

Cabinet Minutes 1978 – Highlights

An overview of some of the major decisions of the 1978 Cabinet

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1. Ministers and MPs

- (a) Expenses. Cabinet decided that overseas travel by Ministers must be approved, in advance, by Cabinet and expenses should be properly vouched. This followed a submission by the Premier, after he had received advice from the Auditor-General, that proper procedures had been ignored in many instances and other auditing difficulties had arisen. There had been a 45 per cent increase in Ministerial expenses in the previous two financial years. [Dec. 27560, sub. 24570, 10 Jan.] The new rules did not apply to visits to New Zealand or Papua New Guinea. [Dec. 27637, 17 Jan.]

Cabinet approved a list of free air travel entitlements, within Australia, for former Ministers and some ex-MPs, following an oral submission by Deputy Premier Bill Knox. The decision was rescinded about three weeks later, following an oral submission by Premier Bjelke-Petersen. [Dec. 28301, 9 May; Dec. 28447, 31 May]

Cabinet decided that overseas travel by backbench MPs at Government expense be not approved. [Dec. 28448, 31 May]

The Minister for Justice and Attorney-General presented Cabinet with a submission (labelled “secret”) outlining the various legal responsibilities of the Auditor-General, Cabinet, the Speaker and others in relation to the expenditure of money on MPs’ air transport, indicating such transport could only be provided in respect of MPs’ duties. It was noted. [Dec. 29203; sub. 26021, 18 Sept.] The submission was prompted by a report by the Auditor-General that some MPs had misused, probably deliberately, government funds by using air travel vouchers to travel overseas. 23 present or former MPs were involved. [Sunday Mail, 20 Sept., p. 1]

- (b) Disqualification. Cabinet decided to introduce legislation to remedy a problem that threatened to cost at least two MPs, including the Minister for Health, their seats in Parliament. The problem involved them holding appointments on bodies contrary to a requirement of the Constitution. The new law would have retrospective effect. Cabinet

approved the new Bill three days later. [Dec. 28293, sub. 25210, 9 May; Dec. 28348, Sub. 25261, 15 May]

- (c) Opposition Leader's staff. The Premier recommended to Cabinet that an additional officer to provided for the Leader of the Opposition. He said he was not adverse to the proposal. Cabinet deferred consideration of the submission for a week, and then decided not to approve it. (Dec. 28054, sub. 25000, 3 April; Dec. 28093, 10 April)

2. Federal issues

- (a) PNG border. Negotiations over the demarcation of the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea in the Torres Strait continued throughout the year. As was noted in one submission, the problem had been a matter of concern for six years. The Torres Strait Islanders were determined to remain part of Queensland, and were supported by the Queensland Government. [Dec. 28610, Sub. 25497, 20 June; Sub. 26217, 3 Nov.]
- (b) Corporations. Queensland agreed to a Commonwealth proposal (initiated the previous year by Business and Consumer Affairs Minister John Howard) to establish a Commonwealth/State Co-operative Scheme for the regulations of corporations and the securities industries, replacing the State-based scheme then in existence. Queensland at first indicated it was not prepared to surrender its powers over corporations to the Commonwealth (as the Labor-governed States were prepared to do) fearing "the effect on private enterprise if a Socialist Government were to introduce national legislation and utilise the corporations power under the Constitution for political, as distinct from, commercial purposes." [Dec. 28402, sub. 25311, 22 May]
- (c) Communications. Following an oral submission from the Premier, Cabinet decided, "That no information of any kind is to be supplied to the Commissioner for Community Relations and that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations and the Director, Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement be informed accordingly." [Dec. 27759, 7 Feb.]
- (d) Duplication. Following a discussion in Cabinet on 11 July (not recorded as a Cabinet decision), Ministers agreed to present reports to Cabinet detailing the extent of duplication of services by the Commonwealth and the States within their various areas of responsibilities. These were presented to Cabinet by Ministers as submissions over the second half of the year.
- (e) Intrusion. The Queensland Cabinet reacted strongly to oppose a proposal by the Commonwealth to hold an inquiry into teacher education. The Commonwealth had sought the cooperation of the

States, but told the States it would proceed with the inquiry in any event. Cabinet authorised the Premier to write to the Prime Minister outlining “certain objections” to the inquiry. The Minister for Education, Mr Bird, circulated a proposal for a national rather than a Commonwealth inquiry. The Commonwealth agreed to a small change in the composition of the inquiry, a change that was accepted by most States, though Queensland and New South Wales were still not satisfied. The Minister had separately made a submission to Cabinet (which was noted) in which he detailed the way the Commonwealth was intruding into education at all levels, from pre-school to tertiary education and also in Aboriginal education and adult migrant education. He concluded, “In my view increasing Commonwealth intrusion in education is sustained and sophisticated.” [Dec. 27854, sub. 24815, 28 Feb.; Dec. 27918, 7 Mar.; Dec. 28646, sub. 25528, 27 June; Dec. 28384, sub. 25294, 22 May]

- (f) Ombudsman accommodation. Following an approach from the Commonwealth and a series of meetings, the Premier asked Cabinet for approval to inform the Prime Minister that Queensland was agreeable to establishing a joint Commonwealth/State Ombudsman office in Brisbane. Cabinet decided that the recommendations in the submission “be not approved.” The Premier made a further submission several weeks later resubmitting the proposals, but adding that the jurisdictions of the State and Commonwealth Ombudsmen were mutually exclusive and that each office would retain its own distinct identity. Cabinet agreed to rescind the earlier decision and approve the Premier’s proposal. [Dec. 29489, sub. 26272, 13 Nov.; Dec. 29641, sub. 26415, 4 Dec.]

3. Indigenous Affairs

(a) Aurukun and Mornington Island. Cabinet had been considering for a number of years whether it should remove the Presbyterian Church from its role of managing the Aurukun and Mornington Island reserves. The church had managed them from their inception in 1904. In 1977 Cabinet authorised the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries to begin consulting with relevant authorities about the assumption by the State Government of responsibility for the reserves. In February, when it received a further report which included the comment that “management on each reserve continues to be poor and ineffective, with no real prospect of improvement”, Cabinet decided to cease paying the church to manage the reserves, as from the end of March, and that the State should take responsibility for them. This was resisted by the Uniting Church (which had succeeded the Presbyterian Church) and then by the Federal Government, which introduced legislation to make the reserves self-managing. Cabinet decided to respond by having the Governor rescind the reserves. Eventually the Commonwealth and Queensland agreed on new State legislation for the management of the reserves by local councils. Later Cabinet ordered the removal of the councils and the

appointment of an Administrator, pending elections the following year. [There were numerous decisions and submissions, including: Dec. 27864, Sub. 24825, 28 Feb.; Dec. 28002, sub. 24953, 21 Mar.; Dec. 28089, 3 April; Dec. 28090, sub. 25033, 6 April; Dec. 28135, sub. 25071; Dec. 28996, sub. 25841, 15 Aug.]

(b) Commonwealth intrusion. The Minister, Mr Porter made a long submission to Cabinet complaining about Commonwealth intrusion in which he said an urgent requirement from the Commonwealth was “Demand that the Commonwealth institute a policy of real co-operation instead of domination (we were spurned, harassed and brushed aside in Labor’s term – the last two years have been no better, and might even be seen in some aspects as worse).” Cabinet decided the Premier should raise the problem with the Prime Minister. [Sub. 25009, 3 April; Dec. 28451, 6 June]

4. Education issues

[For background, see *State of Mind – Why Queensland is different*, Peter Charlton, Methuen Haynes, 1987, Chapter 8]

(a) MACOS (Man: A Course of Studies). This was a program developed in the United States and introduced on a trial basis in Queensland in 1973. It was designed for year six children, and its use was gradually expanded. It came under attack in 1977 from various groups. The Education Minister, Mr Bird, reported to Cabinet that it had been used successfully in a number of schools, that it had the strong support of teachers and parents who had been directly associated with it, that criticisms came from outside and “appear to be based on the claims of political extremists in the United States”, and that it was widely used elsewhere in Australia. He proposed that those schools that were presently using MACOS and wished to continue to do so, should be permitted to do so, as should other schools wishing to introduce it. Cabinet decided that its use in Queensland schools should be discontinued. [Dec. 27624, sub. 24624, 17 Jan.]

(b) SEMP (Social Education Materials Project). Following an oral submission by the Premier, Cabinet decided the Minister for Education should provide an explanation of SEMP and how far its introduction into schools had proceeded. In a submission the Minister said SEMP was a national project to produce resources for social education across the curriculum for secondary school. It had been developed by the national Curriculum Development Centre and all State Departments and non-government systems. It was to be determined in accordance with departmental guidelines which, if any, materials were appropriate for schools’ needs. Cabinet decided that before any SEMP materials were issued to schools, each specific proposal was to be submitted to Cabinet. The following week, after the Minister detailed the way materials would be reviewed, Cabinet decided SEMP would not be

approved for Queensland schools. [Dec. 27761, 7 Feb.; Dec 27786, sub. 24758, 13 Feb.; Dec. 27815, sub. 24786, 21 Feb.]

- (c) Text books. Following public criticism about the choice of text books for schools, the Minister made a submission explaining the Department's policy, which included providing guidelines, but leaving ultimate responsibility with school Principals. Cabinet decided that while the Principal should retain this role, a text book review committee including outside educationalists should be appointed to establish and keep up to date a list of suitable text books from which Principals should make their selection. Some months later, following a further submission, Cabinet adopted an amended policy similar to that originally outlined by the Minister. [Dec. 27660, sub. 24651, 24 Jan.; Dec. 22584, sub. 20179, 17 June]
- (d) Parliamentary committee. The education controversies prompted the Premier to propose an inquiry. This was reported by the *Courier-Mail* on 24 February and was intended to comprise three MPs and three educators. However, on 23 February Cabinet decided (following an oral submission by the Premier) that there should be a Parliamentary Committee of review "to examine the philosophical framework for education in the State, in terms of the moral concepts to be taught for a stable and progressive community and the fundamental skills that children should acquire to fit them for a productive, satisfying and effective place in society." [Dec. 27837, 23 Feb.; Dec. 27882, 28 Feb.]

5. Police/law and order

- (a) Changes following inquiry. Following an inquiry into the enforcement of the criminal law in Queensland, Cabinet established an interdepartmental committee to review its recommendations. The main outcome was that unless a system of recording interviews by police was established, police powers should not be extended. Cabinet decided later that no mandatory requirement for the video or oral recording of confessional material should be introduced, but that this should be kept under review "in the light of developments in both the electronic and criminal investigation fields." [Dec. 26412, 23 May; Dec. 28863, sub. 25628, 31 July]
- (b) Review of prisons, probation and parole services. Cabinet was presented with a major review of prisons and parole services by a steering committee of senior public servants, proposing a forward planning policy. Policies included securing premises for a release-to-work hostel, establishment of an assessment and allocation unit, creating positions of education officer and employment officer, and the introduction of community service orders. Cabinet adopted the recommendations. [Dec. 28546, rec. 25433, 20 June]

6. Infrastructure

- (a) Electricity generator. Cabinet decided to build a new power station at Tarong at a cost of \$857.9 million, rather than the site at Millmerran recommended by the responsible Minister, Mr R. E. Camm, and the Commissioner of the State Electricity Commission of Queensland, Mr E. D. Murray. They estimated the additional capital cost of the Tarong power station at \$23.7 million and the Minister said that the site they recommended had “other telling advantages” including the development of a major export coalfield. [Dec. 27765, 13 Feb. sub. 24709, 31 Jan.]
- (b) Water. Following the rejection by Cabinet in 1977 of a proposal it had earlier endorsed for a water authority for the Moreton region (because it was not acceptable to a number of local authorities), Cabinet sought a report from the Co-ordinator-General on future responsibility for the Wivenhoe Dam (which was then under construction). He recommended the creation of a new Water Supply Authority on which local authorities would have five of the 11 Board positions, five of the remainder representing Government Departments and the other, the State Electricity Commission. Cabinet approved the proposal. Later Cabinet agreed to extend the area covered and change the membership of the Board, so that it merely represented all the local authorities and had a chairman appointed by the Minister. [Sub. 24870, 7 March; Sub. 26141, 16 Oct.; Dec. 29354, sub. 26176, 23 Oct.]
- (c) Bridge. In January, Cabinet approved the preparation of the necessary documents for a “traffic facility over or under the lower reach of the Brisbane River from Eagle Farm to Queensport” (now known as the Gateway Bridge). In July it agreed that a model of the crossing should be displayed at the RNA Exhibition, but it rejected Mr Hinze’s proposal that cost estimates should be included - \$51 million for a bridge, \$121 million for a tunnel. In October it decided tenders should be called as soon as possible for the construction of either a bridge or a tunnel. [Dec. 27727, sub. 24710, 31 Jan.; Dec. 28769, sub. 25636, 18 July; Dec. 29242, sub. 26053, 2 Oct.]
- (d) Rail bridge. Cabinet debated the naming of the new rail bridge across the Brisbane River providing a direct link between South Brisbane Station and Roma Street. From a large list of 22 former explorers, railway engineers, early MPs, previous Premiers, present Ministers/ the Premier, royalty and others, it selected the name ‘Merivale Bridge’, after the nearest street. [Dec. 28539, sub. 25383, 6 June]
- (e) Future electrification. Cabinet authorised a feasibility study into the electrification of the main train lines between Brisbane and Toowoomba and Brisbane and Rockhampton. [Dec. 28986, sub. 25831, 15 Aug.]

7. Commonwealth Games – accommodation

Cabinet decided that student/nurse accommodation at Griffith University should be adopted as the accommodation for athletes at the 1982 Commonwealth Games. While it approved an estimate of \$6.2 million, the contract later awarded was for \$5.6 million, 45 per cent paid by the university, and the remainder shared between the Commonwealth and State Governments. [Dec. 28770, Sub. 25637, 18 July; Dec. 29312, sub. 26122, 9 Oct.]

8. Iwasaki Resort

Cabinet in 1977 authorised the negotiation with Iwasaki Sangyo (Aust) Pty Ltd of an agreement to provide land for a tourist resort near Yeppoon. The various drafts and the negotiations over details of it and the supporting legislation came before Cabinet on a series of occasions through early 1978. [Dec. 27911, sub. 24868, 7 Mar.; Dec. 28098, sub, 25064, 10 April; Dec. 28219, sub. 25148, 24 April] The Cabinet's progress on negotiations was reported in the *Courier-Mail* on 12 March, "Government OK to Iwasaki resort site" [p. 1].

9. Gold Coast City Council – dismissal

Cabinet decided to dissolve the Gold Coast Council and introduce legislation requiring that the Mayor in future should be elected from among the members of the Council. This followed an investigation into a series of decisions by the Council. According to advice provided by Sir Arnold Bennett QC, deep divisions had developed within the Council, the Mayor, Sir Bruce Small, did not command a majority, and personal animosity had ravished proceedings in the chamber and the conduct of business had become difficult. However, nothing illegal could be proved. Cabinet agreed that the Governor-in-Council should dismiss the Council. Later Cabinet decided that the administrator should remain in charge until the next scheduled elections, in March 1979. [Dec. 27877, sub. 24838, 28 Feb.; Dec. 27884, sub. 24843, 2 March; Dec. 29491, sub. 26274, 13 Nov.]

10. Food matters

- (a) Frozen meat. In 1966, Cabinet approved the free sale of packaged frozen meat, however it deferred approval of the regulations in 1967, 1968, 1975 and 1977. The matter was revisited by Cabinet in 1978, following a submission pointing out that the Beef Industry Committee favoured the sale of selected cuts of frozen meat from retail outlets other than registered butcher shops. Cabinet was told butcher shops were closed in many centres for 115 days a year and many people were disadvantaged. Cabinet agreed to change the law and as a quid pro quo also agreed that butcher shops could sell products other than meat. [Dec. 28354, sub. 25031, 22 May; Dec. 28760, sub. 25599, 18

Jul; Dec. 28856, sub. 25718, 25 July; Dec. 29442, sub. 26236, 7 November]

- (b) Bread. Following a joint party room discussion, Cabinet considered whether to provide for orderly marketing in the bread industry. Although Ministers recommended the establishment of a bread industry committee, Cabinet decided instead to establish an inquiry into the industry to examine discounting, price cutting, the return of unsold bread, delivery systems and the practicability of a zoning system. [Dec 29347, sub. 26156, 16 Oct.; Dec. 29515, sub. 26316, 20 Nov.; Dec. 29561, sub. 26340, 23 Nov.]

11. Late night shopping

Cabinet decided in March to deal with the long-running controversy over extending shopping hours by appointing three members of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to conduct a public inquiry under the Commission of Inquiry Act. [Dec. 27886, sub. 24816, 7 Mar.] The inquiry reported in July, and the Minister for Labour Relations recommended adoption of the recommendations. Cabinet deferred a decision on several occasions. [Dec. 29163, subs. 25717, 26017, 18 Sept.] There were many reports of differences between the Premier and the Liberal Leader on the issue. [For example, *Courier-Mail*, 7 Sept., p.1] The *Courier-Mail* reported on 7 December, “Thousands flock for late shopping festivities” [p. 2].

12. Social concerns

- (a) Nude beaches. Attempts by activists to establish nude bathing beaches were rejected by local councils – Sir Bruce Small, Gold Coast Lord Mayor, urged the public to report instances of nude bathing to the police and local authorities. [*Courier-Mail*, 3 Jan., p.7] Following an oral submission by Mr Hinze, Cabinet decided that approval not be given to by-laws that may be proposed by any local authority seeking to make legal, nudity on beaches in its area. [Dec. 27589, 10 Jan.] A 30-year old mother was sentenced to 14 days jail following a pro-nudity protest demonstration. She was released after three hours, pending an appeal. [*Courier-Mail*, 10 Jan. p. 3]
- (b) Fencing swimming pools. The Minister for Local Government recommended that Cabinet approve ordinances made by the Brisbane City Council dealing with the safety and registration of private swimming pools, including their fencing. He said similar by-laws applied in other cities, towns and shires. Cabinet deferred a decision. It was reported that Liberal Ministers had succeeded in getting consideration of the fencing proposal deferred indefinitely. [Sub. 27579, 10 Jan.; *Courier-Mail*, 11 Jan., p.1]

- (c) Maltreatment of children. Cabinet decided to establish a co-ordinating committee on child abuse to advise the Minister on all aspects of child abuse, to co-ordinate the various resources of Government Departments and to periodically review services and cases of abuse that have been notified as a result of mandatory reporting requirements in the Health Act Amendment Act 1978. [Dec. 29524, sub. 26303, 20 Nov.]

13. Miscellaneous

- (a) Environment – World Environment Day. The Premier, responding to a request from the Commonwealth, recommended that World Environment Day on 5 June, with the theme in 1978 related to the built environment, should be celebrated in a low key manner with a small number of departments setting up a modest display. Cabinet decided that no action be taken by departments to prepare a display in connection with the celebration of the day. [Dec. 27847, sub. 24808, 28 Feb.] In November Cabinet decided that World Environment Day 1979, themed on the role of National Parks, should be celebrated by Queensland. This was what the Co-ordinator-General recommended in a submission from the Premier. [Dec. 29482, sub. 26265, 13 Nov.]
- (b) Traders exploiting the public. Cabinet was reminded by the Minister for Labour Relations that in 1977 it did not approve proposals by the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs to prepare lists of traders who were unethical or untrustworthy in their dealings with consumers. He did so in submitting for Cabinet consideration the annual report of the Commissioner that named a series of traders responsible for dubious or illegal dealings. Cabinet decided the names of individuals, firms and companies should not be included in the report. [Dec. 29099, sub. 25926, 4 Sept; Dec. 29162, 11 Sept.]
- (c) Personalised number plates. Cabinet decided Queensland should issue personalised number plates. It rejected arguments by Mr Hinze and decided the plate should contain three letters and three digits, separated on the plate by a symbol of 'Sunshine Sam'. [Dec. 26834, sub. 25516, 27 June; Dec. 28766, sub. 25633, 18 July] The Minister reargued his position in a further submission and Cabinet decided to rescind its earlier decision and instead the personalised number plates would be issued in the form of three letters and two figures separated by a map of Queensland. [Dec. 28916, sub. 25767, 7 Aug.]
- (d) TAB changes. Cabinet agreed to two changes in TAB betting. The first was to increase the minimum bet to \$1 for win and place bets. The second was to approve trifecta betting. [Dec. 27900, 7 March; Dec. 29748, Sub. 26513, 18 Dec.]
- (e) Support for local business. Cabinet decided to approve a tender submitted by a Queensland firm for the supply of 514 fur felt hats and 112 khaki fur felt hats at a cost of \$7,579.50 rather than the tender of

\$5,514.99 submitted by a New Southy Wales firm. The difference was approximately 37.4 per cent. The fur felt hats were issued as part of the uniform for male employees of the Health Department. [Dec. 28342, sub. 25255, 15 May]

- (f) UQ Vice-Chancellor. Cabinet recommended the confirmation of the appointment of Professor Brian Wilson as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland. His salary was set at 50 per cent above that of a standard professor. This was the same as was paid to the previous Vice Chancellor, Sir Zelman Cowen, \$47,564. In 1977, Cabinet had rejected a proposal that a salary higher than \$41,820 should be offered if necessary to attract an outstanding applicant. [Dec. 28687, sub. 25566, 4 July].