Mr. Chairman, Members of Council, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you very much for inviting me to open your Conference today. I am very pleased to be President of this Institute, which has done so much over the years to promote opportunities for public servants to discuss administrative problems and ideas.

As the work of government has become more complex and specialised, the need for administrators to have a meeting ground of common interest is particularly important. When one considers that the public services are also at the stage of questioning and change then this need is even more crucial.

There can be no doubt that the roles of the public service and the functions of the administrator are changing.

An indicator of the questioning that is going on within the service and the community about the structure and functions of public administration is contained in the publication of two important enquiries into State and Federal public services.

Everyone here today will understand the reports that I am referring to if I simply call them the Corbett Report and the Coombs Report.

Perhaps I could begin by quoting two of the major conclusions of the Coombs Report which took, as one of its five themes, the relationship of the administration with the community.

The Coombs Commission concluded that "the widespread and increasing demand within the community, by individuals and groups, to participate in the decision-making processes of government modifies the exclusiveness of the relationship of officials to their ministers and requires reforms in the relationship between officials and the community" and "the extension of services increases the amount and importance of face-to-face contact between officials and those receiving the services. There is a need greatly to improve the efficiency of access to and delivery of these services and to give greater sensitivity and responsiveness to the style of delivery".
I think that you will agree that these conclusions raise fundamental issues and I am sure that in your Conference today some of these points will come forward in discussion.

That there is an increasing demand within the community to participate in the decision-making processes of government is well recognised, I believe, by administrators, particularly in the fields of health and welfare, planning and education.

The demand by the community to participate in the decisions of the administrators stands on three main propositions. First, that it makes government more effective; that people in the community can share a knowledge and expertise of problems with the bureaucracy; that programmes which are formulated and managed without participation by those whom they effect are consequently debilitated and often fail. Second, that participation is a valuable end in itself and should be seen as a general objective of government activities. Third, that by careful decentralisation of administration, it may be possible to bring decision-making closer to the people who are effected by these decisions.

If this case is valid, and I believe it to be substantially so, what are the implications for the procedures and style of administrators in government?

If power is to be shared more democratically then individuals and groups in the community must as a first step have more information about the way in which the administration works or proposes to operate.

Secondly, it behoves administrators to be more responsive to the wishes, needs and ideas of the people that they serve. It follows that individuals and groups must have greater access to administrators and to the information on which administrators are basing their decisions.

This in turn implies that there should be a greater degree of delegation within departments so that administrators can be located in areas where their decisions are being carried out.

All this calls for a public service which is adaptable and that means a public service which is more innovative, more lively, more exciting, more approachable, more responsive, more sensitive. It calls for a public service which is disenthralled with its isolation from the community.

The days of the remote administrator sitting in an immovable bureaucracy are over. The community no longer tolerates it, governments no longer endure it, and I believe administrators no longer want it. There is now
a much greater concern that public servants be identifiable with their clients. This clearly provides a responsibility for administrators to define their client groups and establish contact with and understanding of the needs of these groups. It is not sufficient to define clients as the general public. Instead the administrator is finding that he must be prepared to attend to the varying needs of different groups within the community. Today's administrator realises that he cannot perform his duties solely on the basis of experience or adhere to precedent. He must be a professional who is aware of change and ready to respond to it.

My Government has been mindful of the need for a reformed and more outward-looking public service for some years. The Corbett Committee recommended that "new channels of communication for the community be explored and developed". This recommendation is being pursued as indeed are some of the general recommendations contained in the Coombs Report. I would like to briefly outline some of the Government's attempts to provide for greater community involvement in public administration, particularly as they apply to the areas you have under discussion today.

One of the most striking examples of the desire by the community to be more involved in public decision-making resides in the field of planning and environment. Here the Government is presently undertaking a unique and innovative study in transportation planning called North East Area Public Transport Review (known as NEAPTR).

From the very beginning this Study was designed to forge new ground in the field of community participation in the planning process.

Immediately prior to the announcement of the NEAPTR Study, Local Councillors, Local Parliamentary representatives, Community Councils for Social Development, Environment and Conservation groups and Resident Societies were informed of the Study, the way in which it would be conducted, its objectives, and sources of additional information. The purpose of this action was to equip community leaders and community organisations with knowledge of the study and sources of additional information so that the community leaders or community organisations could help and assist their constituents if asked to do so.

It was thought that people living in the "Modbury Corridor" area were likely to judge (incorrectly) that the announcement of NEAPTR was synonymous with a transport facility being designed in the "Modbury Corridor". The Department of Transport engaged approximately 80 social workers to contact about 900 householders in the Study area immediately
prior to the announcement of the Study, to inform them of the nature and content of the study. In addition, all households were presented with a printed leaflet explaining the Study and where additional information could be obtained.

The purpose of these actions was to advise people likely to see themselves as being affected by the Study, with a personal explanation of it and to provide them with avenues to obtain further information or assistance if they required it.

The public involvement process has then formed into two parts: a communication programme to keep people informed about the Study, what it was doing and later what was being decided; and secondly, a discussion programme which involves meetings with individuals and groups in the area to find out their transport problems and needs.

As part of the information programme community files have been placed in approximately 100 locations including council offices, libraries, Parliamentarian's offices, community centres, government offices and with specific interest groups. The files contain copies of all working papers published together with copies of the news reports. The Department of Transport has undertaken continually to update these files as the Study progresses and as more material becomes available.

The purpose of the Community File is to provide the community with easy access to the full range of Study data upon which a decision will ultimately be made about public transport in the north east. Individuals and groups within the community can readily identify and respond to the issues of particular interest to them.

Special arrangements have also been made to make it easy for the public to contact the NEAPTR Study team. A telephone facility was established so that people seeking information were not confused by interdepartmental responsibilities or switchboard changes in contacting the Team. People simply phoned a given number, asked for "Mr. Todd", and were immediately placed in contact with the Study Team.

The Team has undertaken to record the names and addresses of the persons or organisations who have either contacted the Study Team or have been contacted. To date approximately 2,000 names and addresses have been recorded per magnetic card for retrieval.

The purpose of this storage of names and addresses is to enable the Study Team to notify those persons or organisations interested in NEAPTR about an activity which may be of interest to them.
The Study Team has responded to invitations from Councils and a wide range of community groups to discuss and explain NEAPTR processes and opportunities for public involvement. Communication with several hundred individuals has occurred by telephone, private home visits and correspondence.

A discussion programme has also involved interviews with community councils for social development, local councils, residents' societies, unions and various interest groups in the area. Specialist workshops have been held and a two day workshop that a group representing interests in the area has taken place.

Follow-up discussions with tertiary students, high schools, job-hunters clubs, non working women, and elderly groups, migrants, and workers in the work place have also been conducted.

I think you will agree with me that this is a most extensive, thorough-going, detailed and earnest attempt to involve the community in the decision-making process for the future transport needs of the north east.

Mr. John Hutchinson, who is the Leader of this Team will, I note, be speaking to you later today about the progress with the Study.

As I mentioned earlier, the decentralisation of public administration is another method whereby governments can try and bring the community closer to the processes of public administration. Both the Corbett and Coombs reports support the concept of regional offices as one means of achieving this. There are already country based offices providing services to the community in this State. For example, in the field of Welfare, there now exist 26 community councils for social development spread throughout the State. These Councils assess the needs of their communities and analyse the resources which would be required to meet these needs. They also serve as advisory bodies in the distribution of Community Welfare grants.

Community councils are involved also in determining the priorities based on the special needs of their districts. These may include services for the aged, programmes for aboriginals, youth programmes, child care and pre-school programmes, or the expansion of recreation and sporting facilities.

In all the Government's service areas there are plans to increase the level of service at the community level. To assist with the proper planning and co-ordination of services for regional communities the Government is moving towards a system of uniform regions for all of its departments and statutory agencies.
The adoption of uniform regions for the planning of regional government services will pave the way for a wide range of improvements in providing the community with high quality services to meet its most urgent needs. By bringing co-ordination and administration of these services closer to the community the Government's officers will be in touch with the public, which will then be better placed to influence the way in which these services are provided.

These are some few brief examples of the many and varied processes by which administrators under this Government are attempting a greater degree of community involvement in their programmes. This is a healthy trend; I believe it to be the right course. We should all seek to encourage it. For the test of a programme, when this programme is part of a policy, is not input but output. It is interesting, and at times important, to know how much money is being spent on schools or roads in a particular suburb. But the crucial question is how much are the children learning, and how safely and quickly are people travelling. In the final analysis, programmes are not for bureaucracies, but for people.

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"COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION"

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