietor of Townsville's Sheraton Breakwater Hotel-Casino) proposed an expanded project requiring \$7 million contribution from the government. The joint submission from the Premier and the Treasurer noted that failure to increase the funding grant from its original \$5 million would likely see the project collapse again, leaving the Townsville Suns basketball team – invited into the National Basketball League – without a suitable venue to host its matches. Presented in the submission with options for offsetting an increased financial contribution – deferment of a \$2 million restoration of Townsville's old Supreme Court Building being one possibility – Cabinet in August approved provision of the requested \$7 million grant towards the proposal, conditional on Breakwater Island Ltd bearing any financial losses from the complex's future management and operation (Decision 1475). Cabinet subsequently authorised the drafting and introduction into Parliament of the Townsville Entertainment Centre Bill to ratify the commercial joint venture arrangements (Decisions 1612, 1760).

Major events

From mid- to late May Brisbane played host to its inaugural Biennial International Festival of Music, the forerunner of the Queensland Music Festival. Brisbane had to this point been the only mainland state capital without a major international performing arts festival on its cultural calendar. Cabinet had the year before approved the festival's establishment as a 'prototype' and committed \$750,000 toward its planning and first staging. In a submission from the Premier and Minister for the Arts, the 1991 event, under the artistic directorship of Anthony Steel, was described as an 'overwhelming success', with over fifty musical performances in Brisbane – by some three hundred Queensland artists along with over one hundred international performers – being attended by more than 25,000 people. Furthermore, festival revenue had exceeded its \$1.9 million expenditure by almost \$100,000. In July Cabinet agreed to the Premier's recommendation that the Brisbane Biennial should become a permanent cultural fixture and would be staged again in mid-1993. Cabinet also committed financial support of up to \$300,000 towards early planning for the festival's next iteration (Decision 1412).



Natural disasters

From mid- to late December of the previous year Tropical Cyclone Joy had brought damaging winds and prolonged heavy rainfall to coastal and inland communities of Far North and Central Queensland. Rains continued well into January bringing severe flooding, most notably in Mackay and especially in Rockhampton ('Fitzroy River reaches 9.1m, still rising', *Canberra Times*, 7 January 1991). By mid-January a flood emergency was declared in central parts of the state; Cabinet was duly informed of the extent of damage and the financial assistance made available to stricken communities through Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (Decision 988). The submission from Acting Premier Tom Burns noted that the government helicopter, normally based in Brisbane, would be stationed in Rockhampton to render assistance till floodwaters receded. In late January Cabinet approved a flood management study for Rockhampton, pending multi-jurisdictional agreement on funding arrangements; Cabinet was further informed of moves by local councils to donate to public appeals for assistance to victims in flood-affected areas (Decisions 992, 1003). In February Cabinet noted the contents of a Western Queensland Town Flood Study report, commissioned by the state government after the previous year's devastating floods forced mass evacuations (Decision 1036).

Natural resources

In mid-year Cabinet looked to make financial and logistical arrangements for the importing of nickel ore through the Port of Townsville. Negotiations between the state government and Dallhold Nickel Management Pty. Ltd. (DNM) to secure this import proposal had been ongoing since early in the previous year. At that time the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority had refused permission for DNM to ship its nickel through the Marine Park's waters, prompting the Townsville Port Authority to examine how to enable importation through its port facilities. The submission from the Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development suggested the Townsville Outer Harbour was the government's preferred solution for the import shipping matter, also noting this option would require construction of new Outer Harbour facilities at a cost of some \$88 million. Cabinet agreed to the Premier's recommendation of a funding package to undertake this construction and associated proposal works, comprising contributions from the Queensland Nickel Joint Venture as well as the Townsville Port Authority and state government; Commonwealth contribution for deepening of the Outer Harbour would also be sought (Decision 1339). In December Cabinet noted the contents of a progress report on negotiations to secure the proposal (Decision 1786).

Parliamentary reform

Four-year parliamentary terms

Cabinet in the previous year had authorised investigation of extending Queensland's parliamentary terms to four years (Queensland then being the only state with a three-year term). Support for the holding of a referendum on the matter was confirmed by Cabinet decision, as was the staging of the referendum in conjunction with local council elections in March 1991. After the Referendum Act was amended to allow for this to take place – with council authorities responsible for the conduct of both the elections and referendum voting – Cabinet in February agreed to allocate \$4,263,000 to facilitate the holding of the referendum (Decision 1014). The submission from the Acting Justice Minister, Nev Warburton, noted that, in addition to fully reimbursing council authorities for costs incurred in conducting the referendum on behalf of the state, the funding amount included costs to print and dispatch the 'Yes' and 'No' arguments to electors. After the staging of the referendum on March 23, the proposition to extend Queensland's parliamentary terms to four years was defeated, with 48.8 per cent of almost 1.6 million electors voting 'Yes' and 51.2 per cent voting 'No'.

MPs' parliamentary privileges

With the fallout from the 1987-89 Fitzgerald Inquiry into corruption and police misconduct still playing out publicly in this year, in February Cabinet heard an oral submission from the Premier on the status of parliamentary privileges of former and current Members of Parliament convicted of indictable offences. Cabinet decided that, with regard to MPs convicted of such offences in the course of their parliamentary duties, those members should have all of their parliamentary benefits withdrawn. In addition, those members similarly convicted of indictable offences should also have their privileges relating to air and rail travel withdrawn. Cabinet lastly directed that amendments be made to the



Members' Entitlements Booklet to reflect these new rules and that the changes be referred to Cabinet for ratification (Decision 1057).

Planning and development

Cabinet in the previous year had approved planning initiatives which anticipated high population growth and increasing demand for services in South-East Queensland (SEQ) over the coming decade. In April of this year Cabinet considered a coordinated SEQ Growth Management Strategy arising from a Growth Management Conference hosted in Parliament House in December of the previous year. In a submission from Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government, Tom Burns, the case was made for establishment of a regional planning advisory group with 'broad government and non-government representation to assist in improving the management of growth in South-East Queensland'. The submission argued that existing processes of growth management were 'inadequate' to effectively plan for population growth on the scale expected in the SEQ region. Cabinet agreed to constitute a Regional Planning Advisory Committee and directed that its work and recommendations be reviewed by a specially convened Cabinet Standing Committee; this latter body would 'co-ordinate the government's overall approach to regional planning and infrastructure co-ordination' (Decision 1129). The next month Cabinet endorsed a Special Purpose Cabinet Committee's recommendations for the Regional Planning Advisory Group's terms of reference and its government funding arrangements (Decision 1215).

Police

From mid-year Cabinet considered the matter of a tender process conducted to secure suppliers for computing equipment for the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Citing issues raised in the Fitzgerald Inquiry report around the importance of up-to-date technical equipment and modern management systems in a professional police service, the government depicted this procurement as related to the 'Fitzgerald reform process'. As noted in a submission from the Police Minister, the \$4.9 million proposed outlay to selected suppliers represented the 'largest single acquisition of microcomputers, printers, and software to date by the Queensland Government'. The Minister's submission, however, identified certain shortcomings in the tender evaluation process, including short-listed tenderers failing to meet quality assurance requirements. Cabinet reacted adversely to these shortcomings, rejecting the submission and directing that a consultant be engaged to re-examine the tender evaluation process 'to ascertain whether the present recommendation for a preferred supplier should stand' (Decision 1319). Cabinet later initially deferred considering the Police Minister's report of the consultant's review before subsequently confirming that Apple Computer Australia – the firm selected in the original tender process – was awarded the contract to supply computing equipment to the QPS, subject to a three-month 'pilot installation' (Decisions 1501, 1514, both marked 'Secret').

Social policy

Adoption laws

Following a long period of lobbying by people involved in child adoption, Cabinet had in the previous year authorised amending legislation that entitled adult adoptees and birth parents right of access to identifying information. In the time since that change to adoption laws was enacted, groups likely to be affected by it had made representations to the government voicing opposition to that and other provisions. In February the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs brought a submission to Cabinet outlining options for responding to these concerns, proposing that adult adoptees and birth parents be entitled to register an objection to the disclosure of identifying information. The Minister's submission further suggested that the charging of fees to people lodging an objection should be abolished because 'the payment of fees is considered to be inequitable, and administratively complex'. Cabinet agreed to the Minister's recommendations and further directed that there be a right to place a veto on the disclosure of information, and on the right to contact, 'in perpetuity'; authority to prepare draft legislation incorporating these new provisions was granted (Decision 1013). A fortnight later Cabinet approved that an Adoption Legislation Amendment Bill be introduced into Parliament (Decision 1040).



Anti-discrimination laws

Across much of this year Cabinet considered enacting anti-discrimination legislation that would 'provide the right to be free from unjustified discrimination in all aspects of a person's public life'. In March Cabinet approved that draft legislation be prepared in line with suggested provisions in the Attorney-General's submission, and authorised formation of a Special Purpose Cabinet Committee to advise during negotiations with the Commonwealth on cross-jurisdictional anti-discrimination matters (Decision 1125, marked 'Secret'). The submission singled out sexuality as grounds for claiming discrimination as a particular case that could, explicitly or not, be covered by the draft laws' provisions; Cabinet opted initially to exclude sexuality pending further consideration. Cabinet later approved 'in principle' of administrative arrangements with the Commonwealth (Decision 1238). In September and October Cabinet deliberated the seemingly fraught matter of sexuality, ultimately agreeing with recommendations in the Attorney-General's submissions – while retaining certain limiting qualifications – that its inclusion would make the laws consistent with Commonwealth statutes (Decisions 1552, 1583, 1647, all marked 'Secret'). Late in the year Cabinet approved that an Anti-Discrimination Bill be introduced into Parliament, thereby establishing a Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission and Tribunal, and subsequently proposed a further amendment relating to compulsory retirement (Decisions 1772, 1797).

Sport & tourism

Cairns casino licence

In April Cabinet deliberated the matter of expanding casino operations in Queensland. An Inter-Departmental Committee had been formed late in the previous year to oversee the process for awarding new casino licences, with preferred locations being both Brisbane and Cairns. Cabinet considered a strategy paper delivered by the committee outlining a timetable for awarding licences and recommending provisions for site locations and exclusivity periods for approved operations. The submission from the Treasurer highlighted the desirability or otherwise of various potential sites in which casino proponents had declared interest. Cabinet agreed that a ten-year exclusivity period should apply after granting of a casino licence and identified three acceptable sites – the old Treasury Building among them – for any casino operation in Brisbane (Decision 1135). Months later Cabinet was briefed by the Treasurer on the outcome of business and community consultation in Cairns (where Treasurer De Lacy was the local MP), noting advice in the Treasurer's submission that, besides 'some' local opposition, a casino operation in the city was 'keenly' welcomed. Cabinet approved calling of submissions for the issue of a casino licence in Cairns, directing that 'provision of a suitable convention centre ... be a condition imposed on proponents' (Decision 1504).

North Queensland Cowboys

With both South-East-Queensland-based teams in the New South Wales Rugby League competition having finished outside that season's finals placings, in September Cabinet heard an oral submission from the Premier regarding the proposed creation of a Townsville-based 'Cowboys' rugby league team. Cabinet directed the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to prepare an information paper for Cabinet's consideration and to liaise with interested Cabinet colleagues on the matter (Decision 1533). One week later the Minister submitted a report of his investigations, informing Cabinet that the deadline for applications for new teams to join the 'national' rugby league competition was looming. The Minister's submission outlined details of the proposal's backers – North-Queensland-based Top End Rugby League Incorporated – and Townsville sporting facilities being considered as a 'home' ground. According to the Minister there 'remained a deep yearning for North Queensland to rally behind a flagship side competing at the highest level and an opportunity for its young men to compete while residing in their home region'. Cabinet noted the information paper but took no further action regarding the proposal in this year (Decision 1558).

