

There is substantially greater emphasis on water quality in the new bill than under the Control of Waters Act. Environmental water quality is an increasingly important issue in the Territory and the bill consequently proposes stiff maximum penalties for pollution. There are also comprehensive powers to give directions and to take action where emergencies arise. In recent years, there has been general acceptance of the principle that traditional remedies available through the courts are unduly complex and expensive for citizens to invoke and this has led to the creation of administrative tribunals. Review mechanisms, through a tribunal, are available now in most Australian water legislation. In each case, experience has been positive. Customers are afforded an opportunity to air their grievances expeditiously and, in appropriate cases, administrative errors or oversights are rectified. Accordingly, it is proposed that a water resources tribunal be established, comprising a chairman appointed by the minister and 2 persons drawn from a panel representing a wide range of relevant expertise.

The Water Supplies Development Act is also to be repealed. Currently, it allows the Water Resources Division of PAWA to give advice to applicants on ways of improving water supplies for primary production purposes and for repayable advances of public moneys to be made. It also provides for what are colloquially known as 'advice bores'. An applicant may seek the advice of the Commissioner of Water Development as to where bores for water might successfully be sunk on his land and for reimbursement of the costs of drilling an unsuccessful bore. While provision exists in the bill for giving advice on water resource issues generally, there is no longer specific provision for 'advice bores' and consequential reimbursement of the costs of drilling an unsuccessful bore. This change has been made since the bill was first tabled in the Assembly on 9 May 1991 and reflects government policy determined as part of the Expenditure Review Committee process. Appropriate provision has been made for fair and equitable treatment for 'advice bores' already in the pipeline.

This matter has been the subject of specific consultation with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. Indeed, since tabling the bill in the Assembly in May, there has been intensive consultation with industry and public interest groups. Some 29 separate bodies have been provided with a copy of the draft bill and invited to comment. Some very helpful responses were received leading to minor drafting amendments and ongoing dialogue with the Power and Water Authority. Wide public support for this important new legislation is necessary and is generally evident in the feedback received. In conclusion, in combination with the various orders and regulations, the bill will provide comprehensive modern legislation for water resources management which has drawn from experience elsewhere and will be the equal of any similar legislation in Australia. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PASTORAL LAND BILL (Serial 105)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr ORTMANN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to have the second-reading speech incorporated into Hansard.