

Cabinet Minutes 1980 – Selected Highlights

An overview of some of the major decisions of the 1980 Queensland Cabinet

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Adverse Weather

- (a) Cyclone 'Simon'. Making landfall on the afternoon of 24 February, for the next three days Severe Tropical Cyclone 'Simon' whipped up heavy seas and winds gusting to 170 km/hr from north of Yeppoon down to Sandy Cape on Fraser Island, before turning southeast and out to sea. Hardest hit were several fruit plantations between Byfield and Gladstone, and while losses to the state's stocks of tropical fruit were not extensive, few growers had insurance cover for cyclone damage. [See *Courier-Mail*, 26 Feb., p. 1; 28 Feb., p. 1] In his submission to Cabinet, the Minister for Primary Industries, Vic Sullivan, declared that many plantations had lost almost 100% of their fruit and trees, with total losses valued at just under half a million dollars. After referring the submission to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Dr Llew Edwards, for financial approval, Cabinet agreed 'in principle' to fund a low-interest loan scheme for primary producers affected adversely by Cyclone 'Simon'. The scheme entailed loans of up to \$30,000 per grower, repayable over seven years at 7% interest and administered by the Agricultural Bank. [Dec. 32436, Sub. 28926, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32439, 13 Mar.]
- (b) Drought. Following reports of another dry summer over most of southern Queensland, the outlook for graziers and primary producers across this region was considered "distinctly pessimistic." Responding to several submissions from the Primary Industries Minister (who from late in the year was the newly promoted Mike Ahern), Cabinet decided to implement a scheme of 'drought relief' loans and special repayment provisions, which were amended and extended as conditions worsened 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.] As of April, 10 southern shires were declared drought areas, equating to nearly one quarter of the state's pastoral land. Late in the year, more shires – including Barcoo and Diamantina, where seasonal rainfall was up to 75% below average – were added to those many areas already declared drought-stricken. As the Treasurer's submissions indicated, under federal/state natural disaster arrangements, the Commonwealth was by this stage responsible for 75% of funding for relief measures to the region. [Dec. 33788, Sub. 30151, 7 Oct.; Dec. 34125, Sub. 30462, 2 Dec.]

Contentious Legislation

- (a) Abortion Laws. Consideration of the state's abortion laws, specifically as they related to the running of the Greenslopes Fertility Control Clinic (the only such clinic providing legal abortions to Queensland women), was initiated late the previous year by the Opposition Leader, Ed Casey. Taking up the anti-abortion argument – which ran counter to stated ALP policy – early this year, the government instigated its own campaign to outlaw the clinic and reinforce the state's otherwise prohibitive stance on abortion. After lengthy and often acrimonious debate in both the parliament and the party rooms, and numerous deferrals to consult the opinions of legal and medical professionals, Cabinet eventually agreed to several amendments to its proposed 'Termination of Pregnancies' Act. The projected legislation would change aspects of the Criminal Code as they related to the provision of abortions and effectively criminalise 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] Further to this last decision, Cabinet gave approval 'in principle' to increased state funding to assist various family planning groups in their work. The submission by the Minister for Health, Sir William Knox, suggested that this additional funding (up from \$90,500 the previous year to an estimated \$302,500) would allow these largely city-based entities "to extend their activities into country areas of Queensland." [Dec. 32928, Sub. 29364, 19 May]
- (b) 'Sanctity of Life'. In line with these endorsed amendments to the state's abortion laws, 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 discussions in Cabinet, the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Bill Lickiss, was directed to confer with the Health Minister and promptly present a revised submission on principles recommended for inclusion in any legislation. Subsequently, a joint report was prepared by the Director-General of Health and Medical Services and the Acting Solicitor-General, outlining the few exceptions in which it would not be "unlawful to deprive an unborn child of life" (such as cases of pregnancy through rape or incest, or where there was imminent risk to the mother's well-being through continuation of the pregnancy). Cabinet duly 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

To combat what was seen as a worrying rise in incidences of children's mistreatment, Cabinet had in late 1978 established the Co-ordinating Committee on Child Abuse. Commencing its activities in early 1979, the Committee spent the better part of a year investigating the problem and suggesting ways that the government might address it. After receiving the Committee's report, Cabinet approved of amendments to the Health Act – including changes to mandatory reporting procedures for medical staff and police officers of suspected cases of child abuse – and also to an "intensive public education campaign" through the media at a cost of \$40,000. Cabinet subsequently approved the making of 'Maltreatment of Children' Regulations to oversee the state's provision of child protection services. [Dec. 32141, Sub. 28659, 29 Jan.; Dec. 32167, 5 Feb.; Dec. 33072, Sub. 29487, 9 Jun.; *Courier-Mail*, 6 Feb., p. 30] Accepting a proposal put forward at the national convention of Social Welfare Ministers the year before, Cabinet this year agreed that Queensland would host the 2nd Australasian Conference on Child Abuse in mid-

1981, with the government's endorsement and financial support. In his submissions, the Minister for Welfare, Sam Doumany, outlined how he had sought and received from the Commonwealth assurances of \$20 000 in funding towards the costs of the Conference. [Dec. 32860, Sub. 29300, 12 May; Dec. 33739, Sub. 30105, 30 Sep.]

Commonwealth Games

With the XII Commonwealth Games in Brisbane a little more than two years away, the government's Inter-Departmental Committee (acting under the authority of the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation, Ivan Gibbs) surveyed each Department's additional responsibilities in organising the Games. Upon receiving the Committee's first report, Cabinet endorsed its recommended guidelines for managing the financial and organisational commitments of each Government Department. The report noted that a major involvement was anticipated for the Police Department in providing extra security at Games venues, at a likely added cost of \$5 million; the Police Commissioner, Terry Lewis, viewed this additional security work as outside the responsibilities of the Police Force. Cabinet also supported the Committee's view that, as the school holidays had already been moved to cover the period of the Games, a public holiday to mark the opening ceremony 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. Despite some collaboration between the state and federal governments, there remained this year a number of differences amongst those parties with an interest in the utility, access to or protection of the Great Barrier Reef. One such party was the Canberra-based Australian Heritage Commission, which had late in the year before informed the Queensland Government of its renewed proposal to list the Reef on the National Heritage Register. As it had done for the last two years, the government opposed the idea which would see all coral reefs and islands (bar those consisting of vacant Crown land) included in the listing and thereby protected from exploitation. In his submission to Cabinet, the Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, told how the Coordinator-General had been instructed to draft a letter to the Heritage Commission "reaffirming the Queensland Government's objection to the listing." Cabinet approved that the letter be forwarded promptly, prior to the Commission's next scheduled meeting to discuss this issue. [Dec. 32157, Sub. 28675, 29 Jan.] A similar decision followed the Premier's oral submission to Cabinet 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. As in the previous year, Cabinet deliberated for much of this year over the Marine Park Authority's management of different sections of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. During this time, it was decided to examine in detail a proposed draft zoning plan for the Capricornia Marine Park section, by means of an Inter-Departmental Committee whose brief was to report to Cabinet 'through the Premier'. In addition to its dealings with the Authority, Cabinet debated proposed Commonwealth/State cost-sharing arrangements for the Capricornia 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, to be put to meetings of the Marine Park Ministerial Council, on the proposed declaration of the Cairns section of the Great

Barrier Reef Marine Park. Cabinet repeated its view that Commonwealth assurances of compensation for the likely loss of prospecting licenses in the Cairns section of the Reef were “inadequate.” [Dec. 33348, Sub. 29749, 22 Jul.; Dec. 33849, Sub. 30207, 21 Oct.]

Company Take-overs

- (a) Corporations Regulations. Following on from the Company Take-Overs Act of 1979 – whereby state regulations and financial levies could be imposed upon ‘hostile’ corporate acquisitions – and with some take-over bids for Queensland companies then in motion, Cabinet deliberated over appropriate measures to regulate the acquisition of private companies. Resultantly, Cabinet recommended to the Governor in Council that certain Regulations be adopted and enforced pursuant to that Act. These included a lengthy schedule of fees for various acquisition procedures and rules regarding the disclosure of take-over information to company stakeholders. [Dec. 32092, Sub. 28615, 17 Jan.; Dec. 32256, Sub. 28766, 19 Feb.] In addition to its own corporations rules, Cabinet agreed to endorse the Commonwealth’s ensuing company take-over legislation and regulations. This would see the Attorney-General acting according to the Commonwealth/State Co-operative Scheme agreed upon the previous year, and entailed the repealing of the state’s Company Take-Overs Act 1979 in favour of standardised national corporations regulations. [Dec. 32566, Sub. 29043, 24 Mar.; Dec. 32931, Sub. 29367, 19 May]
- (b) Corporate Raiders. Late in the year, public attention was drawn to two high-profile take-over bids for prominent Queensland engineering companies, Brisbane’s Evans Deakin Industries Ltd and Maryborough’s Walkers Ltd. Both companies had long been suppliers of railway rolling stock and ship-building services to the state and federal governments. Irrespective of its prior commitment to uniform corporations laws, and alarmed at these ‘undesirable’ bids for prized local firms coming from south of the border, Cabinet took the decidedly interventionist step of approving the government’s entry into the stock market. As recommended in the Treasurer’s submissions (marked ‘Secret’), the Public Trustee was authorised – under the direction of the Treasurer – to acquire up to 12.5% holdings of the local firms’ shares to deter the corporate raiders from interstate. In so doing, it was hoped that the government would “provide a solid rock of ‘Queensland interest’” in these targeted companies, and encourage other local firms (so-called “friends of Queensland”) to do the same. [Dec. 34165, Sub. 30495, 9 Dec.; Dec. 34169, Sub. 30498, 11 Dec.]

Decision Reversals

- (a) Currumbin Creek. For some time the government had flagged its intention to stabilise the mouth of the Currumbin Creek on the Gold Coast and allow for private development on the reclaimed land. The move aroused growing concern among local interest groups, whose actions attracted some ‘sympathetic’ publicity in the media. [See *Courier-Mail*, 1 Jan., p. 3; 14 Jan., p. 2] When it was revealed that Cabinet would favour Lend Lease Corporation’s proposal to redevelop the estuary, and was prepared to bypass the wishes of locals and the objections of its own Department officials, the protests grew louder and publicity heightened. Cabinet suggested that the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads, Russell Hinze, arrange for a series of public meetings on the Gold Coast where interested locals could ‘express their views’. Shortly thereafter, continued public outcry forced Cabinet to rethink the Lend Lease 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. Early in the year Cabinet over-ruled a Department of Health directive to investigate the reported ill effects of commercial herbicides and pesticides upon *in utero* and newborn children. When made public, this decision caused a storm of public controversy, the outcry being led by the Australian Medical Association's state branch. [See *Courier-Mail*, 18 Jan., p. 3] Although reluctant to disadvantage the rural and agricultural sectors which relied upon the use of such pest treatments, the widely reported protest was enough to force Cabinet to reconsider its position and ultimately establish a Register of Birth Abnormalities. [Dec. 32230, Sub. 28738, 11 Feb.] Later in the year, Cabinet ordered that further steps be taken to examine how the chemicals in question affected human health generally. Another Inter-Departmental Committee was established to collate the data from the Birth Register with other available 'scientific information', and to recommend "strategies designed to counter moves to ban the future use of these herbicides." [Dec. 33932, Sub. 30286, 3 Nov.]

Development

- (a) Southport Spit. The future use of the last vacant crown land on the Southport Spit at the Gold Coast had been considered by Cabinet for quite some time. When thoughts turned this year to disposing of the crown land, the government was mindful of local sentiment reportedly similar to protests then surrounding the Currumbin Creek estuary proposals. [See *Courier-Mail*, 11 Jan., p. 2] Cabinet concluded that, "in view of the situation of the area", the best use of this 'valuable resource' was to call public applications for suitable development proposals. Among those 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.] Despite having already flagged favourable lease conditions for Mr Williams' existing lease-holdings in the area, Cabinet later suggested deferring consideration of this proposal, owing to ongoing legal proceedings connected to licensing matters (to the point where the relevant submissions were withdrawn). [Dec. 33610, Sub. 29985, 9 Sep.; Dec. 33677, Sub. 30047, 22 Sep.]
- (b) Raby Bay Estate. The long-planned Raby Bay Canal Estate development was further delayed when a number of neighbouring landholders raised objections to the project in relation to loss of their water frontage. After taking advice from the Crown Solicitor's office regarding settlement of these claims, Cabinet eventually approved of the issue of a development lease – including an indemnity clause protecting the government from compensation claims from the landholders concerned – to Civic Projects Pty Ltd to begin work on the Estate project in the Redland Shire. The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources, Neville Hewitt, declared enthusiastically in his submission that the approved scheme "should get off the ground as quickly as possible." [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 on the new Brisbane airport site, the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works recommended that the government convey early possession of the development to the Commonwealth. Cabinet duly agreed to make arrangements for the final transfer of state lands and buildings (roughly 820 acres, including the Cribb Island State School and Police Station sites) and hand overall responsibility for the project over to the federal government. Upon completion of the land transfer, the state government expected to receive compensation of nearly half a million dollars in return. [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. This approval was conditional on the Coordinator-General reaching agreement with the Commonwealth on deflected flight paths that would take air traffic away from oil storage depots and other 'critical areas' at the Port of Brisbane. [Dec. 33076, Sub. 29491, 9 Jun.]

- (b) Burdekin River Scheme. With nearly \$210 million in capital expenditure still required for construction works on the Burdekin River Irrigation Project, Cabinet viewed a submission from the Premier outlining options for financing the project to completion. In light of joint federal/state meetings of Treasury and other Department officials, Cabinet decided that new negotiations should be entered into with the federal government to co-operatively finance the Scheme. The Premier's submission suggested that an agreement be sought with the Commonwealth that "minimises state government contribution to the overall project cost"; the preferred option had the cost of the Burdekin Falls Dam met federally, with the remaining irrigation works state-funded. [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 the government's involvement in the project based near Gladstone. In this time, Cabinet repeatedly deferred decisions for further consideration and suggested rescinding certain mining lease arrangements, reflecting the unknown nature of the oil shale processing technology and the fluctuating state of the project's production targets. With the Premier pushing for 'early finalisation' and the mining companies requesting provision of new infrastructure facilities, Cabinet eventually accepted most 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. For much of the year, the government was at pains to maximise its profitable return from the state's extensive and much sought-after coal resources. This aim was at times impeded by the federal government, whose Foreign Investment Review Board ruled that coal mining interests should increase the share of Australian equity in their companies. The lack of available coal haulage infrastructure and export facilities along the state's coastline also proved problematic. This was most notable in the case of the Utah Development Company, which was restricting other miners' access to its privately-constructed and operated coal loading facility at Hay Point, just south of Mackay. Cabinet received a number of submissions – most from either the Premier or the Treasurer – detailing additional export options; these included adding a further port outlet at Hay Point (an idea opposed by Utah), 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 refused to allow Utah to determine export options at Hay Point (going against the Premier in the process), and kept its other options – such as added 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. Cabinet considered a brief submission from the Deputy Premier and Treasurer (marked 'Secret'), outlining proposed 'future major developments' in the

state by the mining company giant, Comalco. Having been requested by the company to provide 'certain action and policy advice', Cabinet cautiously indicated its 'in principle' and conditional agreement with several development proposals and associated project requests (details of which the company had asked to be kept strictly confidential). These proposals included increased production of aluminium and the generation of electricity through its own private power station. The Treasurer recommended that "we cannot immediately give Comalco in total all it is seeking", and noted enigmatically that "coal is the key to these future developments." [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 (most carried over from the previous year) over wage claims, leave entitlements and working hours. Seemingly, the most contentious of these claims was for a 35-hour working week, which the Industrial Commission ruled as 'inadmissible' and the government considered as 'not negotiable'. When arbitration early in this year failed to bring the warring parties closer to a resolution – "a stalemate which gives cause for concern" according to the Minister for Labour Relations, Fred Campbell – widespread work stoppages ensued. Despite the Minister's indication that he would support a phase-in of shorter working hours along the lines of a scheme introduced in New South Wales, the Premier acted under the provisions of the *Essential Services Act 1979* and soon had convinced Cabinet by way of an oral submission to declare a State of Emergency. [Dec. 32382, Sub. 28877, 3 Mar.; Dec. 32390, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32573, 27 Mar.; *Courier-Mail*, 25 Mar., p. 1; 27 Mar., p. 1; 28 Mar., p. 1; 29 Mar., pp. 1, 3]

Further into the year, the government attempted by different means to introduce better measures for averting or settling such disputes in the electricity industry. While the same wage and condition claims continued to be pursued, conciliation processes seemed to eventually improve relations between the unions and the State Electricity Commission. Ironically, perhaps, impetus for this conciliation was provided by direct intervention and face-to-face meetings with the unions by the Premier, Deputy Premier and Ministers for Labour Relations and Mines, Energy and Police. 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. Over the previous financial year, the Energy Resources Advisory Council had provided advice to the government on energy matters such as solar energy policy, alternative fuel sources and the liquid fuel supply. When in August Cabinet received the Council's annual report, it was noted in the submission by the new Minister for Mines and Energy, Vic Sullivan, that 'greater co-ordination' with government was required in respect of pressing policy formulation on energy matters. Shortly thereafter, Cabinet decided that the Advisory Council should be reconstituted with additional officers from relevant Government Departments and then redesignated as the Queensland Energy Advisory Council. [Dec. 33480, Sub. 29868, 18 Aug.; Dec. 33559, Sub. 29934, 1 Sep.]

Industrial Relations

- (a) Union Demands. In addition to its efforts to curb industrial disputes in so-called 'essential industries' like electricity supply, Cabinet endorsed similar procedures as proposed by the Labour Relations Minister to prevent unrest in other relevant Crown labour forces (for instance, staff in state hospitals, prisons, welfare agencies and fire brigades). Such new measures were formulated and approved by a Labour Relations Consultative Committee working in tandem with such 'eminent leaders of private industry' as the IR managers of MIM Holdings Ltd and the Utah Development Company. [Dec. 32827, Sub. 29272, 6 May] These measures were not enough, however, to prevent work stoppages over union demands for equitable pay rates at various work sites, as noted by Cabinet. These site disputes involved, among others, construction trades workers at the Wivenhoe Dam project, electrical trades workers at the Mary Kathleen uranium mine, engine drivers at the Gladstone power station and employees of the Queensland State Service Union. [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. From mid-year, a series of national wage case hearings were held before the Full Bench of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Prior to each hearing the Labour Relations Minister briefed Cabinet members and, as had been the case at almost every wage indexation hearing, recommended that the state government seek leave to intervene at each. Among various wage-related submissions presented by the government, the ultimate purpose of such interventions was to argue that any real increase in wage rates should be at "less than full indexation". The Minister's brief submissions cited as reasoning for such an argument the current economic climate, the cost to government and employers of industrial disputes and the effects of national oil parity pricing. [Dec. 32855, Sub. 29295, 12 May; Dec. 33886, Sub. 30244, 21 Oct.; Dec. 33979, Sub. 30331, 10 Nov.]

Employment

- (a) Public Service Support. In the three years since Cabinet had established a Committee to examine the issue of alcohol abuse within the ranks of the Queensland Public Service, the Public Service Board issued a policy statement on the matter, in which it recognised that "a wide range of personal problems ... [including] alcohol or other drug dependence or abuse ... can seriously diminish an officer's work standards." In a submission from the Premier, it was reported that roughly half of the cases of diminished work performance linked to external issues were likely "as a result of alcoholism and associated personal problems". After trialling an alcohol awareness program the year before, it was proposed that this program be merged with the Public Service Board's existing staff counselling service, which had assisted at least 40 officers 'so affected' in the previous year. Cabinet duly approved the establishment of an Employee Assistance Service as a counselling and advisory scheme for Public Service staff. [Dec. 32878, Sub. 29318, 12 May]
- (b) Youth Employment Scheme. Following the report of an Inter-Departmental Committee examining the Commonwealth's proposed Special Youth Employment Training Program, the Labour Relations Minister recommended that Cabinet should reverse its decision of early the previous year and allow the government to participate in the scheme. Cabinet gave its approval 'in principle' to the state's participation in a pilot stage of the Training Program, which placed no extra financial burden on Government Departments' existing funding allocations. Further participation would then be reviewed upon completion of this pilot stage. [Dec. 33355, Sub. 29753, 29 Jul.]

Education

- (a) **Teacher Uptake.** Following negative publicity regarding high levels of non-placement of recent teacher graduates, Cabinet authorised the Minister for Education, Val Bird, to release an urgent press statement to the effect that, essentially, the problem was not of the government's making but more a result of demographics – specifically, a continuing trend of lower birth rates meant that fewer children were enrolling in the state's schools, thus requiring fewer teachers to be employed to supervise the state's classrooms. The press release had the Minister stating that, in this 'new phase of social experience', teacher appointments were only required to replace staff losses through retirement or resignation; hence, more than one-third of recent graduates would not receive an initial offer of employment. [Dec. 32051, Sub. 28575, 15 Jan.; *Courier-Mail*, 14 Jan., p. 3] Later in the year, Cabinet also noted a revised Education Department policy brief regarding the employment of married female teachers, who for reasons of likely immobility and a perceived 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.** Early in the school year, the Education Minister submitted his firm 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 both to himself and to the Premier, and his glib assertion that "all too often these holidays are anticipated more by some of the teaching staff than by the students", the submission was in fact withdrawn before Cabinet decided on the matter. Indeed, Cabinet may well have disagreed with the Minister's opinion that ceasing the practice "would be well received by the community in general." [Dec. 32171, Sub. 28685, 5 Feb.]

Health and Welfare

- (a) **Youth Support Services.** After consultations between the Health and Welfare Ministers over the previous year, it was recommended to Cabinet that a youth psychiatric hospital be established promptly at the disused Enoggera Boys Home in Brisbane's northern suburbs. Cabinet gave approval for the proposed facility, dependent on the successful negotiation of a cost-effective lease arrangement with the local Church of England parish and sufficient staffing allocation from the Health Department. [Dec. 32101, Sub. 28620, 22 Jan.] Later in the year, Cabinet also approved the establishment and financing of an accommodation and counselling shelter for youth on the Sunshine Coast suffering from drug and alcohol dependence. The proposed facility would be operated jointly by the Health Department and the Salvation Army, along the lines of their successful refuge program, 'The Haven', based at Coorparoo in Brisbane's inner eastern suburbs. [Dec. 33068, Sub. 29483, 9 Jun.; Dec. 33245, Sub. 29653, 30 Jun.]
- (b) **Shared Hospital Funding.** Soon after the state government's formal representations to the Federal Commission of Inquiry into the Efficiency and Administration of Hospitals, Cabinet noted submissions from the Health Minister outlining the Commonwealth's offer of cost-sharing arrangements for the state's publicly funded hospitals. The Minister also recommended to Cabinet that the Commonwealth's policy of not sharing costs for any new hospital facilities "must be strongly resisted by this state", as this made uncertain the future of new wards and intensive care units – the operational costs of which would total \$2.64 million over the next year – at such sites as the Gold Coast, Mackay, Mater,

Redcliffe and Townsville 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. The Shire Council of Aurukun expressed to the Local Government Minister its 'unanimous opposition' to the establishment of any licensed canteen in the Shire. Instead, the Council proposed that it be granted authority to control the entry and consumption of alcohol within the Shire, with additional powers of search and seizure bestowed upon its officials. A submission from the Minister, outlining the Shire Council's proposed by-law, advised that this course would necessitate amendments to the *Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act*, which would equally affect all racial groups within the Shire (there being "a number of white people residing there", such as teachers and police). As such, Cabinet decided that no action be taken to so 'empower' the Shire Council of Aurukun. [Dec. 33581, Sub. 29956, 1 Sep.]
- (b) 'Consumer Education' Program. Following the publication of the Musgrave Report into 'Consumer Education in Australia', the state government was asked by officers of the Federal Department of Business and Consumer Affairs to consider "the special needs of Aborigines as consumers." Cabinet agreed with the Labour Relations Minister's curt recommendation to authorise a draft letter of reply from the State Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, declaring that Aborigines "are 'sick and tired' of being assessed and subjected to various forms of 'education'", and so that "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. Early in the year, Cabinet fielded submissions from the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police, Ron Camm, proposing a number of possibly controversial amendments to the Police Act. Following decisions in Cabinet late the previous year to broaden police authority, these amendments – as well as bestowing additional police powers – would give police officers the right to disclose sensitive files and information to other Government Departments, Crown instrumentalities and even private companies or individuals. Ostensibly, this proposal was intended to protect police officers from punitive legal proceedings "when supplying information in good faith and in the execution of their duty." Cabinet duly approved the drafting of a Bill to amend certain aspects of the Police Act as suggested in the Minister's submissions. The legislation's later passage through Parliament created a flurry of media interest and public consternation, as well as further discomfort between the two Coalition partners. [Dec. 32397, Sub. 28686, 10 Mar.; Dec. 32519, Sub. 28996, 24 Mar.; *Courier-Mail*, 25 Mar., p. 1; 26 Mar., p. 1]
- (b) Firearms Regulations Amendments. The Police Minister again created a stir when he recommended to Cabinet to further amend the newly gazetted Firearms and Offensive Weapons Regulations. Introduced in March, the Regulations had put in place a licensing schedule that allowed authorities to categorise firearms according to their potential for harm and provided police with a register of people who owned or dealt in such weapons. Following a deputation to the Minister by 'members of the shooting movement', Cabinet agreed that licence fees should be altered to take into consideration those people who collected souvenir firearms or who engaged in pistol club shooting. The proposed fee schedule had a licensee paying \$35 to register a concealable firearm, compared to \$20 for a souvenir sub-machine gun. [Dec. 32831, Sub. 29276, 6 May] Later in the year it was put to Cabinet that pistol cross-bows should be added to the register of offensive

weapons. Cabinet endorsed the proposed broadening of police powers to effectively determine what constitutes a 'dangerous article'. [Dec. 33626, Sub. 29996, 15 Sep.]

- (c) Drug Abuse Inquiry. The tabling in Parliament in March of the report of the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs created something of a furore when the Premier and the Opposition Leader traded scurrilous allegations across the chamber. The barbs continued into the next month, while the integrity of both political leaders was called into question by the Royal Commissioner, Mr Justice Williams. [See *Courier-Mail*, 19 Mar., p. 1; 18 Apr., pp. 1, 2] A short time later, on the Premier's recommendation the Cabinet authorised the formation of an Inter-Departmental Committee to examine the Inquiry's findings and present recommendations to the government. [Dec. 32908, Sub. 29344, 19 May] Later in the year, 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 and the Police Force'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 and having no cash flow – Cabinet decided (after conference between the Culture Minister and the Treasurer) to cover the losses so long as the Company's board members resigned and a new board was then reconstituted (including at least one government nominee). [Dec. 32330, Sub. 28830, 27 Feb.; Dec. 32410, Sub. 28899, 10 Mar.; *Courier-Mail*, 28 Feb., p. 3] Later in the year, with little prospect of future financial viability despite the earlier government grant of \$150,000, Cabinet opted to promptly terminate the Company's activities and establish an entirely new Company – with a new controlling board wholly approved and appointed by Cabinet – then renamed the Lyric Opera of Queensland. [Dec. 34063, Sub. 30406, 24 Nov.; Dec. 34096, 2 Dec.]
- (b) Red Deer. Of the four species of wild deer occurring in this state, only the red deer was present in such numbers as to warrant a detailed management policy, according to the National Parks Minister. With numbers of the animal – which appears on the state coat of arms and serves as a link to the state's colonial forebears – increasing in and around the Brisbane and Mary River Valleys particularly, Cabinet approved of a management plan for the animal as proposed by the Minister. The plan, which included issuing up to 50 permits to farm red deer and to trap a total of 1000 head, worked so well that by the end of the year it was extended to manage the other species of wild deer. [Dec. 32371, Sub. 28866, 3 Mar.; Dec. 34216, Sub. 30542, 16 Dec.]
- (c) State Zoo. In another submission to Cabinet, the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation bemoaned Queensland's lack of a state zoo, leaving it as "the only state on the Commonwealth's mainland that does not have a major zoo serving educational, recreational and promotional purposes." The Minister cited the 'extreme dissatisfaction' of the public with the few small menageries then operating – "existing animal collections are mostly disgraceful by modern zoo standards" – and argued that Queensland's rich diversity of fauna should be better showcased "to promote the inherent qualities of this state." Cabinet agreed and duly 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. The state government over the previous three years had engaged in long periods of consultation with the Brisbane City Council and industry representatives over the prickly issue of mandatory pool fencing. This year proved no different, with Cabinet in mid-year deferring consideration of the matter until near the year's end, during which

time the Lord Mayor, Frank Sleeman, conferred with the Local Government Minister over 'matters for clarification'. By late in the year, Cabinet had finally approved 'in principle' of including in Council ordinances a requirement that all new privately owned swimming pools should be enclosed with a child-proof fence and self-locking gate. [Dec. 33218, Sub. 29626, 30 Jun.; Dec. 34091, 2 Dec.; *Courier-Mail*, 3 Dec., p. 1]

- (e) Iwasaki Bombing. Late on Saturday, 29 November – the date of the state election – an explosive device was detonated at the grounds of the Iwasaki Resort site near Yeppoon, causing some \$300,000 property damages but no injury or loss of life. Fresh from having his government reinstated, the Premier flew north the next day to personally inspect the damaged site. Following an oral submission soon after by the new Police Minister, Russ Hinze, Cabinet decided to offer a reward of \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest of the person or people responsible. Eventually, two local fishermen were arrested for the crime but were later acquitted; no convictions were ever recorded over the bombing. [Dec. 34126, 2 Dec.; *Sunday Mail*, 30 Nov., p. 1; *Courier-Mail*, 1 Dec., p. 1]