

Reports noted pursuant to Sessional Order.

CHAMBER ETIQUETTE

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, before we go with government business of the day, I might remind members this microphone in front of you is for *Hansard* purposes. Yesterday *Hansard* staff had much difficulty because there were people ripping pages off their pads as they spoke, and pouring water next to their microphone. Some people are not pressing the red button so some of the side conversations were audible throughout the building. Please remember these microphones are not for amplification in this Chamber. They are for *Hansard* purposes. Remember that when you are speaking, and bear it in mind when you are crunching up paper and so on. *Hansard* staff have to wear all those sounds and sometimes it makes it very difficult for them.

FISCAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY BILL (Serial 13)

Continued from 25 October 2001.

Mr REED (Katherine): Madam Speaker, the government has introduced this legislation and from the opposition's point of view, we won't be opposing it. In terms of the government pursuing its own initiatives in relation to its responsibilities, then we acknowledge that you will be doing things differently than did the previous government.

In saying that, can I say that over the past quarter of a century plus, CLP governments delivered to the Territory a very strong and sound economy, and that was pretty well for the whole period of the CLP government. There were some quiet years and it is interesting to note that within those quiet years, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were initiatives that were put in place to stimulate, for example, building activity. The building that we are now working in is a fine example of that.

I would suggest that the judgment of Territorians of the new Labor government over the next few years is not going to be: 'Oh, good! There was a Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act put in place'. But rather, comparing their performance in terms of maintaining and assisting a strong economy, creating jobs for Territorians, future prospects and opportunities, and continuing to deliver services to all Territorians, and doing that in a way that won't impose on them, personally, to the extent that we experienced last night with the passage of legislation that will dip into pretty well every Territory family's home to the tune of at least \$90 and, in many cases, double that or more depending on how many

vehicles they own. So that is going to be the target of the judgement of those in the electorates across the Northern Territory in the next few years rather than a Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Bill.

The arguments that are being put forward by the government are now being received as somewhat tiresome in relation to blaming everyone else and, of course, at the same time doing nothing in terms of generating activity as a government themselves, and making the sorts of decisions governments have to make. If they have to make decisions, they should at least have - if they're going to use the word integrity - the integrity to stand up and take responsibility for them, clearly enunciate what the broad detail of the intent of the government's action is, and be proud enough to espouse it. We have seen, at least in the case of that legislation, that they neither did that, nor did the Treasurer or Chief Minister understand the scope of the legislation and the range of people that it would impact upon.

In terms of the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Bill itself, I believe the government is off to a very poor start because the first thing they did with their budget books that the Chief Minister and Treasurer tabled in this House earlier this week was to eliminate a very important piece of information, and that was the staffing numbers per agency. It is interesting to note that the Chief Minister is being very coy, particularly on radio and television in relation to this matter. She has a stock standard answer which is: 'There will be no forced redundancies and no sackings'. She is always very careful, of course, to either change the subject, having stated that, or point out to the person asking the questions that the numbers are not going to change. Of course, the numbers are going to change. Even the unions now have recognised that there is going to be change and they are talking about up to 1400. They are pretty close to this issue.

The very suspicious aspect of this is underlined by the fact that, whilst the Chief Minister has admitted that she has directed CEOs in relation to the staffing levels that will be applied to the reorganised agencies, and, of course, has a monetary figure that is going to be extracted from all agencies, that is across government - that is, knows what the dollar figure is and knows what the staffing figure is - she not only won't talk about it beyond saying that there will be no forced redundancies, but she has now - because it would expose her position - eliminated the reference to staffing numbers in the budget documents all together.

It goes without saying that the comments made by the Chief Minister in relation to efficiencies will be easier gained - and she made this remark in her letter to public servants - that efficiencies will be