

statement how many hits are still achieved by fingerprinting. One would have thought that the capacity to hide your fingerprints at the scene of a crime would be fairly evident to anybody these days. It is interesting this fairly ancient technique is still responsible for so many hits. I would like to think that DNA will largely take the place of this fingerprinting. However, I know from briefs I have been fortunate to have with members of the Police Force that they view DNA as just another tool, and fingerprinting is still of great importance to them. The evolution in this area, I think, will continue.

The necessity for the police to have very secure systems of communication is important. Electronic technology to obtain information through surveillance devices is becoming miniaturised and more commonly available - not just to the goodies but also to the baddies. We have to make sure our police force is equipped and in advance of technology at the cutting edge. The fact our systems are indigenous, the fact they have come from local inventors and local practitioners on the ground, will ensure they are adequately adapted.

I commend the minister for his statement. I commend his diligence in making sure our Territory Police Force is well equipped not only with the human resources necessary to make it the finest force in the nation, but also with those resources that enable them to do their job in this evolving technological world.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE SERVICES BILL (Serial 280)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PALMER (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, for and on behalf of the Treasurer, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to replace the current *Water Supply and Sewerage Act* in order to improve the regulatory arrangements that apply to water supply and sewerage services in the Northern Territory. In particular the bill establishes the framework necessary to ensure appropriate regulation of the monopoly provision of these services and to separate regulatory functions from service provision.

The changes represent a further instalment in the government's response to the comprehensive review of the Power and Water Authority undertaken in 1998. The electricity reforms were implemented by

a passage of the *Electricity Reform Act* and related legislation, and establishment of the Utilities Commission early this year.

Through the combination of these reforms the government is seeking to provide a long term industry and a regulatory framework which ensures that PAWA concentrates on commercial objectives. This is essential if PAWA is to achieve their \$30m per annum financial improvement target, which the government has set for it.

In addition, the framework will allow more appropriate scrutiny of PAWA by the government by, for example, requiring better definition of service standards and monitoring of compliance. In turn, this should help ensure that improvements and efficiency at PAWA do not come about at the expense of appropriate standards of service for Territorians.

The reform of the regulatory arrangements apply to the water supply and sewerage services. It will also address two of the Territory's national reform commitments. They are the review of restrictions on competition in Territory legislation under national competition policy and the institutional reform requirements of the Council of Australian Government's strategic framework for water reform. Both sets of commitments are linked to the Territory's continued receipt of competition payments from the Commonwealth. These are worth around \$4.7m this financial year and over \$7m per annum from 2001-2002. To ensure the government meets its commitments, a review of the legislation was recently conducted by independent consultants. The bill being introduced today also responds to that review.

The *Water Supply and Sewerage Services Bill* is essentially an amalgam of relevant provisions of the *Electricity Reform Act*, suitably modified for the water supply and sewerage industry and the existing *Water Supply And Sewerage Act*. The key elements of the new arrangements involve:

- retention of the single supplier model for provision of water supply and sewerage services in defined geographical areas in the Territory;
- the introduction of a requirement for the single supplier of water and sewerage services within an area to hold a licence to operate issued by the Utilities Commission;
- the transfer of regulatory functions, including price regulation, relating to water and sewerage services in PAWA and the Minister for Essential Services to the