

Queensland State Archives

Department of Public Works

Cabinet Minutes 1979 – Important Decisions

Short summary of some of the major decisions of the 1979 Queensland Cabinet

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Listed below, and outlined briefly, are some of the most important/relevant decisions contained in the Cabinet Minutes of 1979.

Cyclone ‘Peter’

After noting reports of the damage from Tropical Cyclone ‘Peter’ and declaring parts of far north Queensland a Natural Disaster Area, Cabinet agreed that joint State/Federal Natural Disaster Assistance Arrangements be enacted whereby low-interest loans were offered to primary producers adversely affected by the loss of crops and livestock. [Dec. 29793, Sub. 26550, 9 Jan; Dec. 29796, 9 Jan.; Dec. 29839, Sub. 26590, 16 Jan.]

Ministers and MPs

- (a) Expenses. Cabinet endorsed a revised set of guidelines for Parliamentary Members’ entitlements, proposed by the Premier and Deputy Premier (and marked ‘Secret’). [Dec. 30239, Sub. 26948, 19 Mar.]
- (b) Travel. After a series of submissions by the Premier, Cabinet approved revised conditions for overseas travel by Members and Departmental staff for official purposes. [Dec. 30513, Sub. 27189, 8 May; Dec. 31117, Sub. 27732, 13 Aug.; Dec. 31354, Sub. 27949, 24 Sep.]

State/Federal Issues

- (a) Great Barrier Reef. Following Cabinet’s agreement to State/Commonwealth Ministerial meetings and acceptance of decisions therein, Cabinet agreed to the declaration of the ‘Capricornia’ Marine Park section of the Barrier Reef; also approved was establishment of a Ministerial Council to oversee operations of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. [Dec. 30217, Sub. 26923, 19 Mar.; Dec. 30622, Sub. 27295, 21 May; Dec. 31279, Sub. 27878, 10 Sep.]
- (b) Air Services. Cabinet recommended that the Premier inform the Prime Minister of the Government’s belief that TAA should maintain its inland air services to remote Queensland destinations. [Dec. 30995, Sub. 27637, 24 Jul.] A week later, the Minister for Transport outlined to Cabinet potential courses of action should the Prime Minister respond ‘unfavourably’. [Dec. 31059, Sub. 27679, 31 Jul.]

- (c) Corporations. Following deferral and conditional approval of the matter, Cabinet eventually endorsed the National Companies and Securities Commission Bill, establishing a State/Commonwealth Co-operative Scheme for the regulation of corporations and securities industries. [Dec. 30008, Sub. 26739, 13 Feb.; Dec. 30014, Sub. 26739, 20 Feb.; Dec. 30094, Sub. 26815, 27 Feb.]
- (d) Unemployment. Cabinet reaffirmed its position of two years earlier not to participate in the Commonwealth's 'Special Youth Employment Training Programme', with the Minister for Labour Relations citing employers' reluctance to avail themselves of the scheme's 'impractical' funding conditions. [Dec. 29956, Sub. 26694, 6 Feb.]
- (e) Land Acquisition. Cabinet decided to enter negotiations with the Commonwealth regarding transfer of the Elanda Plains property at Cooloola – land acquired in mid-1975 under the Commonwealth's disputed National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act – back to Queensland. [Dec. 30098, Sub. 26819, 27 Feb.]

Indigenous Issues

- (a) Aurukun and Mornington Island. Cabinet decided to grant leases to the under-Administration Aurukun and Mornington Island Shire Councils of "the whole of the lands included in their respective areas"; also approved was the creation in both councils of reserves for 'public purposes'. [Dec. 29821, Sub. 26572, 16 Jan.]

Following an oral submission by the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs, Cabinet approved the preparation of a Bill to amend the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978, so that temporary residents at Aurukun and Mornington Island were ineligible for election to the Local Authority Council. [Dec. 30010, 13 Feb.] The draft Bill, presented by the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads, was rejected by Cabinet. [Dec. 30178, Sub. 26889, 12 Mar.]

- (b) Federal 'Intrusion'. Cabinet reaffirmed its position that the State Department of Aboriginal and Islanders' Advancement was the sole authority responsible for matters affecting Indigenous communities on State Reserves; also decided was the State's rejection of Commonwealth proposals for funding assistance to the Yarrabah Aboriginal Council. [Dec. 30447, Sub. 27130, 23 Apr.] Subsequently, Cabinet decided not to participate in a State/Federal Ministerial visit to Yarrabah to 'diffuse' the situation. [Dec. 30803, Sub. 27454, 19 Jun.]

Cabinet declined the Commonwealth's invitation to join in consultations regarding grant funding available to private organisations for projects benefiting Aboriginal children living in remote areas of the state. [Dec. 30857, Sub. 27503, 26 Jun.]

Education Issues

- (a) School Standards. Cabinet decided to reaffirm its authority over standards of conduct and appearances at State Schools. Instructions were to be delivered to all Principals stipulating: the supply and flying of Australian flags in schools; playing and singing of the 'Royal Anthem' at daily parades; displaying pictures of

Her Majesty the Queen; and the acceptable standard of dress and grooming for school teachers. [Dec. 29772, Sub. 26529, 9 Jan.]

- (b) Inclusive Education. Cabinet approved adoption of recommendations contained within the 'Galbally Report' regarding multicultural education in Queensland schools, and the circulation of a resultant revised policy statement; also approved was the establishment of a State Multicultural Committee to oversee implementation of the policy guidelines. [Dec. 30284, Sub. 26987, 26 Mar.]

Cabinet decided that funding provision be made for some 'handicapped' children to receive at least temporary access to formal education programmes in State Special schools. [Dec. 31671, Sub. 28238, 5 Nov.]

Justice/Legal Issues

- (a) Criminal Law Inquiry. Cabinet referred a report to the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police detailing recommended implementation of findings from the Committee of Inquiry, and matters pertaining directly to police powers. [Dec. 29953, Sub. 26691, 6 Feb.]
- (b) Legal Aid. Following its decision in April 1978 to establish a Queensland Legal Aid Commission, Cabinet approved the signing of a State/Commonwealth Agreement for the provision of legal assistance (that excluded any separate Aboriginal Legal Aid Service). [Dec. 30560, Sub. 27235, 15 May]
- (c) Russell Island Investigation. Following media reports of allegedly fraudulent surveys and valuation of allotments on Russell Island in Redland Bay, Cabinet noted several submissions regarding an Inquiry into the matter. [Dec. 29876, Sub. 26622, 23 Jan.; Dec. 30602, Sub. 27275, 21 May; Dec. 30813, Sub. 27464, 19 Jun.] Cabinet later tabled a report from the Minister for Survey and Valuation detailing disciplinary measures against the surveyor involved. [Dec. 31979, Sub. 28570, 17 Dec.]

Bellevue Hotel Demolition

Cabinet directed the Minister for Works and Housing to undertake a survey and valuation of furnishings in the government-owned Bellevue Hotel and Old Parliament House premises. [Dec. 29775, Sub. 26532, 7 Jan.] Cabinet subsequently decided that 'historically valuable' items be retained for use at Parliament House, and approved the removal for sale or reuse of all other items from those premises. [Dec. 29885, Sub. 26626, 30 Jan.]

Cabinet later deferred consideration of a detailed submission (marked 'Secret') from the Premier. The submission stated that the Bellevue Hotel had been classified by the National Trust as 'worthy of preservation'; however, demolition was recommended. [Dec. 30208, Sub. 26914, 19 Mar.] The next month, Cabinet made a decision (also marked 'Secret') to adopt the recommendations of the report contained within the Premier's earlier submission, subject to further discussions at a Joint Government Parties meeting. [Dec. 30391, 17 Apr.]

Environment

Fraser Island. Cabinet approved the findings and public release of an Interdepartmental Committee's Report regarding a Fraser Island Management Plan, outlining a programme of work on recreation and visitor facilities as well as advice for the Plan's execution. Departments were directed to assess the relative priority of actions required to implement the Plan's recommendations. [Dec. 30352, Sub. 27044, 9 Apr.]

In light of such programmes and potential tourist development on the island, Cabinet recommended that the Governor proclaim Fraser Island as a District of Sub-Artesian Water Supplies, restricting the extraction of water from groundwater sources and controlling its use. [Dec. 31223, Sub. 27829, 3 Sep.]

Infrastructure

- (a) Burdekin River Scheme. Cabinet decided to request additional funding from the Commonwealth for the Burdekin River Dam Project, submitting that the Scheme be considered a 'Special Project of National Importance'. [Dec. 29755, Sub. 26474, 9 Jan.] Later in the year, Cabinet approved several submissions from the Premier that the Project proceed and that expenditure of over \$8 million be released for preliminary work. [Dec. 30916, 3 Jul.; Dec. 31566, Sub. 28140, 22 Oct.; Dec. 31601, Sub. 28140, 29 Oct.; Dec. 31834, Sub. 28385, 3 Dec.]
- (b) Wivenhoe Dam Project. Cabinet decided to continue with construction work on the Wivenhoe Dam and to draft legislation transferring responsibility to the fledgling Brisbane and Area Water Board, despite Departmental advice of a likely shortfall in raising required loan funds for the year. [Dec. 29784, Sub. 26541, 9 Jan.; Dec. 30395, Sub. 27082, 17 Apr.] Foreign buyer credit of some \$44 million was later secured through Mitsubishi Bank to guarantee the overseas content of contracts to conclude the Project. [Dec. 31389, Sub. 27984, 24 Sep.]
- (c) Railway electrification. Cabinet approved the extension of contract work on the electrification of Brisbane suburban railways, to complete the Darra-Ipswich rail line. [Dec. 29780, Sub. 26537, 9 Jan.] At the same Cabinet meeting, it was decided that the Premier would accept the Prime Minister's invitation to Officer-level discussions regarding Commonwealth loan funds to complete the railway system electrification. [Dec. 29781, Sub. 26538, 9 Jan.]
- (d) Container Port Contract. After several deferrals, Cabinet decided that the Port of Brisbane Authority be directed to grant stevedoring rights at the new container facility to a consortium including the Australian National Line, bypassing the earlier recommendations of both the Port Authority and the Minister for Maritime Services. [Dec. 30011, Sub. 26778, 20 Feb.; Dec. 30298, Sub. 26993, 29 Mar.]
- (e) Houghton Highway. Cabinet decided that the new bridge across Bramble Bay connecting Brisbane's northern outskirts to the Redcliffe peninsula be named the Houghton Highway. [Dec. 31733, Sub. 28299, 19 Nov.]

Mining

'Interfering' Legislation. Following "an increasing number of complaints" from mining companies, Cabinet approved drafting legislation to amend the Mining Act 1968-1976, so that Local Government town-planning schemes could not override provisions within the Mining Act. [Dec. 29858, Sub. 26604, 23 Jan.]

Cabinet decided that the relevant State, rather than Commonwealth, legislation should hold jurisdiction over all offshore mining activities "within the territorial sea and beyond"; this was to be 'firm State policy' in all negotiations with the Commonwealth over offshore mineral rights. [Dec. 30044, Sub. 26770, 20 Feb.]

Development

- (a) Hamilton Island. Cabinet approved the establishment of a tourist resort covering the whole of Hamilton Island, with the development including the building of an airstrip. [Dec. 37080, Sub. 27431, 19 Jun.]
- (b) Brisbane City Mall. Cabinet decided to establish a Technical Committee to investigate all matters relating to the construction of a pedestrian mall in the Brisbane CBD; this decision, however, was not to imply the State Government's willingness to contribute costs toward the proposed project. [Dec. 31190, Sub. 27800, 27 Aug.]

Commonwealth Games

- (a) Accommodation. Cabinet confirmed its agreement with Griffith University regarding the construction of student nurse facilities that would be used temporarily as accommodation for visiting athletes and officials. [Dec. 29785, Sub. 26542, 9 Jan.]
- (b) Drug Testing Facilities. Cabinet requested further information regarding the anticipated expenditure for additional equipment required at the Royal Brisbane Hospital Laboratory to perform drug testing during the Games. [Dec. 30931, Sub. 27567, 10 Jul.; Dec. 30982, Sub. 27613, 17 Jul.]

Industrial Relations

- (a) Industrial Commission's Powers. Following threatened strike action by Unions in the Electricity Industry, Cabinet sought to have the Full Industrial Court rule that such action breached the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, thereby allowing for those Unions to be deregistered. [Dec. 31593, Sub. 28167, 22 Oct.] A subsequent submission by the Minister for Labour Relations noted legal advice that this course of action would not be supported by the Industrial Court. [Dec. 31731, Sub. 28287, 19 Nov.]
- (b) Emergency Powers. After an oral submission by the Premier, Cabinet decided that in the event of any future strike action within an 'essential industry' a Meeting of Cabinet be called immediately, so that a State of Emergency might be proclaimed. [Dec. 31885, 4 Dec.]

Public Relations

- (a) Positive Spin. Cabinet decided, following an oral submission by the Premier, that the Government's Public Relations Officer should confer with Ministerial Press Secretaries regarding how best to publicise the Government's achievements. [Dec. 30662, 28 May] Later in the year, Cabinet gave approval for the Public Relations Bureau to train a team of photographers in "essential aspects of press and promotions photography". [Dec. 31701, Sub. 28262, 12 Nov.]

Cabinet approved the production of a publication, presented by the Premier in précis form, titled "Queensland: Australia's Superstate"; the publication was to be marketed at a profit for the Government, and to be printed in bulk for promotional use during the Commonwealth Games. [Dec. 31798, Sub. 28362, 26 Nov.]

- (b) Damage Control. Following an oral submission by the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs, Cabinet recommended that the Premier lodge an official complaint with the Board of the Australian Broadcasting Commission regarding the broadcast of an investigation of Weipa on the "Four Corners" programme on Saturday, 19 May; advice was also to be provided to the Premier indicating whether legal action might be taken against producers of the programme. [Dec. 30626, 21 May]

Policy/Social Issues

- (a) Child Adoption. Cabinet agreed to enter into working arrangements with officials in Thailand and Sri Lanka for the adoption of children by Queensland married couples, so long as acceptable adoption practices were observed in those countries. [Dec. 29980, Sub. 26711, 13 Feb.]
- (b) Solar Energy. Cabinet decided that the Government should encourage the use of solar energy in private and public applications, and support its research and development as an alternative energy source "particularly relevant to Queensland". [Dec. 30595, Sub. 27268, 21 May]
- (c) Fencing Swimming Pools. Cabinet approved ordinances proposed by Brisbane City Council regarding mandatory fencing around private swimming pools, on condition that the requirements be modelled on the provisions of the by-laws adopted by Rockhampton City Council. [Dec. 31526, Sub. 28106, 15 Oct.]

Miscellaneous

- (a) Personalised Number Plates. Cabinet approved draft legislation to introduce personalised plates in April; licence plates would feature three letters and two numbers separated by a map of Queensland. [Dec. 30198, Sub. 26904, 19 Mar.]
- (b) Bread Inquiry. Cabinet directed that legislation be prepared to establish a Bread Industry Committee to implement the findings of the Inquiry regarding bread pricing and trading practices. [Dec. 30287, Sub. 26990, 26 Mar.]

- (c) Overseas Government Office. Following an oral submission by the Treasurer, Cabinet approved the establishment of Queensland Government Representation offices in Tokyo, Japan. [Dec. 31094, 6 Aug.]
- (d) Metrification. Cabinet decided that, as of February 1980, all articles offered for sale in the State would be priced solely in terms of the metric system, in keeping with similar action across other States. [Dec. 31235, Sub. 27841, 3 Sep.]