action.

Other provisions in the bill include the declaration of quarantine areas and treatment of infested things such as vehicles, boats, aircraft, machinery, plants, fodder, soil and animals that may be contaminated with weeds. The powers of weed management officers will include entering and searching land, taking photographs, copying documents, taking samples, and requiring persons to provide information concerning the origin and destination of anything found on their land. They may also order persons to take a contaminated thing to a cleaning or quarantine area. It is recognised in this bill that certain weeds may have a use in one situation, but still be regarded as a weed in another situation. Hence persons may apply to the minister for a permit to use a weed for a commercial purpose or to carry out research on a weed.

Before proceeding further with the bill, the government has asked the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to quantify the resource needs for government agencies as a consequence of the legislation being implemented. For other land, it is the view of my department that landholders, who have been addressing their responsibilities in respect of weeds, will not be disadvantaged by this bill. Following receipt of comments, my department will revise this discussion draft. It is the government's aim to introduce the bill to the Legislative Assembly early in the new year.

Madam Speaker, I table the draft bill and move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr TOYNE (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I would like to respond very briefly to the tabling of the document. I welcome the consultation process that the minister is proposing in relation to this draft bill. Weeds management is an important issue in the Territory. Certainly, with the recent experience in Alice Springs with the Mexican poppy outbreak in the Todd River, it became very apparent that it is falling between several agencies to deal with events of this kind and it would be very good to see a more coherent structure implemented to deal with weed outbreaks. I hope the consultation is carried out thoroughly and I would certainly like to help in any way I can to ensure maximum participation.

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMPLAINTS BILL
(Serial 38)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr BURKE (Health, Family and Children's Services): Madam speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to give effect to an undertaking by the government under the Medicare Agreement. It provides for a commission to deal with complaints by users of health services and community services in an impartial and independent manner. The government's health policy foreshadowed the establishment of a dispute resolution process in order to allow consumers a formal channel through which to make their grievances known and for clinicians and administrators to respond. The government believes that the process should be aimed at encouraging users and providers to resolve problems together, where possible, through various forms of conciliation rather than litigation, and this legislation is formulated to reflect this principle.

The bill is an important initiative taken by the government to address the complaints made by users of health services and community services with respect to the provision of those services, both in the public and private sector. The government realises that, while the provision of these services in the Northern Territory is generally satisfactory, there are no independent, external mechanisms providing for the conciliation and investigation of complaints of this kind apart from expensive and adversarial legal processes. With the passage of this bill, the Territory will have an independent Health and Community Services Complaints Commission.

Victoria was the first jurisdiction to introduce this kind of legislation - in 1987 - and most recently Tasmania enacted similar legislation in 1996. I am pleased to say that we have had the benefit of learning from the interstate experience and have modelled our legislation on that in the majority of states and other territories while addressing many of the functional difficulties they have experienced.

The bill essentially sets out the jurisdiction, objectives, powers and functions of the proposed Health and Community Services Complaints Commission. The bill is divided into 9 parts and I will briefly outline each, starting with part 1 which contains the short title, commencement clauses, objectives and definitions. The main objectives of