

# Queensland State Archives - 1972 Cabinet Documents

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## Introduction

Cabinet submissions and decisions are considered within a historical context, and against a background of broader movements in Australian society during the early 1970s.

Cabinet was, in theory, the 'supreme decision-making body' but also the 'apex of the party system', and these two factors, as this report shows, sometimes caused conflict to emerge between Ministers and political organisations <sup>1</sup>.

## Background

The American bombing of Vietnam, diplomatic negotiations with China and lunar missions were major world news stories in 1972. So too was the emergence of an international terrorist network that killed passengers at an Israeli airport and athletes at the Munich Olympic Games, and blew up civilian planes throughout the Middle East. In Australia the beleaguered Federal Government, led by Liberal Prime Minister Billy McMahon, was fighting a revitalised Australian Labor Party that was widely expected to win office at the next election.

## Natural Resources

In 1972, Queensland was like a sleeping giant waking to discover that the world wanted the resources - **bauxite, coal and nickel** - she possessed. Development was the major concern of the State government and the Cabinet records reflect this fact. However Brisbane was still, in many ways, a big country town - the daily newspaper cost 6 cents, a litre of Super petrol was worth 10 cents, married women were "criticised" for 'taking jobs from men' and many men still wore hats when they left home. In other ways, the modern world was starting to affect Queensland: protests against conscription and the Vietnam War took place on Brisbane streets, while conservationists fought long-running battles for the protection of Cooloola and the Great Barrier Reef.

## Community Issues

Disputes between conservationists and pro-development lobbies were **important community issues** during the late 1960's and the early 1970's<sup>2</sup>. Contentious environmental debates included the fight to stop mining in limestone cave areas, the long-running battles to save Cooloola and Fraser Island from sand mining and the campaign to prevent oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef<sup>3</sup>. It was eventually revealed that several Queensland Cabinet Ministers owned shares in companies that had successfully applied for sand-mining leases at Cooloola. In 1969 fellow Parliamentarians asked the member for Barambah (Joh Bjelke-Petersen) to sell his shares in oil and mining companies, including a number that were involved in drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, and he refused<sup>4</sup>. Oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, which had begun in 1967, was a contentious issue for many years.

## Economic and Political Change

Economically, Queensland changed during the 1960's and 1970's from a predominately rural base to a **major international mineral exporter**. The Nicklin Country Party-led government, which had held office in Queensland since 1957, joined with Comalco during the mid-1960's to develop the Weipa bauxite deposit. The government financed the construction of the harbour and town. Soon after, Sir Frank Nicklin announced that the largest alumina refinery in the world would be built at Gladstone in Central Queensland, near the Moura coalmine. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on infrastructure at what became known as 'the Gladstone Project'.

After the retirement of Nicklin in 1968, **Johannes Bjelke-Petersen** was elected as the leader of the Country Party and thus became the Premier of Queensland. In 1970 government plans to build the state's largest power station at Gladstone were announced, with most of the power reserved for the alumina refinery. At the same time, nuclear energy was seen as a viable electricity source for the huge amounts of power consumed by alumina processing<sup>5</sup>.

Bjelke-Petersen made a successful transformation from rural member to **Queensland's longest running Premier** during the early 1970's<sup>6</sup>. Law and order were seen as important issues, and the Premier exploited every opportunity to claim that his "firm" control of the State was in voters' interests. A statewide month-long "state of emergency" had been declared in July 1971 when the all-white Springbok football team from South Africa visited Brisbane. Bjelke-Petersen later recalled that the Springbok tour 'put him on the map' and provided him with 'great fun', while the government's actions apparently swayed some voters, and the coalition won two crucial by-elections soon after<sup>7</sup>.

## Vietnam War and Political Controversy

Moratorium marches, in protest at the Vietnam War, took place in Brisbane during April and May of 1972: before one demonstration, the Premier announced that police would ensure that 'no one's rights will be trampled during this disgraceful march'<sup>8</sup>. The Police Minister announced that he would ask Cabinet to increase bail for demonstrators because so many failed to appear in court<sup>9</sup>. According to the Courier-Mail, Cabinet approved increases on 16th May but no record of the submission or the decision exists in the Cabinet records<sup>10</sup>.

Probably the most controversial action taken by anti-war protestors was the splashing of animal blood on the floor of the Brisbane Stock Exchange: eight young people were later jailed for this action<sup>11</sup>. In the campaign for the 1972 State election, Bjelke-Petersen announced that law and order was 'the real issue', warning voters that 'if law and order goes, then everything else will go as well'<sup>12</sup>. Cabinet approved extra police on 2nd May and 27th June, with submissions noting that increased numbers were needed because of the 'heavy burden now being placed on police manpower in consequence of demonstrations in public places'<sup>13</sup>.

## Electoral System Changes

In 1971 a statewide redistribution and **new zonal voting system** was passed by Parliament. Cabinet Ministers held 'informal discussions' about "three-cornered contests" at the election 'during lunch' in March: Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk had objected to the question being considered at a Cabinet meeting, saying 'it was not a matter that concerned the government but one that concerned party members as individuals' <sup>14</sup>. A state election was held in May 1972, in which the Country and Liberal parties received 42% of the vote and secured 47 seats; the Australian Labor Party, with 46% of the vote, only managed 33.

After the election there was tension in the coalition as Chalk tried to increase the number of Liberal Ministers while the Country Party attempted to reduce the Liberal representation in Cabinet <sup>15</sup>. The issue of daylight saving, as discussed below, almost caused a permanent fracture within the Country Party-Liberal coalition government. Relations within the Cabinet were also strained over the question of random breath testing, with a number of Ministers voicing their opposition <sup>16</sup>. Cabinet meetings could become displays of the Premier's temper, when he would 'start to yell and threaten' and 'at the same time go red in the face and become more incoherent' <sup>17</sup>.

## Drought, Plagues and Cyclones

Much of Queensland was affected by drought in 1970 and 1971, with many shires declared drought-stricken by the end of 1971. At the end of the drought there was a mouse plague in the Burnett, Wandoan and Darling Downs districts, and controversy emerged over the indiscriminate use of pesticides. Education Minister Fletcher, the Member for Cunningham on the Darling Downs, was reported as being 'angry' in a Cabinet meeting about the number of birds killed on his property by aerial baiting with endrin, a DDT-related chemical <sup>18</sup>. His protest was supported by the Allora Shire Council, which said that dogs, cats and 'thousands of birds' were being killed by the poison <sup>19</sup>. A report to Cabinet on the mice plague, according to the Premier, contained evidence that this was 'Queensland's worst mouse plague' <sup>20</sup>.

Cyclone Althea affected the Townsville region in December 1971, and was followed by major flooding in western river systems. Within a month a second cyclone, "Bronwyn", caused further damage and parts of the east coast received their heaviest falls on record <sup>21</sup>. Two more cyclones, "Daisy" and "Wendy" passed the southern coast of Queensland in February <sup>22</sup>. In February, the Primary Industries Department said the good rainfall meant that Queensland was 'having its best summer for 16 years' <sup>23</sup>. The general good rain in early 1972 led to the revoking of drought declarations in some shires in April <sup>24</sup>.

## Unemployment and Inflation

The population of Queensland at the 1971 Census was 1.8 million, with 700,000 residents living in Brisbane <sup>25</sup>. In 1972 there was an economic downturn in Australia as both unemployment and inflation increased, and Queensland applied for funding from the Commonwealth Grants Commission for the first time <sup>26</sup>. Industrial action and strikes were widespread, particularly in the electricity, resource extraction and transport sectors.

## Exports

Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony noted that exports, particularly of minerals, from Australia to Asian countries rose to 43% in 1972 while exports to Britain declined from 40% in 1966 to 25% in 1971 <sup>27</sup>. A report on Queensland's first trade mission to Asia, which noted that most of the delegates were quite uninformed about Asian customs and traditions before they left, was presented to State Cabinet on 30th October 1972 <sup>28</sup>.

## Issues - Aboriginal and Islander Affairs

Issues discussed by Cabinet during 1972 including administration, capital works, employment, funding, health, housing, the proclamation of the Aborigines Act 1971 and of the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1971, wages, and welfare.

Prime Minister McMahon announced on Australia Day 1972 that land in the Northern Territory 'would be granted on lease to Aborigines who show the ability to make reasonable economic and social use of it'<sup>29</sup>. The Premier advised the Prime Minister that Queensland was 'most disturbed' that he should 'take this course of action' without adequate consultation with the States<sup>30</sup>. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Neville Hewitt) said that church organisations and political groups were advocates of 'Land Rights for Aborigines', and warned Cabinet of the consequences of adopting this policy:

The protagonists would no doubt further submit total ownership of Australian land areas by Aboriginal people and demand compensation rights assessed, probably from 1788 with interest to current date<sup>31</sup>.

Cabinet discussed proposals by the Commonwealth Government with regard to Aboriginal ownership of land on 4th September, and decided that the current policy would be continued<sup>32</sup>. Cabinet ordered that the Commonwealth Government should be advised that Queensland did not 'view favourably proposals to acquire large areas of additional freehold or leasehold land for development by Aborigines or Aboriginal groups in isolation'. The Queensland Government would advise the Commonwealth that it would continue to grant special leases to 'merit individuals' and would request that any additional funding be directed at the development of existing reserves.

On 9th May, Cabinet decided to inform the Australian President of the International Commission of Jurists, with regard to the provisions of the Aborigines Act 1971 and the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1971, that the government welcomed 'any constructive suggestions'<sup>33</sup>. According to the submission, the International Commission of Jurists requested that the introduction of the Regulations be delayed until Professor Garth Nettheim had completed his report in June 1972. The submission noted that the Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council preferred 'an early proclamation of the Regulations' because they permitted the election of an additional Councillor at each Reserve, and also facilitated the granting of canteen licences on Reserves.

On 6th November, Cabinet decided to proclaim the Aborigines Act 1971 and the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1971 in full<sup>34</sup>. The government announced on 1st December that the 'sweeping improvements' in the new regulations would mean 'the whole of responsibility for self-determination will rest with the individual Aboriginal or Islander'<sup>35</sup>. The legal sale and consumption of alcohol on reserves would be permitted for the first time in Queensland history if the locally elected reserve Council agreed to comply with Liquor Act provisions. Under the regulations, beer sales were restricted to allow sufficient quantities for 'all persons wishing to purchase beer'<sup>36</sup>. Proceeds from beer sales were to be placed in Community Fund Accounts with any surplus funds to be 'appropriated to the general welfare of Aboriginal inhabitants on the Reserve' as the Council determined.

The new regulations gave the reserve officials the power to 'eject from the reserve' anybody they decided had behaved in a manner that was 'subversive of good order or discipline'<sup>37</sup>. Although the management of reserves was delegated to locally elected Councils, every 'By-Law, resolution and order' had to be approved by the Minister before it came into effect. Furthermore, in the event of a tied vote for council elections, the Minister retained the power to determine which candidate would be elected.

Cabinet discussed the establishment of an Aboriginal Preventative Medicine Programme on 4th October, with the primary object to 'reduce the Aboriginal mortality rate, particularly of infants, and the morbidity rates of conditions which have become problems peculiar to Aborigines'<sup>38</sup>. The submission noted that the project could only proceed if Commonwealth funding, both for the programme and for wages, was secured. Four travelling teams and 14 public health nurses were to be employed at Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander communities and missions, but the submission noted that the Commonwealth would provide funds for capital costs only. Funding for staff wages had not been allocated, and the recruitment of adequate suitable staff was seen as a possible problem<sup>39</sup>.

The elevation of the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs to the status of a full Department of State for the purposes of the Public Service Act was decided on 18th December. The submission noted that Queensland had 'the highest proportion of any State of Aboriginal people', the department had been a section of the Health Department until 1965, and was subjected to 'intense political and public awareness'<sup>40</sup>. The Department's activities needed to be 'maintained' at 'the highest order in an endeavour to obviate public and political reactions'. The submission also noted that Queensland had 'been the leader in Australia in Aboriginal welfare', and Cabinet agreed that this position needed to be maintained.



## Issues - Beach Erosion on the Gold Coast

This was a major issue that Cabinet considered at 10 meetings between January and October. It was also the subject of extensive media coverage, with a number of newspaper editorials criticising the Government for failing to arrest the dramatic loss of beach sand<sup>41</sup>. There had been similar problems on Gold Coast beaches during 1967 when apartment blocks at Surfers Paradise were 'menaced' by high seas<sup>42</sup>. Various measures, including the construction of strategic groynes, were suggested by the Delft Laboratory in Holland in a report released by the Government in 1971.

In January, the Gold Coast City Council accused the government of 'hindering attempts to restore eroded beaches', claiming that it was 'more concerned' about rural matters than the State's major tourist area<sup>43</sup>. The Premier said in response that the government had offered to help the Gold Coast City Council a month earlier, but there had been 'no official reply'<sup>44</sup>. As 'huge seas' destroyed beachfront facilities, the Acting Mayor of the Gold Coast (Alderman Neumann) 'emotionally criticised' the State Government, and repeated his claim that it was giving higher priority to rural concerns than to the 'protection of the tourist industry'<sup>45</sup>. Bjelke-Petersen, saying his advisers 'continued to remind him' that an anti-erosion scheme for the whole Gold Coast costing \$38 million was necessary, announced that he would fly to Coolangatta and personally inspect the problem<sup>46</sup>.

The Central Council of the Country Party decided that an experimental groyne costing \$250,000 would solve the most urgent problem at Kirra<sup>47</sup>. Bjelke-Petersen announced on 25th January that he would present 'a programme aimed at halting beach erosion at Coolangatta' to Cabinet that day, and Cabinet approved an experimental groyne costing \$200,000<sup>48</sup>. Two cyclones that brought more high seas in February caused more damage, and 10,000 sandbags were carted from army stores in Brisbane to the coast<sup>49</sup>. Houses at Palm Beach were seriously threatened, with waves entering some homes as residents, soldiers and volunteers stacked sandbags<sup>50</sup>. The Acting Mayor of the Gold Coast announced that 'getting the money' to tackle the erosion was 'no problem' and it was the State and Commonwealth Governments that were holding up work<sup>51</sup>. He called on each to fund 40% of the scheme's cost, with the Gold Coast Council to pay 20%.

Cabinet decided on 4th April that a programme of beach restoration covering the entire Gold Coast was needed, and noted that Commonwealth funding was not available<sup>52</sup>. Next day, Hewitt (Minister for Conservation, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs) wrote to the Council accusing it of 'procrastinating' and having 'no intention of implementing the Delft Report proposals'<sup>53</sup>. The Gold Coast City Council was initially reluctant to borrow money to fund the Delft scheme, arguing that it was beyond the capacity of the area to repay any large loan. The Queensland government announced that it would 'not do any more work' until the council undertook 'in writing' to adopt the Delft recommendations<sup>54</sup>.

In June, the Premier met personally with Mayor Small, who had won the seat of Surfers Paradise for the Country Party in the same month, to 'insist' that he accept the loan<sup>55</sup>. Eventually the Gold Coast Council agreed to accept the government's conditions and implement the Delft Report proposals<sup>56</sup>. On 2nd October Cabinet agreed to approach the Commonwealth Government to request a 40% subsidy for the cost of the beach restoration project. The total cost was expected to be between \$12 million and \$17.5 million, but the submission noted that an extra one million visitors would holiday on the Gold Coast if the beaches were restored<sup>57</sup>. The Queensland Government announced it would contribute up to \$6 million to fund the scheme 'if the Commonwealth will do the same'<sup>58</sup>. The State Government advised the Council in December that it would suspend all loans to the Gold Coast until it gave 'an unqualified assurance' that it would 'honour a \$13 million beach restoration programme'<sup>59</sup>.

## Issues - Brisbane

Issues discussed by Cabinet including the redistribution of electoral wards within the City of Brisbane, flooding and the construction of freeways.

Cabinet discussed the redistribution of electoral districts within the City of Brisbane on 13th March, 4th July, 11th July, 7th August and 21st August. The original submission, discussed on 13th March, proposed increasing the number of wards from 28 to 29, and recommended that the State Government should consult with the Brisbane City Council<sup>60</sup>. The Cabinet decided on 4th July to approve the preparation of a new City of Brisbane Act allowing for only 19 electoral districts, and for the election of the Lord Mayor by councilors<sup>61</sup>. On 11th July, Cabinet discussed a Bill allowing for 21 wards and agreed that further discussion was needed to determine the final number of electoral districts<sup>62</sup>. Brisbane's Lord Mayor, Clem Jones, announced that the state government was 'trying to get rid of me'<sup>63</sup>. The Local Government Minister rejected calls for a referendum on the matter, and ignored the Council's protest<sup>64</sup>.

Former Brisbane Town Clerk, JC Slaughter, described the changes as 'without any doubt the most retrograde which have been contemplated in almost 50 years' and criticised the speed with which the proposed changes were agreed to by the State Government<sup>65</sup>. It was decided on 7th August to refer the matter to the next meeting of the joint Government parties<sup>66</sup>. A special Parliamentary committee meeting approved the draft legislation without any changes, and the Bill was passed at the joint parties meeting on 9th August<sup>67</sup>. According to the Courier-Mail, the Premier was one of four government members who voted against the legislation and the newspaper claimed that the changes to the Brisbane City Council were part of a 'back-room deal' between the Government parties<sup>68</sup>. The Premier announced on August 21st that Cabinet had approved the Bill, and legislation would be introduced in Parliament 'without change'<sup>69</sup>.

At the Bill's first reading, Local Government Minister Henry McKechnie said the changes would produce 'democracy' and make the workload of councilors equal to that of State parliamentarians<sup>70</sup>. Country Party member for South Coast, Russ Hinze, claimed that Brisbane had 'not had democratic government for at least 10 years' and 'Clem Jones runs it like the Kremlin'. The Government used its numbers to "gag" debate and the Bill was passed at its first reading. At the Bill's second reading, McKechnie said that Brisbane's councilors were 'not aldermen in the true sense but professional politicians' and under the new legislation the Lord Mayor would 'be answerable to elected representatives' for the first time<sup>71</sup>. The newspapers noted that the ALP team would be 'likely to win' the next council election despite the reduction in the number of wards, and this prediction was proved to be correct<sup>72</sup>.

In February houses in the Brisbane suburb of Windsor were flooded for the second time in five years<sup>73</sup>. Apparently a storm surge caused by a cyclone combined with a high tide caused the street to flood, and major work was needed to alleviate the problem<sup>74</sup>. In March the Department of Harbours and Marine announced that under the terms of the City of Brisbane Flood Mitigation Act 1952, the State government had no responsibility for flooding in Breakfast Creek<sup>75</sup>. A second flood in April forced residents and businesses to evacuate their homes and shops, and the Courier-Mail called on State and council authorities to 'stop passing the buck'<sup>76</sup>.

State Cabinet discussed flooding in Brisbane creeks on 21st March, 24th April and 13th November, and decided to establish a committee to investigate Breakfast Creek flooding. The engagement of engineering consultants to assess the situation was also endorsed<sup>77</sup>. The decision by Cabinet to engage consulting engineers was announced on 25th April, with Treasurer Chalk announcing that this was 'the first positive step ever taken to overcome the flooding of lower areas of Brisbane'<sup>78</sup>.

Brisbane's Lord Mayor criticised the State Government, saying there was no need for further studies as 'volumes of information' already existed on Brisbane flooding<sup>79</sup>. In reply, Chalk said the council had 'never approached the State Government' for any assistance to reduce flooding<sup>80</sup>. The Premier also criticised the City Council, saying it had been invited to provide information to the committee but to date

had not done so<sup>81</sup>. Lord Mayor Jones said that the Premier's claim was 'not true' and flooding had been discussed for 'many years'<sup>82</sup>.

Chalk accused the ALP of making Brisbane's flooding 'a political football' and continued his criticism of the council, claiming that 'the Labor city council for 12 years had done nothing to help the people in flood affected areas'<sup>83</sup>. He also claimed that the council had made the problem worse by allowing industries to 'fill floodplain areas above flood level' and permitting residential development on creek catchments<sup>84</sup>. Many homes and roads were flooded again on 9th November when a 'tropic-style downpour' drenched Southeast Queensland<sup>85</sup>.

On 13th November, Cabinet agreed on the composition of the Brisbane flooding study committee and approved mitigation work at Enoggera, Ithaca and Breakfast Creeks, and Kedron Brook. Chalk called for a complete review of Council legislation relating to development in flood-prone areas, claiming that this was 'probably the only way that the Council can be brought to a position of full responsibility'<sup>86</sup>. Cabinet decided that mitigation work 'should be limited to the worst affected areas' and there was agreement that the overall cost of the scheme should be restricted to \$12 million rather than \$20 million as originally proposed. Furthermore, Cabinet determined that the Brisbane City Council was partly responsible for the current situation because it allowed development to continue in flood-prone areas<sup>87</sup>. Cabinet approval for the scheme was announced on 21st November<sup>88</sup>.

The State Government had announced in 1971 that approval had been given for the construction of a new dam on the Brisbane River at Wivenhoe, which was designed to reduce flooding and provide Brisbane with adequate water reserves. A feasibility study to examine a pumped storage hydroelectric scheme at Wivenhoe Dam was approved by Cabinet on 6th June, and further construction of the dam project was approved to proceed on 21st August<sup>89</sup>. The Premier announced that Cabinet would consider compensation for farmers affected by the dam's construction<sup>90</sup>. Completion of the dam was expected in 1981, and the hydroelectric station would be used to provide power during peak load periods<sup>91</sup>.

In 1972 the Captain Cook Bridge and the first stage of the Southeast Freeway were opened to traffic. Cabinet also considered a number of other projects designed to alleviate traffic congestion in Brisbane and surrounding areas. Approval was given on 18th January for the Main Roads Department to start construction of the Central and Northern Freeways from Fortitude Valley to Kedron, with a proposed connection to the Southeast Freeway by a new bridge at New Farm<sup>92</sup>. Main Roads Minister Ron Camm publicly announced on the previous day that the new bridge would be built on the site of the New Farm powerhouse, which he said 'was obsolete, and not needed in the fast-developing Southeast Queensland electricity generating system'<sup>93</sup>. The Premier announced in February that Brisbane's freeway system would be 'the most advanced of any Australian capital'<sup>94</sup>.

On 6th June Cabinet approved the construction of a Freeway from Spring Hill to Ashgrove, and a future connection to Turbot Street and the Riverside Expressway was also noted<sup>95</sup>. Details of the proposed freeway routes and planned resumptions were announced on 15th June and officials noted that the Wilbur Smith plan had been modified to allow freeways to make greater use of government land<sup>96</sup>.

The submission noted that the alteration of route meant that more elderly people, who could not afford to relocate, would be affected<sup>97</sup>. Cabinet approved assistance, in principle, for those displaced by the Freeway projects on 18th December. Cabinet noted that the Main Roads Department had selected a new route, not that shown in the Wilbur Smith study of Brisbane Transportation Planning of 1965, because the new path reduced the number of private properties needing to be bought. Minister for Main Roads Camm said it 'upset him' to know that elderly people were going to be disturbed but added 'this is a world-wide problem, and like other Governments, we have been unable to find a practical solution so far'<sup>98</sup>.

Work on the freeways was suspended after the incoming Federal Labor government ordered in December 1972 that funding should be directed at public transport instead<sup>99</sup>.



## Issues - Censorship

In 1972 Queenslanders of a more traditional inclination deplored the 'decline' in moral standards amongst young people, and argued for greater censorship of films, literature and schoolbooks. The public debate over censorship filled newspapers and talkback radio, and the Education Minister (Alan Fletcher) announced that sex education courses would not be introduced in Queensland schools, claiming that he had received 'hundreds of letters' opposing sex education<sup>100</sup>. Queensland's Literature Review Board, set up in 1954, said in its 1971 Annual Report that obscenity was 'becoming difficult to define'.

In April the Board banned *The Little Red School Book* in Queensland (which the Federal Cabinet had allowed to be imported), but refused to give any reason for the banning<sup>101</sup>. The *Courier-Mail* pointed out that the other states held different attitudes on this issue and warned that Queensland risked 'becoming a national joke' as a result of the lack of nationally agreed censorship standards<sup>102</sup>. Queensland did not send a representative to an interstate conference on censorship in May because of 'the lateness of advice and the pending State election'<sup>103</sup>.

Education Minister Fletcher said it was 'significant' that there were connections between *The Little Red School Book* and the Communist Party, while the Premier announced that Cabinet had decided to ask anyone seeing copies of the book being distributed to school children to 'dial the police emergency number 000'<sup>104</sup>. One state politician called for the Government to 'deal with the noisy, filthy, scruffy, sex-perversed minority' at Queensland University, and police raided the Student Union building to seize copies of a student newspaper after a single complaint about one "obscene" article had been made<sup>105</sup>. Police also bought a copy of *The Beautiful Losers* by Leonard Cohen from a city bookseller and 'photographed other copies of the banned book' in the shop: the book would 'be read by police' before they submitted a report to the Assistant Commissioner<sup>106</sup>.

## Issues - Coalmines

In 1968 the Queensland parliament passed the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act, which gave the Utah mining company and the Mitsubishi Development Company the right to develop four new export coalmines at Blackwater, Goonyella, Saraji and Norwich Park<sup>107</sup>. Under Bjelke-Petersen's leadership, Queensland funded infrastructure development and claimed a low royalty rate in return for profitable rail freight charges<sup>108</sup>. This approach was endorsed by an editorial in the Courier-Mail, which acknowledged that mineral royalties were low but the earnings from rail freights 'should be immense'<sup>109</sup>. Under an agreement with the Utah Development Company for the export of about \$800 million worth of coal, Queensland would receive 5c per ton royalties until 2010<sup>110</sup>.

Accordingly, Cabinet discussed the development of townships at Blackwater, Moranbah and Dysart for the new coalmines in Central Queensland on 23rd May, 6th June and 18th December. On 25th July the augmentation of water supplies at the Blackwater and Leichhardt mines was discussed, with the submission noting that only one company was prepared to contribute to the cost at this stage<sup>111</sup>. Mines Minister Hewitt announced the construction of a new water pipeline to allow coal washing at Blackwater on 10th August<sup>112</sup>.

In October there were calls for improved medical services to be provided at Moranbah<sup>113</sup>. Cabinet agreed on 9th October that hospitals in mining towns would be constructed 'up to the standard' of others in Queensland, and it was decided to approach the mining companies for contributions. The submission noted that mining companies had no intention of funding health care services, and there was little that the government could do about the situation<sup>114</sup>. Mines and Main Roads Minister Camm reported to Cabinet on 6th November after coal discussions in Tokyo, and Cabinet endorsed his recommendation that prices of Queensland coal should be raised, in line with recent increases by New South Wales' exporters<sup>115</sup>.

## Issues - Daylight Saving

The introduction of daylight saving was discussed at Cabinet meetings on five separate occasions, with oral submissions by the Premier presented at each. The Cabinet's 'sensible decision' was supported by the media, but the editor of the Courier-Mail warned against Queensland 'going it alone' when other states supported it<sup>116</sup>. The issue was given close attention by newspapers during July and editorials warned that Queensland must not go 'into its own Twilight Zone'<sup>117</sup>. Cabinet decided on 18th July that the Premier should express Queensland's opposition to daylight saving when he attended the Premier's Conference that month<sup>118</sup>. Differences in attitude within Cabinet, particularly between Premier Bjelke-Petersen and Treasurer Chalk, were reported<sup>119</sup>. The Premier attended the interstate conference on 21st July and said:

Queensland was against daylight saving because many people would have to go to work in the dark<sup>120</sup>.

According to the newspapers, Country Party politicians were threatening to 'retaliate' if any Liberal Party members of the Coalition voted in support of daylight saving<sup>121</sup>. A proposed referendum on the subject was discussed at meetings on 31st July and 7th August<sup>122</sup>. Cabinet approval, in principle, for a daylight saving referendum was announced on 1st August; the papers reported that discussion in Cabinet on the matter lasted two hours and quoted the Premier as having said that if daylight saving was introduced, 'members of the public would have to get up one hour earlier for almost half their lives'<sup>123</sup>. One week later the government announced that a referendum would not be held<sup>124</sup>.

## Issues - Electricity

Cabinet discussed the State's increasing electrical needs and power station plans in February<sup>125</sup>. In March the government announced that tenders would be called for the supply of coal to Queensland's next major power station, with construction to be completed by 1978<sup>126</sup>.

A fortnight later the newly appointed State Electricity Commissioner announced that Queenslanders were 'likely to face higher power bills by the end of the year' as a result of 'escalating labor and production costs'<sup>127</sup>. Cabinet approved a 30% increase in electricity charges in June, and a 4% rise in the cost of electricity was publicly revealed in July, with further increases forecast in November<sup>128</sup>. The government's intention of establishing a single statewide generating body to replace existing regional authorities was also foreshadowed in 1972, and there was discussion on the proposed reorganisation of the electricity supply industry at a Cabinet meeting in August<sup>129</sup>. On the same day, the construction of a uranium enrichment plant - which would require ample and guaranteed supplies of electricity - had also been considered<sup>130</sup>.

## Issues - Environment

Submissions relating to environmental issues, laws and other matters were discussed throughout the year. In particular, the proposed Commonwealth Bill on The Law of the Sea, involving issues of offshore mineral rights, control of territorial waters and internal waters of the State was considered. The Federal Government announced in March that legislation which aimed at defining Commonwealth and State jurisdiction over coastal waters and offshore resources had been deferred so that consultation with the States could proceed<sup>131</sup>. State Cabinet decided on 25th September to 'affirm its opposition to the proposed Commonwealth Territorial Seas and Continental Shelf Bill'. Cabinet noted that the Commonwealth had advised there was a chance that the Bill might be debated soon, which was 'against the will of the Government'<sup>132</sup>. Minister for Mines and Main Roads Camm recommended that Queensland should consider the problems raised by the proposed Bill, and express opposition to it. Cabinet agreed.

A clause in the Clean Waters Act 1971 that allowed members of the public to inspect registers of licences was discussed on 16th October. The submission noted that the Water Quality Council wanted the clause retained, but McKechnie (the Minister for Local Government and Electricity) expressed concern that 'an ardent conservationist' might use the register to 'harass a Local Authority or an industry or the Water Quality Council'<sup>133</sup>. Cabinet agreed with his recommendation that the Water Quality Council would serve the public interest and approved the deletion of the clause.



## Issues - Gladstone Smelter

Major industrial development at the Central Queensland port of Gladstone commenced in the early 1960's, and the government decided to construct the State's biggest power station close to the Comalco alumina refinery. Cabinet agreed on 22nd February to send an engineer to Japan for the purpose of inspecting the Fuji industrial works where the turbines for the Gladstone power station were to be built<sup>134</sup>. The new station was expected to be in operation by 1975. The Siemens Corporation of Germany had been awarded the contract worth \$19.2 million but was unable to undertake the job due to heavy orders. By 1972, the Comalco mine at Weipa was claimed to be the biggest single bauxite mining operation in the world<sup>135</sup>.

On 23rd May Cabinet approved, in principle, the augmentation of Gladstone's water supply and improvements to the railway facilities at the Gladstone power station<sup>136</sup>. Total cost of the new dam and water supply works was expected to be \$15 million, and another \$1 million was required for the railway expansion. Cabinet approved the Agreement with Comalco for power supply to the smelter on 6th June, with the submission noting that cost and tariff details were 'strictly confidential'<sup>137</sup>. The Agreement was, as Cabinet noted, a 'lengthy and complicated document'. In October Comalco shut down the alumina refinery project, claiming 'too many strikes' as the reason: the Premier described the strike action as 'industrial lawlessness'<sup>138</sup>. The entire workforce of 1,200 men was dismissed and work did not recommence until one month later.

## Issues - Greenvale Nickel Mine and Yabulu Treatment Plant

In 1972 work began on the Greenvale nickel mine near Charters Towers<sup>139</sup>. Mining was to commence in 1973, and was expected to be in full operation by 1974, with ore to be carried by rail to a new nickel refinery at Yabulu north of Townsville<sup>140</sup>. Industrial action at the Yabulu site led to the sacking of over 200 workers in October<sup>141</sup>. After a stoppage of one month, work recommenced in November<sup>142</sup>. On 15th February, Cabinet gave approval for the Yabulu nickel refinery to exceed sulfur content emission regulations until 1979 and noted that the company had expressed 'deep concern' about the requirements<sup>143</sup>. Cabinet confirmed this decision on 4th July, when it discussed Queensland Nickel's request for an exemption: the company claimed that low-sulfur fuel would increase their costs<sup>144</sup>. Sulphur dioxide, a byproduct of nickel smelters, was already known to have caused massive environmental problems at Mt Isa and in Tasmania<sup>145</sup>.

In August there were calls for the government to explain why it overruled a decision by the Air Pollution Council and allowed the refinery to exceed newly introduced sulfur content requirements<sup>146</sup>. The Treasurer announced that Cabinet had 'considered all factors' and claimed the decision was 'reasonable'<sup>147</sup>. The decision, and Chalk's explanation, was attacked by the Courier-Mail, which said the government had failed to insist on effective liaison with the mining company in its haste to attract new industry<sup>148</sup>. Wastes from the refinery, and its impact on local marine organisms were discussed on 18th September; the submission noted that the only similar plant was in Cuba, and Cabinet agreed to have the wastes studied by the Water Quality Council<sup>149</sup>. An advisory committee, appointed by the Federal Government to consider the effect of processing-plant effluents on the new Australian Institute of Marine Science, was announced in November<sup>150</sup>.

Cabinet approved an oral submission by Treasurer Chalk granting land title to Queensland Nickel for treatment works at Saunders Beach on 6th June<sup>151</sup>. Harbour and channel works at Townsville worth \$2.7 million were approved on 25th July after Queensland Nickel requested an upgrade of port facilities<sup>152</sup>. Seven million gallons of water per day had already been approved for Greenvale mining companies Metals Exploration and Freeport (with another five million gallons per day at the refinery site) when Cabinet considered the companies' request for more water on 18th September<sup>153</sup>. Cabinet decided to seek advice from the Crown Law Office as to whether a Cabinet decision was sufficient authority. On 2nd October Cabinet agreed to issue licences for Queensland Nickel to draw seven million gallons per day from Black River, and authorised investigation of further supplies from Bluewater Creek<sup>154</sup>.

## Issues - Uranium Enrichment Plant

In January 1972 the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced that 'chances' for the construction of a joint Australian-Japanese uranium enrichment plant had 'improved'<sup>155</sup>. On 22nd February Cabinet gave approval for a joint committee to be established with the Commonwealth Government to develop the uranium industry in Australia. Cabinet noted the Prime Minister's request for 'no publicity' and discussed the requirements of a uranium enrichment plant in Queensland. Ministers noted that the plant's establishment would mean doubling the existing capacity of electricity generating stations in Queensland, and guaranteed supplies of water and fuel for 25 years<sup>156</sup>.

There was further discussion of the proposal on 21st March, with Cabinet noting the preference for a gaseous diffusion method and the need to seek French technical advice<sup>157</sup>. The Federal Minister for National Development announced in June that Australia's uranium industry would 'produce an income as large as that of the wool industry' and said that he hoped to see Australian production increased after 1977<sup>158</sup>. Cabinet agreed on 14th August to send the report on the establishment of a uranium enrichment plant to the Australian Atomic Energy Commission<sup>159</sup>.

The Federal Government announced in October that it was prepared to 'do what it could to help' Australian businesses to enter the uranium enrichment industry<sup>160</sup>. On 18th December, Cabinet gave approval for the Atomic Energy Commission to release a statement concerning the 'generated energy cost of the uranium enrichment plant'<sup>161</sup>. The Premier advised the Cabinet that the preferred site was Broadmount near Rockhampton using water from the Fitzroy River, and it would be 'the biggest project ever undertaken in Queensland'.

## Endnotes

1. Sol Encel (1974) *Cabinet Government in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp4-5
2. Four issues highlighted in an Australian Conservation Foundation advertisement before the Queensland election in May 1972 were Coolooloa, the Great Barrier Reef, kangaroos and rainforests; *Courier-Mail*, 17 May 1972, p8
3. A newspaper editorial claimed that the current government was 'the state's first conservation-minded Government, although that is not saying much'; *Courier Mail*, 28th January 1972, p2
4. *Courier Mail*, 6th July 1969; see also Evan Whitton (1989) *The Hillbilly Dictator*, Sydney, ABC, pp12-14 & pp18-21
5. The retiring State Electricity Commissioner said the State could look forward to 'the economy of nuclear generation' for electricity supplies (*Courier Mail*, 11th January 1972, p6). The new Commissioner said in March that 'the use of nuclear power in Queensland was not contemplated until the mid 1980's'; *Courier-Mail*, 14th March 1972, p1
6. For details, see Rae Wear (2002) *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: The Lord's Premier*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, p133
7. Quoted in Wear (2002) *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: The Lord's Premier*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, p138
8. *Courier-Mail*, 14 April 1972, p14
9. *Courier-Mail*, 16 May 1972, p1
10. *Courier-Mail*, 17 May 1972, p9
11. *Courier-Mail*, 8 July 1972, p5
12. *Courier-Mail*, 24 May 1972, p22
13. Decision 16965 & Decision 17195; Submission 15102 & Submission 15312 (2 May 1972 & 27 June 1972)
14. *Courier-Mail*, 8 March 1972, p3
15. *Courier-Mail*, 31 May 1972, p3; 1 June 1972, p3; 2 June 1973, p3; and 8 June 1972, p3
16. *Courier-Mail*, 22 September 1972, p5
17. Liberal member Don Lane, quoted in Rae Wear (2002) *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: The Lord's Premier*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, p135
18. *Courier Mail*, 26th January 1972, p7
19. *Courier-Mail*, 19 April 1972, p14 & 27 April 1972, p8
20. *Courier-Mail*, 8 May 1972, p11
21. *Courier Mail*, 10th January 1972, p1
22. *Courier Mail*, 12th February 1972, p1 and 14th February 1972, p1
23. *Courier Mail*, 28th February 1972, p9
24. Decision 16886; Submission 15034 (4 April 1972)
25. FW Sayer (1973) *Queensland Year Book 1973*, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Brisbane
26. *Courier Mail*, 24th January 1972, p10
27. "Queensland '72" Feature, p 6 in *Courier Mail*, 1st February 1972
28. Decision 17803; Submission 15857 (30 October 1972)
29. *Courier Mail*, 27th January 1972, p2
30. Decision 17541; Submission 15612 (4 September 1972)
31. Decision 17541; Submission 15612 (4 September 1972)
32. Decision 17541; Submission 15612 (4 September 1972)
33. Decision 17000; Submission 15137 (9 May 1972)
34. Decision 17921; Submission (27 November 1972)
35. *Courier-Mail*, 2 December 1972, p1

36. Decision 17921, Submission 15964 (27 November 1972)
37. Decision 17921, Submission (27 November 1972)
38. Decision 17684; Submission 15745 (2 October 1972)
39. Decision 17684; Submission 15745 (2 October 1972)
40. Decision 18030; Submission 16062 (18 December 1972)
41. Courier-Mail, 21 January 1972, p2; and 25 January 1972, p2
42. Courier-Mail, 9 February 1972, p1
43. Courier Mail, 6th January 1972, p3
44. Courier Mail, 18th January 1972, p10
45. Courier Mail, 19th January 1972, p3
46. Courier Mail, 20th January 1972, p7
47. Courier Mail, 22nd January 1972, p5
48. Courier Mail, 25th January 1972, p3; Decision 16675; Submission 14844 (25 January 1972)
49. Courier Mail, 9th February 1972, p1; and 10 February 1972, p1
50. Courier-Mail, 15 February 1972, p3
51. Courier-Mail, 16 February 1972, p8
52. Decision 16891; Submission 15039 (4 April 1972)
53. Courier-Mail, 5 April 1972, p11
54. Courier-Mail, 22 April 1972, p5
55. Decision 17178; Submission 15299 (20 June 1972)
56. Courier-Mail, 30 June 1972, p7
57. Decision 17698; Submission 15759 (2 October 1972)
58. Courier-Mail, 3 October 1972, p1
59. Courier-Mail, 2 December 1972, p5
60. Decision 16803; Submission 14959 (13 March 1972)
61. Decision 17241; Submission 15355 (4 July 1972)
62. Decision 17287; Submission 15397 (11 July 1972)
63. Courier-Mail, 18 July 1972, p1
64. Courier-Mail, 19 July 1972, p3
65. Courier-Mail, 2 August 1972, p4
66. Decision 17442; Submission 15526 (7 August 1972)
67. Courier-Mail, 9 August 1972, p2; and 10 August 1972, p1
68. Courier-Mail, 10 August 1972, p4
69. Courier-Mail, 22 August 1972, p3
70. Courier-Mail, 1 September 1972, p3
71. Courier-Mail, 6 September 1972, p3
72. Courier-Mail, 1 November 1972, p1
73. Courier Mail, 14th February 1972, p3 and 15th February 1972, p3
74. Courier-Mail, 14 February 1972, p3
75. Courier-Mail, 14th March 1972, p5
76. Courier-Mail, 4 April 1972, p2
77. Decision 16635 & Decision 16960; Submission 14805 & Submission 15099 (18 January 1972 & 24 April 1972)
78. Courier-Mail, 25 April 1972, p3
79. Courier-Mail, 26 April 1972, p15
80. Courier-Mail, 27 April 1972, p6
81. Courier-Mail, 1 June 1972, p23



82. Courier-Mail, 23 June 1972, p9
83. Courier-Mail, 2 November 1972, p11
84. Courier-Mail, 3 November 1972, p1
85. Courier-Mail, 10 November 1972, p1
86. Decision 17854; Submission 15903 (13 November 1972)
87. Decision 17854; Submission 15903 (13 November 1972)
88. Courier-Mail, 21 November 1972, p2
89. Decision 17100 & Decision 17523; Submissions 15229 & 15596 (6 June 1972 & 21 August 1972)
90. Courier-Mail, 24 August 1972, p13
91. Courier-Mail, 20 June 1972, p8
92. Decision 16635; Submission 14805 (18 January 1972)
93. Courier Mail, 18th January 1972, p1
94. Courier Mail, 17th February 1972, p6
95. Decision 17092; Submission 15221 (6 June 1972)
96. Courier-Mail, 15 June 1972, p3
97. Decision 18014; Submission 16046 (18 December 1972)
98. Courier-Mail, 26 June 1972, p8
99. Courier-Mail, 12 December 1972, p1
100. Courier-Mail, 27 January 1972, p16
101. Courier-Mail, 15 April 1972, p1
102. Courier-Mail, 17 April 1972, p2
103. Decision 17701; Submission 15762 (2 October 1972)
104. Courier-Mail, 7 June 1972, p9
105. Courier-Mail, 21 September 1972, p15; and 27 October 1972, p3
106. Courier-Mail, 30 November 1972, p28
107. See Brian Galligan (1989) *Utah and Queensland Coal*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane
108. Parliament was informed in 1973 that 'lucrative bulk haulages' had been a 'major factor' in the Railway's profits; see Annual Report of the Railway Commissioner for 1972, p1
109. Courier-Mail, 3 June 1972, p2
110. Courier-Mail, 3 June 1972, p7
111. Decision 17355; Submission 15451 (25 July 1972)
112. Courier-Mail, 11 August 1972, p23
113. Courier-Mail, 3 October 1972, p10
114. Decision 17731; Submission 15791 (9 October 1972)
115. Decision 17839; Submission 15890 (6 November 1972)
116. Courier Mail, 9th February 1972, p2 & p13; and 25th February 1972, p2
117. Courier-Mail, 14 July 1972, p2; and 26 July 1972, p2
118. Decision 17332; Oral submission (18 July 1972)
119. Courier-Mail, 19 July 1972, p6
120. Courier-Mail, 22 July 1972, p1
121. Courier-Mail, 28 July 1972, p3
122. Decision 17417 & Decision 17460; Oral submissions (31 July 1972 & 7 August 1972)
123. Courier-Mail, 1 August 1972, p1
124. Courier-Mail, 10 August 1972, p1
125. Decision 16767; Submission 14923 (29 February 1972)
126. Courier-Mail, 2 March 1972, p7
127. Courier-Mail, 14 March 1972, p1

128. Decision 17159; Submission 15280 (20 June 1972); Courier-Mail, 1 July 1972, p1: and 10 November 1972, p10
129. Decision 17476; Submission 15552 (14 August 1972)
130. Decision 17474; Submission 15550 (14 August 1972)
131. Courier-Mail, 30 March 1972, p1
132. Decision 17637; Submission 15703 (25 September 1972)
133. Decision 17757; Submission 15816 (16 October 1972)
134. Decision 16755; Submission 14913 (22 February 1972)
135. Courier-Mail, 24 March 1972, p3
136. Decision 17040 & Decision 17041; Submission 15170 & Submission 15171 (23 May 1972)
137. Decision 17107; Submission 15236 (6 June 1972)
138. Courier-Mail, 19 October 1972, p1
139. Industrial Development Minister Campbell in "Big stimulus to Townsville area" in "Queensland '72" feature p11, Courier Mail, 1st February 1972
140. Courier Mail, 14th January 1972, p1
141. Courier-Mail, 28 October 1972, p3
142. Courier-Mail, 25 November 1972, p13
143. Decision 16723; Submission 14883 (15 February 1972)
144. Decision 17252; Submission 15366 (4 July 1972)
145. Courier Mail, 13th January 1972, p2
146. Courier-Mail, 31 August 1972, p3
147. Courier-Mail, 31 August 1972, p3
148. Courier-Mail, 1 September 1972, p4
149. Decision 17620; Submission 15690 (18 September 1972)
150. Courier-Mail, 15 November 1972, p18
151. Decision 17112; Oral Submission (6 June 1972)
152. Decision 17374; Submission 15470 (25 July 1972)
153. Decision 17613; Submission 15683 (18 September 1972)
154. Decision 17699; Submission 15760 (2 October 1972)
155. Courier Mail, 22nd January 1972, p1
156. Decision 16750; Submission 14908 (22 February 1972)
157. Decision 16827; Submission 14983 (21 March 1972)
158. Courier-Mail, 7 June 1972, p3
159. Decision 17474; Submission 15550 (14 August 1972)
160. Courier-Mail, 16 October 1972, p7
161. Decision 18034; Submission 16066 (18 December 1972)