

Annual Release of Cabinet Minutes
Important Decisions of 1976 Cabinet Minutes
by Dr David Solomon AM

These appear to be the 30 (plus) most important/relevant decisions taken by the Queensland Cabinet during 1976, taking into account both the circumstances of the time, and the advantages of historical hindsight now extending over 30 years.

It is important to note that often Cabinet will have assessed the merits of a particular decision on the basis of material that is not included in the submission before it: the relevant background might be political (in a partisan way) and the circumstances familiar to ministers, not needing to be spelt out. In some cases the most important political developments during the year may not be the subject of a Cabinet decision or discussion of any kind. For example, during 1976 the long-serving respected Liberal leader, Deputy Premier and Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk, decided to retire. There is no reference to this in the Cabinet record, other than a change in the names of those entitled to receive Cabinet material. Nor is there any reference to the decision of the Premier to carry out a minor reshuffle, displacing the then Minister for Police. Nor to differences in the Coalition over the allocation of portfolios that followed the election of the new Liberal Leader. There is a reference to three by-elections, but only to record the dates on which they would be held. Those interested would have to go elsewhere to discover the results of the by-elections, or, for example, the fact that the National Party endorsed a candidate in the electorate of Clayfield against Liberal and Labor candidates.

Some of the decisions that have been selected for noting are arranged by subject matter, not chronologically. The first group deal with issues affecting the Queensland Police, the second with federal issues and the third with issues affecting Coalition relations or the Party Room, the fourth with strikes and industrial relations and a fifth with a few transport issues. Finally there is a miscellany of other interesting issues and problems the Cabinet had to face during the year.

Generally only the relevant Cabinet decision is listed in relation to each subject. If there was a relevant submission, it can generally be found immediately following the decision. In some cases submissions have been noted where there has not been a decision taken by Cabinet, generally because the submission was withdrawn.

Police issues

- The appointment of Terry Lewis as Police Commissioner. The records of Cabinet do **not** include this decision, which was reported in the media as having occurred on 22 November. The appointment was taken to Executive Council by the Minister for Police and approved as decision No. 4459, 22 November. An article by Phil Dickie written in 2001 records that the Fitzgerald Inquiry searched for the relevant Cabinet decision but could not locate it.
- The approval of a police promotions list, including that of Lewis from Inspector to Assistant Commissioner – Decision No. 25453, 15 November.

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- Judicial inquiry into the enforcement of the criminal law – Decision No. 25447, 15 November. A Police Union proposal for a management survey of Police Force rejected by Cabinet, Decision No. 24779, 6 July. The Minister endorsed the Whitrod proposals on actions to be taken on corrupt police, Submission No. 22682, 8 November, but this submission was withdrawn.
- Integration of the Police Arts and Science Course into the Police Qualifying Examinations system. Submission Nos. 21198, 21248 and 21297. The Minister backed down on his original support for the Commissioner's proposals. Decision Nos. 237110 and 23792, 13 and 27 January.
- Police inquiry into complaint arising from university students' demonstration, 29 July. Cabinet objected to the Commissioner's inquiry. Decision No. 24974, 3 August.

Federal issues

- PNG border - Decision 24170, 22 March, Submission No. 21700, 9 April; Submission No. 21754, 23 April; Decision No. 24611, 8 June; Decision No. 24292, 15 June. Decision No. 24357, 8 June; Decision No. 24655, 15 June.
- Federal proposals for a State income tax; and federal economic issues – Submission No. 21364, 10 February; Submission No. 22015, 15 June.
- Medibank changes - Decision No. 23929, 17 February; Submission No. 21737, 23 April; Decision No. 24698, 22 June Decision No. 25275, 11 October.
- Council of States, Constitutional Commission, Council for Intergovernmental Relations - Decision No. 24021, 2 March; Decision No. 24105, 15 March.
- Fraser Island - results of federal inquiry and state reaction - Decision No. 25634, 13 December.
- National Companies and Securities law proposed by the Commonwealth (and resisted by Queensland) - Decision No. 25148, 13 September; Decision No. 25225, 4 October; Decision No. 25421, 8 November; Decision No. 25494 22 November.
- Commonwealth proposals for environmental impact statements (again, resisted) Decision No. 25414, 8 November.
- Attempts by Federal Government to acquire land leases to provide to Aborigines – Decision No. 24543, 1 June; and 24589 8 June.

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Coalition/party room issues

- Abolition of death duties, Decision No. 24713, 22 June; Decision No. 25500, 22 November.
- Union membership - Party Room proposal rejected by Cabinet. Decision No. 25283, 18 October.
- Strikes – teachers and pay deductions, Decision No. 25311, 18 October; Decision No. 25353 and 25375, 25 October and 1 November. Collinsville power station, Decision No. 25379, 1 November.
- Porter (party room) Committee and proposals for action against trade unions, Decision No. 25449, 15 November; Decision No. 25480, 22 November; Decision No. 25499 and 25502 of 22 and 29 November on recommendations of the Porter Committee on changes to industrial law.
- Extended shopping hours – referred to Party Room. Decision No. 23800, 27 January.
- General rule about how Ministers should deal with legislation changed by party room - Decision No. 24119, 15 March.

Other industrial relations issues

- Non-deduction of union fees of public servants - Decision No. 24103, 15 March. Teacher aides not required to join union - Decision No. 25682, 20 December.
- Teachers strikes - Decision No. 25064, 23 August.

Transport and traffic

- Plans for new railways – Feasibility study for Redcliffe Peninsula, Submission No. 22776, 29 November.
- Abolition of “P” plates - Decision No. 24683, 22 June. Learner’s permits reduced to 6 weeks - Decision No. 24571, 1 June.

Miscellaneous matters

- State finances - Decision No. 24026, 2 March; Creation of a Priorities Review Committee, Decision No. 24717, 22 June; Decision No. 24766, 29 June; Decision No. 24943, 27 July; Decision No. 25022, 17 August; Submission No. 22830 6 December, on impact of devaluation on Qld.

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- Building Society problems - Decision No. 24215, 29 March; Decision No. 24605, 8 June.
- Currumbin bird sanctuary, transfer of ownership to National Trust - Decision No. 24771, 29 June; Decision No. 24964, 3 August; Decision No. 25084, 30 August; Decision No. 25129, 6 September; Decision No. 25200, 27 September; Decision No. 25226, 4 October; 25263, 11 October; Decision No. 25281, 18 October; Decision No. 25340, 25 October.
- Purchase of Twelfth Night Theatre - Decision No. 24769, 29 June; Decision No. 25189, 27 September; Decision No. 25280, 18 October;
- Soccer pools - Decision No. 24165, 22 March; Decision No. 25010, 9 August.
- Flood maps and flood prone lands – Decision No. 23688 and 23699, 13 January; 24801, 6 July 1976. Decision No. 24801, 6 July.
- Construction of Wivenhoe Dam and associated works - Decision No. 23829, 27 January; Submission No. 21652, 2 April 1976; Decision No. 24270, 12 April.
- Prostitution and massage parlours – Decision No. 23763, 20 January.
- Government's reaction to Brisbane getting right to host the Commonwealth Games - Decision No. 25073, 30 August.
- Legislation to entrench the position of Governor - Decision No. 25094; Decision No. 25498, 22 November. Governor's pension, Decision No. 25012, 9 August and Submission No. 22832, 6 December.
- Investigation of foreign ownership of land in Queensland – Decision No. 23905, 17 February; Decision No. 24812, 6 July.
- Aluminium smelter, Gladstone - Submission No. 21436, 24 February; Decision No. 23993, 2 March; Decision No. 24025, 2 March.
- Expansion of Fisherman Islands new port facilities - Decision No. 25307, 18 October.
- Petrol price war – power of the Qld Government to intervene. Decision No. 25342, 25 October; Decision No. 25653, 20 December.
- Cyclone relief measures – clearing up, and planning for future – Decision No. 24111, 15 March; 205686, 20 December.

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- MP appearing as a barrister representing the Crown. Possible conflict with Officials in Parliament Act. Submission No. 22815, 6 December withdrawn, but Decision No. 25588, 6 December approving amendment to the Act.