

However, in order to provide further accountability, transparency and consistency with other variations to appropriation, the new section will also require the Treasurer to table a statement of the increase within six sitting days of the Assembly.

As you know, under the current arrangements appropriation can be increased during a financial year up to a maximum of 5% of total appropriations. This provision will now apply to total appropriation, excluding Commonwealth appropriation.

It is a new funding arrangement commenced on 1 January 2009. The proposed amendments will be retrospectively applied. This also necessitates the introduction of the Appropriation (Additional for 2008-2009) Bill scheduled to be tabled later in these sittings. Accordingly, this amendment bill is required to be enacted before the commencement of the Appropriation (Additional for 2008-2009) Bill, the Appropriation 2009-10 Bill and prior to 30 June 2009.

The requirement to amend the *Financial Management Act* to accommodate the arrangements has provided an opportunity for other contemporary changes and administrative amendments to be made. These include additional definitions, the repealing of redundant sections and the alignment of reporting requirements with the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members, and table the explanatory statement to accompany the bill.

Debate adjourned.

GEO THERMAL ENERGY BILL (Serial 22)

Continued from 27 November 2008.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine): Madam Speaker, it was just a couple of months ago in this House, in the last sittings, that I saw the most extraordinary thing occur. The member for Johnston, in moving that this House adjourn, if my memory serves me correctly, leapt to his feet at a speed that was somewhat befitting a superhero - the first one that sprung to mind was the Flash. In fact, the movement was so fast and sudden that it prompted a colleague of mine, the member for Port Darwin, to refer to that sudden movement by the member for Johnston as 'blue shifting'. For those who do not know what blue shifting is it is a term that relates to a phenomenon that happens at a speed close to the speed of light and, in fact, it was a compliment of a kind. What it does is illustrate and demonstrate just how quickly

members of this government can move when it suits their purpose; and that was designed to adjourn the debate and gag the opposition, again. We have all talked *ad nauseam* about how the government does that to us.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the introduction of the geothermal legislation in this parliament. On 14 February 2006, more than three years ago, the member for Casuarina promised in this House that there would be a geothermal bill by late 2006. Well, that came and went fairly well. On 26 October 2006, the then minister Natt put out a press release promising another geothermal bill. Christmas came and went and, on 15 February 2007, then minister Natt again promised this parliament there would be another geothermal bill.

It is going to be a little tedious to hear all this, Madam Speaker, but the government was mysteriously quiet on the issue for another nine months or so and then minister Natt again promised the parliament that geothermal legislation was being developed. Finally, the Chief Minister chimed into the debate and on 21 February 2008 he re-announced to the parliament the importance of geothermal energy saying it was one of the most critical issues facing the Northern Territory.

This critical issue is now enshrined in this bill some three years after it was first announced by the government, as opposed to the blue shifting member for Johnston who leapt to his feet at such a great rate of knots. This bill moved at a pace somewhat more akin to its natural surroundings deep inside the earth or, more specifically, it has been moving faster than a speeding tectonic plate. However, it is pleasing that we finally do have a geothermal bill and that the government has got its act together on this.

I support this bill today, with a few words of caution thrown into the mix. First, I thank the minister for Resources for providing a briefing, not only on the bill as a whole but also on the amendments which will be placed before the House today. As usual, the Resource department staff was very helpful and accommodating. In examining the bill and the recent amendments it appears to have most, if not all, the bases covered, particularly given that it is very new legislation. In reality, what will happen now is that we will wait to see how it works in practical application; there well may be some issues that need to be solved as time goes by. However, I am still a little bewildered over the three-year thing and how, only two weeks ago, there were still amendments coming in. I would have thought they would have been quite on top of it by then. Anyway, here we have it.