

Cabinet Minutes 1980 – Important Decisions

Short summary of some of the major decisions of the 1980 Queensland Cabinet

Released to the public 1 January 2011

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Listed below, and outlined briefly, are some of the most important/relevant decisions contained in the Cabinet Minutes of 1980.

Adverse Weather

- (a) Cyclone 'Simon'. After referring a submission from the Minister for Primary Industries to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer for financial approval, Cabinet agreed 'in principle' to fund a low-interest loan scheme for primary producers affected adversely by Severe Tropical Cyclone 'Simon'. [Dec. 32436, Sub. 28926, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32439, 13 Mar.]
- (b) Drought. Following another dry summer over most of southern Queensland, Cabinet decided on a scheme of 'drought relief' loans and special repayment provisions, which were amended and extended over the course of the year. [Dec. 32692, Sub. 29153, 14 Apr.; Dec. 32871, Sub. 29311, 12 May; Dec. 33846, 14 Oct.; Dec. 33877, Sub. 30235, 21 Oct.] Late in the year, more shires were added to those many areas already declared drought-stricken. [Dec. 33788, Sub. 30151, 7 Oct.; Dec. 34125, Sub. 30462, 2 Dec.]

Contentious Legislation

- (a) Abortion Laws. After lengthy debate, Cabinet agreed to amend its proposed 'Termination of Pregnancies' Act, thereby changing aspects of the Criminal Code as they related to provision of abortions and the operation of abortion clinics. [Dec. 31989, Sub. 28457, 8 Jan.; Dec. 32080, Sub. 28605, 15 Jan.; Dec. 32093, 22 Jan.; Dec. 32166, 5 Feb.; Dec. 32284, 27 Feb.; Dec. 32440, 17 Mar.; Dec. 32792, Sub. 29241, 28 Apr.; Dec. 32881, Sub. 29321, 12 May; Dec. 32927, Sub. 29363, 19 May] Cabinet also gave its approval 'in principle' to increased funding for various family planning groups. [Dec. 32928, Sub. 29364, 19 May]
- (b) 'Sanctity of Life'. Concurrent with these proposed amendments, Cabinet approved of a proposal to enshrine in legislation the principle that "life must be respected and protected at all stages from conception to old age." Following a revised submission, it was agreed to urgently prepare a Bill that protected the sanctity of human life, "particularly that of the unborn." [Dec. 32650, Sub. 29115, 8 Apr.; Dec. 32653, Sub. 29117, 10 Apr.]

Child Protection

After receiving a report from the Co-ordinating Committee on Child Abuse, Cabinet then approved of amendments to the Health Act and the making of 'Maltreatment of Children' Regulations to oversee provision of child protection services. [Dec. 32141, Sub. 28659, 29 Jan.; Dec. 32167, 5 Feb.; Dec. 33072, Sub. 29487, 9 Jun.] Cabinet also agreed that Queensland would host the 2nd Australasian Conference on Child Abuse in mid-1981. [Dec. 32860, Sub. 29300, 12 May; Dec. 33739, Sub. 30105, 30 Sep.]

Commonwealth Games

Cabinet endorsed the recommendations within an Inter-Departmental Committee report, regarding each Department's financial and organisational commitments to the running of the Games. Cabinet also supported the Committee's view that a public holiday to mark the opening of the Games should *not* be granted (a position that Cabinet reaffirmed later in the year). [Dec. 32355, Sub. 28850, 3 Mar.; Dec. 34064, Sub. 30407, 24 Nov.]

Great Barrier Reef

- (a) Heritage Listing Opposition. Cabinet agreed to draft a letter to the Australian Heritage Commission reaffirming the Government's objection to listing the Reef on the Heritage Register. [Dec. 32157, Sub. 28675, 29 Jan.] A similar decision followed the Premier's oral submission in mid-year, in response to Commonwealth plans to nominate the Reef for listing by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. [Dec. 33027, 5 Jun.]
- (b) Marine Park Authority. Cabinet studied at length a draft zoning plan for the Capricornia section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, as well as offering Commonwealth/State cost-sharing arrangements for that section's management. [Dec. 32158, Sub. 28676, 29 Jan.; Dec. 32514, Sub. 28990, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32848, Sub. 29288, 12 May; Dec. 33077, Sub. 29492, 9 Jun.; Dec. 33349, Sub. 29750, 22 Jul.; Dec. 33558, Sub. 29933, 1 Sep.] Cabinet also determined its position on the proposed declaration of the Cairns section of the Marine Park. [Dec. 33348, Sub. 29749, 22 Jul.; Dec. 33849, Sub. 30207, 21 Oct.]

Company Take-overs

- (a) Corporations Regulations. With take-over bids for at least two Queensland companies then in motion, Cabinet recommended to the Governor in Council that Regulations be adopted and enforced pursuant to the Company Take-Overs Act 1979. [Dec. 32092, Sub. 28615, 17 Jan.; Dec. 32256, Sub. 28766, 19 Feb.] Cabinet subsequently agreed to support the Commonwealth's company take-over legislation, with the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General acting under the Commonwealth/State Co-operative Scheme. [Dec. 32566, Sub. 29043, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32931, Sub. 29367, 19 May]
- (b) Southern Raiders. Late in the year, with two high-profile take-over bids for Queensland companies coming from south of the border, Cabinet took the decidedly interventionist step of approving the government's entry into the stock market; the Public Trustee, at the direction of the Treasurer, was authorised to acquire up to 12.5% holdings of the local companies' shares to deter the corporate raiders from interstate. [Dec. 34165, Sub. 30495, 9 Dec.; Dec. 34169, Sub. 30498, 11 Dec.]

Decision Reversals

- (a) Currumbin Creek. The Government planned to redevelop the Currumbin Creek estuary on the Gold Coast, bypassing locals' wishes and the objections of its own Department officials in favouring Lend Lease Corporation's proposal. Public outcry forced Cabinet to rethink the proposal, which was duly scrapped in favour of building sea groynes at Palm Beach. [Dec. 32086, Sub. 28611, 15 Jan.; Dec. 32095, 22 Jan.; Dec. 32203, 5 Feb.]
- (b) Birth Defects Register. When the Government over-ruled a Health Department directive to study the effects of commercial herbicides and pesticides upon newborn children, a public outcry forced Cabinet to reconsider its position and ultimately establish a Register of Birth Abnormalities. [Dec. 32230, Sub. 28738, 11 Feb.] Later in the year, further steps were taken to examine how the chemicals in question affected human health generally. [Dec. 33932, Sub. 30286, 3 Nov.]

Development

- (a) Southport Spit. When the Government wished to dispose of the last vacant crown land on the Gold Coast's Southport Spit, Cabinet opted to call public applications for suitable development proposals. Among the applications under consideration was one from Mr Keith Williams (trading as Sea World Pty Ltd), who proposed a 'Fisherman's Wharf-type project'. [Dec. 32383, Sub. 28878, 3 Mar.; Dec. 32437, 10 Mar.] Cabinet had to later defer consideration of this proposal, owing to legal proceedings connected to licensing matters. [Dec. 33610, Sub. 29985, 9 Sep.; Dec. 33677, Sub. 30047, 22 Sep.]
- (b) Raby Bay Estate. After taking advice from the Crown Solicitor's office regarding certain objection claims from neighbouring landholders, Cabinet finally approved the issue of a lease – including an indemnity clause protecting the Government from compensation claims – to Civic Projects Pty Ltd to begin work on the long-planned Raby Bay Canal Estate development in the Redland Shire. [Dec. 32864, Sub. 29304, 12 May; Dec. 33264, Sub. 29672, 7 Jul.; Dec. 33674, Sub. 30044, 15 Sep.]

Infrastructure

- (a) Brisbane Airport. With work continuing apace, Cabinet agreed to make arrangements for the final transfer of state lands and responsibility for the new airport project over to the Commonwealth (in return for compensation of nearly half a million dollars). [Dec. 32785, Sub. 29234, 28 Apr.] Cabinet also later approved a revision of the project's master plan, involving the construction of a cross-wind runway. [Dec. 33076, Sub. 29491, 9 Jun.]
- (b) Burdekin River Scheme. With \$210 million in capital expenditure still required, Cabinet decided that new negotiations should be entered into with the federal government to co-operatively finance the Burdekin River Irrigation Project. The Premier's submission suggested that an agreement be sought with the Commonwealth that "minimises State Government contribution to the overall project cost." [Dec. 33545, Sub. 29929, 25 Aug.]

Mining

- (a) Rundle Project. Throughout the year, Cabinet concerned itself with the progress of the Rundle oil shale processing proposal and the prospect of Government's involvement in the project based near Gladstone. After several deferrals and rescinded arrangements, Cabinet eventually accepted the recommendations in the Premier's submissions and

approved of entering into a franchise agreement with the joint venture project's mining interests. [Dec. 32493, Sub. 28974, 17 Mar.; Dec. 32539, Sub. 29016, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32567, Sub. 29044, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32618, Sub. 29082, 8 Apr.; Dec. 32652, Sub. 29116, 10 Apr.; Dec. 34143, Sub. 30473, 9 Dec.]

- (b) Coal Export Facilities. Cabinet reviewed a number of submissions detailing its available coal export options, including adding a further port outlet at Hay Point, a proposed new export development at Port Clinton in the Shoalwater Bay area, and extending the export facilities at the Port of Brisbane. Ultimately, Cabinet kept its options – such as additional operating facilities at Gladstone Harbour – open for even further scrutiny. [Dec. 32513, Sub. 28989, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32929, Sub. 29365, 19 May; Dec. 32988, 2 Jun.; Dec. 33032, 9 Jun.; Dec. 33160, Sub. 29572, 17 Jun.; Dec. 33209, Sub. 29619, 24 Jun.; Dec. 33225, Sub. 29633, 30 Jun.; Dec. 33314, 15 Jul.; Dec. 33420, Sub. 29812, 4 Aug.; Dec. 33622, 9 Sep.; Dec. 33668, Sub. 30038, 15 Sep.; Dec. 33990, Sub. 30342, 10 Nov.]
- (c) Comalco Proposals. After a submission by the Deputy Premier marked 'Secret', Cabinet cautiously indicated its 'in principle' agreement with several development proposals and associated project requests by the mining giant, Comalco (details of which the company had asked to be kept strictly confidential). [Dec. 33698, Sub. 30066, 22 Sep.]

Electricity Industry

- (a) Industrial Disputes. Queensland's electricity supply industry was dogged throughout the year by union-led disputes over wage claims, leave entitlements and working hours. When arbitration initially failed to bring the warring parties closer to a resolution and widespread work stoppages ensued, the Premier acted under the provisions of the Essential Services Act 1979 and convinced Cabinet to declare a State of Emergency. [Dec. 32382, Sub. 28877, 3 Mar.; Dec. 32390, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32573, 27 Mar.]

While wage and condition claims continued to be pursued, conciliation measures ultimately improved relations between unions and the State Electricity Commission. Cabinet's adoption of a proposed reduction in working hours and of a nine-day working fortnight in the industry went some way to achieving a measure of 'industrial harmony'. [Dec. 32930, Sub. 29366, 19 May; Dec. 33446, Sub. 29836, 11 Aug.; Dec. 33787, Sub. 30150, 7 Oct.; Dec. 33801, Sub. 30165, 9 Oct.; Dec. 33806, Sub. 30199, 14 Oct.; Dec. 33876, Sub. 30234, 21 Oct.; Dec. 33916, Sub. 30270, 27 Oct.; Dec. 33946, Sub. 30301, 3 Nov.; Dec. 33974, Sub. 30326, 10 Nov.; Dec. 34034, Sub. 30385, 17 Nov.]

- (b) Policy Advice. When Cabinet received the report of the Energy Resources Advisory Council, noting in a submission by the new Minister for Mines and Energy that 'greater co-ordination' with Government was required in respect of pressing policy formulation on energy matters, Cabinet decided that the Council should be reconstituted with additional officers from Government Departments and then redesignated the Queensland Energy Advisory Council. [Dec. 33480, Sub. 29868, 18 Aug.; Dec. 33559, Sub. 29934, 1 Sep.]

Industrial Relations

- (a) Union Demands. Cabinet endorsed procedures proposed by the Minister for Labour Relations to prevent unrest in 'non-essential' state industry workforces. [Dec. 32827, Sub. 29272, 6 May] These measures did not, however, prevent work stoppages over union demands for equitable pay rates at various work sites, as noted by Cabinet. [Dec. 33156, Sub. 29568, 17 Jun.; Dec. 33409, Sub. 29801, 4 Aug.; Dec. 33696, Sub. 30064, 22 Sep.; Dec. 33930, Sub. 30284, 3 Nov.]

- (b) Wage Cases. For a series of national wage case hearings, Cabinet adopted the position that the state government should seek leave to intervene at each to argue that any increase in wage rates should be at “less than full indexation”. [Dec. 32855, Sub. 29295, 12 May; Dec. 33886, Sub. 30244, 21 Oct.; Dec. 33979, Sub. 30331, 10 Nov.]

Employment

- (a) Public Service Support. In response to a submission from the Premier outlining a report on the diminished work performance of some Queensland Public Service officers “as a result of alcoholism and other personal problems”, Cabinet approved the establishment of an Employee Assistance Service as a counselling and advisory scheme for Public Service staff ‘so affected’. [Dec. 32878, Sub. 29318, 12 May]
- (b) Youth Employment Scheme. Reversing its decision of early the previous year, Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Labour Relations Minister and gave approval ‘in principle’ to the state’s participation in a pilot program of the Commonwealth’s Special Youth Employment Training scheme. [Dec. 33355, Sub. 29753, 29 Jul.]

Education

- (a) Teacher Uptake. Negative publicity forced Cabinet to authorise a press statement by the Minister for Education, stating that the problem of teacher non-placement was not of the government’s making but more a result of demographics. [Dec. 32051, Sub. 28575, 15 Jan.] Cabinet also noted a revised Education Department policy regarding employment of married female teachers, who for reasons of perceived immobility and reluctance to accept remote work postings, were considered somewhat ‘down the pecking order’ of suitable teacher applicants. [Dec. 32959, Sub. 29391, 26 May]
- (b) ‘Special’ School Holidays. The Education Minister submitted his recommendation to Cabinet that “the practice of Cabinet Ministers being able to grant a special holiday to a school or schools which they visit be no longer the practice.” Despite the Minister’s account of parents’ complaints made to himself and to the Premier, the submission was withdrawn before Cabinet decided on the matter. [Dec. 32171, Sub. 28685, 5 Feb.]

Health and Welfare

- (a) Youth Support Services. Cabinet gave approval for the prompt establishment of a youth psychiatric hospital at the disused Enoggera Boys Home, owned by the local Church of England parish. [Dec. 32101, Sub. 28620, 22 Jan.] Cabinet also approved establishing and financing an accommodation and counselling shelter for youth on the Sunshine Coast suffering from drug and alcohol dependence, to be operated by the Salvation Army. [Dec. 33068, Sub. 29483, 9 Jun.; Dec. 33245, Sub. 29653, 30 Jun.]
- (b) Hospital Funding. Cabinet noted submissions from the Minister for Health outlining the Commonwealth’s offer of cost-sharing arrangements for the state’s hospitals. It was also recommended that the Commonwealth’s policy of not sharing costs for new facilities “must be strongly resisted by this State”, as this made uncertain the future of new wards and care units at various hospitals. [Dec. 32498, Sub. 28979, 17 Mar.; Dec. 32897, Sub. 29333, 19 May; Dec. 33460, Sub. 29850, 11 Aug.; Dec. 33815, Sub. 30174, 14 Oct.]

Indigenous Issues

- (a) Alcohol Consumption. A submission from the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police outlined a proposal by the Aurukun Shire Council that it be allowed to control the entry and consumption of alcohol within the Shire. As this would necessitate amendments to the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act, Cabinet decided that no action be taken to so 'empower' the Shire Council. [Dec. 33581, Sub. 29956, 1 Sep.]
- (b) 'Consumer Education' Program. After reviewing the Musgrave Report into 'Consumer Education in Australia', the state government was asked by federal officials to consider "the special needs of Aborigines as consumers." Cabinet authorised a draft letter of reply stating that, in essence, the state's Aborigines "are 'sick and tired' of being assessed and subjected to various forms of 'education'", and so "at this time it does not appear desirable to proceed with the proposal you suggest." [Dec. 34142, Sub. 30472, 9 Dec.]

Police Matters

- (a) Police Act Amendments. After submissions by the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police, Cabinet approved the drafting of a Bill to amend certain aspects of the Police Act. These amendments would give police the authority to disclose sensitive files and information to other Government Departments, Crown instrumentalities and even private companies or individuals. [Dec. 32397, Sub. 28686, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32519, Sub. 28996, 24 Mar.]
- (b) Firearms Regulations Amendments. The Police Minister again created a stir when Cabinet endorsed his recommendations to further amend the newly gazetted Firearms and Offensive Weapons Regulations, thereby broadening police powers to determine what constitutes a 'dangerous article'. [Dec. 32831, Sub. 29276, 6 May; Dec. 33626, Sub. 29996, 15 Sep.]
- (c) Drug Abuse Inquiry. Cabinet approved formation of an Inter-Departmental Committee to examine the findings of the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs and then present recommendations to the Government. [Dec. 32908, Sub. 29344, 19 May] Later, Cabinet noted a submission from the Attorney-General detailing a judicial inquiry into drug trafficking in Australia proposed by the Prime Minister. In the submission, it was suggested that the only obstacle to the state's involvement in such an inquiry would be its likely cost. [Dec. 33883, Sub. 30241, 21 Oct.]

Miscellaneous Issues

- (a) Culture Vultures. With the Queensland Opera Company facing liquidation, owing debts of some \$127 000, Cabinet directed the Company's board members to resign and for a new board to be reconstituted (including at least one government nominee). Later in the year, Cabinet opted to terminate the Company's activities and establish an entirely new Company – with a new board approved by Cabinet – then renamed the Lyric Opera of Queensland. [Dec. 32330, Sub. 28830, 27 Feb.; Dec. 32410, Sub. 28899, 10 Mar.; Dec. 34063, Sub. 30406, 24 Nov.; Dec. 34096, 2 Dec.]
- (b) Red Deer. With numbers of red deer increasing in and around the Brisbane and Mary River Valleys particularly, Cabinet approved a management plan for the animal – which appears on the state coat of arms – proposed by the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation. [Dec. 32371, Sub. 28866, 3 Mar.; Dec. 34216, Sub. 30542, 16 Dec.]

- (c) State Zoo. Following a submission from the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation, in which he bemoaned Queensland's lack of a state zoo, Cabinet approved a feasibility study to determine the possible location and layout of such a major facility. [Dec. 32856, Sub. 29296, 12 May]
- (d) Pool Fencing. Following long periods of consultation with the Brisbane City Council and industry representatives, Cabinet finally approved 'in principle' of the inclusion in Council ordinances of a requirement that all new privately owned swimming pools be fenced with a child-proof, self-locking gate. [Dec. 33218, Sub. 29626, 30 Jun.; Dec. 34091, 2 Dec.]
- (e) Iwasaki Bombing. After an explosive device was detonated at the grounds of the Iwasaki Resort site on 29 November, causing some \$300,000 damage to property but no injury or loss of life, Cabinet decided to offer a reward of \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest of the person or people responsible. [Dec. 34126, 2 Dec.]