

legislation dealing with these bodies is more up-to-date and includes appropriate standards.

In the Northern Territory itself, housing assistance to low-income earners is provided through the HomeNorth scheme. The housing finance market generally is very competitive with banks, building societies, credit unions and mortgage originators all keen to provide housing loans to Territorians. It is appropriate to repeal the *Building Societies Act* and regulations. If there were an initiative to establish a new terminating building society, then the Northern Territory could base the legislation needed on that of another jurisdiction.

Honourable members may recall that the *Financial Institutions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill* was passed at the April 1997 sittings. It provided that persons and organisations that could invest in banks could invest in building societies and credit unions. This amendment makes a consequential amendment to the *Northern Territory Treasury Corporation Act* to make an adjustment that was overlooked previously. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PALMER (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Bill* (Serial 41) and the *Waste Management and Pollution Control (Consequential Amendments) Bill* (Serial 43): (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND POLLUTION CONTROL BILL

(Serial 41)

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND POLLUTION CONTROL

(CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL

(Serial 43)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr PALMER (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

It gives me some pleasure to introduce this important legislation. The purpose of the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Bill* is to ensure that activities that have a potential to cause pollution are properly managed, and that the environment is protected. The Territory environment is one of our most precious resources, and it is important to the economic wellbeing and quality of life which Territorians enjoy today. However, the quality of life we will enjoy in the future will depend to a large extent on how we manage our wastes now. As a result of the Northern Territory's brief development history, and due partly to good management by many Territorians, we do not face the large scale pollution problems that are experienced in other parts of Australia. This provides the Territory with an opportunity to build on its achievements, not a reason for complacency. Prevention is better and cheaper than cure, and this bill is intended to ensure that sound environmental practices are put in place.

The Territory government foreshadowed the introduction of this bill when the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy* was released in September of 1995. A draft bill was tabled in the Assembly in November 1996 and it was made available for public comment. The proposed legislation was well received by industry and the community, and the constructive comments received have been used to revise and improve the draft bill. The bill addresses issues that are important to all Territorians, including environmental noise, the treatment and disposal of hazardous waste, air quality, contaminated land and the control of pollution. The bill adopts best practice environmental regulation, aimed at providing a regulatory framework that rewards and encourages continuous improvement in environmental performance and fosters the development of innovative and cost-effective approaches to environmental protection without compromising community desires for environmental quality.

The bill will provide an important link between the environmental assessment of new developments, undertaken through the *Environmental Assessment Act* and the long-term management of environmental issues once a development is up and running. Where waste management issues arise from an assessment of a new development, those assessment recommendations will be able to be implemented through the provisions in this bill.