

Annual Release of Cabinet Minutes
Selected highlights of 1976 Cabinet Minutes
by Dr David Solomon AM

These appear to be the most important/relevant decisions taken by the Queensland Cabinet during 1976, taking into account both the circumstances of the time, and the advantages of historical hindsight now extending over 30 years.

It should be noted that often Cabinet will have assessed the merits of a particular decision on the basis of material that is not included in the submission before it: the relevant background might be political (in a partisan way) and/or the circumstances may be very familiar to ministers, and not need to be spelt out. In some instances the most important political developments during the year may not be the subject of a Cabinet decision or discussion of any kind. For example, during 1976 the long-serving respected Liberal leader, Deputy Premier and Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk, decided to retire. There is no reference to this in the Cabinet record, other than a change in the names of those entitled to receive Cabinet material. Nor is there any reference to the decision of the Premier to carry out a minor reshuffle, displacing the then Minister for Police. Nor to differences within the Coalition over the allocation of portfolios that followed the election of the new Liberal Leader. There is a reference to three by-elections, but only to record the dates on which they would be held. Those interested would have to go elsewhere to discover the results of the by-elections, or, for example, the fact that the National Party endorsed a candidate in the electorate of Clayfield against Liberal and Labor candidates.

Some of the decisions that have been selected for noting are arranged by subject matter, not chronologically. The first group deal with issues affecting the Queensland Police, the second with federal issues and the third with issues affecting Coalition relations or the Party Room, the fourth with strikes and industrial relations and a fifth with a few transport issues. Finally there is a miscellany of other interesting issues and problems the Cabinet had to face during the year.

Generally only the relevant Cabinet decision(s) are noted for each matter listed below. If there was a relevant written submission, it will be located in the microfiche records immediately following the decision. In some cases submissions have been noted where Cabinet has merely noted the submission or where the submission was formally withdrawn.

Police issues

[The essential background for understanding the significance of these five decisions is provided by the 1989 report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the report of the Commission of Inquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council (particularly, pages 35-48). Media reports, particularly in the Courier-Mail, detail many of the events and the conflict between Police Commissioner Ray Whitrod and the Police Union, in which Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen more often than not sided with the Union.]

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- The appointment of Terry Lewis as Police Commissioner. The records of Cabinet do **not** include this decision, which was reported in the media as having occurred on 22 November. The appointment was taken to Executive Council by the Minister for Police and approved as decision No. 4459, 22 November. An article by Phil Dickie written in 2001 records that the Fitzgerald Inquiry searched for the relevant Cabinet decision but could not locate it. The promotion of Lewis followed Ray Whitrod's unexpected decision to resign as Police Commissioner on 15 November.
- The approval of a police promotions list, including that of Lewis from Inspector to Assistant Commissioner – Decision No. 25453, 15 November. Lewis was an inspector at Charleville. The promotion elevated him over about 100 more senior police officers. Whitrod had recommended another officer to be appointed assistant commissioner (with two others in reserve). However the Cabinet submission by the Police Minister says Whitrod had recommended the entire list of promotions, including Lewis. It was this decision by Cabinet – and the Premier's refusal to discuss it – that prompted Whitrod's resignation. (For a contemporaneous account, see the Courier-Mail, 16 November, p. 1. See also the transcript of an interview given by Whitrod in October 2000 www.australianbiography.gov.au/whitrod - tape 10)
- Judicial inquiry into the enforcement of the criminal law – Decision No. 25447, 15 November. On 5 November 1976, after a trial that lasted 126 days, a jury found three men not guilty of official corruption charges. One was a serving policeman, the second the person who had allegedly been involved in trying to bribe him and the third a policeman who had retired. That last man, Jack Reginald Herbert, was later to admit (to the Fitzgerald Inquiry) to his guilt for this and many similar crimes, and to implicate Sir Terry Lewis as an active member of the 'Joke'. Three days after the acquittal of Herbert and his co-accused, Whitrod made a submission to his Minister and to Cabinet concerning other police who were facing similar charges. (Submission 22682). He suggested the Minister (Newbery) should make immediate arrangements for New Scotland Yard detectives to return to continue their investigations and that any judicial investigation into police actions be deferred. The submission, although listed for Cabinet, was withdrawn. On 15 November the Cabinet, following an oral submission by the Premier and Minister for Justice, decided to establish an inquiry into 'the enforcement of the criminal law'. This was instead of an inquiry promised by the Premier the previous year into police corruption, an inquiry that had been deferred pending the conclusion of the Herbert trial. (Decision 25447) A Police Union proposal for a management survey of Police Force was rejected by Cabinet - Decision No. 24779, 6 July.

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- Integration of the Police Arts and Science Course into the Police Qualifying Examinations system. Submission Nos. 21198, 21248 and 21297. Decision Nos. 23710 and 23792, 13 and 27 January. At the beginning of the year the Minister for Police put forward a proposal to support the Police Commissioner's intention to set as a precondition for promotion success in the Police Arts and Sciences Course. (Submission 21198). This was strongly opposed by the Police Union and then by the Premier. The Minister subsequently rewrote his submission to take account of the Premier's position, and in effect wrote the Arts and Science Course out of the promotion system above the rank of senior constable. This was adopted by Cabinet. The Fitzgerald report (p. 42) refers to this.
- Police inquiry into a complaint arising from university students' demonstration, 29 July. Decision No. 24974, 3 August. The decision, made following oral submissions by the Premier and Police Minister, reads: 'That there should be no Police Departmental Inquiry regarding the complaint lodged by the President of the Queensland University Students Union concerning certain actions by the Police during the illegal march through City Streets by University students on Thursday 29th July, 1976.' The main complaint was that a Police Inspector had hit a girl on the head with his baton. Immediately following the student complaints the Premier was reported as saying that Cabinet, not the Police Commissioner, would decide whether there would be an inquiry. The Police Commissioner said the inquiry would be entirely routine. The Courier-Mail reported (4 August) that in the Cabinet meeting the Police Minister (Hodges) opposed the Premier's decision to prevent the Commissioner inquiring into the allegations.

Federal issues

- PNG border - Decision 24170, 22 March, Submission No. 21700, 9 April; Submission No. 21754, 23 April; Decision No. 24611, 8 June; Decision No. 24292, 15 June. Decision No. 24357, 8 June; Decision No. 24655, 15 June. For some years there had been discussions between Papua New Guinea, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments about proposals to move the Torres Strait border and/or to establish joint control over some of the Torres Strait Islands, several of which were only a few miles from the PNG mainland. Queensland maintained there should be no change because the Islands (and their inhabitants) were part of Queensland. Federal Governments (Labor and then Liberal) were inclined to cede some control. According to a report from Port Moresby, the Fraser Government and PNG Ministers finally decided the inhabited islands would remain part of Australia, though the seabed boundary would move. (Sunday Mail, 6 June).

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- Federal proposals for a State income tax; and federal economic issues - Submission No. 21364, 10 February; Submission No. 22015, 15 June. The newly elected federal government headed by Malcolm Fraser, facing a 14 per cent inflation rate, introduced significant cuts in federal spending, and initially cut 17,000 public service jobs. These decisions impacted on all States and Cabinet was warned Departments must control expenditures. The new federalism promoted by Fraser envisaged the States being able to raise their own income tax as part of the federal tax. This was rejected by all the States.
- Medibank changes - Decision No. 23929, 17 February; Submission No. 21737, 23 April; Decision No. 24698, 22 June Decision No. 25275, 11 October. One of the first actions of the Fraser Government was to review Medibank. It proposed in its first Budget to impose a Medibank levy of 2.5 per cent, which was strongly opposed by the Premier as an attack on Queensland's free hospital system. (Courier-Mail, 25 May). Queensland eventually agreed to changes in the Medibank arrangements that had been negotiated with the Labor Government the previous year. As a result, daily charges in intermediate and private wards in public hospitals doubled to \$40 and \$60 a day, the charges that had applied before the introduction of Medibank in 1975.
- Council of States, Constitutional Commission, Council for Intergovernmental Relations - Decision No. 24021, 2 March; Decision No. 24105, 15 March. The Government was concerned to maintain contact with the other states to resist attacks by Canberra on the federal system. Cabinet was informed (submission 21210) of the results of a meeting of most states as the 'Council of States' set up the previous year, and responded with caution to Fraser's proposal to establish a Council for Intergovernmental relations. It agreed to attend the resumption of the Australian Constitutional Convention, having boycotted the meeting held in Melbourne the previous year.
- Fraser Island - results of federal inquiry and state reaction - Decision No. 25634, 13 December. In October the Commonwealth was given a report recommending that mining should stop on Fraser Island (Courier-Mail, 26 October) Its recommendations were accepted by Fraser but resisted by Bjelke-Petersen. (Courier-Mail, 11 November) In December Cabinet agreed, following an oral submission by the Premier, to establish a working party of three Ministers to investigate what action Queensland could take and then report back to Cabinet.

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- National Corporations and Securities law proposed by the Commonwealth - Decision No. 25148, 13 September; Decision No. 25225, 4 October; Decision No. 25421, 8 November; Decision No. 25494 22 November. In July John Howard, Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, announced that the federal government intended to pass a comprehensive Corporations and Securities Act and establish a National Corporations and Securities Commission, based on existing state legislation, but to replace that legislation. The states would be asked to pass laws giving their powers to the Commonwealth. Cabinet was told early in November that Howard had said on a number of occasions the government was committed to participating in this area and that the Commonwealth's constitutional power was probably quite extensive. The Cabinet was reluctant to agree and wanted to know why the existing system could not be expanded as a means of achieving federal/state co-operation.
- Commonwealth proposals for environmental impact statements - Decision No. 25414, 8 November. In October the Prime Minister wrote to the State Premiers affirming that the Commonwealth intended to maintain its interest in environmental protection and give effect to the legislation passed by the Whitlam Government in 1974, the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. He proposed to develop arrangements with the States for co-operation in assessing environmental impact. The Cabinet decided it would participate in talks with the Commonwealth, but made it clear it considered environmental matters to be the concern of the States and that it did not agree with a number of the guidelines the Prime Minister had proposed.
- Attempts by Federal Government to acquire land leases to be provided to Aboriginals – Decision No. 24543, 1 June; and 24589, 8 June. Queensland was approached by the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Land Fund Commission to purchase the Archer River Pastoral Holding (about 450 square miles) for the Aboriginal community at Aurukun. The Minister told Cabinet this Commission was established and funded by the Whitlam Government. The Minister said he was hopeful of a more 'co-operative and decentralist attitude' following the removal of the Whitlam Government but it seemed the old policies ('racial isolation or the quasi apartheid policy') were to continue. Cabinet adopted the Minister's recommendation that it reaffirm a policy it first adopted in 1972 concerning Aboriginal reserves, and determined that 'sufficient land in Queensland is already reserved and available for the use and benefit of Aboriginals' and that consent to the transfer not be given. The following week the Minister advised Cabinet of legal advice which suggested that in opposing federal schemes concerning Aboriginal land and welfare Queensland was not in a legally unassailable position and 'political rather than legal methods of resisting the Commonwealth may be more appropriate.'

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Coalition/party room issues

- Abolition of death duties, Decision No. 24713, 22 June; Decision No. 25500, 22 November. In June Cabinet agreed that legislation be prepared abolishing death duties from 1 January 1977. This was a landmark decision by Queensland, that was to be followed by every other State. But despite its importance, Cabinet did not have before it a written submission – only an oral submission by the Premier. This policy had been announced by the Premier the previous year, but had been resisted by Liberal Leader and Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk (Courier-Mail, 2 May). The policy was a major issue in the Clayfield by-election, in late May, following which the Liberal Party changed its mind and decided to support the abolition of death duties.
- Withholding of pay increases to teachers who were not union members - Decision No. 25311, 18 October; Decision Number 25353, 25 October; Decision Number 25375, 1 November; Decision Number 25682, 20 December. In 1932 a Labor Government introduced a policy requiring public servants to become members of a registered trade union. The policy was continued when the National Liberal Government took office in 1957. The law allowed award increases to be withheld from non-unionists and it was government policy to withhold increases from teachers who were not union members. In 1976 the Education Department told teachers that non-union members would not be paid award increases. The Joint Government Parties passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of this circular by the Department. The Minister for Education argued that the policy was correct and warned a change could have industrial consequences. Cabinet rejected the Minister's recommendation, instead adopting the proposal of the Joint Government Parties meeting and decided that teachers who were non-union members should be paid increases in future. Later, on the Minister's recommendation, this policy was extended to cover Teacher Aides.
- Strikes – Teachers union. Decision No. 25283, 18 October. The Joint Government Parties resolved to urge the Government to make provision for a professional association of teachers, to cater for teachers who did not wish to belong to the Queensland Teachers Union. The Minister for Education pointed out that an exodus of 'moderate thinkers' from the union could facilitate control of the union 'by the more militant section'. Cabinet resolved to reject the proposal when it was again discussed by the Joint Government Parties.

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- Joint Government Parties proposals for action against trade unions - Decision No. 25449, 15 November; Decision No. 25480, 22 November; Decision No. 25499 and 25502 of 22 and 29 November. The Joint Government Parties established a committee in August to review changes to industrial law. It reported in November, recommending changes that would reduce the protection given by the law to unions, and in particular open the way for unions to be sued in tort for any damage they caused to an employer by striking. The Minister for Labour Relations was strongly opposed to some of the proposals, warning of the effect of 'provocative' and 'repressive' legislation. He nevertheless prepared a Bill that was approved by Cabinet with some modifications. He told Cabinet the Bill went beyond what trade unions may regard as moderate legislation, and that more radical unions would have stop work meetings in protest against it.
- Extended shopping hours – Decision No. 23800, 27 January. Early in January it was reported the Government would consider a proposal by the Premier for late night shopping (Courier-Mail, 10 January, p 2). The Minister for Labour Relations recommended that the issue be left as it was: since 1964 trading hours had been controlled by the Full Bench of the Industrial Commission, acting as an independent trading hours tribunal free from political interference or control. He suggested there would be 'doubtful consumer benefit' from altering the existing system. Cabinet decided that the question of possible extended shopping hours should be referred to a future meeting of the Joint Government Parties. It was later reported (Courier-Mail, 19 March and 25 March) that the National Party caucus could not agree on a means of implementing the proposal.
- General rule about how Ministers should deal with legislation changed by party room - Decision No. 24119, 15 March. Providing more possible evidence that the Joint Government Parties did use their numbers to change decisions of the Cabinet, this decision sets down the rules for Ministers when the party room changes proposals for legislation that cabinet had earlier approved. Ministers were required to make a further Cabinet submission for follow-up action. However when legislation was approved by the party, Ministers had to give notice in the parliament immediately, if the Bill was ready.

Industrial relations

- Deductions for union fees – Decision Number 24103, 15 March. Cabinet was provided by the Premier with a minute from the Public Service Board dealing with requests for the deduction of union fees from fortnightly pays, for railways and hospitals employees. The Board pointed out that requests had earlier been made by other unions and these had all been refused. Nevertheless the Board effectively endorsed the requests, recommending the scheme that might be adopted if Cabinet approved the idea in principle. Cabinet decided the proposal should not be approved.

Transport and traffic

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- Plans for new railways – Submission No. 22776, 29 November. In January it was reported that the Premier had plans to extent the railway system to places such as the Gold Coast, Redland Bay, Redcliffe and the Sunshine Coast (Courier-Mail, 7 January) In May, Russ Hinze was reported as pushing for the reopening of the Gold Coast link closed by Gordon Chalk in the early 1960s. (Courier-Mail, 2 May) However the only Cabinet decision concerning new rail links was taken towards the end of the year when the Cabinet noted a submission by the Minister for Transport concerning the initiation of a feasibility study of a rail link to the Redcliffe Peninsula, and that two-thirds of the study would be paid by the Commonwealth.
- Abolition of ‘P’ plates - Decision No. 24683, 22 June. Learners permits - Decision No. 23898, 10 February; Decision No. 24571, 1 June. Cabinet decided in June to remove the requirement that the holder of a provisional licence had to display a ‘P’ plate. This was opposed by a parliamentary committee but eventually supported by the Joint Government Parties (Courier-Mail, August 21) In February Cabinet decided, on the recommendation of the Minister for Transport, that a learner driver had to hold a permit for at least three consecutive months before being eligible to take a test or be issued with a driver’s licence. In June, following an oral submission by the Minister, that period was reduced to six weeks.

Miscellaneous matters

- State finances - Decision No. 24026, 2 March; Creation of a Priorities Review Committee, Decision No. 24717, 22 June; Decision No. 24766, 29 June; Decision No. 24943, 27 July; Decision No. 25022, 17 August; Submission No. 22830 6 December, on impact of devaluation on Qld. These decisions reflect the reaction of Cabinet to Commonwealth proposals to change the basis of providing grants to the States, and to the economic measures adopted by the Commonwealth to try to reduce inflation and to improve the national economy. Among those measures was the decision in December to devalue the Australian dollar by 17.5 per cent. The Cabinet submission listed the anticipated impact of that decision on Queensland. Cabinet decided in June to establish a Priorities Review Committee - consisting not of ministers but of senior officials - to examine departmental programs and make recommendations through the Premier to Cabinet. Cabinet also decided there should be no overall increase in departmental staff, that air travel should be reduced by 20 per cent and that with just a few exceptions, public servants should travel economy class.

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- Building Society problems - Decision No. 24215, 29 March; Decision No. 24605, 8 June. Cabinet agreed to a series of changes in the law governing the establishment, operation, management and supervision of building societies, following a run on a number of building societies, the temporary suspension of five and then the collapse of two of them, the Great Australian and City Savings Permanent Building societies, with a joint deficiency of \$3.7 million. Cabinet was told the SGIO did not wish to become bankers to the permanent building society industry. The Cabinet decisions also involved the creation of a contingency fund, funded by a compulsory levy on all permanent building societies in Queensland.
- Currumbin bird sanctuary, transfer of ownership to National Trust - Decision No. 24771, 29 June; Decision No. 24964, 3 August; Decision No. 25084, 30 August; Decision No. 25129, 6 September; Decision No. 25200, 27 September; Decision No. 25226, 4 October; 25263, 11 October; Decision No. 25281, 18 October; Decision No. 25340, 25 October. The Cabinet submissions in this matter detail an extraordinary story of the difficulties encountered by the National Trust and by the Government when in June 1975 the founder of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary, Alex Griffiths, decided to transfer ownership of the sanctuary and all its commercial activities to the National Trust. There were legal issues as to the power of the National Trust to accept the properties and also issues over the extent to which the government should monitor and/or control the activities of the Trust, and differences between Cabinet and the Joint Government Parties. These were ultimately resolved in legislation.
- Purchase of Twelfth Night Theatre - Decision No. 24769, 29 June; Decision No. 25189, 27 September; Decision No. 25280, 18 October. These decisions set out the terms and conditions under which the Cabinet was prepared, in conjunction with the Australia Council, to rescue the Twelfth Night Theatre building from resumption by the Bank of Adelaide, which was owed \$325,000 by the group operating the theatre.
- Soccer pools - Decision No. 24165, 22 March; Decision No. 25010, 9 August. These decisions provided for the introduction of soccer pools in Queensland, following their introduction in some southern states. Cabinet was told the distribution of the money 'invested' in the pools would be: prize pool, 37 per cent, state government return, 30 per cent, agents' commission 12.5 per cent, promoting and operating 15.5 per cent, promoter (Australia Soccerpools Pty Ltd) 5 per cent. It was told the turnover in Queensland was estimated at \$5 million, meaning the return to the government would be \$1.5 million. Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk proposed two-thirds of this should go to a sports and youth fund, and one-third into consolidated revenue. Just a few months later he told Cabinet the turnover (and Queensland share) was twice the original estimate.

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- Food maps and flood prone lands – Decision No. 23688 and 23699, 13 January; 24801, 6 July 1976. Decision No. 24801, 6 July. These decisions all relate to the after-effects of the 1974 Brisbane floods and later weather events. In January Cabinet agreed to release to the public maps showing flood-prone land in Brisbane (the release occurred in February). It was also concerned to discover the legal liability of councils in relation to flood-prone land, and their right to deny owners permission to build in areas where subdivisions had been approved prior to the 1974 floods, except in accordance with restrictions determined by councils to ensure a clearance between the floor of any building and the maximum determined flood level.
- Construction of Wivenhoe Dam and associated works - Decision No. 23829, 27 January; Submission No. 21652, 2 April 1976; Decision No. 24270, 12 April. The construction of the Wivenhoe Dam was approved by the Cabinet in August 1972, as was the acquisition of the necessary land. By January 1976 about 40 per cent of the land acquisitions had been completed and the first contracts for the relocation of roads and bridges were expected shortly afterwards. These decisions by Cabinet concerned the delegation of authority to the Co-ordinator General for the construction of a pumped storage hydroelectric installation in connection with the construction of the dam, and the use of the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation as consultants.
- Prostitution and massage parlours – Decision No. 23763, 20 January. In January the Minister for Health presented Cabinet with a submission responding to a request by Cabinet in September 1975 to make recommendations for a scheme to cover the licensing of massage parlours to cover only the massage services offered by them. The Minister said he was advised that there already existed in the Local Government Act the necessary legislative authority and he proposed (and Cabinet agreed) that the matter be referred to the Minister for Local Government. Some months later the Courier-Mail reported that the Police Minister had said massage parlours were fronts for brothels and prostitution should be legalised. The Police Minister called on the Local Government minister to substantiate claims that police were protecting prostitutes.(Courier-Mail, 18 June, p.9)

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- Government's reaction to Brisbane getting the right to host the Commonwealth Games - Decision No. 25073, 30 August. In July the Commonwealth Games Federation officially confirmed that Brisbane had won the right to host the 1982 Commonwealth Games (other possible contenders had withdrawn earlier in the year). The Games bid was managed by the Brisbane City Council – the State Government had watched the bid developing but not taken part in it. The Minister for Sport reported to Cabinet on 30 August on the decision confirming Brisbane's bid and on his visit to the Montreal Olympic Games the previous month. Cabinet rejected his recommendations concerning the preparation for the Brisbane Games, including a proposal that the Government 'reaffirm that financial assistance' would be given. Cabinet decided instead that no action should be taken by the State Government until a firm estimate of the cost was received, and it affirmed that 'the initiatives for staging of the 1982 Commonwealth Games should not originate from the State Government'.
- Legislation to entrench the position of Governor - Decision No. 25094, 2 September; Decision No. 25498, 22 November. Governor's pension, Decision No. 25012, 9 August and Submission No. 22832, 6 December. The Premier's submission makes it clear that this legislation resulted in part from a dispute with the Whitlam Government the previous year. The Cabinet decided to adopt proposals that involved changing the Queensland Constitution in a way that formally entrenched the position of Governor and the role of the Governor so that no further changes could be made without the agreement of voters in a referendum. The aim was to prevent a federal government using the power of the Governor-General to 'control' the State Governor. The Cabinet also agreed to legislation providing for the payment of a pension to the Governor.
- Investigation of foreign ownership of land in Queensland – Decision No. 23905, 17 February; Decision No. 24812, 6 July. In 1974 Cabinet decided to investigate the best way it could identify and control overseas ownership of land in Queensland. In December 1975 Cabinet decided it was desirable to discover the extent of foreign ownership before deciding if controls were needed and what form they should take. These decisions in 1976 provided the mechanism for identifying (but not controlling) the foreign ownership of land.
- Expansion of Fisherman Islands: new port facilities - Decision No. 25307, 18 October. This decision began the construction phase of the new port facilities at Fisherman Islands, the development of which the Cabinet had approved in May 1974. The main item was approving the spending of \$7.3 million to build a causeway and bridge across the Boat Passage. Planning was also approved for road and rail links.

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- Aluminium smelter, Gladstone - Submission No. 21436, 24 February; Decision No. 23993, 2 March; Decision No. 24025, 2 March. These decisions and a submission detail negotiations between the Government and Comalco over the terms of the agreements under which Comalco would establish an aluminium smelter at Gladstone.
- Petrol price war – power of the Qld Government to intervene. Decision No. 25342, 25 October; Decision No. 25653, 20 December. The Government was asked by the Qld Automobile Chamber of Commerce to intervene in a petrol price war started by the Australian Council of Trade Unions-owned Solo brand petrol stations. The association wanted the Government to restore 'orderly' marketing, including the fixing of minimum wholesale and retail prices. The Government obtained legal advice suggesting it had limited powers in this area. The Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs – two months after the original Cabinet decision to investigate the problem – noted the price war had simmered down and there did not appear to be the same urgent need for legislation as there had been three months earlier. He added, 'I would of course seriously question the desirability of a free enterprise government fixing a minimum retail price for petrol. Extremely adverse consumer reaction could be expected.' Cabinet decided to take no further action at that stage.
- Amendment of the Officials in Parliament Act. Submission No. 22815, 6 December; Decision No. 25588, 6 December. This arose out of a challenge by the Labor Opposition to a Minister who had made a small number of court appearances as a barrister representing the Crown. The ALP suggested this might be an office of profit under the Crown, in terms of the Officials in Parliament Act. If so the Minister would be liable to be disqualified from sitting as an MP. The Attorney-General told Parliament it was the view of the Law Officers that the Act did not apply. The Minister, John W. Greenwood, the Minister for Survey, raised the issue in a submission to Cabinet, but the submission was officially withdrawn. However the Cabinet, acting on an oral submission by the Attorney-General, authorised the Attorney-General to prepare an urgent draft Bill to amend the Officials in Parliament Act to 'formalise the accepted practices' that certain appointments of MPs are not considered an office of profit under the Crown, the Bill to be introduced during the current sittings by the Premier.