

Selected highlights

1985 Cabinet Minutes | Queensland State Archives

Dr Jonathan Richards

AIDS and abortion clinic raids

The fear of catching AIDS and the castigation of homosexuals continued, especially after the death of film star Rock Hudson. Cabinet considered AIDS-related matters at eight meetings held in 1985. Decisions included funding for counter-measures (Dec 45329, Dec 46180 and Dec 47306); the potential liability of the Blood Bank for using AIDS-infected blood donations (Dec 46514 and Dec 46975); the testing of all prisoners for AIDS and the allocation of a 'Specialised Protective Area' at Wacol Prison (Dec 47599). Health Minister Brian Austin's recommendation (Dec 37046) that prohibiting condom vending machines in Queensland be rescinded (a strategy recommended by the World Health Organisation to reduce sexually transmitted diseases) was rejected by Cabinet members in July (Dec 46687). In March, Welfare Services Minister Geoff Muntz criticised 'the use of public swimming pools by the gay community' (*The Courier-Mail*, henceforth CM, 12/3/1985:3). 'You'll never hear of a gay mardi gras or gay swimming carnival in Queensland', he said.

In May police raided two abortion clinics at Greenslopes and Townsville, 'confiscating' thousands of patient medical files (CM, 13/6/1985:1). Questions were raised as to the extent of Cabinet's knowledge of the raids (CM, 18/6/1985:2), but there are no references to the raids in the records. Charges were later dropped amidst criticism from National Party president Sir Robert Sparkes (CM, 29/6/1985:1).

Business

General

Discussed and approved at three meetings emergency loans for small businesses affected by the dispute with SEQEB (the South East Queensland Electricity Board – the sole electricity provider for South East Queensland) (Dec 45387, Dec 45544 and Dec 45823). Almost 100 loans totalling \$275,000 had been approved by April. Changes to the Bread Industry Act were discussed at a number of meetings without being resolved (Dec 45351, Dec 45499, Dec 45586 and Dec 45730). The price of a loaf of bread rose by four cents to about 80 cents per loaf in 1985 (CM, 1/5/1985:1). Deregulation of award conditions – including voluntary employment contracts between businesses and employees, thereby bypassing unions – were also discussed at a number of meetings (Secret Dec 45747, Dec 46796, Secret Dec 46884 and Dec 46963).

Mortgage regulations

In 1984 Cabinet approved support for a secondary mortgage market in Queensland – a subject discussed at eleven meetings during 1985. Opposition parliamentarians described the Secondary Mortgage Act as 'a fiasco' and 'a joke in financial circles' (CM, 12/4/1985:10 and CM, 6/12/1985:12). One business that applied for registration under the Act was Brooklyn Holdings Pty Ltd, a \$2 company (Dec 47213). A company with limited capital of \$2 meant potential investors or customers faced a higher risk of financial losses. At first rejected, the

company's application was later approved, suggesting some form of lobbying had been conducted (Dec 47025 and Dec 47278). Queensland's secondary mortgage market exercise ultimately failed to persuade leading financial institutions to relocate from southern capitals to Brisbane.

Combined use of land for service station/shop

Members of Cabinet decided in January to amend the *Local Government Act* and the *City of Brisbane Act* to 'prohibit the use of any land, building or other structure for the purpose of a service station/shop' (Dec 45033). This topic was discussed at another six meetings, and several re-zonings were approved in regional localities before Ministers decided to invite city and shire councils to comment on the proposal. Local Government Minister Russ Hinze stated 'a decision made in isolation from Brisbane could result in the undesirable situation of prohibiting the combined use of land for a service station and shop in localities where such a use could be justified' (such as 'in small country towns and rural areas') (Dec 46165).

Shopping centres

Cabinet members, who had briefly blocked the establishment of 'hypermarkets' in Queensland during 1983, discussed further shopping centre proposals during 1985. After an oral submission by Minister Hinze at the first meeting of the year, they decided to 'take no additional action in respect of the control of the growth of the number of shopping centres in any particular area' (Dec 45099). Gold Coast retailers were said to be angry at the increased number of shopping centres (CM, 16/1/1985:9). A six-month trial of unrestricted trading hours on the Gold Coast also attracted criticism, and was soon abandoned (Dec 45598 and Dec 45697; CM, 5/3/1985:9 and CM, 28/3/1985:1).

In September the ALP asked for details of a proposed rezoning at Burleigh Heads. The zoning change was requested by the Grollo brothers (the owners of Oasis Holdings Pty Ltd), who had been convicted of paying secret commissions to union boss Norm Gallagher in Melbourne (CM, 20/9/1985:3 and CM, 27/9/1985:3). In November a submission from the Premier requesting that land at West Burleigh be rezoned for a shopping centre, to be developed by Samfam Pty Ltd of 750 Elizabeth St, Melbourne, was withdrawn (Dec 47479). George Herscu, an associate of the Grollo Brothers, was later imprisoned for corruptly paying Minister Russ Hinze \$100,000 for improved access to a Sunnybank shopping centre.

Development

Brisbane and South East Queensland

More than thirty Cabinet Decisions dealt with plans for and the construction of World Expo 88 at Southbank, and with other development proposals in Brisbane and Moreton Bay. Significant Decisions affecting Brisbane included the proposal for a Rugby Hall of Fame at Ballymore, the Kippa-Ring railway survey and the abandoning of the New Farm Bridge proposal (Dec 47483, Dec 47497 and Dec 47557). Hinze presided over a ceremony at the completion of the Gateway Bridge in June, and Cabinet discussed toll charges and other legal matters relating to the bridge on several occasions (Dec 46719, Dec 47189 and Dec 47736; CM, 27/6/1985:3).

A proposal for 'floating modules' combining parking, shopping complexes, offices and a heliport on inner city reaches of the Brisbane River was rejected in August (Dec 46784). In October Cabinet approved the presentation of documents to Parliament for the Gold Coast railway route (Dec 47238; CM, 5/11/1985:3). In December Cabinet approved a 'freeze' on proposals for the Hamilton Reach area, apparently favouring Leighton Holding's redevelopment of existing wharves (Dec 47719). In June, Barry Paul, the chairman of Kern Corporation, tipped 'a retail revolution' in Brisbane's 'CBD revitalisation' and his contribution to inner city

development was acknowledged with the award of an OBE in December (CM, 21/6/1985:21 and CM, 31/12/1985:9).

Casinos

Casino 'video games' were discussed at four Cabinet meetings in 1985. The managers of Jupiter's Casino on the Gold Coast requested permission to install 'specified casino table games in a video machine form' rather than poker machines, and 'approval in principle for the playing of Blackjack, Roulette, Baccart, Craps and Mini-Dice (Sic Bo)' was granted in January (Dec 45107; CM, 23/1/1985:1). National Party trustee and Jupiter's Casino director Sir Roderick Proctor described the government's opposition to poker machines as 'illogical and hypocritical' (CM, 4/3/1985:1). 'Video Keno' was permitted after a Cabinet meeting in May, but 'Video Draw Card' or 'Video Poker' was not approved (Dec 46155 and Dec 46658; CM, 15/6/1985:14; *Sunday Mail*, henceforth SM, 28/7/1985:5). Proctor later withdrew his complaint after criticism by the Premier (CM, 6/8/1985:3).

Port Douglas

Christopher Skase ('a success story from the start') moved his 'empire's headquarters' from Melbourne to Brisbane in August, purchasing two houses at Hamilton for family and executives (CM, 16/8/1985:23; CM, 14/9/1985:49; SM, 15/9/1985:34). Cabinet members decided in September to choose Skase's company Qintex from a short-list of five as the preferred developer for the Port Douglas Resort Project (Dec 47031; CM, 17/9/1985:8). In October Skase told the inaugural Young Nationals Speakers' Forum that 'the only chance for Australia to survive let alone prosper ... is to become more and more private enterprise' (CM, 18/10/1985:9). The company's first Queensland Christmas party, attended by the Premier and 400 guests, 'went off with a bang' in December (CM, 21/12/1985:3). Despite this grand entry, Qintex ultimately failed and Skase was declared bankrupt in 1991.

Sanctuary Cove

In January 1985 Cabinet considered a proposal from Mike Gore (another prominent member of the 'white shoe brigade') and some members of Cheoy Lee Pty Ltd (owned by the Lo family of Hong Kong) for a luxury resort on Hope Island (Dec 45148). Gore said he thought the Gold Coast was 'paradise lost'; 'alright for tourists' but not for residents. Special legislation covering rezoning, road access, liquor licenses and rate deductions was recommended by the Premier. Approval for a Sanctuary Cove Resort Bill was granted in March after an oral submission from Local Government Minister Hinze (Dec 45558). Subsidies for dredging the Coomera River and 'early' work by the Main Roads Department on connecting bridges and roads were approved in April (Dec 45857).

A 'Deed of Grant without Competition' for Sanctuary Cove was approved in September, with a total cost to the developers of \$120,600 (Dec 46948). Exemption from stamp duty was discussed at a meeting in October (Dec 47274). Security guards would regulate access, and 'Strict body corporate laws will control such suburban hazards as barking dogs, smoking incinerators and noisy children' (CM, 2/11/1985:45). In December, Gore advertised residential blocks under the banner 'Are there 900 Civilised Human Beings in Queensland?' (CM, 28/12/1985:12-13).

Stradbroke Island bridge

This controversial proposal – first mooted in 1982, involving the construction of a road bridge by a private developer 'in return for Crown land on the island, development profits and toll revenues' – was discussed at five meetings in 1985. Possible routes, further proposals and tenders were all considered. Members preferred a 'southern' route via Russell Island rather than a more direct 'northern' route (Dec 45227; CM, 30/1/1985:3).

Ministers agreed, in September 1985, that approach routes, upgrading of main roads and local infrastructure (totalling about \$60m) would be excluded from government financial involvement (Dec 46960). This was the final submission presented to Cabinet by local Member and Minister for Maritime Services, John Goleby, who was killed in a tractor accident one week later (CM, 11/9/1985:4 and CM, 12/9/1985:3).

Government

Electoral Districts Act

In March the members of Cabinet approved (in a secret Decision) a Bill to 'make provision for the better distribution of electoral districts' (Dec 45688). Further details of this proposal, which included seven more seats in National Party areas and was described as 'the greatest gerrymander in Australia', were considered in July (CM, 28/3/1985:1; Dec 46534 and Dec 46688). The Electoral Districts Bill was passed after midnight, but the National Party refused to release its submission and party president Sir Robert Sparkes claimed 'this system of electoral weightage ... is applied in practically all the principal democracies' (CM, 7/11/1985:2). Political scientists John Wanna and Tracey Arklay noted the National Party submission 'went missing and has never reappeared' (Wanna and Arklay, 2010, *The Ayes Have It: The history of the Queensland Parliament, 1957-1989*, ANU Press, p.570). Academic commentator Peter Coaldrake described the redistribution as 'very good news' for the National Party (SM, 10/11/1985:2).

Expenditure

A special \$600m capital works programme (covering education, water resources, roadworks, hospitals and public service offices) was discussed at meetings in February and May (Dec 45316 and Dec 46189). Secret Decisions on public service levels were considered in April and December (Dec 45837, Dec 45844 and Dec 47807). Other secret Decisions regarding government office needs in Brisbane were also passed in 1985 (Dec 45425, Dec 46432 and Dec 46845). A further secret Decision on consolidated revenue and the State Budget was passed in April, with an additional \$46m allocated, mainly for railway expenses and projects, police superannuation, health, water resources as well as towards a number of additional costs of the Premier's Department, including the Enterprise Queensland promotional campaign, power strike advertising, and salaries (Dec 45895). Another secret Decision approved the State Budget in July (Dec 46664).

Members of Cabinet approved production of the government's television program *Queensland Unlimited* (at a cost of \$12,293 per week) at their first meeting in 1985 (Dec 45089). In November and December they agreed to continue the program for another three years (Dec 47494 and Dec 47804). Nine additional public relations staff for the Premier's Department were authorised in January (Dec 45145). In February Cabinet gave approval for a mail security scanning system to be installed in the Executive Building (secret Dec 45263).

SEQEB dispute

The power industry dispute, described as 'a full-scale bitter confrontation', began with a 1980 dispute over shorter working hours (*AJPH Political Chronicles*, 1985:498). Cabinet members endorsed the actions of SEQEB (the South East Queensland Electricity Board) throughout the 1985 dispute and also declared a State of Emergency from 7 February to 7 March (Dec 45049, etc.). Government newspaper advertisements during the SEQEB dispute included 'The unions versus the law', 'Power station operators v The people of Queensland', 'Power to the people' and 'What the Unions don't want you to know' (CM, 15/2/1985:7, CM, 16/2/1985:10, CM, 20/2/1985:7 and CM, 20/2/1985:8). There is no record of approval by Cabinet for this expenditure, but there was for an oral submission by the Premier in August directing all government advertising to be approved by the Director, Government News and Information Service, in the Premier's Department (Dec 46751).

In May Cabinet approved (in a secret Decision) payment of \$200,000 to solicitors acting for the Crown in legal proceedings against the Electrical Trades Union (Dec 46130). The SEQEB dispute was discussed at fifteen meetings, including four held between 18 February and 25 February. Unscheduled meetings held on 20 and 21 February 1985 were convened to discuss 'the effects' of the power strike (Dec 45388 and Dec 45389).

Laws and policing

Fifty extra police were approved in February, and a further 463 were discussed 'in the context of budget deliberations' in May (Dec 45310 and Dec 46026). Amendments to the Criminal Code 'in relation to sexual offences against children' were approved in March after an oral submission from Minister for Justice and Attorney-General Neville Harper (Dec 45512; CM, 5/3/1985:9).

Further amendments, including life sentences for deliberately introducing infectious diseases to animals, were approved in September (Dec 47112). This followed a 1984 threat to release foot-and-mouth virus into Queensland pastoral areas (CM, 5/12/1984:1). A further amending Bill, approved in November, removed the punishments of whipping and solitary confinement from the Queensland Criminal Code (Dec 47604). At the end of the year, Commissioner of Police Lewis was made a Knight Bachelor for 'distinguished service to the Queensland police force' (CM, 31/12/1985:1). His knighthood was officially removed in 1993 after his conviction in 1989 for corruptly receiving \$700,000 to protect illegal prostitution and gambling.

Electricity supply and essential services legislation

Five oral submissions at six Cabinet meetings dealt with contract employment at SEQEB and the State Industrial Commission's role in settling the SEQEB dispute (Dec 45508; CM, 6/3/1985:1). In January Cabinet members approved the preparation of a Bill amending the Essential Services Act to provide for automatic penalties for striking workers (Dec 45210). The Electricity (Continuity of Supply) Bill was passed after three hours debate (CM, 8/3/1985:12). Another oral submission from Mines and Energy Minister Ivan Gibbs for the Electricity Authorities Industrial Causes Bill was also approved in March (Dec 45624; CM, 21/3/1985:10). A third oral submission from Gibbs added a requirement for 'persons to provide their name and address when properly required to' and included 'the power of arrest in certain circumstances' (Dec 45692).

Ninety-six protestors, including five clergymen, were arrested in one day for picketing a SEQEB depot in April (CM, 18/4/1985:1). In October Cabinet members approved a Queensland Electricity Commission proposal to further increase the use of contract and casual labour, including a provision to 'invite unions to assist in the implementation of changes to maintenance practices' (Secret Dec 47219).

Liquor Act amendments

Amendments to the Liquor Act, discussed at twelve Cabinet meetings in 1985, were constantly deferred and ten of the resulting Decisions were classified as secret. Alcohol sales in Aboriginal and Islander communities were to be transferred from the *Community Services Act* to the *Liquor Act*, but would not apply to Aurukun or Mornington Island (Dec 46865 and Dec 47146). In addition to the existing prohibition of 'prostitutes, thieves or persons of notoriously bad character' in licensed premises, 'drug dealers' were to be banned and publicans would forfeit their licenses if they allowed their premises be used by 'deviates, sexual perverts or child molesters' (Dec 46376 and Dec 46599).

In July, Ministers announced that the only acceptable amendments were to allow drinking at the Gold Coast and Townsville casinos (CM, 19/7/1985:3 and CM, 24/7/1985:2). In one submission Minister for Justice and Attorney-General Neville Harper stated several items 'do not fall in the ambit of Party Room discussion' but 'are either of a non-controversial and/or sufficiently important nature to be considered by the Cabinet' (Dec

46844). Members of the gay community in Queensland regarded the changes to the *Liquor Act* as detrimental to their human rights, and planned to protest (SM, 1/12/1985:4).

Local government

Most Australian states amended their constitutions during the 1970s and 1980s to recognise local government, but the Queensland Cabinet members decided in May 1985 to continue opposing the constitutional recognition of local government (despite the Local Government Association of Queensland's support for the change) while confirming a 'strong commitment' to local government (Dec 46059). Appeals against property development rezoning proposals (thereby 'fast-tracking' construction), first discussed in August, attracted controversy in the later part of 1985 (Dec 46800; CM, 25/9/1985:3, CM, 26/9/1985:3 and CM, 27/9/1985:3). The proposed amendments were 'for the purpose of removing the rights of objectors to appeal against decisions of Local Authorities to approve rezoning applications initiated by developers' (Dec 46800). Opponents of development proposals would no longer be able to argue against them in planning courts. Minister Hinze said the changes were designed to prevent 'delays' in developmental projects, but the members of Cabinet decided in November not to proceed with the removal of appeals (Dec 47486).

Native Title and the Mabo claim

Eddie Mabo and others presented a case for traditional rights in land, leading to a number of secret Cabinet Decisions. In January Ministers discussed the potential ramifications of the Mabo case in terms of sovereignty, approving the preparation of a draft Bill intended to 'put beyond doubt some matters where there might be room for argument on Queensland's position or its powers' (Dec 45176). 'Extensive historical research' to counter the claim was authorised in February (Dec 45383). Members decided in March to oppose the Commonwealth's 'preferred National Land Rights model', arguing that Aboriginal land areas would 'negate State and Local Government' (Dec 45645). To counter the land claim, the Cabinet approved, after gaining legal opinion from Mr Ian Callinan QC, the introduction of the Queensland Coasts Declaratory Bill (Dec 45690). This Bill would declare that islands annexed by Queensland 'became the wastelands of the Crown' and validated all subsequent legislation affecting them.

Pilots and planes

In January Cabinet members approved the disbanding of the Government Air Wing and the establishment of two new units – a Ministerial Air Unit and a Police Department Air Unit (Dec 45157; CM, 24/1/1985:1 and 26/1/1985:3). Some pilots lost their jobs and Beryl Young, the Premier's senior pilot, was placed in charge of the Ministerial Unit (CM, 28/1/1985:1). A fresh controversy erupted over the classification of the state's new \$8m jet aircraft after the government claimed the plane's 'private' classification meant flight-plans and passenger details were not released (CM, 30/1/1985:1). In contrast, police aircraft were classified as 'commercial' meaning flight information was available. A claim by the Premier that he performed most of the take-offs and landings, despite not holding the correct pilot's endorsement, led to a mid-year Aviation Department investigation (CM, 1/6/1985:3 and CM, 20/9/1985:3). Evidently the Premier exaggerated his flying ability and opportunities for the media's benefit. Flight details remained secret, and the Opposition accused the Premier of using the plane as his private taxi, including flights for visits to his son in Central Queensland, a charge he freely admitted (CM, 16/9/1985:3; SM, 14/7/1985:3 and SM, 15/9/1985:5). In February the Premier took 'an Arab businessman' to Cairns in the government jet so he could 'assess' the Port Douglas resort proposal (CM, 7/2/1985:8).

Racing and the TAB

Russ Hinze, the Minister for Racing, was embroiled in controversy all year. Cabinet discussed the testing and prevention of drugs (including caffeine) in race horses in March (Dec 45689; CM, 11/1/1985:36, CM, 3/4/1985:46 and CM, 4/4/1985:1). A technical unit, a small police unit and a Racing Codes Advisory Board were proposed and approved in April, but a decision in September on funding for staff was deferred (Dec 45745 and Dec 47093). Hinze's recommendations for government financial support of a Breeder's Incentive Scheme, to assist thoroughbred breeders, was discussed in May but deferred indefinitely (Dec 46058 and Dec 46064).

A second controversy erupted in March when a 'row' between Hinze and TAB Chairman Sir Edward Lyons (a prominent National Party figure) made the front pages of the Brisbane newspapers (CM, 23/3/1985:1; SM, 31/3/1985:3). The Premier announced his support for Lyons, who finally resigned at the end of April (CM, 30/4/1985:1). The final controversy for the year concerned a TAB sub-agency awarded to a Hinze family company (CM, 23/8/1985:2). The application for the sub-agency was withdrawn soon after (CM, 27/8/1985:1).

Mines and energy

Cabinet meetings throughout the year discussed and approved exports and infrastructure connected with coal mining in Queensland, including railway electrification and rail freight rates for coal (Dec 45384 and Dec 45748). Following Decisions made in 1983 and 1984 to reserve land in the locality of Red Rocks (between Bundaberg and Gladstone) as a future coal export port, and after several inconclusive discussions in 1985, a National Park in the Red Rocks area was approved in September, with nearby areas to be investigated as alternative port sites (Dec 39293 and Dec 47007). A second potential port at Stanage Bay, north of Rockhampton, was also discussed in September (Dec 46998).

In 1985, as in 1984, Mines and Energy Minister Ivan Gibbs presented a submission on industrial issues in the electricity industry at every Cabinet meeting. Cabinet also considered issues connected with electricity generation. The acquisition of four coastal power sites was approved by the Executive Council in January. In February steps for a larger power station site at Broadmount, east of Rockhampton, were approved (Dec 45435). Studies to determine the best location of a new power station on the Darling Downs were approved in April (Dec 45891). Wandoan, outside the Queensland Electricity Commission's mapped area, was added by Cabinet.

A revised schedule for the construction of Stanwell power station, and the decommissioning of generating units at Bulimba, Tennyson and Collinsville, was approved by Cabinet in July (Secret Dec 46704; CM, 23/7/1985:8, CM, 30/7/1985:1 and CM, 30/7/1985:7). Members were told that 'development did not eventuate at the rates anticipated and from 1981 each year saw load growth being forecast at a lower rate'. Possible hydro-electric power station sites were considered in August and November (Dec 46733 and Dec 47593).