

Selected highlights of the 1990 Queensland Cabinet Minutes

Dr Chris Salisbury

Daylight saving trial

The daylight saving trial held over the 1989-90 summer – instigated by Premier Mike Ahern, reportedly providing the ‘trigger’ for his removal and replacement by Russell Cooper in September 1989 – concluded on 4 March 1990. A Daylight Saving Task Force reported to the government in April on public and business reaction to the trial, noting “considerable difference of opinion within the community”; its report recommended that the state be split into separate time zones, with daylight saving observed only in southeast Queensland. Premier Wayne Goss dismissed that suggestion, and in August Cabinet agreed to his proposal to introduce daylight saving time state-wide “on a permanent basis” (Decision 614). A Cabinet decision the following month allowed local government authorities some flexibility in adapting their communities’ school, working and trading hours to the time change, with alterations applicable either throughout the state or in specific regions only (Decision 696). Cabinet subsequently agreed on draft legislation to establish daylight saving time annually in Queensland – “to settle the [daylight saving] issue once and for all” according to the Premier when introducing the Summer Time Bill in Parliament on 2 October – and further agreed on the make-up of an advisory committee to help communities reduce any adverse effects of its implementation (Decisions 732, 757).

Economy & industry

Late in the year, the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, Geoff Smith, advised Cabinet of the need for Queensland to increase its capacity “to produce high value-added products which embody technology and intellectual capital”. The Minister’s submission outlined how Queensland’s manufacturing sector had for some time lagged badly in terms of business expenditure on essential research and development (R&D) compared to the Australian and (to an even greater extent) OECD averages. In a break from past state-funded R&D support focused largely on primary industry, Cabinet agreed to establish a Queensland Grants for Industrial Research and Development Scheme (Decision 951). The ‘QGRAD’ scheme would offer successful applicant manufacturing firms seed funding – of at least \$25,000 up to a maximum of 50 per cent of firms’ projected research expenditure over a three-year period – to help leverage additional private capital for R&D activity, and “to encourage technology transfer out of the universities and research institutions into industry”. Grants offered through the scheme, with a

projected budget over five years of \$7.5M, would be approved by the Industry Minister after recommendations from an independent Advisory Committee established by the Minister.

Education

Tertiary entrance review

Cabinet considered the matter of Queensland's higher education entrance system, with a view to replacing the TE score with a new system of ranking higher education applicants. A submission from Minister for Education, Paul Braddy, noted that the existing system had been "the subject of vehement public criticism in recent years". Cabinet duly agreed to terms of reference for a review of the state's tertiary entrance procedures, and accepted the Minister's recommendations that the review be undertaken by a 'leading academic figure' supported by a reference committee broadly representative of the education sector (Decision 73). At the same February Cabinet meeting, it was decided that Professor Nancy Viviani, then Head of the Political Science Department at the Australian National University, would be appointed to lead the Tertiary Entrance Review Committee, scheduled to report mid-year (Decision 85). In August, Cabinet agreed with the Education Minister's appraisal that recommendations in Professor Viviani's review report should be "generally endorsed", including adoption of new Overall Position (or OP) ranking measures and the establishment of a Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority to oversee the new procedures (Decision 641). Cabinet subsequently authorised legislation to be drafted to bring these and other changes into effect, with the OP entrance system commencing in 1992 (Decisions 690, 800).

Higher education participation

Upon coming to office, the Goss Cabinet endorsed a policy of increasing the intake of commencing students at the state's universities and colleges. Accordingly, to "provide enhanced higher education opportunities for young Queenslanders", more of whom were continuing through to complete senior high schooling, the government committed to providing additional state-funded higher education places in 1990. This was, as noted in a submission from the Education Minister, also in response to the federal government's introduction in 1989 of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, which impacted immediately on student offer acceptance and retention rates. When several tertiary institutions subsequently increased their offers of new places, some over-enrolled above their government-funded quotas for new students. Cabinet reacted by agreeing to reallocate 200 state-funded places initially slated for James Cook University in north Queensland, which had not attracted additional enrolments, to other institutions which had significantly over-enrolled – Rockhampton's University College of Central Queensland and Toowoomba's University College of Southern Queensland among them (Decision 620). Late in the year, Cabinet decided to further boost state-funded higher education places, agreeing to outlay \$2.25M over four years on an additional 800 places, also seeking Commonwealth agreement to match that number in extra federal-funded places (Decision 980).

Environment

Wet Tropics world heritage area

Several years of conservation campaigns had culminated in north Queensland's wet tropics region being listed in 1988 as a World Heritage Area, despite the Bjelke-Petersen government's earlier opposition to the proposal. By 1990, joint State-Commonwealth financial commitments and administrative arrangements for management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area still awaited finalisation. In February, Cabinet directed the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Pat Comben, to re-open negotiations with his federal counterpart with the objective of securing agreeable conditions for the heritage area's management. These included 'compensation' from the Commonwealth for loss of economic activity (principally logging operations) in areas proposed as heritage reserve. With inter-governmental ministerial discussions pending later that month, Cabinet requested the Minister report back to Cabinet promptly "on the success or otherwise of the negotiations" (Decision 92, marked 'Secret'). Some months later, having come to terms with the Commonwealth – including securing \$10m federal funding over three years for "capital works and associated programs" in the region – Cabinet approved the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Agreement and endorsed establishment of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Management Authority responsible for overseeing the location (Decision 522).

North Stradbroke Island national park

With the Australian Heritage Commission intending to list much of North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah) on the National Estate Register, the Queensland government sought arrangements with the federal government and sand mining companies that would ensure a "balance[d] land use package between nature conservation and mining" on the island. Noting a long track record of conflicts between mining interests and earlier conservation proposals, the Environment Minister's submission proposed to establish national park land and protected areas on roughly fifty per cent of the island's terrain. This plan required the principal sand mining operations, ACI Pty Ltd and Consolidated Rutile Ltd, to forego parts of their lease holdings; in return, the companies sought extended 'life of mine' export permits, rather than standard annual export approvals. After initially deferring the submission until further inter-departmental consultations were conducted, in March Cabinet gave 'in principle' acceptance to the plan, pending resolution of export licence negotiations and other matters between all parties (Decisions 165, 213). Late in the year, with negotiations still ongoing, Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to the land use plan for the island, including agreeing to a proposed silica export loading jetty in the protected Myora Fish Habitat Reserve, pending ACI conducting an environmental and anthropological impact assessment study (Decision 936).

Federal-state relations

At the end of October 1990, Commonwealth and state leaders assembled in Brisbane for a 'special' Premiers' Conference, convened at Prime Minister Bob Hawke's suggestion. In what was deemed a 'new Federation' initiative, leaders met for face-to-face discussion of state-federal financial relations and plans to reduce "costly government duplication". While not exactly renegotiating federalism, leaders came to agreement on a number of modest fiscal and regulatory reforms in areas such as national rail and road freight haulage and uniform national food standards, as well as national principles of environmental protection. In November, Cabinet agreed with the Premier's submission that Departments should promptly undertake work in preparation for subsequent special Premiers' Conferences planned for 1991 (Decision 899). The 'work' in question would establish the Queensland government's position on proposed areas for reform, with a view to capitalising on opportunities for 'rationalising' the state's revenue ties to Commonwealth taxation and grant distributions. To better coordinate the government's planning, the Premier sought Ministers' cooperation to keep him informed of the progress of preparations in 'priority portfolio areas', and to "seek Cabinet approval for policy directions they intend to pursue in Ministerial Council forums in relation to Premiers' Conference matters".

Fitzgerald-related reforms

EARC and CJC appointments

Two of the key reform outcomes in Queensland of the Fitzgerald Inquiry process, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission, were fully constituted during the year. Having been legislated into existence by the previous Cooper government in October 1989, it fell to the Goss government to confirm the Chairmen of both bodies and then appoint Commissioners to make the agencies operational. Prior to these latter appointments, in March 1990 Cabinet approved amending both agencies' establishing legislation to enable suitable candidates from educational institutions to be appointed as part-time Commissioners; the Premier's submissions argued this objective was "as specifically provided for in the Fitzgerald Report" and rectified a 'deficiency' in the original legislation (Decisions 204, 228). Two months later, after the government had appointed Commissioners and then the Assembly constituted the Parliamentary Committees responsible for oversight of both agencies, Cabinet agreed with the Premier's further submission that amending legislation be drafted to provide additional salaries to the Committees' appointed Chairs and members (Decision 400). This brought the salaries of appointed MPs – an extra \$6,375 p.a. for the Chair and extra \$3,265 p.a. for members – into line with additional remuneration offered to members of other Parliamentary Committees.

Electoral system review

With the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC) fully constituted and its Commissioners appointed by government in March, one of the first tasks on EARC's agenda was a multi-faceted review of Queensland's Legislative Assembly electoral system. This included examination of the state's zonal system of vote weightage (the notorious 'gerrymander' which Labor in opposition had campaigned against in favour of 'one vote, one value'), as well as appraisal of the administration and conduct of state elections, a proposed electoral redistribution, and negotiating a joint state-Commonwealth electoral roll. To prepare a government submission to the EARC review, the Goss administration had engaged a Canberra-based consultant; Cabinet decided in April to form a ministerial sub-committee – comprising the Premier, Deputy Premier and two other Ministers – to conduct a detailed assessment of the consultant's draft submission (Decision 285, marked 'Secret'). The memorandum submitted by the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services, Glen Milliner, noted that Cabinet had 'a number of options' for finalising the government's position on proposed changes to the Electoral Act and its submission to EARC. Subsequently, Cabinet's decision indicated that the Labor Party's Queensland branch would provide 'detailed proposals' to add to the government's deliberations on electoral reforms.

Fraser Island inquiry

In line with a commitment during the 1989 state election campaign, in January 1990 Premier Wayne Goss announced a public inquiry into the conservation and land management of Fraser Island (K'gari). With the Hawke federal government pushing for World Heritage listing and the cessation of logging on Fraser Island, in February Goss further announced that former corruption inquiry commissioner, Tony Fitzgerald, QC, would head the review (for no fee, but rather as a 'community service'). In March, Cabinet endorsed the Premier's submission proposing terms of reference for the inquiry – which would also examine the land management of the entire Great Sandy region – and confirming Fitzgerald's nomination to lead the inquiry's investigations (Decision 189). The inquiry broadly aimed to examine conservation and land use principles in the region but "with due regard for ... material considerations and the interests of potentially affected individuals" – among whom would number state forestry workers. Ministers were requested to examine implications for their portfolios of the inquiry, which was expected to report its recommendations by the end of the year (Fitzgerald delivered his report midway through 1991); meanwhile, logging activity continued on Fraser Island throughout the inquiry's proceedings.

Gaming machines

It had long been Labor Party policy to introduce gaming (poker) machines to licensed Queensland venues. Throughout this year, the Goss Cabinet approved actions to investigate and facilitate that introduction, ultimately allowing poker machines to operate in clubs and hotels from early 1992. In January 1990, Cabinet first repealed regulations introduced only months earlier under the

previous Cooper government which enabled the operation of gaming machines without legislated safeguards (Decision 46). In March, after earlier deferring a joint submission on introducing gaming machines for further consideration by a Cabinet Special Purpose Committee, Cabinet agreed to amend the *Liquor Act 1912-1989* to effectively permit machine gaming in licensed Queensland venues and later for specific legislation to be drafted for that purpose (Decisions 55, 178, 215, some marked 'Secret'). The Premier assured Parliament on 20 March following this last decision that his government was "pursuing a course of action that we are very confident will eliminate any possibility of corruption [and] will ensure strict control". Cabinet considered a Criminal Justice Commission report (and an ensuing Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee response) highlighting concerns over links between the gaming machine industry and 'criminal interests', while continuing to approve drafting requisite legislation (Decisions 454, 514, 826, 846, 938, marked either 'Restricted' or 'Secret').

Government reviews

One of several reviews of government agencies and statutory bodies undertaken by the new Goss administration, a review of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation (QTTC) was agreed to by Cabinet in March (Decision 248, marked 'Secret'). The review was prompted by government and tourism industry concerns over the QTTC's administrative and financial decision-making, in addition to criticisms outlined in Tourism Minister Bob Gibbs' submission suggesting that "the Corporation had become a public relations tool of the [previous] National Party government". Indeed, Labor in opposition had promised ahead of the 1989 state election to restructure the QTTC's role and management, which its critics claimed was unrepresentative of the industry and reflective of political patronage under the chairmanship of National Party-aligned Sir Frank Moore. Despite Moore having earlier resigned, the government was intent on replacing the QTTC's chair and directors; both prior to and after the review was conducted, Cabinet approved new appointments to the Corporation's board (Decisions 449, 981). During the year, Cabinet confirmed the make-up of a Special Purpose Cabinet Committee (comprising the Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Tourism Minister, among others) which ultimately produced a government response endorsing or amending the review report's 91 recommendations for restructuring the QTCC (Decisions 656, 890).

Heiner Inquiry

Following the Heiner Inquiry into management of the John Oxley Youth Centre at Wacol, Cabinet agreed to extend legal indemnity to the inquiry Chair, retired magistrate Noel Heiner, as his initial appointment as a 'contractor' did not afford him the statutory immunity of Crown employees (Decision 101). Family Services Minister, Anne Warner, recommended in her submission that most materials (some considered 'defamatory') gathered as evidence during inquiry investigations should be destroyed to protect Heiner and witnesses from legal challenge. Cabinet initially deferred this matter pending a memorandum outlining the Crown Solicitor's advice and

further options regarding destruction of the materials, at that stage not considered 'public records'. A week later, Cabinet again deferred consideration of the Minister's memorandum until the Cabinet Secretary had liaised with the State Archivist for additional advice (Decision 118). In early March, with representations being made by solicitors for John Oxley Youth Centre staff seeking access to the documents in question, Cabinet agreed to the destruction of the materials having received advice from both the Crown Solicitor and the State Archivist that it was permissible to do so (Decision 162). The materials were subsequently destroyed under the guidance of the State Archivist in late March.

Heritage preservation

Cabinet moved this year to enable 'immediate' protection from demolition for heritage-listed Queensland buildings. While awaiting Crown Law advice on retrospectivity, in March Cabinet approved 'in principle' the Environment and Heritage Minister's recommendation that interim legislation be drafted, with a view to enacting 'comprehensive' heritage preservation laws at a later date (Decision 172, marked 'Secret'). After twice deferring the Minister's subsequent submissions and draft legislation, initially for consideration by a Special Purpose Cabinet Committee and then pending further discussions between the Minister and the Premier (Decisions 280, 355), in May Cabinet agreed that the Heritage Buildings Protection Bill be introduced to Parliament following further amendments to the Bill's wording (Decision 378). Accepting the Crown Solicitor's advice, the Special Purpose Cabinet Committee had removed references in the draft legislation to imprisonment and trial without jury for building owners undertaking unapproved demolition of a 'listed historic place'; the interim legislation was made retrospective, taking effect from 11 March 1990. In September, Cabinet noted the Environment and Heritage Minister's submission of a green paper containing proposals for "full and comprehensive historical heritage legislation to satisfy the Government's commitments and to protect this heritage on a permanent basis" (Decision 712).

Hospital administration

The Goss Cabinet's first decision in 1990 was to sack the Townsville Hospitals Board and appoint a Department of Health official to administer the Board's functions. This followed 'concerning' findings from an internal investigation by the government's Health Complaints Unit into longstanding allegations of "improper clinical practices" within Townsville General Hospital's psychiatric unit. Cabinet also agreed that the Health Minister, Ken McElligott, would make an explanatory statement to the Parliament regarding the investigation and move to have the full Health Complaints Unit report made public (Decision 26, marked 'Secret'). The tabling of the report and dissolution of the Townsville Hospitals Board pre-empted any public inquiry into the malpractice allegations, counter to the government's pre-election commitment and despite repeated calls from sections of the Townsville community for an open investigation. Months later, however, following backlash against this course of action, Cabinet agreed 'in principle' that a

public inquiry into the Townsville General Hospital's psychiatric unit should be established, while noting concerns over witness privacy and costs involved (Decision 407, marked 'Secret'). Cabinet approved subsequent submissions from the Health Minister, a Townsville-based MP, confirming the inquiry's terms of reference, timeframe, commissioner and operating budget; the inquiry's reporting deadline was also extended to February 1991 (Decisions 436, 490, 561, 599, 779).

Indigenous affairs

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, established in October 1987 and delivering its final report in April 1991, conducted investigations in Queensland under the direction of Commissioner Lew Wyvill, QC. As noted in a submission from the Premier in January 1990, the previous National Party government in Queensland had months earlier issued a directive requiring any state government employee to report approaches for information by Commission staff to their department heads, after which an officer of the Crown Solicitor would be present during inquiries. This directive reportedly 'caused difficulties' for the Commission's investigations and was rescinded by Cabinet as being "inconsistent with the policy of the new government". Cabinet approved a new directive which required full cooperation of all state government employees to facilitate the work of the Commission in Queensland (Decision 56). Later in the year, Cabinet endorsed the government's response to the fifty-six recommendations contained in the Commission's interim report, indicating support for the majority of recommendations (Decision 646). As the Commission continued to encounter and investigate cases of Indigenous deaths while in custody, Cabinet later approved requests for extensions to the final reporting dates for the Commission's findings (Decision 737).

ATSI education policy

Between 1988 and 1989, the Commonwealth in conjunction with the states and territories, and in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, established a National Aboriginal Education Policy (NAEP) aiming "to redress [Indigenous] educational inequalities". The previous Cooper government had committed to Queensland's participation in NAEP in October 1989; the following year, the Goss government reaffirmed this commitment, in line with the new administration's recognition of "the need for specific action in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education". In March, Cabinet approved the joint recommendation of the Education Minister and the Employment, Training and Industrial Relations Minister, Nev Warburton, to endorse their respective departments' Operational Plans for implementing NAEP programs in Queensland, and to accept Commonwealth funding contributions towards this implementation (Decision 249). Commonwealth funds available to Queensland over three years of NAEP programs totaled \$7.5M for TAFE and \$18.6M – a 130% increase on 1989 federal funding for Indigenous-specific education – for schooling. Later in the

year, Cabinet also approved a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy to provide increased employment opportunities for Indigenous applicants in Queensland's public service. The Employment Minister's submission noted that the employment strategy was 'wholly consistent' with the National Aboriginal Education Policy earlier endorsed by Cabinet (Decision 765).

Industrial relations

Following the 1987-88 Hanger Inquiry into Queensland's industrial relations framework, the Labor Party campaigned at the 1989 state election on a commitment to introduce new industrial relations legislation based on that inquiry's findings. In February 1990, a submission by the Industrial Relations Minister declared the principal intent of new labour laws was to "ensure that the Industrial Court and Commission is the sole industrial relations jurisdiction in Queensland functioning under a single piece of Industrial Relations legislation". Cabinet agreed that the Minister's preparation of this legislation should continue, "reflecting recommendations in the Hanger Report" and in consultation with employer groups and all trade unions (Decision 125). In May, Cabinet twice considered draft legislation, suggesting confidential release to 'interested parties' for review and requiring further amendments to certain 'technical matters', prior to approving the Industrial Relations Bill (Decisions 356, 379). Concurrently, Cabinet approved the Minister's preparation and introduction of legislation to reinstate the 'lost' superannuation entitlements of electrical workers sacked after the 1985 SEQEB dispute (Decisions 342, 389, both marked 'Secret'). Later in the year, Cabinet requested and in turn approved a proposal for policy coordination in respect of the government's position on industrial relations matters, vesting responsibility for formulating such with the Minister (Decisions 699, 760).

Infrastructure

Townsville Entertainment Centre

Following representations made by Townsville MP Ken Davies on behalf of commercial interests behind a proposed sport and entertainment complex for Townsville, in March Cabinet heard an oral submission on the matter from the Premier and requested that the Treasurer report back to Cabinet on financial considerations of the proposal (Decision 191). A fortnight later, the Treasurer presented details of the business case and various options for State investment in the proposed complex. The proposal was based on a failed earlier commercial venture to construct a 'home' stadium for the Townsville Suns basketball team in its bid to enter the National Basketball League, requiring a suitably sized and commercially viable stadium. After considering the Treasurer's detailed submission of costs involved and desirable financing arrangements, Cabinet decided to make available a \$5M grant (half the projected capital cost) towards construction of the complex, dependent upon Townsville City Council involvement in the project (Decision 222). In a similar vein, the following month Cabinet heard another oral submission, jointly from the Premier and the

Tourism and Sport Minister, on a proposed new multi-purpose stadium for Brisbane. Cabinet requested that the Minister prepare a brief detailing the proposal's financial viability and options for instead upgrading existing stadium facilities (Decision 339, marked 'Secret').

Multifunction Polis proposal

Plans for a Multifunction Polis (MFP) development jointly conceived between the Japanese and Australian governments commenced in early 1987. The project centred on a 'purpose-built' city created as a "futuristic international centre to serve as a model for 21st century living". Queensland participated in a feasibility study to determine a likely location as well as engage commercial partners to support the project. In March, the Premier brought to Cabinet a memorandum outlining the state's progress in gauging its capability to host the development. After deferring consideration of the Premier's submission, Cabinet shortly afterwards approved state government support for preparation of a detailed Queensland MFP proposal (Decisions 243, 244). Two months later, Cabinet approved submitting the completed proposal to the project's Joint Steering Committee for assessment, after a site between the Coomera and Pimpama Rivers in the Brisbane-Gold Coast corridor was selected as the site location (Decision 359). In June, a submission from the Premier indicated Queensland's proposal was favoured to win the development, pending acceptance of the Joint Steering Committee's stipulation that "the government must forcibly acquire title to all lands within the MFP site". Cabinet, however, refused this condition, deciding to reaffirm its original proposal to the Committee (Decision 489). Ultimately, the development was awarded to South Australia.

Miscellaneous

In October, Cabinet deliberated on the government-funded superannuation entitlement paid to former MP and Transport Minister, Don Lane. Earlier that month, Lane had become the first former National Party Minister sentenced to prison following charges resulting from the Fitzgerald Inquiry. After Lane's conviction for misappropriating public funds (which he had since repaid), Cabinet considered whether to take action to recover part of the state-provided portion of Lane's superannuation payout – a sum of roughly \$400,000. This avenue was available to the government through the *Public Officers' Superannuation Benefits Recovery Act 1988*, established by the previous Ahern government in the midst of the Fitzgerald Inquiry's proceedings. The Treasurer's submission outlined the state's options to recoup superannuation benefits paid to Lane, while acknowledging Crown Law advice suggesting any Court-awarded repayment would likely be small. Noting the Crown Solicitor's advice, Cabinet decided "in consultation with the Attorney-General" to refer the matter to the Supreme Court to assess Lane's liability for forced recovery of superannuation benefits and the extent of any repayment amount (Decision 825). The Cabinet Minutes make no further mention of this matter, nor whether similar action was considered against former National Party Ministers Leisha Harvey and Brian Austin, also convicted of misappropriation later in the year.

Parliamentary reforms

Ministerial pecuniary interests

The Fitzgerald Inquiry report had highlighted the importance of establishing a register of pecuniary interests for Members of Parliament and Ministers to reduce the possibility (or perception) of conflicts of interests. The Goss Cabinet had initially responded with a Ministers' Code of Ethics included in the new Cabinet Handbook, established with its first decision in December 1989. In February 1990, Cabinet approved the Premier's proposal to establish a confidential Ministerial Pecuniary Interests Register to record the financial interests of Ministers of the Crown, their partners and dependents (Decision 134, marked 'Secret'). Cabinet directed that Ministers' declarations of interests should be completed prior to the commencement of the new Parliament, and further agreed that a similar register for all Members of Parliament should be developed. Over the next two Cabinet meetings, a Register of Members' Interests was considered and then approved 'in principle', subject to approval of the Labor caucus; the Premier was asked to seek the advice of the leaders of the National and Liberal Parties regarding the Register's 'suitability' (Decisions 158, 188, both marked 'Secret'). Following an EARC review of guidelines for declaring Members' interests, in November Cabinet endorsed a draft resolution for establishing a Register of Members' Interests to be moved in the Parliament (Decision 882).

Four-year parliamentary terms

Beginning mid-year, Cabinet authorised investigation into how Queensland's parliamentary terms might be extended to four years' duration. In May, Cabinet heard an oral submission from the Premier on the matter, deciding that a detailed joint submission should be prepared by the Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, the Attorney-General, Dean Wells, and the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services. The question of whether a referendum would be required to effect this lengthening of terms for both the Legislative Assembly and for Local Authorities in Queensland was of particular interest to Cabinet (Decision 437, marked 'Secret'). Delivered two months later, the joint submission noted that Queensland was then alone among Australian states in retaining three-year terms; in outlining voters' likely arguments against the change, no mention was made of Queensland having no Upper House. Having received advice from the Solicitor-General that a referendum would indeed be required to enact the change, Cabinet directed the Attorney-General to produce a submission on the means for calling a referendum on this matter (Decision 526). Cabinet repeatedly deliberated on the referendum's timing, favouring it being held in conjunction with Local Council elections in 1991, as well as on providing funding for publicised 'Yes' and 'No' cases ahead of the referendum (Decisions 649, 823, 855, 941).

Planning & development

With South-East Queensland experiencing sustained population growth in the years up to 1990, and expectations that this would only expand further in coming years, the Goss administration

looked to plan for the region's development needs. In July, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government brought a submission to Cabinet detailing the population pressures and demand for services anticipated over the next decade, when roughly half a million people were forecast to relocate to the state's south-east corner. Cabinet endorsed the Deputy Premier's proposal to establish a planning framework for managing this expected population growth and directed that an inter-departmental steering committee be convened to direct this process (Decision 540). The next month, Cabinet noted an information paper, 'Managing Growth in South-East Queensland', submitted by the Premier, in which Local Authorities' concerns about the state government 'taking over' councils' planning roles were raised (Decision 642). Also included were plans for a major conference later in the year as a culmination to the planning and consultation process. In October, Cabinet approved the staging of a 'summit'-style conference to discuss implications of the proposed planning framework, to be held at Parliament House in December (Decision 751).

Police

In February, Cabinet acted on a Fitzgerald report recommendation that the state's Police Act should be 'redrawn and modernised'. A submission from Police Minister, Terry Mackenroth, described legislation regulating Queensland's police force as 'archaic' and "having been changed little from its 1937 origins"; the Minister offered that "a new Act be drawn up to deal with the administration of the entire Queensland Police Department, not just the police officers within [it]". Cabinet duly agreed that legislation fitting these aims be drafted and that Leo Murray, QC, who had assisted in the Fitzgerald Inquiry, prepare the Bill (Decision 77). The next month, Cabinet authorised that the resultant Police Service Administration Bill be introduced to Parliament pending minor amendments (Decision 230). In April, Cabinet agreed that subordinate legislation be approved which would progressively bring various provisions and regulations associated with the newly passed Police Act into effect, thereby allowing the appointment of new executive-level police officers (Decision 306). In addition to this 'root and branch' reform, Cabinet approved the repeal of the *Police Complaints Tribunal Act 1982-1989*, enabling the process for investigating complaints against police officers to be moved from within the Police Department to the Criminal Justice Commission, in line with another of Fitzgerald's recommendations (Decision 259).

Public sector

Prior to the 1989 state election, Labor in opposition made known its desire for major administrative reform to 'modernise' Queensland's public service and make it more 'efficient'. Beginning in January 1990, Cabinet authorised establishment, staffing and operation of the Public Sector Management Commission (PSMC) to enact this vision. As described in the Premier's lengthy submission, the PSMC would provide "oversight, leadership and direction in the management of the Queensland public sector" through undertaking reviews of government departments and public sector agencies as well as administering merit-based appointment and equity principles for

the public service. Cabinet authorised preparation of a Bill to bring the PSMC into being, also approving a budget of almost \$4.2M for the organisation's first full financial year of operations (Decision 54). The next month, Cabinet approved introducing the Bill into Parliament (Decision 147), and in turn approved the Premier's nominations for appointment as Chair and Commissioners along with appointments to an Advisory Board to assist the Commission in its activities (Decisions 282, 291, the former marked 'Secret'). Late in the year, Cabinet noted reports from the PSMC's first round of departmental reviews, as well as authorising amending legislation to establish a Senior Executive Service level within the state's public service (Decisions 845, 958).

Regional television

During the year, the Hawke federal government initiated a review of Remote Commercial Television Services (RCTS) in Australia to gauge the future viability of regional satellite television broadcasting, which was heavily subsidised by the national and state governments. Queensland's regional television stations faced the prospect of aggregation, or affiliation with metropolitan-based networks, as had happened already in regional New South Wales. In December, Cabinet approved the Queensland government response to the Commonwealth's ongoing RCTS review, brought to Cabinet by the Minister for Administrative Services, Ron McLean (Decision 923). The detailed response entailed an acknowledgement that RCTS "should be retained as a valued, well established service to outback Queenslanders", with the state government willing to extend its subsidy agreement with the state's broadcasting licensee, Queensland Satellite Television. This subsidy was estimated to total up to \$3.2M in the next financial year. Cabinet requested the Minister provide a further submission by the end of March 1991, updating on the progress of the Commonwealth's RCTS review and outlining funding options for the state's regional television services in coming financial years. In the meantime, aggregation of Queensland's regional television stations took place on 31 December 1990.

Social policy

Homosexual law reform

The matter of gay law reform had featured during the 1989 state election campaign, with the Labor opposition supportive of decriminalising homosexuality and the Cooper Nationals government adamant that homosexual conduct should remain illegal in Queensland. With protests and public rallies in favour of decriminalisation occurring prior to the election and into 1990, the issue was referred to the Criminal Justice Commission for review. In June, Cabinet heard an oral submission from the Deputy Premier seeking to publicly clarify the government's position on gay law reform ahead of further rallies. Cabinet authorised preparation of a media statement by the Acting Police Minister, Bob Gibbs, confirming the government's support for decriminalisation while also affirming its view that street marches by 'minority groups' should not be designed to "offend certain sections of the community" (Decision 506, marked 'Secret'). After the CJC later in the year

concluded that homosexual conduct should be decriminalised, in November Cabinet approved that a Bill be prepared amending the state's Criminal Code to make legal "certain sexual activities between consenting [male] adults in private". Contrary to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee recommending an 'equalised' age of consent of sixteen years, Cabinet decided that "the age of consent be established at eighteen years" (Decision 886, marked 'Secret').

Women's policy

As part of its election campaign platform, the Labor opposition had developed a comprehensive women's policy statement and, once in office, promptly established an Office of Women's Affairs. After consultation with the Labor Women's Caucus, the Goss administration intended to establish a dedicated women's policy unit "capable of carrying out the government's policy to improve the position of women in Queensland". In May, Cabinet approved the formation of this women's policy unit, to be known formally as the Women's Policy Branch, located within the Policy Co-ordination Division in the Premier's Department (Decision 409). The unit would also contain a section titled Women's Infolink, responsible for providing and promoting issue-specific information and referral services to Queensland women. As recommended in the Premier's submission, Cabinet also agreed to consider establishing a Women's Infolink office in Townsville. Late in the year, Cabinet noted an information paper submitted by the Premier outlining progress on the establishment and functions of the Women's Policy Branch (Decision 903). Included in the document was mention of a 1990-91 budget paper, 'Queensland women: Fairness and Equity', which it was suggested would "provide a base on which to work towards a more comprehensive Women's Budget Statement" in future budget announcements.

Sport & events

After its founding in 1989 by the previous Ahern government, the first major event secured by the Queensland Events Corporation (QEC) was the Indy Car Grand Prix race on the Gold Coast. Through much of 1990, Cabinet considered and authorised legislative and regulatory measures in order to stage the first edition of the race at Surfers Paradise in March 1991. It was envisaged the motor racing event would provide a significant boost to the Gold Coast economy through increased tourist visitation, with the drawcard event taking place annually over the following five years. In March, Cabinet approved QEC's contractual agreement with the event's owners, Championship Auto Racing Teams Inc., and agreed with the Treasurer's recommendation to provide \$1M from consolidated revenue for QEC to hold a 50% equity stake in the company staging the event (Decision 211). In June and July, Cabinet authorised drafting and then introducing to Parliament legislation – similar to that enacted in South Australia to establish Australia's Formula One Grand Prix in 1985 – to enable the staging of the Gold Coast Indy Car Grand Prix (Decisions 499, 573). In October, Cabinet considered and then approved regulations governing the event's staging, having taken on board community concerns over 'civil liberties matters' (Decisions 749, 808).

