

1973 Queensland Cabinet Minutes Report

Elections Act Amendment Bill

On 6th February 1973, the Cabinet considered changes in the Electoral Act, with the main amendment being a lowering of the age for compulsory voting from 21 to 18 years of age. The submission from Hon William Knox (the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) covered a range of changes, including amendments in electoral roll procedures, the abolition of “How to Vote Cards” at polling booths and a complete ban on political signs at polling places. The Cabinet approved the preparation of a draft Bill to amend the Elections Act 1915-1971 but did not adopt the proposals to ban cards and signs at polling places (Decision No 18231). The amending Bill was passed and became law from 1st July 1973 (*Queensland Yearbook*, 1974:78)

US Proposals to place the Grey and Red Kangaroo on the Endangered Species Schedule

The Cabinet considered this matter on 20th February 1973 after Hon Vic Sullivan (the Minister for Primary Industries) received advice from his New South Wales counterpart that approaches would be made to Washington about the proposed placing of kangaroos on the endangered species schedule. According to the submission, such a move would ‘have a disastrous affect on the Queensland economy in certain rural areas’ as the commercial kangaroo industry was worth \$4 million per year. About 3,000 people were employed in the industry and the harvesting of 600,000 kangaroos per year was ‘limited to those areas where the animal is in abundance’.

A letter from the General Wool & Skin Company was attached to the submission, in which it was claimed that Senator Murphy and his ‘technical adviser Professor Messel’ had ‘approached the USA authorities to influence them’ thus prompting the US actions. According to the company’s letter, federal politician Dr Moss Cass had agreed to try and ‘reverse’ the Australian Government’s advice to the US. The Cabinet decided to have the issue ‘further considered by the Premier and the Treasurer in the light of future developments’ (Decision 18322). According to the Queensland Government ‘at no stage in the history of direct exploitation of fauna have fears for the survival of species been substantiated’ (*Queensland Yearbook*, 1974:42)

Anti-Hijacking Measures

The Cabinet considered procedures to deal with the hijacking of aircraft at five meetings in 1973. Hon Allen Hodges (the Minister for Works and Housing) submitted a proposal on 5th March 1973 for ‘adequate’ equipment to be supplied to the police force. The equipment included bomb blankets, mobile bullet proof shields, sniper rifles and ammunition, a trailer with a specially constructed ‘Bomb Transportation Box’, body armour and walkie-talkie radio transceivers. A decision on this matter was deferred until 12th March 1973, and again on that date until 19th March 1973 when approval was given for the purchase of this equipment as ‘Unforeseen Expenditure’. On 26th March 1973 the Cabinet decided to recommend that the Governor should sign an agreement with the

Governor-General after the Civil Aviation (Offenders on International Aircraft) Act 1970 and the Crimes (Hijacking of Aircraft) Act 1972 were enacted by the Commonwealth Government. The Cabinet also approved additional anti-hijacking measures including the purchase of one camera, extra radio transceivers and Closed Circuit Television equipment on 30th July 1973 (Decisions 18365, 18431, 18472, 18477, and 19088)

Transfer of Sandmining Treatment Plant – Currumbin Minerals Pty Ltd

The Cabinet first considered this matter on 9th January 1973 when authority was given to the Treasurer to hold discussions with the company about a transfer of operations from Currumbin Beach to another site south of the Pacific Highway. The company agreed to relocate the treatment plant if the Government paid compensation of \$70,000. Hon Gordon Chalk (the Treasurer) submitted that this amount should be paid from Consolidated Revenue funds, and the Cabinet approved this. The matter was also discussed on 29th May 1973 when Hon Ron Camm (the Minister for Mines and Main Roads) said sandmining, which ‘invariably raises a storm of public protest’, only occurred ‘when erosion causes a deposition of minerals on the beach’. According to the submission, which was noted by the Cabinet, the present situation with regard to the Company’s rights under the Mining Act meant that mining operations could ‘remain in existence forever’. The Cabinet decided on 19th November 1973 to introduce a Bill allowing the Company to carry on mining operations ‘at a site not within the boundaries of a claim held by it’ (Decisions 18078, 18564, 18757 & 19691).

Next Power Station after Gladstone

At a meeting on 20th February 1973 the Cabinet decided that the Southern Electricity Authority would be the constructing authority for the state’s next power station until this role was ‘assumed by the central generating authority which is to be constituted in 1975’. The Cabinet decided on 9th July 1973 to accept the *Report on Electrical Development in South-Eastern and Central Queensland to 1983* from the State Electricity Commission, and to publicly release details of the Commission’s recommendation ‘but not the actual Report’. The accompanying submission by Hon Henry McKechnie (the Minister for Local Government and Electricity) stated that ‘a coal-burning power station located at Tarong’, with a total cost of \$243 million, was ‘by far the most economic development’.

On 13th August the Cabinet decided to return the Report to the State Electricity Commission for ‘further clarification’ with regard to the financing and comparative costs of power stations at Tarong, Millmerran and Ipswich. Hon Gordon Chalk (the Treasurer) noted in his submission that the predicted demand for electricity was largely dependent on Comalco’s option to take power from the Gladstone station for a proposed aluminium smelter. Chalk requested, and obtained the Cabinet’s approval for further work to be conducted on the proposal to ensure that ‘the level of tariffs will be sufficient to provide the necessary finance and not be a burden on industry as well as the public’ (Decisions 18320, 18980 & 19193)

Committee Inquiring into the Status of Women

The Cabinet approved on 20th August 1973 the establishment of a Committee to inquire into the 'status of women in Queensland', with a District Court judge, 'a Woman' and a Stipendiary Magistrate 'with considerable experience in the Matrimonial and Children's Courts fields' to be members. On 10th September 1973 the Cabinet noted a submission advising details of the membership of the Committee and the issue of their payment. At a meeting on 17th September 1973 the Cabinet agreed that the Public Service Board should make a submission to the Committee but decided that submissions would 'not be designed either to justify the existing state of affairs or to propose policy changes' (Decisions 19210, 19264, 19326).

Establishment of a Tourist Hotel with restricted Gambling Licence

Treasurer Gordon Chalk placed a submission on casinos in Queensland before the Cabinet on 17th July 1973. In this submission the Cabinet was called upon to 'face up to our responsibility to ultimately decide whether we will permit the establishment of a tourist hotel of international standard with a restricted gambling license'. Chalk proposed that Treasury should prepare guidelines for the Cabinet, which could then be placed before a special sitting of the Joint Government Parties for a final decision. The Cabinet deferred a decision on the question 'until a later date'.

The matter was considered again at a Cabinet meeting on 27th August 1973, and was deferred for further consideration until 10th September, at which time a submission from the Premier would be available. A report prepared by two senior public servants, outlining the results of their visit to the Wrest Point Casino in Tasmania, was presented to the Cabinet on 10th September 1973. After considering the establishment, operations, 'crime aspect' and social position of the casino, the Cabinet decided not to introduce any legislation allowing a casino licence to be granted in Queensland unless 'the people of Queensland indicate by way of a Referendum that a Casino is desirable' (Decisions 19042, 19232 & 19262)

Suggested Transfer of Railways to the Federal Government

On 22nd October 1973 Hon Keith Hooper (the Minister for Transport) presented a submission to the Cabinet about the apparent desire of the Federal Government to accept responsibility for railways. Hooper stated that 'it would not be in the best interests of the State to transfer control of the railway system' and the Cabinet agreed (Decision 19488).

Brisbane Flooding Study

The Cabinet decided on 12th June 1973 to approve an increase in the consultancy fees paid for the Brisbane Flooding Study from \$150,000 to \$200,000. On 19th June 1973 the Cabinet decided to ask the Brisbane City Council to 'undertake urgently the widening

of the existing spillway at the Enoggera Reservoir' as the dam wall 'could fail if it was overtopped by flood waters'. If the dam failed 'a wave of water would roll down Enoggera Creek' and damage 'at least a thousand homes'. \$50,000 was approved for the work, with the Cabinet deciding 'the terms of repayment [would] be determined when the basis of subsidy for the proposed flood mitigation scheme is known'. The Flooding Study was considered again on 26th November 1973 when the Treasurer presented a number of recommendations made by the consultants. According the submission, an inter-departmental committee had recommended that \$13 million should be spent on flood mitigation in Brisbane but no commitment was made to funding. The Cabinet decided to ask the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission to formulate 'a flood management policy in urban areas of Queensland' (Decisions 18829, 18854 & 19741).

Wine Industry

On 6th February 1973 Cabinet decided to ask the Minister for Primary Industries to ask his department to 'thoroughly examine the question of the wine industry in Queensland' and to present a submission to Cabinet. No further details were given (Decision 18228).

Ex Gratia Payment to Mr Ram Chandra

Cabinet approved the payment of \$2,000 to Mr Ram Chandra of Mackay on 19th March 1973 'in recognition of the work which he has carried out in obtaining snake venom used in the manufacture of Taipan Antivenene'. There was no further information on the file (Decision 18475).

Future Development of Townsville

On 8th May 1973 Cabinet considered a submission from the Premier regarding negotiations with the Commonwealth Government about the development of Townsville as a "Regional Capital". A request from the Prime Minister for the Queensland Government to 'stabilise land prices' as a means of controlling 'excessive land speculation' was rejected, with the Cabinet deciding to approve the purchase of about 10,000 hectares near the James Cook University and the Army Base at 'current market prices' for future development (Decision 18668).

Request for Approval of a New Type of Secondary School Complex

A joint submission from the Minister for Education and the Minister for Works was presented to the Cabinet on 24th July 1973. Senior officers from both departments had visited schools in other States, and reported that these were 'in advance' of what was then being offered in Queensland. The report by these officers was not attached to the submission. The Cabinet approved a new style of high school, offering considerable

savings in construction costs. The construction of a prototype of the new school at Craigslea was approved (Decision 19054).

Stickers on Government Cars

At a meeting held on 13th August 1973 the Cabinet decided to prohibit the attachment of any 'stickers, labels, transfers, etc' to all Government vehicles. A request from Tourism Minister (Hon John Herbert) on 10th September 1973 for permission to place stickers on Government vehicles advertising the 1973 theme ("Australia's Historic Heritage") for Tourist Development Week was refused (Decisions 19195 & 19275).

Commonwealth Child Care Funding Scheme

The Minister for Local Government (Hon Henry McKechnie) advised the Cabinet on 27th August 1973 that Commonwealth funding was currently available for childcare centres and requested permission to issue a bulletin to local governments advising them of the scheme. Cabinet decided to take no action with regard to advising local councils about the funding available (Decision 19248).

Deposits on Drink and Beverage Containers

Cabinet approved a submission to the Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation about 'environmental problems caused by the disposal of packaging waste' on 17th September 1973. The submission, which was presented by the Premier, noted that no recommendations were made 'as it has not been possible to properly calculate the full costs and benefits'. According to the submission, litter was 'only a minor constituent of solid waste' and the removal of beer and soft drink containers from the solid waste stream 'would not significantly reduce costs' of rubbish disposal. In Queensland the packaging industry had invested \$11 million in new equipment, earned \$39.5 million per year and employed over 3,000 employees. According to the submission:

Any imposition of a substantial deposit on beverage containers in Queensland could cause a reduction in the demand for beverage drinks and indeed would involve a significant impact on the firms' \$11 million investment which could well precipitate a complete restructuring of the packaging and beer industries to the detriment of the economy of the State.

Cabinet agreed to forward the submission to Canberra (Decision 19322).