

NOTE: There could be differences between this document and the official printed *Hansard*, Vol. 314

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 1990

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, Mr C.L. Johnson, will be available this evening from 6 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. to speak with members on the duties and functions of his office. The meeting will be held in the conference room on level 5 of the Parliamentary Annexe.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Funding, Hervey Bay Hospital

From **Mr Nunn** (5 549 signatories) praying for funding to enable the Hervey Bay Hospital to fulfil its health-care functions.

Daylight-saving

From **Mr Littleproud** (161 signatories) praying that daylight-saving be abolished.

Annual Land Valuations

From **Mr Burns** (543 signatories) praying for the abolition of annual valuations.

Additional Boat Harbour, Manly

From **Mr Burns** (183 signatories) praying for a stop to works on the second boat harbour at Manly so that environmental impact studies may be undertaken.

Public Inquiry into Local Government Funding

From **Mr Burns** (951 signatories) praying for a public inquiry into the present system of raising funds for local government through rates based on land valuations.

Proposed Marinas at Wynnum and Tingalpa Creeks

From **Mr Burns** (334 signatories) praying for a rejection of proposals to construct marinas at Wynnum and Tingalpa Creeks.

Daylight-saving

From **Mr Ardill** (18 signatories) praying for continuation of daylight-saving.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

Proclamations under---

Chiropractic Manipulative Therapists Act Amendment Act 1988

- Queensland University of Technology and Brisbane College of Advanced
Education Amalgamation Act 1990
- By-laws under---
- Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act 1979-1988
 - Dental Act 1971-1987
 - Medical Act 1939-1988
- Orders in Council under---
- Grammar Schools Act 1975-1989 and the Statutory Bodies Financial
Arrangements Act 1982-1989
 - Education (General Provisions) Act 1989
 - Co-operative and Other Societies Act 1967-1986
 - Credit Societies Act 1986
 - District Courts Act 1967-1989
 - Friendly Societies Act 1913-1986
 - Religious Education and Charitable Institutions Acts 1861-1967
 - Supreme Court Act of 1921
 - Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982
 - Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971-1988
- Regulations under---
- Education Act 1964-1989
 - The Criminal Code
- Statutes under---
- James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970-1989
 - University of Central Queensland Act 1989
 - University of Southern Queensland Act 1989
- Accounts of ANZ Executors and Trustee Company Limited and subsidiaries for the
year ended 30 September 1989.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (2.37 p.m.), by leave: I am pleased to report to this Parliament on the success of a mission which I led to Japan, Korea and Hong Kong between 1 and 13 April this year.

Honourable members will be well aware of the devastating effect of the domestic pilots dispute on Queensland's tourism industry—an industry which is vital to Queensland's economy, being the third-largest earner after mineral resources and agriculture.

The Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation reports that the direct expenditure cost to Queensland from when the pilots stopped work in August until the end of December last year was approximately \$225m. The corporation estimates that the total cost of lost direct, indirect and induced expenditure reached more than \$473m.

It was deemed of great importance within the industry that the Government take a lead in turning around the situation. Soon after coming into office, I announced a massive \$2.2m promotion campaign to boost our tourism produce in the domestic market. However, the international market—particularly our most accessible market, Asia—also needed to be reassured that domestic air services in Queensland have been restored. Queensland recorded a dramatic drop of about 11 per cent in arrivals from Japan, our key Asian market.

The delegation which I led to Japan, Korea and Hong Kong comprised representatives from the private sector of our tourism industry, as well as from the Government. I sought the assistance of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation in selecting and inviting representatives from our major tourist regions.

The delegation comprised Mr Peter Langdon, the Queensland manager of Qantas; Mr Keith Williams, general manager of Hamilton Island; Mr Peter Blackburn, general manager of Ramada Reef Resort in Cairns; Mrs Wendy Hall, head of the Brisbane Visitors and Convention Bureau; Mr Gary Balkin, managing director of Seaport Enterprises; Mr Alan Pettigrew, director-general of my department; Mr Toshio Watanabe, head of the Japanese division of the QTTC; Mr Tony Luxton, from the QTTC's Japan office; and my private and press secretaries.

Not only did that mission give Queensland direct access to key operators and agents in the countries that we visited, but it also gained for us valuable media coverage within the travel-trade press in those countries. I was also able to let potential investors know that, subject to the guidelines laid down by the Federal Government, this Government welcomes investment from those countries in Queensland.

As I reveal in the full report on the trip, which I will table for the House, the mission was an outstanding success in that it enabled Queensland to steal a march on all other States in Australia in the lucrative tourist markets of the region. I was the first Tourism Minister, State or Commonwealth, to visit the area since the pilots strike. I was the first State Tourism Minister ever to visit Korea, which is potentially a huge visitor market for us.

I am pleased to table a full report of the mission, detailing the people I met and the outcome of my discussions. I trust that members will find this informative and fascinating reading, as it lays the ground for the future development of our tourism industry with Asian visitors.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Report of Committee of Review of Industrial Relations and Training in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Hon. N. G. WARBURTON (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (2.40 p.m.), by leave: In March 1989 a tripartite committee was established to examine training arrangements and industrial relations practices in the tourism and hospitality industry. Printing of the report has been completed and today copies are being provided to all honourable members.

The committee was formed following calls for the establishment of a tripartite committee to examine the future staffing, structure and award requirements of the industry. A wide range of interest and responsibilities was represented on the committee. A key finding of the committee was that "employers and employees have common goals". However, these goals are to an extent impeded by the absence of a single employer organisation, either nationally or within the State, to represent the industry on industrial relations and training issues. This situation hinders industrywide negotiation. This deficiency is addressed in the recommendations.

Recommendations 1 to 4 contain a strategy encouraging formation of an industry employer council or organisation and from this the development of a small group that could negotiate industrially for the industry. These recommendations place the responsibility squarely on the industrial parties, with the Government playing a catalytic role. The Honourable the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing and I are in the process of determining how the Government can optimise its role.

We are presently working towards the establishment of a peak council. From this will be formed a subcommittee to operate as a negotiating group that could represent the industry in industrial matters.

Other recommendations are wide-ranging and address various issues, in particular, training. A number of these recommendations require Government action. An assessment is being made and, when completed, a total Government response will be formulated.

The tourism and hospitality sectors are vital to the Queensland economy, and the Government will do all that it can to assist the parties to find solutions.

I table a copy of the report of the committee of review.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Western Queensland Floods

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (2.42 p.m.), by leave: I visited Charleville between Sunday, 29 April, and Tuesday, 1 May, where I met many of the people who have been devastated by the floods, those who are standing beside them in support, and those working tirelessly with brooms, brushes and shovels. The basic ingenuity and common sense of the people working to rebuild the community is to be applauded.

Firstly, however, I want to commend the members of the local State Emergency Service for preventing immediate loss of life. They coordinated an almost miraculous exercise of hauling people from the swirling floodwaters and out of immediate danger onto the roofs of houses. The State Emergency Service essentially organised a very efficient response. While its task was immediate, the task of my department, the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, was to promote the community's effective recovery. Already there are signs of rebuilding what will become a stronger community, which has faced the challenges together and won through.

My department's role in the response and recovery stage has been to help the community to comprehend and deal with the understandable traumatic reaction to disaster. It is vital that people know that their feelings are normal and can be dealt with, so that they can get on with the task of rebuilding their physical environment. The community will need debriefing and counselling for many months, and my department will continue these services. The commitment of my staff to this task is evident from the long hours that they have worked, and from people's very positive response to the Family Services' workers in their red shirts.

As evacuations commenced in Charleville on the night of Friday, 20 April, my department's State disaster recovery coordinator was called to the first meeting of the State disaster planning subcommittee on the Saturday morning. The capacity of Family Services staff to understand what was going on with the reactions of various individuals and to advise the State Emergency Service, the police and other workers was very evident from that time. By early Sunday morning, while evacuations continued, two senior departmental staff had arrived in Charleville to assess recovery needs and to coordinate a one-stop-shop recovery, information and services centre at the railway station.

My department has continued to coordinate services from its Charleville centre. Social work professionals and administrative staff have worked in Charleville, Augathella, Wyandra and other small towns in the surrounding areas. As well, people evacuated to towns such as Longreach, Alpha and Roma and to other places throughout the State have received support and assistance from Family Services staff.

The flood relief centre in Brisbane has offered assistance and service to evacuees, linked family members, coordinated offers of assistance and made relief payments. The back-up team in my department's head office has done a wonderful job in supporting more than 50 staff in Charleville, Brisbane and elsewhere.

Up to 20 staff have worked at the Charleville centre to provide speedy access to subsistence relief assistance, to conduct an information service, to provide crisis counselling and to work with other State, Commonwealth and community agencies. In particular, staff have been very grateful for the assistance of Lifeline, the Salvation Army, all the major churches and the regional family support program. As well, my staff have been working with dedicated people not only from social security, the mental health profession and other counselling agencies but also from the insurance, banking, finance and legal industries.

Many stories exist about people working above and beyond the call of duty, and I mention only a few, such as the Brisbane-based recovery coordinator who came back from his holidays and has not had a day off since; the computer-programmer who worked through the night conducting a program and then flew to Charleville with his program early the next morning so that payments would not be delayed; and the regional director for Charleville who had worked without a break until last weekend.

Countless groups, such as the Aboriginal Housing Cooperative from Toowoomba, worked on the clean-up. They were later joined by a team from Cunnamulla.

I am very proud of my staff, who were well organised and showed good team spirit and whose skills quickly made them fundamental to that whole communal effort. They have learned valuable expertise in the process of transferring their theoretical knowledge to hands-on experience and will continue to be a valuable resource for any community that is faced with large-scale trauma.

One of the benefits to the community of a disaster is that people forge stronger links—stronger networks—as they work together to face the crisis. My department is ably responding to the need to rebuild a social and physical community.

During the crisis, the counter-disaster training that has been undertaken in a number of departments bore fruit. Given that we live in a country that is regularly racked by disasters—floods, cyclones and fires—the expertise that has been developed in Charleville must be preserved.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Western Queensland Floods**

Hon. R. T. McLEAN (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (2.48 p.m.), by leave: Last week I spent four days inspecting the flood-ravaged areas of Queensland. I am full of admiration for the way in which residents are rebuilding their lives, despite having suffered enormous losses. I am also very proud of the way in which staff from my department have helped to make that possible.

The Department of Administrative Services has contributed significantly to the rescue and rehabilitation of those people. As soon as the first call for help was received at 3.42 a.m. on 21 April, Bill Kelly and his staff from the State Stores Board worked through the night to supply goods such as rescue craft, bedding, food, generators and all the other essentials that are necessary when a whole town has virtually disappeared under water. The department was also heavily involved in the provision of trained tradesmen, technical staff and professional officers for on-the-spot inspection, assessment and repair work.

I pay particular tribute to the work of regional manager, Dave Duncan. Mr Duncan was in charge of resuscitating Charleville. He divided the town into sectors and teams of workers, including Administrative Services, the SES, police cadets and prisoners. He moved quickly and efficiently through the town. That efficiency must have been a great morale-booster for the residents.

A work force of some 70 departmental staff inspected each of the 1 180 homes in Charleville. They removed decomposed goods, itemised the damage and provided an estimate of the cost of repairs. Next, they made each house safe and secure by repairing

all flood-damaged electrical circuits, plumbing, roofs, walls, windows and doors. They also looked after Augathella. We had our own house to put in order. Charleville Hospital and the damaged schools, police stations and public service housing throughout the flood-affected areas had to be repaired.

Accusations have been made that other towns were neglected. That is patently untrue. As soon as the roads were passable on the 24th, Bruce Cory—another member of my staff who deserves the highest praise—led a team from Rockhampton into Alpha and Jericho. Mick Morrison, who heads a small team in Barcaldine, also did a wonderful job. On Anzac Day, he flew into Blackall to make initial assessments. When roads were opened, he led a team that assessed damage to some 43 houses and carried out essential work on them.

As I said, I visited those towns last week to make sure that any problems that still existed were dealt with. There appeared to be the possibility that guidelines for the distribution of financial assistance were not being interpreted in the same way outside Charleville. The Family Services Minister immediately organised advisers to make sure that everybody received the same treatment.

To all my Department of Administrative Services staff—from Ross Dunning, my director-general, to Ron Rankin who accompanied me to the affected areas, all the other people at that level of the department all the way through to those who worked in the mud and debris—I thank them. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Mr ARDILL having given notice of a motion—

Mr Katter interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Flinders will not interject from other than his correct seat.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (2.56 p.m.): Pursuant to Standing Order No. 52, I seek leave to move a motion without notice.

Question—That leave be granted—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 33

NOES, 50

DIVISION

Resolved in the negative.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Government Commitment to Implement EARC Recommendations**

Mr COOPER: I refer the Premier to his stated support last year for the reform bodies which the previous Government set up in the wake of Mr Fitzgerald's report, and to a commitment that he gave, along with the other party leaders to Mr Fitzgerald in July, which stated in part that "all recommendations of EARC with respect to electoral matters will be immediately implemented", and I ask, firstly: will the Premier now give an unqualified assurance of his party's long-term commitment to EARC and, secondly, will he give Queenslanders a similar assurance that his Government will abide by and implement the recommendations of EARC in regard to electoral reform?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because it is a most important issue for Queensland. Last year, the people of this State made a clear judgment as to which party they trusted with the carriage of Mr Fitzgerald's reform agenda, and their judgment overwhelmingly was that the Australian Labor Party was the party to carry out that agenda. In his resignation comments on the weekend, the former Premier, Mike Ahern, said, "The Fitzgerald reform agenda is on track."—it certainly is.

I will certainly not pre-empt, prejudice or seek to pressure the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. The Government will await the determination of that commission. The Leader of the Opposition should be aware, if he is not already, that there is a process laid out; that is, that the commission should report to the parliamentary committee on which his party is represented, that parliamentary committee must then report and make recommendations to the Parliament and the Parliament will then make a decision.

The members of the Australian Labor Party have always indicated their support for the Fitzgerald reform agenda. It was the Government's party—the Labor Party—that made the submission concerning the primary importance of electoral reform, that electoral corruption was at the heart of the broader corruption that had occurred under the National Party in this State and that electoral reform was a key to restoring faith and confidence in public institutions in this State.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Those honourable members might well want to whinge about electoral reform, but in private some of them are honest enough to concede that the National Party's electoral corruption was a rot and will not stand scrutiny.

In good faith my Government will abide by the recommendations of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. The Australian Labor Party will make its submission to the commission, which will make its recommendations to the parliamentary committee, and that committee will report to the Parliament. By the end of this year or early next year Queensland will have legislation from the commission and the Government will then have independent boundaries drawn by that commission. Those boundaries will not be second-guessed by the Government. The commission's boundaries will stand. That is the Government's commitment.

Dr Sally Leivesley

Mr COOPER: I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: is it not a fact that Dr Sally Leivesley, who was publicly crucified by him about her consultancy work for the previous Government, is currently—I repeat, "currently"—undertaking a major consultancy task for the Government at a projected cost of some \$300,000?

Mr MACKENROTH: Not for me, she is not.

Industrial Laws

Mr PREST: I refer the Premier to claims by the director of the National Party, Mr Crooke—another one—that changes to Queensland industrial laws will give trade union militants strike power with the likely risk that resulting industrial conflicts will bring Queensland to a standstill. I ask the Premier to comment on Mr Crooke's assessment of the proposed industrial legislation, which was echoed by the Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr Innes.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The issue of reform of industrial relations in this State is important. It is a difficult task and was not only shirked by the previous Government but was deliberately shirked for the purpose of creating confrontation to score cheap political points. The Queensland economy and Queensland workers suffered because of that irresponsible approach.

It has come to my notice, and it is typical, that the member for Sherwood would echo the bleatings of the National Party because these would-be coalition parties have the same agenda when it comes to industrial relations. It is a lopsided system in which there is an inability by both parties to stand on an equal basis and achieve a just result from an independent umpire.

Our industrial relations legislation and industrial relations commission which will be established by the legislation that we will bring into this House will provide not only justice and a progressive framework in relation to industrial relations but also the scope that the commission has been crying out for—a cry that was ignored by these people opposite—in terms of giving it greater flexibility and room to move in terms of award restructuring and a whole host of other progressive moves. The commission called for that publicly while these people opposite were in Government, and they ignored the call.

The model and the framework on which we will proceed, and on which the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has been working, is the Hanger report, which was commissioned by the previous Government. It was commissioned by these people opposite. It is a worthy document and contains a worthy set of recommendations. This State has been held back by the failure, for political reasons, of the people opposite to implement the Hanger report. Why did they fail to implement that report? I will tell the House. It was on orders from Sir Robert Sparkes and the other people from the bunker who told them to back off.

Mr Cooper: Rot!

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition says, "Rot!" Can he explain to this House why it is that in *Quality Queensland*, which the previous Government commissioned from consultants at a cost of over half a million dollars because it did not have an economic vision of excellence of its own, the Government, through its then Premier, promised to implement the Hanger report but then backed down as a result of a telephone call from Sir Robert Sparkes?

We will implement the Hanger report. It has the support of not only the Industrial Commission but also the responsible unions and employer groups. Last year—and I thought it was significant that it occurred during the election period—the Confederation of Industry called for the implementation of the Hanger report. We will do it. It will provide a progressive and modern framework for industrial relations. It will be a fair one for Queensland and will enable a number of those very important micro-economic and industrial reforms to proceed.

Mr Cooper: VEAs? Productivity agreements?

Mr W. K. GOSS: VEAs, VEAs. They parrot on about VEAs. Some of the proponents of VEAs say that they allow for flexibility, for incentives for workers, and for workers to gain increased skills. They say that as if VEAs were the only way in which those things could be achieved. They can be achieved by other means, and those

sorts of positive measures will be provided for in the legislation that the Minister will introduce in this place.

What we will not tolerate is the dark, dishonest and inequitable side of VEAs—the secrecy. If these documents are so good for working people, why did the people oppose keep them secret? They kept them secret because they would not stand up in the marketplace; they would not stand up in public. Why would they not allow them to be arbitrated and judged by an independent umpire? Because they would not stand up in the public arena!

We will have the documents open and on the record. We will have an independent umpire in the form of the commission with the power to enforce its orders. We will provide a flexible industrial relations framework, which has a range of measures including awards and the provision for an employer or an industry to obtain a variation of an award or to register an industrial agreement. We will provide the flexibility.

VEAs may have positive aspects; but who knows that, because they were secret and the Government would not allow them to be made public. The aspect of VEAs that we will not tolerate is their capacity to drive down minimum conditions for the workers in this State. We stand for increasing minimum conditions. Those opposite might want to drive workers in this State to rates that are paid in Third World countries, but we will not tolerate it.

Differential Rating

Mr PREST: I ask the Minister for Housing and Local Government: has his attention been drawn to the report in this morning's *Courier-Mail* newspaper regarding the flexibility on rates for the Brisbane City Council? Has the Government made any decision in relation to this matter? What is the background, and what is involved?

Mr BURNS: This morning's *Courier-Mail* report is not correct. The Government has not made a decision to support a change to the system of minimum rating or differential rating. About a month or five weeks ago the Brisbane City Council provided to me a copy of a barrister's opinion that suggested that the differential rating provisions of the Local Government Act would prevent the council from introducing a number of minimum rates. Following the receipt of that opinion, my department stated that it would have the barrister's opinion reviewed. However, when the Government got its own lawyers to have a look at the Act, they found that the council was right, and that it is not possible for the council to introduce a number of minimum rates.

Because under the provisions of the Act a number of councils have introduced a number of minimum rates, I am prepared to introduce amending legislation. Those councils acted as they did because they thought that their interpretation of the Act was quite correct, but now that it has been determined that it is not, the decision has been made that the Government will have to introduce amending legislation. At this stage the proposal has not even been to Cabinet. It will have to go to Cabinet, which will have to make a decision. If Cabinet approves the proposal, the Government will very quickly have to introduce amending legislation.

On Friday, after I received the legal opinion, I told the Lord Mayor over the telephone that she should write to me and give me a clear indication of what she wants to achieve through her suggested legislation. I also told her that, so far as rating is concerned, it would not be my final position to allow a large number of minimum rates, perhaps 20 or 30, because that would change the whole uniform valuation and rating system. I also told the Lord Mayor that if I found that her council—or any other council—was using the minimum rate provision implemented under this Government's legislation to force up the rates paid by people earning low incomes who are living in lower priced houses and reduce rates for people in valuable properties with high incomes, I would be only too pleased to come back into this House and introduce further legislation that would restrict such a practice.

I repeat that the matter has not been resolved, as was reported this morning by the *Courier-Mail*. I do not know how the paper reached that conclusion. The Government will be moving to introduce legislation and asking the House to deal expeditiously with it, because a number of councils are obviously in trouble over the Act's provisions.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the member for Sherwood.

Mr INNES: I have a question without notice—

PRIVILEGE

Determination of Order of Opposition Questions

Mr LINGARD (Fassifern) (3.19 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Mr Speaker and honourable members, I refer to Standing Orders 46 and 115 and to a report of the Privileges Committee dated March 1979. This question of whether the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should be called to ask his questions after the Government Whip has been a controversial one since the start of this Parliament.

The Opposition wrote to you, Mr Speaker, and you replied as follows—

"I have advised the Opposition Whip that I will continue the current order of questions until the first four weeks of sittings are completed and will then reconsider the matter."

Obviously, because of your call today, Mr Speaker, you have reconsidered the matter. The report of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee in March 1979 stated that if Mr Speaker was not prepared to refer a matter to the Privileges Committee, then a member was allowed to submit it to the House to have the House decide whether it should go to the Privileges Committee. Therefore, I do so now. Quite obviously I expect the members of the Liberal Party to oppose my proposal because they have been given a great advantage by having the call after the Government Whip. However, Government members are obviously in a quandary. I wonder how the Deputy Premier will answer this request because, for as long as I have been in the House, when the Deputy Premier was Deputy Leader of the Opposition he was always entitled to the call after the Government Whip and always had the second question.

Therefore, I submit this motion to the House through you, Mr Speaker, to ask the House to consider that the matter of the second call for questions by the Opposition should go to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and that the matter should be referred to the Privileges Committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not accept the honourable member's motion. I wish to inform the honourable member for Fassifern that this is the Forty-sixth Parliament of Queensland and that I am the Speaker of this Parliament. The determination of the order in which questions are asked in this House is the prerogative of the Speaker. I will not accept the honourable member's motion. He can seek leave to move a motion or place a notice of motion through the proper channels. I warn the member for Fassifern that I will not countenance any disrespect shown for my rulings, otherwise I will deal with him under Standing Order 124.

Mr LINGARD: I rise to a point of order. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to refer to the table and ask whether what happened in March 1979 is as I say.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr LINGARD: Allow me to do this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I now warn the member for Fassifern under Standing Order 124. If the honourable member continues to go against my ruling at this time and not allow me to conduct question time in the way I see fit, I will have him dealt with under Standing Order 124.

Mr LINGARD: I now formally move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling be dissented from."

I ask that that motion be debated as soon as possible.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. The member needs to hand that motion in writing to the table immediately he moves it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I rule that the member for Fassifern has given notice of that motion. It will now be handed in and will be listed on the notice paper for discussion at a later date. I call the member for Sherwood.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Continuation of Electricity Supply

Mr INNES: I listened to the Premier's answer to the Dorothy Dixier, but I come now to the heart of the industrial relations question which is in the minds of many people. Irrespective of any new industrial legislation, I ask: can the Premier give an ironclad guarantee that Queensland electricity consumers will enjoy the same strike-free supplies in the future that they have enjoyed for the last five years?

Mr W. K. GOSS: As the member for Sherwood well knows, I can give no such ironclad guarantee, just as I can give no ironclad guarantee that it will be fine on weekends.

The question asked by the honourable member is a spurious and cheap one that betrays a superficial approach to industrial relations, and one that the Labor Government is endeavouring to change and reform by progressive industrial relations legislation of the kind that I have described. The Government has to establish a proper framework so that disputes can be resolved. In the past, that framework has not existed.

The Labor Government is confident that a range of measures that will be announced, both in terms of legislation and other matters that are under consideration, will deliver to this community reforms that will be regarded by the community as reasonable and proper safeguards for the supply of services regarded by the public as important.

There can be no ironclad guarantees in relation to what may happen in the future. Year in, year out, it is a question for Governments— of whatever persuasion they may be—to manage, within a framework or system that is fair to both sides, as best they can. That is this Government's promise, and that is what I believe we will be able to deliver.

I look forward to the member providing in this House—in relation to any claims or comments that the member may make of his party having a philosophy or a capacity to prevent industrial disputation, and perhaps he may care to table the information—details of an ironclad guarantee in relation to essential services similar to the one that has been given by Mr Greiner to the people of New South Wales. When he does that, I will treat him seriously.

Schemes for Temporary Release of Prisoners

Mr INNES: I ask the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services: did a release-on-leave system go on in the prisons of Queensland until the escape of Mr Henry John Bartczak in the week before last? Did that involve, at times, more than 100 people, including killers, rapists and drug-pushers? Did that go on despite public objection and outcry in February? Why has he ignored Labor Party policy issued in its "Law and Order" document in May 1988, which promised that, upon coming to Government, the Labor Party would abolish all existing schemes of remission and early release?

Mr MILLINER: I thank the honourable member for his question because it gives me an opportunity to place on record the action that has been taken in relation to leave

of absence. The scheme has been in existence since approximately 1969. Since that time, approximately 20 000 to 30 000 prisoners have gone through the leave-of-absence program. There have certainly been some problems with the scheme and there has also been some public disquiet about it.

Upon the Labor Party's coming to office, some of the public disquiet was brought to my attention because it arose over a number of people who had received leave of absence. The Labor Government set about reforming the leave-of-absence program. Leave of absence is a privilege that must be earned by correctional institution inmates. The Government has introduced a system whereby leave of absence will be given only to those prisoners who are nearing completion of their sentences. The Government has also introduced a new classification system. There are now five categories of classification ranging from an open classification to a maximum classification. Prisoners who enter the system will work their way through the classification program. When they reach the low risk and open classification stage, they will then be eligible for work-release and leave-of-absence privileges.

I must emphasise that prisoners must earn the right to leave of absence; it will not be given automatically to them. Having said that, I point out that leave of absence plays a very important part in rehabilitating someone who is nearing completion of his prison sentence so that he can re-establish himself in the community with his family. Although some problems have occurred with the leave-of-absence scheme, I firmly believe that the steps taken by the Government will overcome the problems that existed and that the public will have great confidence in the system.

Public Works in Schools

Mr PALASZCZUK: I ask the Minister for Administrative Services: will he inform the House of the assistance received by the Inala State High School from his department? How does that compare with the treatment of pupils of schools in other areas of this State?

Mr McLEAN: I thank the honourable member for the question and appreciate the fact that he is the one who asked it. Since I became a Minister, I have taken the opportunity to travel around this State and visit a number of schools. I did that because I think that all honourable members would be aware of some of the obvious rorts that were going on over a period of time.

Mr FitzGerald: The member for Cooroora complained that there's nothing done in his electorate, so you're not going to bag us on that one.

Mr McLEAN: I urge the honourable member to keep speaking. Probably one of the worst examples of neglect that I encountered throughout my travels in this State is the Inala area in the honourable member's electorate—particularly the high school.

In the last session, I had the audacity to rise in this Chamber and accuse members of the National Party of having a coloured map.

Mr FitzGerald: Yes, and the member for Cooroora complained he didn't have enough work done in his electorate, which denies what you're saying.

Mr McLEAN: Fine.

Mr FitzGerald: Read his maiden speech.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McLEAN: I will take the interjection. I love it. I point out that previously I had the audacity to state in this Chamber that there was a coloured map marked in green, blue for the electorates of our Liberal friends seated at the back of the Chamber, and Labor electorates in red, of course. At that time, I was heckled by the Leader of

the Opposition and by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, as well as by the former Minister who is now seated at the rear of the Chamber. Since that time, I have had an opportunity to delve a little further.

I can assure some honourable members present in the Chamber that I have bad news for them. This news will also affect some Labor members who, unfortunately, represent marginal electorates on which quite a deal of money was spent. A great deal of money was spent in the electorates of members of the National Party, too, but some of them missed out. The electorates marked in blue—the colour of the Liberals—got nothing.

Mr Innes: That's why you're telling us nothing.

Mr McLEAN: I think the honourable member might be interested in this.

Mr Mackenroth: I just hope you're going to rectify it.

Mr McLEAN: I can assure the House that, from now on everything that will be done will be done on a needs basis in consultation with my friend and colleague Mr Braddy. We have sat down together and talked. He is amazed and appalled by the situation, as I am. We will work in conjunction on these matters.

Just before the last State election—at about this time last year—a special electorate works program was circulated by Mr Cooper. I think most of us realise that during the Petersen years, we had to accept those types of programs, but in Mr Cooper's era and in Mr Ahern's era, we were told publicly that the program was part of the squeaky-clean image that was coming forward.

I ask Mr Warburton to assist me with the diagram that I have. The part marked in green on the diagram refers to the National Party. The special works program for electorates contained 293 projects.

Mr Milliner: Who was the crawler on the bottom?

Mr McLEAN: The bottom of the sheet where Mr Warburton's left thumb is shows that one project for \$200,000 out of total expenditure of \$27.4m was allocated to a Labor Party electorate; the others have gone to National Party seats. The Liberal Party received nothing.

The Labor Party received one project, in the electorate of Mr Bredhauer, who is a new member. Bob Scott was the retiring member in Cook. I hasten to add that we do not suspect Mr Bredhauer, because he was in an unfortunate position. They are the facts. Mr Cooper ought to hide his head in shame. Shame! Shame!

Government members: Shame!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, even the Speaker has schools in his electorate. I cannot hear the answer.

Mr McLEAN: Because schools in his electorate were neglected badly, Mr Palaszczuk is probably entitled to be the most upset member in this Chamber. It is a disgrace. It is no laughing matter. The children who live in Inala and the surrounding suburbs are entitled to the same treatment as that given to the children who live in Mr Cooper's electorate or in Mr Borbidge's white-shoe brigade electorate.

At present, the Labor Party has spent \$80,000 on providing lights and fans for schools in Mr Palaszczuk's electorate, and it will spend another \$8,000 to overcome erosion problems in the area. Other problems in that electorate and in many other electorates that have been neglected so badly are being investigated.

Because of the examples that I have cited in this House, Mr Cooper, who was proclaimed to be so pure and squeaky clean, ought to hold his head in shame.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Surfers Paradise under Standing Order 123A. I just asked him to cease interjecting.

Voluntary Employment Agreements

Mr PALASZCZUK: I address my second question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Over a number of years, the Opposition has shown disdain for the arbitration commission. It now seeks to champion secret deals known as VEAs. I ask: is it correct that the former Employment Minister, Mr Lester, disagrees with the Opposition Leader on that issue?

Mr WARBURTON: I thank the honourable member for his question. I suggest that the National Party is not having a very good day at all.

The former Employment Minister, Mr Lester, obviously finally succumbed to the pressures exerted upon him by the Sparkeses and the Bjelke-Petersens and, when he wrote to Mr Mike Ahern some time ago, apparently acted contrary to his own personal point of view. I have a copy of Mr Lester's letter, which refers to what he, as the Employment Minister in a National Party Government, had to say about voluntary employment agreements—a point of view supported by the Liberal Party. The letter states—

"It is envisaged that under voluntary employment contracts an employer would be able to negotiate with an employee payment of a lesser amount than the minimum weekly wage prescribed by awards of the Commission.

It could be argued that voluntary employment contracts or any move away from the existing arbitration system is a recipe for industrial instability and wage fixing chaos, could in some circumstances lead to sweated labour conditions and in some areas cause a wage explosion."

This is Mr Lester's letter to Mr Ahern. It continues—

"The present wage fixing system of conciliation and arbitration practiced in Queensland and the rest of Australia has served the community well for close on 80 years and has general acceptance."

The Labor Party agrees with Mr Lester. He continues—

"Voluntary employment contracts would in essence be a form of collective bargaining. It is well recognised that an arbitration system cannot satisfactorily exist in conjunction with a collective bargaining system."

Mr LESTER: I rise to a point of order. I have no recollection of such a letter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Peak Downs will resume his seat.

Mr WARBURTON: What the member for Peak Downs stated in that letter when he was Minister for Employment is spot on as far as the Labor Party is concerned. However, recent actions of the National Party show what that party, supported by the Liberal Party in respect of those secret deals, really thinks of the working people of our State.

Public Service Appointments

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier, I refer to the Government's stated policy of appointment on merit only in the public service. I ask: can he explain the placement of two of his ALP branch members as drivers in the

Government service? Does he consider it proper that one of those appointees retired from his previous job at the Port of Brisbane Authority, collecting his superannuation prior to taking up his new career that was personally organised by the Deputy Premier?

Mr BURNS: I am thankful for the question because this Government does have a policy that staff such as drivers who are appointed by Ministers are not members of the public service. They are appointed for the length of the Minister's service. It was not that way under the former National Party Government.

Mr Borbidge: Your branch members.

Mr BURNS: It makes no difference whether they are branch members or not because they work only for that specific period. The honourable member is talking about public servants. I might just remind the honourable member that he was a member of the Government that on 1 December last year signed a contract for the Under Secretary of the Treasury Department that gave him a \$700,000 lump sum the day after Labor won Government. The honourable member should hang his head in shame.

Cape York/North Queensland Enterprise Zone

Mr BORBIDGE: I thank the Deputy Premier for his admission that he has been employing branch members, and I refer the Minister for Manufacturing and Commerce to his comments in the *Courier-Mail* of 9 April 1990, wherein he clearly supported the Cape York/North Queensland Enterprise Zone, acknowledging its wide acceptance and suggesting an expansion of its boundaries. I refer also to conflicting comments made by the Treasurer in the *Townsville Bulletin* of 25 April 1990, claiming that the Government may scrap the enterprise zone, that it was discriminatory, and that it was based on political imperatives rather than sound planning. I now ask: can the Minister advise the House whether he agrees with the Treasurer's assessment and whether it is he or the Treasurer who will determine the future of the North Queensland Enterprise Zone?

Mr SMITH: In answer to the honourable member—the question of the future of the North Queensland Enterprise Zone is presently before Cabinet, which is the appropriate place for a decision to be made. As that matter is before Cabinet, I do not propose to discuss it today in the House.

Coolum Police Station; Cut-backs in Police Officer Hours

Mr BARBER: I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to cut-backs in Coolum police officer hours for the next four weeks, forcing the station to close at 6 p.m. on Saturdays until 8 p.m. on Mondays, which are peak hours for policing in Coolum, and I ask: can the Minister advise the House of the reason for the cut-backs and can he tell honourable members what can be done to remedy the situation?

Mr MACKENROTH: In answer to the honourable member's question—I understand that the situation at Coolum is that the staffing there was increased from two to four and that the police in that area made an estimate of what amount of overtime would be needed and also penalty units for working on weekends. That has now been reviewed and a new estimate has been made, so that further overtime and penalty rates can be paid on weekends. However, there are now in fact four police officers working from the Coolum Police Station, not two. The point that is being made that there is less policing in the Coolum area than in other areas is in fact incorrect.

Petrol Price Rise

Mr BARBER: I ask the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services: can he verify the accuracy of today's front-page story in the *Sun* which claims that petrol is about to rise by 9c a litre?

Mr MILLINER: I thank the honourable member for his question. Like many honourable members, I was very disturbed to see the headline in today's *Sun*, "9c petrol price hike threat". I was very disturbed to read that certain ultimatums have been issued around the place by various people. I instructed my staff to immediately contact Mr Moss. He indicated quite clearly that there had not been any ultimatums issued at all. So the headline is incorrect.

I am very concerned about what is happening to consumers in regard to the price of petrol. At the moment we are seeing a Mexican stand-off, with all sides making all sorts of allegations and threats.

Mr FitzGerald: You don't know what to do, though, do you?

Mr MILLINER: The Government does know what to do.

Today I have called for all the parties to get together, to sit down around the table and discuss the issue. I have had meetings with the service station operators and they have put to me certain facts and figures. I believe that the way in which this can be resolved is by people sitting down and discussing it. I have already written to the Trade Practices Commission, and it is looking at the whole question of petrol pricing. I am hopeful that in the not-too-distant future the Government will receive a report from that commission. However, in the interim, I believe that all sides of the argument should—

Mr FitzGerald: What will you do then?

Mr Mackenroth: You had 32 years and you did nothing.

Mr MILLINER: That is right. For 32 years the National Party did absolutely nothing about petrol pricing and service stations. At least this Government is encouraging people to sit down around the negotiating table to try to resolve the question of petrol pricing.

Withdrawal of Science Teacher from Science and Technology Centre

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I direct a question to the Minister for Education. In the light of the fact that Prime Minister Hawke insists that Australia must become the clever country and in the light of the fact that Premier Goss has promised that Queensland must encourage industry and technology to broaden the base of the State's economy, I ask: is it correct that the science teacher attached to the Science and Technology Centre had been withdrawn from his role of promoting interest in science? If that is correct, how can it be justified?

Mr BRADDY: I do not have any knowledge of that particular matter. I therefore ask the honourable member to place the question on notice.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I do so accordingly.

Skerman Report; *Education—Have Your Say*

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I refer the Minister for Education to a recent Education Department publication called *Education—Have Your Say*. I understand that this is a result of the Skerman report, and I ask: is it a fact that the Skerman review was initiated when the director-general was on holidays and was done without discussing it with him at that stage? Would the Minister concede that this is a highly irregular practice, as Ministers should be advised by chief executive officers? Is it a fact that two middle management officers, who are well known as strong ALP supporters, were appointed to assist Mr Skerman?

Would the Minister concede that it is just too much of a coincidence that, from the many officers he could have chosen from middle management, he should pick these two ALP supporters? Is it a fact that the chairman of the new policy unit set up as a result of the Skerman report is now seen as the de facto head of the department, in

spite of his low ranking in seniority? Will the Minister concede that his actions are an outrageous vote of no confidence in a chief executive and his senior officers?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call on the Minister to answer that question, can I suggest to all honourable members that questions without notice should be somewhat briefer than the one just asked.

Mr BRADDY: I welcome the question. On our coming to office it was apparent that the administration of the Education Department and its relationship with the regional officers and the schools required examination to make sure that they were operating at their best level. You would realise, Mr Speaker, that up to 40 000 people are employed by this department as teachers, teacher aides or in some other capacity.

This Government was elected to office on the basis of making education a priority. We certainly do not resile from that undertaking. This Government has always affirmed that priority.

The decision was made by me as the Minister to review the department's relationship with its regional offices and the schools. At that time the then director-general was on holidays. He is now on preretirement leave. Therefore, he has played relatively little part in the organisation of the department during the period of our term in office. As the competent and responsible Minister, I take the responsibility for having made that decision.

The report was compiled by a combination of internal and external people, namely, Mr Skerman, who was the external person, and two internal officers. I employed two very competent public servants who were also employed within the department when Mr Littleproud was the Minister for Education. One of those people was a regional director and one worked in the head office in Mary Street. I made no inquiry about their political standing. I have no knowledge whatsoever of whether either of those officers is a member of the Australian Labor Party, nor do I have any concern about whether they are members of the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party or the National Party. They were employed to do the job on advice given to me by officers of the department, and they did that job extremely well.

To suggest that one of them is the de facto head of the department is absolute nonsense. The position of director-general has been advertised, as is required by law. I have no idea whether the officer to whom the Opposition Education spokesman is referring is going to apply for the position. If he does, along with everyone else he will be judged by the system that this Government has set up.

The Minister, a representative of the Public Service Management Commission and the Director-General of the Premier's Department will make the decision. We will pick the short list and interview the people on that list, so that nobody will have an opportunity to indulge in the patronage and the poor selection that occurred when the National Party was in Government. A fair and objective system will be adopted. All those people who apply for the position will have an equal opportunity. I can assure honourable members that there is no name in my pocket for the Director-General of Education. Together with the other people who will make the selection, I will look at the list, interview the appropriate people and the best person will be selected. The department will operate better under our system than it did under the shameful patronage that has been exposed today by my colleague the Minister for Administrative Services.

Criticism by Opposition Leader of Overseas Trip by Tourism Minister

Mr NUNN: In directing a question to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing, I refer to an article that appeared in the *Courier-Mail* on 10 April of this year, in which the Leader of the Opposition was critical of the Minister's overseas trip. I ask: is the Minister aware of the article and what are his comments in relation to it?

Mr GIBBS: I certainly am aware of the accusations and statements that the Leader of the Opposition made during my absence overseas. At the time that the article came

to my notice when I was in Japan, the people from the private sector who accompanied me on that trip were extremely upset. In fact, they were appalled by his statements. Immediately, without any reaction from me, a number of them put pen to paper to write—

Mr Borbidge: What did you do in Hong Kong?

Mr GIBBS: If the honourable member asks that as a separate question, I will be more than delighted to answer it for him.

Let me tell the House exactly what the Leader of the Opposition said. Supposedly he has a knowledge of how the system works in Queensland. He was a former Premier and is now the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Cooper said—

"We find that there are now board or senior management people from the Tourist and Travel Corporation with him."

Is there no end to the naive stupidity in which the Leader of the Opposition constantly seeks to indulge? I will name the people who accompanied me. One of them was Mr Allan Pettigrew, my director-general, who is a member of the board of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. I was accompanied also by Mr Toshio Watanabe, who is the regional director for Japan. For the entirety of the trip throughout Japan and Korea we were accompanied constantly by Mr Tony Luxton, who is the manager of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation for Japan and Korea. I put on public record the very excellent job that Mr Watanabe and Mr Luxton did. However, people can concoct criticism. I suppose that the one part that stung a little bit was this statement in Mr Cooper's press release—

"Mr Gibbs has headed off to the tourist hot-spots of Asia with his personal staff and a couple of tourist operators."

I have already mentioned the names of those so-called "couple of tourist operators" who are all held in high regard in the tourist industry in Queensland. I might add that Mr Cooper has been associated with them in the past and that they held him in high regard. When they heard about Mr Cooper's statement, they bagged him like he would not believe.

Mr Cooper's most incredible statement was that we were going to the hot spots of Asia. Mr Cooper has never been out of this country. He has never travelled overseas. In fact, I am reliably informed by a member of his own back bench that he has never even visited this nation's capital of Canberra. Mr Cooper's knowledge of hot spots obviously must be formed totally on his very expert knowledge of his own activities on Saint Valentine's Day.

Western Queensland Floods

Mr NUNN: I direct my second question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I ask: will the Minister explain to the House how the Western Queensland Flood Appeal funds are being distributed and what time-frame is envisaged for that distribution?

Mr MACKENROTH: It was with interest that I read today's *Courier-Mail* in which an article conveyed the impression that the funds that were raised by the public appeal were being distributed rather slowly. That in fact is not correct.

I met with Clem Jones today. He informed me that approximately one-tenth of the funds were distributed earlier this week by way of vouchers to individuals in Charleville in particular. Those vouchers are redeemable at the shops in Charleville. That being the case, a two-way benefit is being received from the money that is being donated by people to the public appeal. One benefit is providing the flood victims with money to purchase the goods that they need. The second benefit is that that money is being spent in local businesses in Charleville and other western Queensland towns.

Clem advised me that yesterday he travelled to Charleville to discuss with the Charleville committee that town's needs and where it would be best to spend the money.

A scheme has now been formulated whereby the committee hopes next week to distribute further vouchers up to the value of \$650 to enable people to buy either white goods or floor coverings for their homes. Those goods will be purchased wholesale by the appeal committee and will then be distributed through the retailers in Charleville who will receive a commission for doing that. As a result, they will receive some economic benefit from the purchase of either the white goods or the floor coverings.

I understand that a decision has already been made to provide floor coverings to all of the homes in Alpha that were inundated by water. One of the problems that have been encountered is that at this stage all of the undersheeting in north Queensland has been purchased but it amounts to only about half of the amount required to replace the floor coverings in homes in Alpha. The committee has had to go to the national distributor of that undersheeting to purchase the remainder of it. It is presently on its way from Sydney.

Money is still being donated to the public appeal. I understand that quite a number of functions are still to be held at which a large amount of money will be raised. The money that has been donated is being distributed as quickly as it can. It is being distributed equitably to those people throughout western Queensland. I do not believe that there is a better person in Queensland than Clem Jones to accept responsibility for heading up that fund-raising committee. He is prepared to get out and to ensure that things move quickly. That is exactly what he is doing. There certainly should be no criticism whatsoever of his efforts in relaying the money that is being donated by people right throughout Australia as quickly as possible to people in western Queensland to ensure that they can rebuild their homes as quickly as possible.

Western Queensland Floods; Assistance Package

Mr HOBBS: I ask the Premier: in view of his statement yesterday that the final flood assistance package for businesses and land-owners has not yet gone to Canberra for approval, can he advise the House when the Queensland submission will be completed?

Mr W. K. GOSS: A considerable amount of material has already gone to Canberra. Loss-assessors have made assessments in respect of the business community. We have only provisional figures on the loss in respect of stock and property. Almost daily discussions and negotiations have been occurring with departmental officers and, ultimately, Ministers in Canberra in relation to the actual loss. As I said, the details of the loss-assessors' claims went to Canberra, I think, on about Thursday of last week. We received the assessors' report on only Tuesday or Wednesday. It took the assessors and the local businesspeople that long to finalise the claims and complete the calculations.

Discussions have been occurring between officers of my department and those of other relevant departments with the Department of Finance in Canberra, primarily, and other departments, in respect of what sort of funds are likely to be available and the types of criteria or qualifications that should be applied in terms of determining eligibility.

We propose to meet with representatives of the business community of Charleville tomorrow evening. From there we should be in a position to finalise our discussions with Canberra on, I would hope, Friday, but possibly not until early next week. There will be another report to Cabinet on Monday and then hopefully we will be in a position to make some announcements next week.

I think it was only the Monday after the floods had peaked in Charleville that I received the representation from one particular businessman in Charleville that unless the Government was able to give an immediate guarantee that he would receive a grant, that is, a non-repayable straight-out grant from the taxpayer, in the sum of \$1m to cover his losses, then, because of the damage that he had suffered, he would be forced to close his premises and leave, that this would do tremendous damage to the town and that it could occur with other businesspeople, too.

I have considerable sympathy for the plight of that individual and others in that position; but in terms of the Government being both responsive to the needs of such

people and responsible to the whole community, it is not, I believe, going to be possible to meet claims of that order 100 per cent. Those claims have to be subject to assessment by some independent assessor, and that would not have occurred as quickly as it has if it had not been for my personal intervention with the Insurance Council of Australia on Anzac Day when I was in Charleville with the Acting Prime Minister and retained at substantial cost to this Government—I did not ask them to volunteer—a team of assessors to process the claims. That cost will be borne by the Government. As I said, the assessment, which is more than an inch thick and which relates to individual losses by some 130 to 140 businesses, has been received by the Government and has gone to Canberra for processing. What we will be looking at is something beyond that.

As I indicated on Anzac Day, we will be definitely giving those people something beyond the normal disaster relief arrangements that operated prior to our coming to Government and which we inherited. The Government will be going beyond that, but how far it can go beyond that is not limited by its willingness to respond and to help the flood disaster victims. It is only limited by the funds available following the required negotiations with and agreement of the Federal Government. The Queensland Government must take into account the precedent that it establishes by its actions, because that precedent will be presented to my Government or any future Government following any future disaster. The Government has that responsibility to the community as a whole and will bear that in mind.

Western Queensland Floods, Review of possible Causes

Mr HOBBS: I direct my second question to the Minister for Primary Industries: in view of the devastating flooding of the township of Charleville by the waters of the Warrego River, will the Minister undertake to carry out a review of the causes of the severity of the flooding and, in particular, investigate the positioning of the railway line which, in some areas, has been held responsible for unnecessary flooding?

Mr CASEY: The Government's reaction to the western Queensland floods has been to direct the Queensland Water Resources Commission to send teams into the affected areas to do a thorough check of all water catchment areas and water levels and an assessment of stream run-offs, all of which will be properly recorded.

The Government has already taken action to obtain from an overseas satellite imagery program adequate data detailing the path of the floodwaters along the different stream systems. I refer particularly to the unusual break out of floodwaters north of Cunnamulla, which meant that the Warrego and Paroo systems joined virtually right down to the Queensland/New South Wales border.

That analysis will be recorded in a proper assessment and in due course will be tabled in the Parliament. However, adequate information is already available that clearly indicates, for instance, that in the Paroo system, which has the whole of its catchment area in the mulga areas of Queensland and where there was a record flood, that on an average taken over a period of 20 years, and this information was released prior to the flood at an arid lands management conference that was held in Charleville, that in fact there is a direct relationship between the tremendous amount of clearing undertaken in the mulga areas and the flooding and that, while the rainfall has remained fairly static, over the years the run-off has considerably increased.

Therefore, officers of the Department of Primary Industries will look at the stocking numbers in those areas affected by the floods. Profitability gains may be available to the grazing community through the reduction of stock numbers in some areas and the restoration of those mulga lands.

Proposed Planning and Environment Act

Mrs BIRD: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier, I refer to the proposed planning and environment Act, and ask: when can the members expect this important piece of legislation to be tabled in the House? Will time be given for consultation before its approval?

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for her question. The planning and environment Act is the old planning and development legislation that arose from a discussion paper issued in 1986. The draft legislation has been around for quite some time now and the consultation process has gone on for years.

In the last month, two full-day discussions were held between my parliamentary committee and the officers of the department. The members of the committee also had discussions with officers of other departments in relation to this matter.

Today, I make the offer to any member of the Parliament that, as soon as the draft Bill is available, if they would like to sit down and spend some time with the two officers of my department who drafted the legislation, they may do so. Honourable members should be prepared to do that because this will be a very important piece of legislation. It will replace the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act. It will mean that there will be one town-planning and environment Act for the whole of this State. The draft legislation encompasses a wide range of issues affecting not only every member of this House but also every person in Queensland.

Before I bring this piece of legislation into the Parliament, it is important that every member has an opportunity to study and understand it. My offer is open to any honourable member from the Opposition or the Liberal Party. That offer has been made to the green movement, the UGA and people from the different development organisations.

I believe that is the only way to introduce this dramatic change to the legislation that was originally initiated by the previous Government. This Government has made a number of its own changes to the draft legislation.

I assure honourable members that down the track there will be a further amendment to the Act because, as part of the Government's policy, it proposes the abolition of the Local Government Court. However, because a systems review is now under way—a joint consultative process between the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government—and a series of seminars is currently being held through the State, it is in Queensland's interests not to repeal that section but to continue with the planning and environment part of the legislation and take it from there.

Two or three major changes will affect all Queenslanders. One is a proposal for a compulsory conference very early in the process after the close of objections, and another is the provision of a better definition of "environment" so that councils and individuals will have some authority to work on the environment, following the Land Court decision of Mr Justice Connolly.

I ask every honourable member of this House to consider the proposals, and I repeat my invitation to all honourable members to talk to my departmental officers.

The proposed legislation is a massive document comprising nearly 100 pages, with many clauses. It is not a document that will be easily changed on the floor of the Parliament. Discussion and debate should occur well before the Bill comes to the Parliament.

If I can, I intend to bring it to the Parliament on the last sitting day in June to lie on the table until the House resumes.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for questions has expired.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (4.06 p.m.), by leave: The Minister for Administrative Services personally misrepresented me in answer to a Dorothy Dix question not so long ago by detailing part of the works program for 1989-90. In order to put the record straight, I seek leave to table the complete works program for education for 1989-90. In it is included—

Mr McLEAN: I rise to a point of order. At no stage did I say that that was the case. I said that it was a special electorate works program that the Leader of the Opposition sat around a Cabinet table working out.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McLEAN: It was a \$27m specialist work program.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would honourable members resume their seats, please.

Mr COOPER: Mr Speaker, I had almost finished. I wish to table the complete works program for 1989-90 to set the record straight as far as the education works program is concerned. It includes a full teaching block for Inala at a cost of \$290,000.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs) (4.08 p.m.), by leave: A few moments ago, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Mr Warburton, said that I had supposedly written a letter to the then Premier, Mr Mike Ahern, about voluntary employment agreements. Judging by what I heard, the letter was not written the way I ordinarily write a letter and it does not contain my personal philosophy on the matter. I simply ask whether the Minister would be kind enough to table the copy of the letter so that I can examine it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is not in the Chamber.

PROPOSED MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have received letters from the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Sherwood pursuant to Standing Order No. 137. The letter from the honourable member for Sherwood reads—

"Dear Mr Speaker

I submit the following matter as a definite Matter of Public Importance for discussion today, namely: Responsibility for and the administration of, the so-called 'Leave of Absence system' in the Queensland gaols through which convicted killers, rapists and drug pushers have been repeatedly released, unescorted, years before their sentences have expired and in some cases, weeks after their admission.

In particular, and notwithstanding public outcry against the scheme, in February, how a convicted killer, and now escaped prisoner, Henry John Bartczack could have been released, contrary to the recommendation of the trial judge, and forcing terrified and threatened relatives to leave their homes and go into hiding seeking police protection."

The letter from the Leader of the Opposition reads—

"Dear Mr Speaker,

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 137, I wish to propose that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:-

the impact on regional economic activity of the tragic flooding in central and western Queensland, and in particular, as it effects primary industry, small business and the family unit."

Honourable members would be aware that, when two matters are submitted, the Speaker chooses the matter that is of greater public importance and urgency. I will accept the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Western Queensland Floods

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the Leader of the Opposition have the required support?
Not fewer than five members having risen in their places to indicate approval—

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (4.10 p.m.): What I have to say today follows on from what was said yesterday by the Premier and a number of Ministers about the western Queensland flood disaster which affected not one town, but probably half a dozen towns. During the Matters of Public Interest debate yesterday, the honourable member for Warrego outlined the extent of the damage in his area and I also spoke on this disaster. Because of time constraints, I was not able to complete what I wanted to say and I thank the House for allowing me time to do so today.

I repeat the Opposition offer to provide bipartisan support in the setting up a joint parliamentary committee so that the Opposition can identify with the Government in considering this terrible disaster. We believe that, in matters such as this, there must be bipartisanship, and we offer it in the most sensible way.

There will be a debriefing on the whole operation from the onset of the disaster and through the evacuation to the final result, which will not be known for up to three months. There will be, in effect, a post-mortem. There is a need for a joint parliamentary committee to look into all natural disasters and to come up with a plan to be put into effect in future disasters. That would be of great interest to the people of this State.

Debriefings will certainly be carried out by the armed services, the police, the State Emergency Service and all the other organisations that took part in this operation. We will certainly need input from the parliamentary representatives and I hope that my suggestion receives favourable consideration by the Government.

The effect on businesses in the affected areas has been outlined and is known to all honourable members. The effect on small businesses and rural producers has been and will be immense. I have said, and I say again, that no-one expects any Government of any political colour to go into devastated areas with an open chequebook. That is even too nonsensical to contemplate.

I have suggested to small businesspeople and others to ensure, as early as possible, that they assess the damage they have suffered so that they have some hard facts and figures upon which to base a case. No-one expects that they will be compensated for the full amount of their losses. What is needed is a major effort to put these people back into business as soon as possible, and the Federal Government must be involved. These people cannot wait for two or three months.

We know that the agreement was made between the Federal Government and all the States, not just Queensland. New South Wales and Queensland suffer more than the other States from natural disasters. Queensland suffers more than any other State from cyclones, droughts and floods. Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia do not suffer such natural disasters. Therefore, the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State suits the southern States more than the States that are worst affected. That is why Queensland is disadvantaged when it comes to the provision of assistance for natural disasters.

When once-in-a-century disasters such as this flood occur, the rule book must be put aside. The Federal Government must be convinced that there is a need for relief, because the whole region that has been affected by the floods plays an important part in the economy of this nation.

Because of this, special consideration must be given to getting businesses back into production as a matter of urgency. Many businesses will need to have their debts restructured and certain refinancing must take place. Before the floods, most of the people living in the region, especially those in Charleville, had been in the grip of a recession for quite some time from drought or some other cause. That has gone on for

approximately 15 or 20 years, which is a long time for people to be in that sort of position. The people in the region had experienced better seasons and markets and were just beginning to come out of the recession when the flood hit. They have a very high debt structure and high interest repayments to make. They cannot possibly wear the sorts of debts that they would now have to incur in order to get back into business. Even if an interest rate of 1 per cent applied to loans, businesses would be unable to repay them. I suggest that the debts that they already have and the debts that they are about to incur be considered in total so that their debts can be completely restructured and refinanced accordingly. That can be done on a very sensible basis and without undue damage to the public purse, bearing in mind that the State needs to have these people back in operation as soon as possible.

I will point to some specific anomalies that have occurred and, as the Minister is now in the House, I will mention one particular anomaly. I make no criticism of any particular body. These matters will come out during the debrief. At the time of the flood, a support unit was based in the Toowoomba/Oakey region. It had a field hospital, field kitchens, tents, bedding and every item of equipment that would be required to cope with a disaster. These facilities were not called upon. There may be reasons why they were not called upon, and I do not intend to make any political hay out of it at all. However, matters of that nature should be looked at. I sincerely hope that this issue will be raised during the debrief and that answers will be given. If a joint parliamentary party was involved in the relief operation, valuable representations could be made through parliamentarians and benefits would follow.

Some residents in the region have reported to the member for Warrego that the Family Services office, which was working from the railway station, was tending to enforce the \$970 limit for single people, even though they were home-owners, whereas at the magistrate's office they were told that single people could receive up to \$3,000. I believe that the Minister is probably aware that in the initial stages there were some difficulties with payments to various families from various offices.

Ms Warner interjected.

Mr COOPER: No. That is grossly unfair. Those schemes were there for a very definite purpose and have fulfilled a very real role in all natural disasters up to the present time. This flood is a once-in-a-century type of disaster which needs to be looked at in a different light. If the Opposition sees anomalies occurring, it has a responsibility to bring them to the Minister's attention, and that is exactly what I am doing. There is no doubt that there are reasons for them and that the problems have been cleaned up. It is the responsibility of elected representatives in the region to bring matters reported to them to the attention of those responsible at the time.

Another anomaly appears to have emerged in relation to flat-dwellers. These people do have a household—although it is certainly not a house—and relief payments to them have been restricted. A block of flats is regarded as a household and the residents of different flats within the block share the \$3,000 pay-out, even though each family living in those flats has the normal household effects, such as a television, stove and furniture.

In addition, there have been problems with fraudulent claims. I know that the Minister is aware of these and that the police have taken action to retrieve funds that have been paid out. The Opposition is concerned that once the payments have been made and a legitimate claimant comes along to receive payment, that claimant cannot receive payment until the other people are caught and the money has been retrieved. The innocent people are the ones who suffer because of the guilty or greedy ones who have moved in first.

The relief fund is still being distributed to various people and I commend the coordinator, Clem Jones, for moving so rapidly to implement the distribution of the fund. It may be possible to speed up the distribution of the vouchers that have been provided through the public appeal. Currently, vouchers are issued in the same way as travellers' cheques. Each has a value of \$20 and there is a limit of \$220 for families.

Each of these vouchers are for use in local stores and must be countersigned by the recipient and by an official of the appeal as the vouchers are handed out. This is proper accountability and the Opposition does not argue with that. However, this has led to long queues. In one recent instance, people who reached the end of the queue in Charleville at 3 p.m. were told that their applications could not be processed on that day because of the length of the queue. Even with that restraint, the office closed late in order to service those people who were already in the queue before the cut-off time. In other words, people who are in need of relief funds and assistance were suffering more trauma as a result of the long queues. I do not raise these matters in any form of carping criticism, but I simply mention that these problems exist today and should receive more attention so that these people are relieved of this unnecessary extra stress.

On behalf of the Opposition I would like to thank all those people involved in overcoming the flood crisis: the police, the armed services, the State Emergency Service and those other bodies such as the Salvation Army and the St Vincent de Paul Society that did a fantastic job in providing people in that region with the necessary sustenance during the early days of the flood. I happened to be out there during the evacuation. On the first day, I found that when people had been taken off the roofs and later taken to aircraft hangars, they were in need of assistance there and then. Disaster relief people were in attendance to take their names and addresses immediately. However, I feel that the tents and field hospitals might have been set up a little earlier. If there were reasons for any delay, perhaps they can be found out later. I am thinking ahead to the next time a disaster occurs so that, in the initial stages, if matters can be taken in hand a little faster, many people will suffer much less. That statement is not intended as carping criticism, but merely as a means of bringing these matters to notice so that they can be dealt with in a debriefing session. I sincerely hope that members of this Parliament will be given an opportunity to take part in that debriefing session.

I commend all the people who live in the towns and districts surrounding the affected areas—people from Charleville, Alpha, Jericho, Blackall and Augathella. The community service groups in those towns certainly got right into gear. They moved into the flooded areas and began a clean-up operation. They went into those areas self-contained and continue to be so, which demonstrates the tremendous support of members of the local community for their fellow man in times of trouble. Those organisations certainly do not look for commendation, but they undoubtedly deserve it.

I mention also the various local service clubs that are now in the process of raising funds. I commend the flood appeal to all members of the National Party who may wish to contribute to it on a personal basis. I commend the appeal to all parliamentarians and all other people throughout the State so that the fund can be built up to such a level that assistance can be given to the people affected by the floods, thereby alleviating the burden on the public purse. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity of saying these few words.

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (4.25 p.m.): The situation in relation to the floods in western Queensland has been well canvassed and I have no doubt that in this place and in the public arena it will be further canvassed over the next few weeks. The seriousness of the disaster and the Government's response have been well canvassed and well outlined by the Government.

Because of the importance of communicating the action taken by the Government, I pay credit to the Minister who has been primarily responsible for coordinating the Government's efforts, Mr Terry Mackenroth. I commend him not only for what he has done overall but also for his efforts in coordinating assistance. A local newspaper, the *Western Times*, was out of action and he organised publication of that newspaper on a regular basis to outline what was happening, what the Government was doing, and what community organisations were doing. That was a very important move, because it conveyed to the community exactly what had been done to assist the people affected.

From time to time, reports circulate about the Government not communicating what it is doing. I think that the Government could improve its performance but that, frankly, during the disaster, its communication had been pretty good. Other measures for improvement will be looked into, but they will have to be weighed against the fact that people were in shock or were greatly concerned about their personal situation. Arising out of that, those people had a psychological need to see something concrete happening almost on a daily basis.

As I said earlier in answer to a question asked by the member for Warrego, it is a matter of the Government's being both responsive and responsible. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is well aware that the Government is endeavouring to act in a responsible manner and also that the management of disaster relief is not simply a case of writing a series of blank cheques and giving them to people in western Queensland—which was a suggestion made by some people recently—simply because the disaster creates a special situation. I certainly acknowledge that, but point out that the rule book should not be thrown away, which some people were immature enough to suggest. When the rule book is thrown away, the end result is chaos. Governments have to manage their affairs in an orderly manner and ensure that they are accountable in terms of the broader public interest as well as in terms of responding to those people who are in need.

I do not propose to repeat the details of the ministerial statement that I made yesterday about the Government's response, but I will refer members to that statement which outlines the great expense that has been incurred and the efforts that continue to be made. I also refer members to the ministerial statement made by Mr Mackenroth, which underlines a tremendous effort by a number of Ministers and outlines the coordination of that effort by Mr Mackenroth and the Cabinet subcommittee. A couple of weeks ago, the disaster relief arrangements were referred to as similar to those entered into during a war effort, and I think that that statement is very true.

I remind honourable members that the precedent that is being established in relation to disaster relief—and bearing in mind the statements that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition recently—could prove to be expensive not just as it relates to western Queensland, but also in the future. The Labor Government inherited a set of guidelines for natural disaster relief. This Government has gone well beyond those guidelines and is now looking at additional measures. The response of this Government compares very favourably with any response made by a previous Government. If the Opposition wishes to examine examples of disaster management by previous Governments in cities and towns such as Gympie and Dalby, I would be happy to go into the details to make a comparison that will illustrate what this Government is doing.

I appeal to all members not to do anything that will prejudice community support for the Western Queensland Flood Appeal, or the success of appeals that have been made to a range of individuals, companies and community organisations. The activities of those groups depend a great deal on goodwill and a generally favourable, positive community spirit. That is the attitude that this Government is trying to foster. I believe that all responsible members of Parliament and people in the community will want to participate in that effort. I point out that, ultimately, the millions of dollars collected from the public—and bear in mind that the fund was kicked off with a contribution of a quarter of a million dollars from both the Queensland Government and the Federal Government—will go to western Queenslanders. Already, as a result of the efforts of Mr Clem Jones and his committee, a very substantial sum is in circulation. Because of the voucher system, those funds not only benefit people in the west but also will circulate through the western Queensland business community.

As to the future—many things will have to be done for a long period. It will be a long and costly process in terms of rebuilding lives and infrastructure in the west, but the Government is committed to doing that.

The immediate predicament has been well handled. I am pleased with and proud of the efforts of the Ministers who have been primarily involved. There has been much talk about a bipartisan approach. The Government welcomes that type of approach. Over recent weeks, some unfortunate statements have been made. However, during this debate I will not go into that. I want to encourage the growth of the sort of bipartisan approach that has been referred to.

At present, the Government is continuing to assess the losses by business. As I said in question-time, I hope to formulate a response as to what the business community can expect. I have indicated clearly that nobody will be able to nominate a figure, as some people did in their hour of desperation, and expect to have that given to them as a gift. That never happened before under relief arrangements. The community cannot afford that to happen. It did not happen in Gympie or Dalby or the other instances to which I referred earlier. Unfortunately, as much as one might like to do that, it cannot happen on this occasion.

The Government will be going beyond the normal relief arrangements. Over the next week or so, those negotiations will have to be finalised with the Commonwealth Government. That will occur after the Commonwealth Government has assessed the loss assessors' reports and after the State Government has had further discussions with the business community and a further report is given to Cabinet.

Mr INNES (Sherwood—Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.32 p.m.): I am pleased that the Government allowed debate of the motion on this Matter of Public Importance. As somebody who lived through the 1974 floods in Brisbane—although I was not at the time a member of Parliament—to go to Charleville and the near districts to witness the consequences of the flood brought to me some grim recollections.

Together with the member for Currumbin, Trevor Coomber, and the member for Merthyr, Mr Santoro, I visited Charleville on the Saturday following the flood. I thought that in the early days the last thing that the people of Charleville needed was more politicians. Certainly, those with direct interests based on their electorates and Ministers of the Crown who had effective work to do should have had priority for transport early in the week. I used the charter allowance available to me to go to Charleville. I was happy to provide an additional seat for the relief helicopter pilot to accompany me.

We spent three hours on the ground. I advised the Minister responsible, Mr Mackenroth, that we were travelling to Charleville. It was not a time for politics. After three hours on the ground, we subsequently flew from Charleville as far as Quilpie. I was interested to see the extent of the flooding. We took a southerly turn at Quilpie down to Thargomindah and an easterly turn back to Cunnamulla, where we landed to refuel. We obtained an overview of the extraordinary extent of the flooding in the region. In fact, we followed the floodwaters down to Thargomindah. The Paroo, the Warrego and the Bulloo Rivers virtually joined together as they flowed towards the New South Wales border.

Before I refer to Charleville itself, I point out that we saw hundreds of miles of rural roads under water. In terms of human tragedy, I suspect that there may well be more people injured and killed as a result of the effect on the road system of the flood than there were in the flood itself. It was a matter of God's good grace that very few people were killed or badly injured by the flood; however, quite clearly, it will have a catastrophic effect on the road system for months and years to come.

We started off with a road system with major problems and we will end up with a road system that has vast problems. Travel around and between some of the stations will be impossible for months rather than weeks. The edges of the roads and the roads themselves are soft and scoured. The shire chairman told us of a 20-foot chasm that was cut beside a new concrete bridge culvert in the Murweh Shire. The force and the rapidity of the flow of the water staggered everybody. That rapidity eroded the ground around vehicles in Charleville and dug them in until their turrets were level with the surface and the water could flow evenly—and on it went. The flooding has produced an

unusual effect. It is not a question of conventional flooding. The force of the water has caused damage.

The State Government has a headache over funding. The Federal Government has been attacked—I believe rightly—over the whole basis of road-funding. More of the taxation contribution out of each litre of diesel or petrol must be apportioned to the road system, particularly in the west, which has problems of massive lines of communication but inadequate funds.

Looking further than Charleville, to the recovery of the area, I say transport is vital. An enormous need exists for assistance with road-building, road-rebuilding and culvert and bridge-building in that area. The damage obviously extended over hundreds of miles to the north, areas that we could not inspect on that day.

The damage from the floods will have an enormous effect on the State Budget. Because of the massive tax take, the Commonwealth Government should assist the State Government with emergency relief road-funding at least for that locality, even if we cannot find a total answer to the road-funding problems of the State.

I turn now to the problems in Charleville. I was happy to return to Charleville and speak with the Minister on the following Sunday morning. Because of the initial limitations of the policy, ordinary council workers with modest houses were denied assistance, except for assistance for their children. The Minister said that the matter was under active discussion. I referred to the situation in New South Wales. I am not suggesting that it was my proposal. The Minister had taken it on board. My colleagues and I welcome and support the change to the guidelines, which was made by Cabinet decision two days later, I think.

Everybody in Charleville who occupied a house was desperately affected. Just as I am sure that everybody who gives money to the appeal does not expect it not to be distributed throughout the community, so I believe that in this situation there is a special case for Government funds. We should forget the means test for the first \$3,000 and assist everybody whose household was devastated by the floods.

On the basis of these very exceptional circumstances, I think that there should be some special assistance given to business. Any consideration is welcome. It seems to me that the steps taken by the Government to have assessors brought in at its own expense to look at loss is completely sensible and sound. There cannot be an open-cheque system. There can be rorts. The Liberal Party will certainly be interested to see the proposals that the Government puts forward for the distribution of moneys to businesses on the basis of need and loss demonstrated to the assessors. That will not be approached in a niggardly or pinpricking fashion on our part. It is an exceptional situation.

It is really a case of catch 22. Those of us who have lived in flood-affected parts of Brisbane are aware that it is impossible to get flood insurance if it can be shown that there is a history of flooding in the area. If there is no history of flooding, why have insurance? I am sure that that was the situation for most of the people in Charleville. There was no historical or demonstrated need, so therefore they did not have insurance. They themselves could not be held to be negligent for not taking out the insurance; if they had been flooded before, they would not have got it—I am in a position to tell honourable members that.

I say again that the circumstances are exceptional. I think it was more a case of luck than good management that the airstrip at Charleville happened to be built on the highest ground and was the only place not under water. It would have been horrifying had that not been the case. One can imagine people going in all directions, looking for high ground. There was that ability to bring in the bigger aircraft, the Hercules, with immediate supplies. A World War II hangar was available to keep the people of Charleville dry. That was an unusual combination of emergency services, which proved very helpful.

Perhaps what the illustration is that throughout Queensland, wherever there is a country town or a significant town beside a river system, there should be developed a protocol and a manual of emergency procedures. High ground and aircraft

access need to be considered. That is important. Even the coordination of the type of aircraft which could be used in an emergency is important. If a problem arises in a place like Normanton, there would be a need for aircraft with the necessary range. As the Minister well knows, the notorious Government jet was the perfect aircraft for this situation. It was able to fly backwards and forwards to Brisbane twice without refuelling. There is a lack of appropriate types of aircraft available from the military. For instance, the new Black Hawk helicopter cannot be used in roof-top rescues. The downdraught is too great. The people who were to be saved would be blown off the roof. We were lucky to have Kiowa and Iroquois helicopters still available for rescue work. The military cannot be told to plan their lives in accordance with emergency procedures; however, the military are used so often in emergency situations that some concept of domestic emergency work should be in the military's mind for the coordination of all facilities.

One commends the Government, the public servants and the military for their enormous effort. It was said that the field kitchens were a little delayed. I understand that the first kitchens in operation were the Salvation Army kitchens, which did a magnificent job, and they were supported by the army field kitchens. The evening before I got there, 5 000 meals had been served by those emergency field kitchens. That is to be commended.

The road system is something that I will add to the debate. There is a desperate need for the allocation of special resources and the development of a protocol or emergency procedure for many of our towns which might in the future experience such a disaster. I think that is very desirable.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.42 p.m.): I am pleased to join this debate. Firstly I would like to thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for the courtesy that he showed me when he went to Charleville, which he mentioned in the debate today. He certainly did ring me and seek my advice in relation to that, and I do thank him for that.

In regard to the Government effort in relation to the floods in western Queensland—I do not know of much more that could have been done by Government. At the end of the effort that is going on, when we have a debriefing, we might find areas in which we could have done things better or done things differently. However, in view of the situation that arose in Charleville and given the circumstances, I do not know that things really could have been done any better.

I was in Charleville on the Friday afternoon before the flood came on the Friday night/Saturday morning. I left there at 4 o'clock on the Friday afternoon. I was informed by people who seemed to know that the waters had reached the height of the flood 27 years ago and that nobody expected the floodwaters to get much higher than that. It was thought that that was going to be the height reached. So I left Charleville, returned to Brisbane and reported the position to the Premier, who at that stage had gone to Melbourne.

At 5 o'clock the next morning I received a telephone call from Alan Windsor from the State Emergency Service asking me because of the floods to declare Charleville a disaster area. Having been there only 13 hours previously, it was very hard for me to comprehend what I was to see when I went back there later that day, especially as I had been informed by people who had lived in Charleville for 60 or 70 years and who knew the water systems in western Queensland that the waters were not going to rise to such a height. However, when we returned in the afternoon, what confronted the Premier and me was fairly much chaos—but probably organised chaos in that almost the whole township of Charleville had gone onto the roofs. There were some 12 helicopters operating to get these people off their roofs and up to the aircraft hangar. They were operating in a very organised way. On the ground, thousands of people had been taken with no belongings whatsoever from their homes. People were abusing other people, and it really took some time to settle them down. I returned to Brisbane that night after helping to settle them down.

On that Monday, I attended a Cabinet meeting in Townsville and had prepared a submission on the floods in western Queensland. As a result of that submission, a Cabinet subcommittee was established. It is composed of me as the chairman, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Administrative Services, the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs and the Minister for Health. During the first week, that subcommittee met daily. It now meets every second day to deal with all matters relating to the floods, not only matters relating to departments but also matters relating to any way in which the Government can assist or can provide assistance not only to Charleville but to all of western Queensland.

Honourable members may recall that last week the army was sent to Alpha following reports that the people there were not coping as well as we had been led to believe. Because of the massive resources that are operating in Charleville, the Minister for Defence was approached to send the army to Alpha so that work could continue on the rebuilding program.

Following that Cabinet meeting and the establishment of that subcommittee, I returned to Charleville and stayed there until Friday to ensure that the Government was doing everything possible. Each day I reported back to the Cabinet subcommittee, which continued to meet. When I returned to Brisbane I was replaced in Charleville firstly by Ken McElligott, then by Anne Warner and then by Ron McLean. A ministerial presence was maintained in Charleville until last weekend.

Mention has been made of several politicians going to the area. We ensured that at any one time only one Minister was present in Charleville and that we did not create a flying circus of people and public servants having a look at the area and then going home at night to sleep in their warm beds. The one politician in that area was actually working and ensuring that his presence was providing assistance to the people of Charleville. Other Ministers travelled to areas such as Alpha, Jericho and Blackall and reported back to the Cabinet subcommittee on the damage in those towns.

The Cabinet subcommittee meeting which was held on the weekend before last discussed the assistance available to private individuals under the Commonwealth Government scheme. The Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs is administering the assistance scheme in Charleville. On the basis of reports received by me and that department, it was ascertained that the assistance scheme was not good enough and that it needed to be adjusted and amended. The Cabinet subcommittee devised a scheme that was approved by Cabinet on Monday of last week. The people of western Queensland were informed of that scheme as quickly as possible.

This debate relates mainly to the economic problems experienced by people in western Queensland. This Government is well aware of those problems. That is one of the reasons why it considered how it could best assist the people of that area. Previously a means-tested grant of \$2,900 for a family and \$970 for a single person was available. In the new scheme that means test has been removed. Grants of up to \$3,000 per household are now available where water has at least entered the house.

Under the previous scheme the estimated costs would have been \$1.2m. Of course, it is necessary to wait until all the money has been distributed before the real costs can be assessed. Under the new scheme the estimated cost is \$3.6m. The previous scheme, which covered repairs to dwellings, contained a means test on assets and income and ignored mortgage costs. The maximum benefit that was paid out was a grant of \$8,000, less the \$2,900 that had already been paid. The cost to the Government of that is estimated at \$3m. No concessional loans were available.

The new scheme still has a means test on assets and income. However, the mortgage costs for anyone who is paying off a home are taken into account. No maximum limit is placed on the cost of restoring living areas and dwellings to a habitable and secure condition. This Government is not simply giving another \$5,000; it is granting a sum of money to bring houses back to a liveable condition. The estimated cost of that is \$10m.

For those people who do not qualify for that assistance or who qualify only for part of it, the Government has instituted a new scheme whereby a maximum loan of \$80,000 is available at an interest rate of 6 per cent. No loan was available under the previous scheme. Because of the way in which the Government has amended the assistance scheme, I believe that it has done everything possible to assist those home-owners, house-holders and private individuals who have been affected by the floods.

In relation to business—the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that an assessment should be made in relation to the effect on business. That has been done, and the assessment was handed to me last Tuesday by the insurance loss-adjusters. The Premier referred to that earlier today. I am certain that by early next week a new scheme, which will be much better than the previous scheme, will be in place.

Time expired.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory) (4.53 p.m.): In addressing these devastating floods in the west, I will speak mainly about my own electorate of Gregory. I would like to mention a few people in dispatches. I believe it is paramount that these people be named because it was as a result of their ability and the coolness of their operations that loss of life was not suffered in the areas of Alpha and Jericho.

I want to mention especially the inspector of police at Longreach, Inspector Kevin Williams, for the way in which he delegated his men during the course of this disaster. I pay tribute to Sergeant Dan Glenden, the chief of the SES at Longreach; Mr Ken Cullum, an SES coordinator from Brisbane; and Brian Egan, one of the regional operators at Longreach. I believe it was because of those people, the way in which they worked and the way in which they controlled their jobs that there was no loss of life. I congratulate them on the way in which they worked.

I pay special tribute to Bob Millis, the shire clerk at Jericho; to the police at Jericho and Alpha; to Sergeant Owen Williams, Peter Clarke and the officer in charge at Jericho himself, Greg Flint. Help was also rendered by a Blackall policeman, Constable Rob Richards, who was stranded there.

I now refer to the aid that has been given since the floods and to the way in which the operation has been carried out. I congratulate all those who provided the voluntary aid that we have received in that region. I congratulate the members of the military on their expertise and also the volunteers who came into the region after the flooding. I think enough has been said about the people who have helped. Now we should get down to the nitty-gritty. I praise also the work of Telecom, the CEB and the Department of Works for the way in which they have worked in trying to rectify the essential services that were knocked out as a result of the disastrous floods in the Jericho Shire.

At this point I think it is paramount that I address the situation with regard to the railways. My congratulations go to Darryl Smith and Lionel Latchford from Rockhampton on the way in which they coordinated things and made the railway operational again in that central region. I thank those two men for the way in which they have managed the railway premises in Alpha and looked after their people there. When I say "their people", I tell the House that there are a lot of people there in need.

Just last week I was fortunate enough to be in the company of my colleague Mr Lester, the member for Peak Downs, Mr Smith and Mr Latchford. We toured the railway premises there. The people in those railway houses have been well and truly devastated. One lady, a mother of three young children, whose husband is an engine-driver on the railway, was on her own as her husband was away working. Her three kiddies were in Rockhampton. If anyone wanted to see a state of depression, he should have been there that day.

This is the point that I want to highlight. It is paramount that we address this problem, not just now but for the next three or four months when the real problems will arise. Social workers will be needed in this area to help these people. I am concerned mainly about the women and children in these towns, because they will be on their own a lot. The pressure that they are under at the moment is unreal.

I would like to point out also at this time that the effect on small business, as I think all the speakers have alluded to, is something that has to be addressed. When I say "small business", I speak mainly of those businesses in the towns of Alpha and Jericho and also in the region in my electorate that is on the Landsborough Highway—towns such as Longreach, Winton, Barcaldine, Ilfracombe as well as every town between Roma and Mount Isa that has been affected by these floods. Because the tourists are not coming to the area, the businesses are suffering. It has had a snowballing effect right down the line.

Yesterday I had discussions with the Honourable the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services. I put to them that the people about whom we are greatly concerned are road transport operators who, because of the imposition of load limits, are now not able to load their trucks fully. That is placing great stress on the operators. The earth-moving contractors are suffering as well. Because of the wet weather, they cannot operate their plant. They have instalments to pay on their equipment. At present they are facing hardship. Today I wrote to the Premier and to the Deputy Premier putting my views on the matter, hoping that over the next three months the financial institutions might allow those people to defer their payments or to make staggered payments. It would be great if financial institutions made that concession.

Small businesses should have made available to them QIDC loans. To restore faith in small businesses and to get the towns operating again, their debt structure should be taken over. If the QIDC could make available to those people loans at a blanket interest rate of 6 per cent, they could get the show up and running; otherwise a lot of those businesses will not operate. I know it will be hard to make grants available, but the Government has to look at getting small businesses back on the road.

The other thing on which I want to elaborate is the action of the Assistant Commissioner for Railways, Mr Bill Adamson, at the time of the disaster in Longreach. On the day of that disaster, the Midlander was stranded in Longreach, so I rang him in Brisbane and told him of the plight of some of the railway clients who were stranded on it. Amongst those people was a group of intellectually handicapped adults and 14 widows, three of whom were cancer patients, who needed medical attention. I congratulate acting commissioner Adamson on the way he was able to move those people and the other stranded railway passengers out of Longreach.

It is important not to let those incidents go unnoticed, but the most difficult problems ahead revolve around the people facing the hardship. The next three or four months will be crucial for those affected by this disaster.

As the Minister said, an army contingent of 120 to 140 men, under the command of Lieutenant Commander David Thearle, has entered the Jericho Shire. This afternoon I spoke with Bob Millis, the shire clerk at Jericho, who assured me that the boys are doing a great job. They are working in an area south of the railway line. Tomorrow, officers of the shire council hope to have an interview with Brigadier General Harris, the commander in charge of that army contingent, to plan for further works to be carried out in the north of the Jericho Shire, as well as in the adjoining Tambo and Isisford Shires. That will be up to the Department of Defence, but hopefully those men will be able to stay around longer than the one month it is understood they will be available for.

I also wish to highlight the plight of the people along the Barcoo and Thomson Rivers. As the Minister for Primary Industries stated yesterday, those people will not know what their losses will be for probably another four to six weeks, when the floodwaters finally recede. The sheep and cattle losses along those catchment areas will be astronomical. Honourable members should also bear in mind the expected loss of countless hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of livestock as well as the damage to dams, fencing and other structures on those properties. In addition to damage to housing in the townships of Alpha and Jericho, many station homesteads have been structurally damaged.

The town of Barcardine suffered minor flooding, but the heavy storm rain caused unrest for a time. As for the rest of the electorate of Gregory, I can report that the main problem areas have been limited to Alpha and Jericho.

I thank those Ministers who visited my electorate for their support of the flood victims.

Time expired.

Hon. E. D. CASEY (Mackay—Minister for Primary Industries) (5.04 p.m.): I join the debate to give honourable members some further information about the actions of the Government in response to this major disaster in south-western Queensland.

As the honourable member for Gregory well knows, that whole area depends on one industry, the pastoral industry. In my own coastal city, for instance, if a major disaster was to affect the sugar industry—the Mackay region is a big producer—the coal, tourism, grains and beef industries would help carry the economy of the towns and cities and support the business community, but in the case of the pastoral industry in those western areas, there is only wool and beef production.

Consequently, the major task for my department is to ensure that industry in the west gets back on its feet and starts generating the economic conditions necessary so that people can again earn a wage and those on properties can get on with their work and start redeveloping. Money will then flow through into the small businesses in the towns and communities and it will start to regenerate the local economies. All honourable members appreciate that that is a mammoth task and that a proper assessment must be undertaken. That was the major purpose of my spending three days on a very extensive run right down the Balonne River system, back up through the Mungallala channels and over into the Warrego system, the Paroo system, the Bulloo system and on across into those areas that the honourable member has just referred to, the Thomson, the Barcoo and right down the Coopers Creek where, at that stage, the flooding was starting to turn and flow into South Australia and into the Coopers' channel system.

The first people whom I would like to offer my personal congratulations to are the people of the west. There is no doubt about it, the people of the west have a wonderful spirit and they are a wonderful people. They have taken that adversity and hardship completely in their stride. Sure, there was shock in the first instance, but now they are all up and on the go, and there is that great willingness from the people of the west to show that hospitality for which they have been widely renowned and to show how they can link hands together. They are some of the greatest Australians and they are getting on with the job and saying to themselves, "We are going to get this west going again." That great, courageous feeling is there and it gives everyone who goes out into those areas great heart and spirit. When I see the tragedy that those people have undergone and realise the way they are feeling about undertaking the reconstruction of those areas, I heartily congratulate the people of the west for their great spirit and for just being who they are.

Many poets have expressed it over the years in far better terms than I can. I particularly remember when I was young reading one poem and being fascinated about how the women of the west carried out their role and exhibited that great pioneering spirit.

Last Saturday night I spoke with an elderly couple in Charleville who have known me from my visits to the area in prior years. They were flooded out. Their house had floodwaters up to the eaves and they lost everything, but they are going back. Charleville is where they have lived. That is where they own their home. They have no mortgage payments and they want to return to Charleville and keep working as they always have. They have been involved in many charitable, social, welfare and self-help organisations in Charleville and they are a classic example of the spirit of those western people. It is wonderful to see people with those qualities. They demonstrate perhaps what made this country what it is today.

To get down to some of the nitty-gritty, today the last of the fodder drops will be undertaken out in the St George area. A very good program has been undertaken and the Government is sincerely grateful to the RAAF, to the SES volunteer groups and to all those people who came along and physically got up onto the back of trucks and threw hay bales down or loaded them into the Caribous or the helicopters.

The donations of fodder were absolutely tremendous. I mentioned in the House the other day that, in the St George area, 3 500 out of the 4 500 bales dropped were donated. One fellow from the Dalby area came in with a large semitrailer. He said to me, "Well, Ed. It may have been me. I am just glad it wasn't. Anything I can do to help those fellows, I will." It was a tremendous donation from him and would have involved an enormous amount of money.

I was in the Alpha and Jericho area shortly after the flood. The people in those small townships suffered greatly. The losses in the outer areas might not be as bad as in some other areas of south-western Queensland but, proportionately, they were bad. A massive flood is now going down the Belyando system and it is causing more problems. It will be a considerable period before we know exactly what happens. The people mentioned by the honourable member for Gregory, particularly the police officers, did a tremendous job.

I offer my congratulations to all officers of my department in the western areas, such as the stock-inspectors and the veterinary officers, who hopped in and did a good job. From day one, we had a 008 telephone number so that people could contact us. We coordinated daily with people from the United Graziers Association and the Cattlemen's Union, and also the area members of those groups. The cooperation was tremendous.

Many more problems will arise in future months. As I mentioned in the House recently, there will be more sheep losses. Some sheep have been standing in water for three days, and footrot will set in. It is lamentable to see sheep dying. In addition, there will be a blowfly strike because the sheep carcasses cannot be buried as quickly as they should be.

I announce that, to try to lessen the effects of the blowfly strike, Coopers Animal Health has very generously donated 250 000 doses of Nilvern drench for worm control in sheep. That is a tremendous donation, as members from the west would know. The product is being distributed by the Department of Primary Industries officers. People who want to participate should get in touch with my office and the free drench will be available to overcome the blowfly strike.

Queensland Wire Industries has offered discounts to graziers who are faced with major refencing of their properties. We are attempting to get other wire suppliers to do likewise.

The financial control counselling sector of my department has moved a person to Charleville to supervise operations. An officer will be based in Charleville during the months ahead to assist property-owners who need to be rehabilitated.

As the Premier has indicated, a reassessment has been made by Cabinet. We are discussing, with the Federal Government, better financial provisions to help people to restock or to replace buildings and fences. A 50 per cent freight subsidy will apply to goods taken into the area to replace buildings and fences and make other improvements.

We have conferred with the major banking organisations to ensure that the banks do not foreclose on people who have sustained losses because of the flood. We will be having further meetings with them next week. I congratulate Westpac Banking Corporation for coming to talk to us about these matters.

I hope that I have been able to cover points that I have not dealt with in answer to questions in the House. I reiterate what I said earlier today about the flood assessment that is to be undertaken. It can be done now because of satellite imagery. It will probably be six or eight weeks before we get accurate information. It will be processed through

the computer system in my department. Also an on-the-ground assessment will be made by a team that will go out into the catchment areas. I am sure that all honourable members will be appreciative of the information that will be available for future use.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (5.14 p.m.): I reiterate what the Minister for Primary Industries said about stock losses. One of my roles has been to fly people back to their properties so that they can try to assess the damage. We might see 300 or 400 stock in a mob and, because they had been sitting in the water for so long and were not moving, we thought that they were dead and it took three fly-overs to even get a wriggle out of them. Then we felt sorry that we forced them to move. Now the sandflies are driving them into mobs. If the poor devils have survived the flood, they are now copping this sort of punishment.

I appreciate that a permanent officer—or a temporary officer?

Mr Casey: He will be there right through the months ahead.

Mr HOBBS: He will be in Charleville and a lot of work will have to be done.

Mr Casey: He will be there as long as he is needed.

Mr HOBBS: And he will tie in with other staff, so that is very much appreciated.

There are problems with the way the flood aid is being handled. My role is not to criticise; it is to help. We want to make the system as efficient as possible. We all learn from our mistakes, and I feel sorry for people who do not believe that. The problem is the lack of guidelines. The Government had to relax the guidelines, but it was found that their interpretation then became very difficult. Some people were receiving \$500 and others \$3,000. For the life of me, I could not work out why this was the case and neither could they. Some people went back for reassessment and received the balance. In other cases people were chased and had to pay back the money. These sorts of things must be talked about and everything possible must be done to ensure that we are ready next time such a disaster happens. Naturally, everyone hopes that it does not happen again, but we will be able to handle a similar disaster more efficiently in the future.

The reassessments are still continuing and the line-ups are still there. More people are coming in. I believe that an extra week is needed. Once this week is over, that is the end of the \$3,000 assistance scheme. Obviously people who are not entitled to assistance will not receive it, but if they continue to apply it will take longer for everyone who qualifies for assistance to receive it. I ask the Government to allow its officers an extra week in which to handle applications for assistance. Funds were being distributed in two areas, the railway station and the courthouse. Because a problem occurred, it is obvious that better communications are needed. The Leader of the Opposition covered a few points and I will not go over them again.

One matter I wish to mention concerns landlords who are finding themselves in real trouble because their tenants, who owned the furniture, have gone. The owner of a house is entitled to \$3,000 and surely people living in flats, who have the same sorts of personal items such as refrigerators, stoves, toasters, irons, etc., should be entitled to a similar start.

Insurance is another item that I would like to cover. Many people who had flood insurance were not eligible for assistance. This problem must be debated at some stage. Taxpayers' money is going to the people who did not have insurance. At the end of the day people who are insured get the money, but they often have to wait for quite some time for that money to come through. A few people came into my office and raised this matter. My office tried to help them as much as possible and in a few cases stirred up the insurance companies on their behalf. Many of these people believe that they should be entitled to assistance as well. It is a case of the good Lord helping those who help themselves, and often Governments tend to help those who do not help themselves and do not want to help themselves. The people who insure their properties are helping themselves, but they miss out down the line.

People should be given low interest loans for the purpose of raising their houses. The flood water went through many houses at different levels, from floor level to window-sill level, and in some cases much higher. If those houses were raised approximately six or eight feet they would be out of any danger in the future. This would save the Government money in the long term. The cost of raising a house is between \$7,000 and \$10,000. Many people have said that if they can get assistance they will raise their houses so that flooding will no longer be a problem. That is a sound proposition. These people could pay the loan off over 10 years, five years, or an even shorter period. Even if the flood water had only reached floor level of some houses, it would be of great benefit if they were raised. Obviously the shire councils and the Government must be willing to help those people who wish to relocate. The cost of moving a house to higher ground is similar to the cost of raising one, that is, between \$7,000 and \$10,000, and, provided land is available, shire councils should be receptive to that proposition.

A few Ministers visited the flooded region and grasped the seriousness of the situation, which was appreciated. However, I will read from a letter that I received from one of my constituents which states—

"At a general meeting which was held on Wednesday 2nd at the Raceview complex at 8.30 p.m., Ron McLean, Howard Hobbs, Grahame Andrews, the head of the police here, and a man from Clem Jones Flood Appeal Committee were present. At that meeting the Minister said that each household would receive \$3,000."

This was right to a certain extent, but the guidelines stated "up to \$3,000". This is where the problems arose. In future the guidelines must be made easier for people to understand and must be gone through more carefully. We appreciate those Ministers coming to the region. However, by the time Mr McLean got there, tempers were getting a little frayed. It was several days after the flood. People had gone back to their homes, cleaned up, seen what they had left and thought, "Oh, my God! Who can we get into?" The Minister happened to be there. It was better him than me, and I thank him for that!

Some form of taxation concession is desperately needed. It would be of great assistance if the Federal Government could waive the payment of provisional tax. Many businesspeople and graziers have paid a lot of tax in the last few years and the waiving of the payment of provisional tax for two years would allow those people to use their own money to help themselves. I will be putting that recommendation to the Government and I hope to talk to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services later about it. Many people such as accountants will have to buy new equipment. They will need photocopiers, typewriters, computers and so forth, and some concession in relation to sales tax on these items needs to be considered. The Federal Government gave the airlines \$68m and Kodak \$30m. Those organisations were in trouble, but this case is far more serious. There is a definite need for the Federal Government to perform and provide assistance over and above the normal disaster relief arrangements.

I mention that the records held by accountants also went under water. As much as possible, people who live in the town try to use the local accountant but now find that their records have been lost. Those people will need an extension of time for lodging taxation returns. Moreover, the accountant will need help to sort out his business. I understand that he and two members of his staff are trying to sort out a room full of soggy files, which is a very difficult task.

Earlier, the Premier mentioned a war effort. I endorse his remarks and point out that the disaster required many decisions to be made. Never before have so many required a decision by so few. The economy of the whole area is in trouble. I appeal to Governments at all levels to give as much assistance as possible.

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (5.23 p.m.): I rise to join in this debate to add another dimension to the discussions on the Charleville floods. As honourable members would be aware from the ministerial statement I made this morning, my departmental officers

have been in Charleville virtually since day 1, and have been assisting people both in the crisis period and in the recovery period. Obviously, the immediate need was to cope with physical emergencies, which were dealt with surprisingly successfully, given the level of danger facing the people of Charleville.

I find it remarkable that in swirling, rising waters, a great number of elderly, fairly frail people—some of whom were not small—were hoisted to safety by people who had substantial muscle power. The elderly people were placed onto the roofs of houses, but I am not quite sure how that was accomplished. If it had been filmed, it probably would have been interesting to see. The mind boggles. Some of the people I spoke to said, "Yes, I was lifted from a boat onto a roof." By the time I arrived in Charleville on 29 April, there was an element of humour in the town. People told me that they remembered the roar of the water and how frightened they were as they sat and waited to be rescued—not knowing, of course, whether or not the rescuers would come. Most of the people I spoke to were jovial, relaxed and happy to have survived; but, nevertheless, it was a very frightening and exceedingly traumatic experience for them.

Members of this Parliament will not do the people of Charleville a service by saying, "She'll be right, mate"—the usual Australian trick—and by carrying on regardless. The fact of life is that the recovery operation will require a significant input of resources, ingenuity and work by the Government and by Government departments, specifically by my department. Officers of my department have been trained to deal with social problems encountered after people have undergone a traumatic experience. Apparently, there are some similarities between the basic psychological reactions of people involved in the Ash Wednesday bush fires, the Newcastle earthquake and the Charleville floods. Although many of those responses may not be apparent at the moment or may be covered up, over the next few months they will be emerging. There will be a considerable need on the part of everybody in the community to understand the plight of the people of Charleville. Significantly, officers of my department, health professionals who are attached to the hospital and social workers will be giving advice in an attempt to assist people in unburdening themselves and divesting themselves of their innermost feelings. Those people will be encouraged not to feel ashamed of their feelings, which are normal and indicate not weakness but, rather, humanity.

During the next week after the first flurry of activity has ceased, and the SES and the army start to move out, one of the problems will be that people will feel that they have been left on their own or have been abandoned. They will still be faced with the enormity of their loss and they may sit in their houses and wait. They may also experience very substantial levels of depression. My departmental officers have suggested that during the next week, a doorknock of the entire Charleville area be undertaken in case people have not responded to television, radio and newspaper information indicating where help and assistance may be obtained. They have suggested that the department could perhaps be a little more proactive and try to find those people and talk to them. Of course, that action is not intended to be in any way obtrusive. The intention is to ensure that simply because people are in a state of shock and are traumatised, they will not be prevented from obtaining assistance. All honourable members would appreciate that doorknocking is not an easy task. It is tedious and time-consuming, but it is one of the activities proposed to be undertaken by my department during the next week.

Over the next few months, my department will be looking into augmenting the work of a housing referral worker attached to the existing neighbourhood centre in Charleville. Honourable members should bear in mind that even before the floods, Charleville had a housing crisis and that there will be some difficulty with accommodation, as I am sure all honourable members could imagine. I do not think it is good enough to say, "A large number of people will move out. Therefore, there will be a large number of vacant houses." If the intention is that the town of Charleville should survive, that is not an appropriate economic decision. If Charleville is to be restored as a cohesive community and derive benefit from the economic recovery that is just around the corner—referred to earlier by Ed Casey—the restoration program will have to ensure that Charleville becomes a viable, well developed and strong town. Nature sometimes

has a strange way of taking things away and then paying back more than it has taken, and Charleville will need to be a strong support centre for an area that may benefit from financial gain over the next year or two. To reach that stage, the Government must be very careful in coordinating its resources.

One point that emerged very clearly during the floods was that everybody worked in concert. There was much networking. Every morning, a meeting was held and all aspects of the predicament were discussed. Somebody would present a problem and somebody else would provide an answer to it. Every morning at those meetings, resources, understanding and knowledge were pooled to direct a very complex operation. That will disappear. However, over the next few months, other social networks and organisations can provide assistance. I am thinking specifically about the neighbourhood centre, where my department will be looking at funding an extra worker to assist people to get back on their feet. They will need either counselling or advice on how to go about setting themselves back up and what options they should take. It would be better if it was not just departmental workers who did that. The three departmental workers in the town are very good, but they have their ordinary work to do as well. Of course, departmental workers who come from other places do not have the local community knowledge. Additional people who have a sound knowledge of the community and an understanding of how the community operates should be attached to the neighbourhood centre.

Out of this experience we might get a better understanding of what people need, not merely in terms of a crisis but in terms of their daily lives. We might gain a better understanding about how to look after one another and how to run society. That is an optimistic view. Before we reach the point at which that will emerge, we have much pain and trauma to go through, although I must say that there is a great spirit in Charleville. It feels like a war-time setting. It feels like people are making the best of a very difficult situation. In the main, the better aspects of human nature are emerging.

I commend the people of Charleville, the people of my department and all the other Government workers and voluntary organisations who have put their shoulders to the wheel in whatever way they could to assist the people of Charleville.

It is important for us as a State that we are successful not just in getting the emergency phase right. Some teething difficulties occurred in respect of the relief program. Although people were being housed in tents, they were being fed, so they were not in immediate hardship at the time when there was some confusion about relief payments. The payments came on line when they were needed. The Government responded to what people in Charleville were saying. Every day, a strong message came from Charleville to the committee that made decisions about the way forward.

The Government managed that part of it well. The next task, which is less tangible, is harder. Once the physical work is completed, we then must deal with the much more complex task of socially rebuilding a community that already had a housing crisis. However, the town had a number of other social problems which we may now have the opportunity to address for the first time and to get right.

I urge honourable members to understand the nature of the problem and not see it merely in terms of who gets financial assistance.

Hon. R. T. McLEAN (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (5.34 p.m.): I welcome the chance to join the debate. It is necessary that debates of this type take place. From the tone of the previous two National Party speakers, I was glad to find that they were treating this as a debate in which we could have some input from all sides and from which we could get something rather than having a political debate.

The disaster that occurred at Charleville and the other towns was a major one. One had to actually visit Charleville and see the disaster to realise how bad it was. For a period before visiting Charleville, I was involved in Brisbane in a back-up role. In that time, I watched events closely on television and saw some of the startling photographs in the newspapers. The photograph containing the car that almost disappeared into the road brought home to most of us the seriousness of the flooding. However, when I

arrived in Charleville and actually saw what had happened, it hit home how serious and how devastating the problem was.

I have the highest praise for everyone involved in the relief work that was carried out. Considering what the people of the west had been through, I was amazed at their attitudes and humour. All the people who assisted in any way in clean-up operations deserve the highest praise, none more than the people of the west.

By the time I reached Charleville and attended a meeting, it was probably not the best time to be there. As Howard Hobbs said, by that time the initial danger to life and limb had passed and the reality of the financial and social predicament facing the community had hit home. However, my trip was necessary. My team and I had the opportunity to visit homes and knock on doors. Unfortunately, I did not see the member for Gregory there, because when I was at Charleville he was in another location. However, I was told that the honourable member did a very good job in the area. I congratulate him. It is the type of difficulty in which, if a person did not lend a hand he would not be human, anyway. However, to see a member working to help other people rather than for political gain is a credit to him.

We had the task of knocking on doors and talking to people. In Charleville, 13 homes had to be demolished, which created a problem in itself. The homes that were to be demolished were not new homes, and the homes next door were almost in the same category. It was difficult to overcome the problem without demolishing the whole street. It was not an easy task.

When the National Party was in Government, it had to cope with the floods at Gympie and Dalby and was presented with the same problems from businesses. It was not an easy task.

I met with groups of businesspeople in a number of towns out west and posed the question to them, "What do you suggest we do? Do we just write out a cheque for \$1m? Do we write out a cheque for \$1,500, or \$100? What do we do? Can you come up with a formula?" No-one could. It is a complex problem. The local hair-dresser has not lost as much as the local supermarket or perhaps the saddlery, which may have lost a couple of hundred thousand dollars in stock. How does one go about it? I do not know. Anyone who has been in the position of trying to solve such a problem knows that it is not an easy one to solve. It is no good saying, "This is a one-off situation." There is no such thing as a one-off tragedy of this nature. The next disaster comes along and the same problems arise. One can set standards that perhaps one may not be able to live up to somewhere down the track. It is not easy.

In Charleville I faced a public meeting of some 500-odd people. Quite understandably, a number of people there, particularly those from the business community, were quite upset. However, overall most of the people at that meeting were very thankful for the efforts that had been made by the Government and by everyone involved. I personally have only the greatest praise for the efforts of Terry Mackenroth. He took over the problem not knowing exactly what was the right or wrong thing to do. He grabbed it by the throat and ran with it. Everywhere I went I heard nothing but praise for his efforts in that initial stage. I think that any fair person would have to agree with that assessment. The right thing was done.

I stayed at the tent city out at Charleville. It was incredible to see such a mammoth exercise in which thousands and thousands of meals were served. There was virtually a town under canvas. The people were there in stressful circumstances. The people were working all sorts of hours, encountering every problem that goes with that. This all happened on the outskirts of a town. It was a major exercise. The army, the SES, my department and all the other people who have been praised in this Chamber during the last two days certainly deserved it.

Mr Coomber: Don't forget the Salvation Army.

Mr McLEAN: Yes, I must not forget the Salvation Army. I thank the honourable member. The Salvation Army played a major role in the early stages.

If I was going to offer one criticism—and it would only be on the basis that we have to learn by this exercise, because, whether we like it or not, there is going to be a next time—it would be that I believe that the army pulled out of Charleville too soon. Although the engineering units of the army are going back to Jericho and Alpha, in my book they definitely pulled out of Charleville too soon and left a hell of a lot of work to some of those volunteer organisations, which could have done with the assistance of the army for another week or two. I will pass that message on when a good look is taken at what has happened.

I want to say something about the people from my department who were involved. Ross Dunning, the director-general, and Ron Rankin both accompanied me on my trip out west. From day one Bill Kelly from State Stores was up day and night and all weekend supplying the type of equipment that one does not normally come in contact with. He also did a great job. I heard no complaints from anyone about the speed and the efficiency of getting equipment, stores, generators and so on out to those places.

I must mention Dave Duncan. He was the supervisor or the person who was put in charge of my department's activities. When he arrived in Charleville, he most certainly made a difference to the organisation in the area. He built up morale and he put efficiency into the whole operation, which was probably needed at that time. Somewhere down the track, when we are going through the overall results of all the efforts that were made, I think honourable members will find that the praise for him will come from many directions. All the other fellows in the department who did the necessary behind-the-scenes work also deserve the greatest credit.

When the floods were coming, one young fellow who was a carpenter with Administrative Services went out in his car to help other people. He parked his car, went out placing sandbags and doing other work. He lost his car and his house. He is a young married chap with three small children. He had just paid off his house the month before. When he returned, he had lost his car and his house. He has never stopped working and helping other people since then. Those are the sorts of efforts that we came across all along the way. That would not be an isolated case. I imagine there would be plenty more.

I will just finish on this note: Charleville has a great history. From what I have seen of the attitude of the people and everyone associated with it, it most certainly has a future.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (5.43 p.m.): At the outset, I want to add my words of praise to all those who have been involved in the massive clean-up in central and south-western Queensland. I believe that the effort that has been coordinated by the Minister for Emergency Services has been a most praiseworthy one.

I can remember vividly the effects of the 1974 flood in my own electorate. Although that was a case of great hardship and heartache to those who were affected, it was relatively minor compared with the total devastation that has occurred in a number of towns in the west and south-west of this State, where not just 10 or 20 per cent of the town has been affected but the whole town has been affected, including the economic viability of those centres.

My department also has a major job to do with respect to the rehabilitation of those areas. In many respects, the job for my department is only just beginning because, in a number of areas, floodwaters still inundate large areas and it is not possible yet to get a full assessment of the total damage that has been wrought to the infrastructure in those areas.

I receive daily reports from officers of my department about road and rail infrastructure to try to ascertain a very clear picture of the damages bill which the Government and the community must bear in order to restore that necessary infrastructure. Let there be no doubt that the economic revival of the area will not occur unless the transport infrastructure is in place. That includes highways, railways and that part of the transport

infrastructure which falls outside of the State Government's responsibility, namely, shire roads. I will make some comments about that aspect a little later.

The department has sought to provide real measures of assistance for people in the affected area. For example, the Department of Transport has located officers in the area to provide assistance to those people whose vehicles have been inundated and rendered inoperable. Residents in those areas know that they can approach the department for rebates on their vehicle registration for the period for which those vehicles are rendered inoperable because of the floods. That very tangible assistance is being offered throughout those communities.

Queensland Railways has rallied to the occasion by providing freight-free movement of flood relief donations and materials into the affected areas. Queensland Railways has been particularly affected by the floods. The rail network to the west is not yet back to normal.

I compliment those gangs and officers of Queensland Railways who have managed to restore to a semblance of normality the train services to centres such as Longreach and Charleville. The devastation around Alpha was particularly bad. Many railway-workers' families suffered terribly. Fortunately the department has rallied to restore a reasonable standard of living for those affected families in Alpha.

People have lost many things in the floods. Homes have been inundated and personal possessions have gone. A special consignment of uniforms was necessary for Queensland Railways employees because many of them lost their uniforms in the floods.

Quite scurrilous allegations have been made in some quarters that Queensland Railways and the Labor Government will use the floods as an excuse to terminate rail services to the central-western and south-western areas of this State. I state here and now that nothing could be further from the truth. Many rail services have been resumed. The Midlander, the Westlander and freight services were maintained throughout the worst period of the floods. Where trains could not get through on railway lines, road transport was enlisted to ensure that vital freight movements reached their required destinations.

Reconstruction of railway lines has continued. Certainly much more work has to be done. According to advice that is available to me, it is not expected that rail services will again connect Quilpie and Cunnamulla to Charleville until perhaps the end of this month. A massive amount of ballast must be moved into those areas to enable reconstruction of the railway lines which have been washed out by floodwaters, particularly by the action of the Warrego River. I assure all members of the House and all residents of those affected areas that normal rail services will be resumed to those areas as soon as possible. The railway gangs are hard at work to achieve that end.

One issue that has generated some comment from industry sources, particularly the livestock transporting industry and some carriers, is the load and weight restrictions that I placed upon affected roads in the inundated areas. I stand by that decision. I am pleased that the responsible elements in the road transport industry have been most complimentary of the action that has been taken to secure the roads that have been left after the ravages of floodwater.

The road transport industry and the Government recognised that it was essential to preserve what is left of the road system if economic activity in the affected areas is to be restored as soon as possible. Many of the main roads and shire roads have been under water for some time. The pavements are like a sponge.

This Government was not prepared to sit idly by and allow carriers to take heavily laden trucks over those roads. Perhaps those carriers would get through, but I assure members of the House that not too many others would get through after those initial truckloads. That is why I placed twofold restrictions on the movements of heavy vehicles in the affected areas. The maximum permissible load over the roads that were prescribed as being flood affected is 80 per cent of the legal load. Furthermore, there was a cessation of volume loading, which affects the livestock transport industry. Those decisions were

not taken lightly. As I indicated when those restrictions were announced, I am pleased to report that they are being progressively lifted. In fact, as soon as the road surfaces dry out, the restrictions are lifted.

My discussions with the people in the road transport industry reveal that they are most grateful to be able to cart 80 per cent of their normal load as distinct from moving no load whatsoever. I believe that the restrictions are working well, although some operators—through ignorance or selfishness—want to run the gauntlet and are prepared to jeopardise the transport network in the area simply because they want to take their loads through. I sincerely hope that those operators who think about flouting the limits will think again. If they seek to flout the restrictions that have been placed on the roads they will only hurt themselves, their industry and the people who are trying to reconstruct their lives.

Officers within my department who are regulating traffic flows in the affected areas have compiled a set of figures. As at yesterday, 169 vehicles had been stopped and 33 had been booked for breaching the load restrictions. Some operators do not want to know anything about it. The damage they are causing, through either ignorance or selfishness, is going to cost many thousands, indeed, maybe millions of dollars.

The burden will not simply fall to the State Government. Shire roads are particularly vulnerable. In fact, many of the shire roads in the area are even more vulnerable than the State road network because they have not been as soundly constructed and, in many cases, they may not be sealed and may simply not be able to carry the volume of traffic and the weight of traffic that the State highways can carry.

To give the House a bit of information, I will relate the flavour of a couple of the cases that I would like to mention. For example, a complaint came to me from the district engineer in Barcaldine. He stated—

"Yesterday a road train loaded with sheep attempted to move from Barcaldine-Downs to Blackall.

The Transport operator had checked this office last week to ascertain the 'rules'."

No doubt, that is a reference to the restrictions.

Time expired.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (5.54 p.m.): I join briefly this debate on the very real trauma of the floods covering a very large area of the western part of Queensland, bearing in mind my involvement in the two floods that occurred in close proximity to each other just 12 months ago in Gympie.

I can relate very well to the trauma that the people are going through in this instance and to the problems that immediately confront anybody who is faced with rising floodwaters, not really knowing what is ahead of him and not really being able to understand what the end result will be.

During the floods in Gympie, voluntary work was carried out by the SES, the police, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the councils. They were very much to the fore. They are to be commended for their efforts and their enthusiasm and for their willingness to get on the job immediately. It is possible that during the second flood Gympie had an advantage in that a great deal was learned from the first flood. As I said, the SES, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army were there. They knew exactly what to do and where to go. They were an enormous help.

But that still does not overcome the trauma and the initial problems caused by the flood. I know that one of the members opposite asked, "What do we do? What is required?" I found that in Gympie the most pressing need was for immediate assistance. I know that when a person's house is inundated and its entire contents are washed away and the person is usually left without anything in his pocket, he really needs to be sure that he will be able to get something to eat next week and that he will have something in his pocket. This is what I found very, very relevant under these sorts of conditions.

What people wanted then was to be handed a piece of paper, whether it be a cheque or a voucher, to enable them to go and purchase their requirements as soon as possible after the floodwaters had receded.

I became aware of the trauma that was suffered by many as a result of the enormous volume of water that inundated their houses and took everything before it. Under those circumstances there is not only human loss but also loss of animals. I do not think that the loss of animals can be estimated. When one sees photos of sheep against a mesh fence or tangled up in barbed wire, I do not think it is possible to realise the trauma suffered by those animals and the tremendous monetary loss suffered by their owners.

I suppose things were a little bit different in the Gympie floods. However, stock losses occur in floodwaters irrespective of where they are and irrespective of how long they might take to rise. Because heavy rain may fall in one area, there may be a heavy flow of water in another area that will take with it everything that can be moved. If things are not able to be moved under normal circumstances, the floodwaters will certainly ensure that they will be moved, and moved very, very swiftly indeed.

Communications are also affected to a great degree. I highlight the trauma experienced in that instance by relatives who are trying to contact their families or immediate friends.

It is also possible that delays could occur in the making of submissions that are required by the Government in relation to EARC, for example, or gun laws. Some people may find that their time is taken up looking after their own environment and their own possessions and that they do not necessarily have time to consider submissions of that nature. But looking to the future, in a month's time it will be just as relevant to them and consideration should be given to an extension of the time in which those people can make submissions.

Mr Beattie: Are you supporting gun laws?

Mr STEPHAN: I know that Mr Beattie gets upset about gun laws and I noticed that he made a comment about them in the House yesterday. But it is still relevant to those people concerned.

Mr Beattie: Only because they all come from your area.

Mr STEPHAN: They do not all come from my area. Just because one or two letters have been received from my area does not mean to say that everybody concerned about gun laws comes only from Gympie.

Mr Beattie: Did they send letters to you?

Mr STEPHAN: It is very interesting to hear the comments from Mr Beattie. I just mentioned that in passing. The delay in communications, how it affects people, their livelihood and their future is very relevant to this debate.

I am pleased to have been able to speak in this debate. It does not give me pleasure to witness the problems that were caused as a result of the flood. I certainly hope that, as a result of this catastrophe and other catastrophes of this nature, we will learn and be a little bit more prepared the next time.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 March (see p. 468)

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs) (7.30 p.m.): The members of the Opposition support this Bill, which follows up the work of the previous National Party Government.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr LESTER: Obviously there was an election; however, during the great number of years that the National Party was in Government it did achieve an enormous amount for the betterment of Queensland and that should always be remembered.

However, the members of this House should be ever trying to improve legislation aimed at reducing the road toll. Politics should be cast aside when the legislation dealing with the lives of people that endeavours to make the lot of everyone in the community a little happier is being debated. One only needs to visit the public wards of our hospitals to see the agony of those who have not been killed but have been seriously injured in road accidents. Honourable members do not need me to tell them that road accidents really are the worst and most catastrophic form of accident.

Wherever possible the road rules should be made easier for people to understand. In fact, the legislation should go further. As all honourable members would be aware, many driver-training courses are available but, from my observations, mainly it is the Volvo owners, who probably have never had an accident in their lives, who attend those courses. Because they are the ones who contribute very much to the accident scene in Queensland and ruin not only their lives but also the lives of many innocent people, it would be better if the young hoons of our State were the ones attending those courses.

Mr Beattie: Do you own a Volvo, Vince?

Mr LESTER: No, I do not. I am not a rich man.

Mr Palaszczuk: Geoff Muntz used to.

Mr LESTER: I do not think he did actually, but let us just get on with the job.

I believe that the element of surprise is necessary when police officers are operating radar traps. They should not be placed in a position to trap a driver who is slowing down into a 60 km/h or 80 km/h zone, but in areas where people do attempt to speed, radar traps are necessary. Such devices should be updated continually. In the recent past, that has been occurring.

One used to be able to guess where a police radar trap might be located, but now the police force has radar devices which they attach to another police car. They are not easy to detect and people are caught more easily. That is not a bad thing, because it reminds people of the dangers of speeding. Speeding is a major problem because a speeding vehicle is difficult to control.

Mr Beattie: Speed—particularly on country roads.

Mr LESTER: People do speed on country roads.

Mr Beattie: That's when people are killed.

Mr LESTER: That is correct. Probably most honourable members have been guilty of speeding on country roads from time to time.

Mr Stephan: People get killed in the city, too.

Mr Beattie: Statistics show that country roads are the worst areas for speeding.

Mr LESTER: That point is taken. Mr Stephan's point is taken, too, because I note that a number of fatal accidents over the last weekend occurred in Brisbane.

This Bill deals with the installation of cameras at intersections that are designed to catch people who cut it too fine and end up going through a red light. A photograph will be pretty hard evidence to refute. The National Party very much supports that concept. I hope that in the near future Queensland will purchase more than the 15 units referred to by the Minister.

Today, notice was given of the motion to set up the Travelsafe Committee. The honourable member for Carnarvon and I will be very happy to serve on that committee

in a non-political way. We want to contribute as much as possible and pull our weight to help the committee reduce Queensland's road toll.

Mr Hamill: A very worthwhile addition to the work of the House.

Mr LESTER: I am sure that it will be. The members from all political parties seem to have their heart and soul set on doing a good job. I understand that Mr Ardill, the member for Salisbury, will be the chairman of this committee. He and I have already spoken at length on the matter. We have reached our first agreement, which is when the committee will have its first meeting. The members of the Travelsafe Committee will endeavour to have as many meetings, within reason, as possible and I am sure all committee members will put their heart and soul into trying to do what they can as members, with their variety of experience, to help reduce the road toll. Over the years, members of Parliament have driven many thousands of kilometres. Many have come across road accidents and, in a lay person's role, have assisted at road accident scenes.

With the assistance of parliamentary officers and research organisations, the members of the Travelsafe Committee will be able to make an important contribution to the reduction of the road toll. The role of the committee will be good for the State of Queensland.

This legislation also deals with the topic of provisional licences. I believe that there are certain areas in which the present system can be improved, just as anything can be improved from time to time, and I refer particularly to the imposition of tougher penalties for those people who take the law into their own hands and do not acknowledge the courtesy given to them when they are allowed to drive a vehicle during certain working hours.

Employers will be allowed to give supporting testimony to ensure that a court order does not permit an applicant to drive any type of vehicle for which he or she has not previously been tested and licensed. It will preclude the holder of a learner's permit from applying as he or she may not have been tested for ability to drive safely on our roads.

The Bill will restrict the eligibility of applicants, as was originally intended, to those drivers who held a Queensland licence at the time of the offence and who continue to hold a Queensland licence when they appear before a court on a drink-driving charge. It will restrict the eligibility of persons who have had a previous dangerous-driving conviction or interstate drink-driving conviction in the previous five years.

That is fair enough because, in many instances, accidents are caused by the people who have previously been careless and had accidents. Many people who try to do the right thing do not ever have an accident. In saying that, I do not refer to accidents that are not their fault. Generally, bad drivers tend to have more than one accident and they should try to learn from their mistakes.

The Bill will substantially increase the maximum penalty for disobeying the restrictions placed on a special licence from 20 to 200 penalty points, which is \$1,200 in monetary terms.

The holder of a restricted licence may reapply if, during the holding of that licence, the circumstances surrounding earnings and livelihood have changed. Obviously we agree with all of that because it is common sense and should be done.

In 1987, red-light running cost this State \$20m. That was the cost of people being impatient.

Mr Beattie: How is that made up?

Mr LESTER: It is made up of 220 crashes and 122 casualties.

Cameras will be set up at 15 intersections firstly on a trial basis and, depending on the result, the scheme will be extended to provincial cities.

If somebody other than the owner of a car is driving it when an offence is committed, the owner will have 21 days to prove that. The Bill also provides for people driving stolen cars. It is hoped that all of these matters can be streamlined as time goes on and we see how they work in practice.

The Bill also deals with the removal of houses. This will ensure that the local authority is given notice and is involved, because there have been instances of houses being dumped and nobody having authority to shift them.

Queensland's road toll for 1989 was 428 fatalities, which was 111 or 21 per cent fewer than the figure for the previous year and the lowest since 1963 when 398 fatalities were recorded. We should not pat ourselves on the back and say how good that result was, because, quite frankly, it was not good. I hope that the day will come when we can obtain sufficient funding from the Federal Government to greatly improve our highways.

No doubt many honourable members have been overseas and seen the highways there. They would know the difficulties under which we operate in Queensland. I realise that many overseas countries have larger populations than Queensland has. As motor vehicles travel towards each other at 100 kilometres an hour or, in some cases in the country, at 140 kilometres an hour, and pass within two feet of each other, it is surprising that there are not more accidents. In many overseas countries, vehicles travelling in opposite directions are well separated and accidents are less likely.

Recently, two buses crashed head on. Had there been a divided highway with a wall in the middle, that crash may not have happened. We do not know the exact circumstances but, if the buses had been travelling on a divided highway, only one may have crashed.

I have many more statistics but I shall not refer to all of them. The total cost of fatalities, injuries and property damage to the Queensland community in 1989 was approximately \$1.1 billion. On that basis, crashes on Queensland roads in 1989 cost about \$400 for every man, woman and child in Queensland. Queenslanders have to pay for that out of their taxes before they even start to pay for the cost of road accidents.

Typically, young road-users are overrepresented in the number of road fatalities. In 1989, young road-users between the ages of 17 and 25 years accounted for 31 per cent of road fatalities, yet they represent only 13 per cent of the population. It is a terrible waste of human resources when young people are killed or maimed for the rest of their lives in such a fashion. Unfortunately, young males were overrepresented in the number of fatalities. In other words, young male drivers had many more smashes and injuries than young females. I suppose females could now argue that they are better drivers than males.

Mr Beattie: Are you going for the women's vote?

Mr LESTER: I have to do something, have I not?

Mr Hamill: There is not much else going for you these days.

Mr LESTER: I am going all right. The Minister need not worry about that.

Mr Hamill: Well!

Mr LESTER: I thank the Minister. I am going well.

Mr Beattie: The size of Queensland and Australia is part of the problem, too. Talk about overseas—the size and cost of putting in roads is a big problem. The population is too small. You look at Europe. They can put their roads in, but they are smaller countries.

Mr LESTER: I basically said that before I made my comment.

Mr Hamill: Your speech is getting as long as his.

Mr Beattie: No. I think he made an intelligent point. I was just adding to it.

Mr LESTER: Yes. I did mention that overseas countries had bigger populations and much more traffic, and that is why some of these things can be done.

Based on the distance travelled, in 1989 articulated vehicles were five times more likely than cars—and almost twice as likely as rigid trucks—to be involved in a fatal road smash. Those figures tell us that, because of the large number of articulated vehicles on the roads, there is a problem with carting freight on the railways. I live for the day when the efficiency of Queensland's rail systems can be improved, particularly those adjacent to high density road routes. I understand that the volume of goods being carted on the roads between Sydney and Melbourne is approximately 70 per cent of the total freight carted. Trucks are five times more likely to be involved in accidents than cars and, when one of them hits a car or a bus, the result is catastrophic.

In recent times the Commonwealth has not given any money to the States to improve their railway systems. I am absolutely certain that the railways can be made more efficient, as has happened in Queensland with the electrification of the State's rail services. I realise that this issue does not relate directly to the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, but the matter does concern smashes. I compliment the people who run Queensland's long distance passenger trains. I have travelled on the Capricornia a great many times from Rockhampton to Brisbane and return. It is a pleasure to travel on that train. I have been treated well by all of the railway staff, including the electrician, conductors and the people who serve in the club car.

Mr Beattie: Don't forget the driver.

Mr LESTER: On my last trip down I even went and said, "Hello" to the driver before we left and he thought that was all right. The next time Mr Beattie travels on a train, I hope that he thanks the driver at the completion of his journey. That is an old English tradition which is not always followed. However, the drivers appreciate it if it is done occasionally, because they do a good job. Queensland has a long way to go and this Parliament should try to address the matter in a rational manner. This is a very serious problem facing not only Queensland but also the rest of Australia.

During 1989, 133 young road-users between the ages of 17 and 35 years were killed on Queensland's roads. The majority were occupants of a vehicle, that is drivers and passengers, and motor cycle riders—in other words, people in motor vehicles. Alcohol plays a significant part in road crashes in which young adults are involved. This is one of the concerns I have about the extension of hotel trading hours. The Minister for Transport must take note of this fact and ensure that people do not get carried away, because alcohol is on sale most of the time.

An analysis of post-mortem results over the six years from 1984 to 1989 indicates that 49.3 per cent—almost half—of young drivers and riders who were tested for alcohol levels had consumed alcohol before the fatal crash, although 29 per cent were not tested. This clearly shows that the consumption of alcohol is an extremely serious problem. Unfortunately, many people who are heavily under the influence of alcohol—although not all of them—and who are involved in accidents survive the accident, but an innocent person who has been doing the right thing is killed outright or severely maimed.

Research on the consumption of alcohol by young drivers indicates that inexperienced drinkers are more impaired by alcohol than experienced drinkers at any given BAC level. That does not mean to say that if a person is an experienced drinker he or she can have some drinks and then drive a car. It is far better to leave the stuff alone altogether. Generally, young drivers do not drink and drive more often, nor do they have significantly higher BACs, than older drivers. Their overinvolvement in crashes is related to their age or maturity. That does not mean that they are immature. It simply means that they do not have years of driving experience behind them. The combination of a little alcohol and immaturity means that a fairly lethal weapon is being driven by someone who has insufficient maturity or driving experience.

In the majority of fatal crashes involving young drivers—in 59 per cent of such crashes—passengers were travelling with the young driver at the time of the crash. Usually, no more than two passengers were present, but these were typically of an age similar to that of the driver. Basically, it seems that young people tend to travel together.

In conclusion, I state that the Opposition supports the Bill. However, I certainly request that every effort be made to ensure that the system of "red-light" cameras at intersections is administered to make it as convenient as possible for people; so that people will know what to expect; so that there will not be bureaucratic problems related to it; so that the difficulties of someone other than the driver driving the car can be easily sorted out; and so that problems associated with stolen cars can be sorted out without causing too much trouble. From time to time, I hear of many cases involving innocent people who have had to justify their actions although they were not even involved in the incident.

The Bill also contains provisions relating to the removal of houses, and those provisions are fair enough. Other clauses relate to the issuing of provisional licences, which will enable those people who have been convicted of dangerous driving or drink-driving to be able to continue in their employment. I am pleased that those matters are being attended to.

The Opposition supports the Bill. Obviously, the operation of the legislation will have to be continually monitored and, whenever possible, improved. If the Government takes action to improve legislation that will make Queensland's roads safer, the Opposition will support those moves.

Mrs EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (7.55 p.m.): I rise to support the Traffic Act Amendment Bill because I believe that it breaks new ground in the fight against the road toll. As someone who is concerned about road safety and traffic management, I am pleased to address a problem that has impinged on traffic flow and has caused traffic accidents throughout Brisbane and the outer-lying areas of this State.

This amending Bill provides for the use of "red-light" cameras to assist in the enforcement of road regulations. It would be clear to all members that the days of having a police officer at every intersection in this city to enforce the regulations are long gone. If members do not realise it, I can inform them that drivers in the community do, which is the reason that they are prepared to gamble on the operation of traffic lights. Not only do they gamble that they will not get caught, but they also gamble with their own lives and with the lives of other innocent road-users. The odds need to be changed in favour of law and order. To do that, this Parliament should support the police in their enforcement task by providing up-to-date technology. This amending Bill does just that. It enables cameras to be used to detect red-light runners by photographing the offence and the registration number of the vehicle, thus placing the onus on the vehicle-owner to advise the police of the person who was in charge of the vehicle at the time of the offence.

This Bill is in keeping with my longstanding concern about road safety. I realise that many of the issues addressed are more relevant to south-east Queensland—where there is noticeably more traffic congestion and therefore more of a temptation to run red lights illegally--than to other parts of the State. However, red-light running is not limited to highly congested traffic conditions. It often occurs in more dangerous circumstances, during quiet traffic periods, when minimal traffic and higher speeds are involved. That it is a dangerous practice is obvious; but it is also obvious that it places at risk not merely the perpetrator—and I cannot say this often enough—but also the innocent drivers and occupants of other vehicles who are obeying traffic laws.

Of course, it should not be necessary to legislate to enforce safe, sensible traffic practices, but it would seem that the only way that some drivers can be persuaded to improve their driving habits is to enforce driving laws in any way possible. Recently, road safety has caused a great deal of concern. Arguments are presented that call for most of the petrol excise to be spent on improving roads. Earlier in the debate, the

member for Peak Downs reiterated that policy, which is, in my view, rather simplistic. Although I agree that some roads need to be repaired and upgraded, as a person who has had a longstanding interest in traffic safety, I remain to be convinced that, in reality, the building of wider, straighter, faster roads will improve safety. In fact, quite a body of evidence exists to show that the exact opposite is the case.

The alternative argument is that this excise revenue should be targeted to deal with the cost of hospitalisation, rehabilitation and long-term assistance for traffic trauma victims and their dependants. At the moment, these problems consume millions of dollars of health and social welfare funds. It is just too simple to state that, because the revenue comes from road-users, it should be spent on roads.

I should also mention that, because people who run red lights currently seriously disrupt traffic flow by blocking intersections, a by-product of enforcing this legislation may well be the improvement of traffic flow. Experience gained overseas and in other States has shown that in most cases the offender was the owner of the vehicle. If not, the owner had to indicate who was in charge of the vehicle at the particular time. A notice was then sent to the person concerned.

Earlier, the Minister mentioned commonsense defences that are available, so I will not dwell on those now. However, I stress that the enforcement method contained in this legislation is proven. It saves lives. Any arguments advanced along the lines of Big Brother and the erosion of liberties do not wash with me. I believe that victims have civil rights, too. All this system does is witness offences taking place and hold people responsible for their actions in the name of improved road safety.

Honourable members may also be aware that, in other jurisdictions, enforcement agencies are being supported with an extension of this technology in the form of speed cameras. Although this Government has not been prepared to take that step at present, it is watching with interest developments of that technology. To that end, the amending legislation presented here allows for the extension of camera-detection devices by prescribing the particular offence for which cameras may be utilised. I also expect that, in future, detection of the offence of crossing double lines and other similar offences will be possible.

The Minister has already stressed that the criteria for the installation of these devices will be set by the Road Safety Division of the Department of Transport and that the prime reason for the introduction of this technology is prevention, not detection. But it is the increase in the likelihood of detection that increases the deterrent factor. That is a lesson that has been taught to us by random breath testing. If one increases the risk of detection, one deters people from continuing the offence. The success of RBT, for so long opposed, is now indisputable. That is the logic behind the amendment and the reason that I support the Bill.

We have a responsibility to do anything we possibly can to reduce the horrific wastage of road trauma. For that reason, I fully endorse the amendments to the legislation and urge the House to do likewise.

Mr J. N. GOSS (Aspley) (8.02 p.m.): The Liberal Party also generally endorses the Bill.

Mr Beattie: Hear, hear!

Mr J. N. GOSS: I thank the honourable member. I knew that he would come to my aid.

Firstly, I will deal with the transportation of houses and the problem that it has caused for local government over many years. A problem is created when houses are left at the side of the road. I recall a house being left for months at a very dangerous corner on Gympie Road at Aspley. Local government has a terrible task in deciding what to do with such houses. The police do not want to know about a house sitting at the side of the road. One cannot really go along and demolish the house, yet one does not have the resources to take it away.

Mr Beattie: What does the local alderman do about it?

Mr J. N. GOSS: The honourable member will be pleased to know that the house was on the other side of the road from my ward.

In some instances, parks have been used on a regular basis for the storage of such houses. Take the case of a person who has bought a house and been told to move it at short notice. He engages a contractor to put the house on a trailer and take it away, but when the contractor asks the owner where he is to take it, the owner says, "Well, I haven't got approval to put it anywhere yet, so you will have to hold it." Of course, there is no holding yard, so the nearest park becomes the storage area.

In some instances, houses have been removed from beautiful, tree-lined residential streets—not in my ward—and the alderman has been informed by telephone that a house is being carted down the street and, because the house does not fit along that street, the workmen ahead of it are cutting down trees with a chainsaw.

Mr Beattie: That is a disgrace.

Mr J. N. GOSS: What is more, damage is caused to water mains and sewers.

Another practice that the police must examine seriously is that when houses are being moved along roads with centre traffic islands, the removalists take away the "Keep Left" signs so that the house can move through. However, they do not replace the signs. It is only when someone reports the matter or when someone's vehicle collides with the traffic island that the council becomes aware that the sign has been taken down. It is not satisfactory for local government to be following those matters up. The route to be taken by the contractor should be included in the permit so that, if damage has been caused along the route by the contractor, the local authority will know who is to blame.

The proposal to grant special provisional licences to first drink-driving offenders is excellent. It will reduce the hardship imposed on families of drink-drivers. If a drink-driver is caught in charge of a heavy vehicle—over 10 tonnes—a taxi or a bus, the owner of the vehicle should be notified. People in the transport industry are concerned that a person could lose his licence, not tell his boss and drive a bus or semitrailer illegally. People can drive illegally in their own family cars and lose their licences but still go to work and risk driving the company vehicle. If they are driving the company vehicle when they are caught, the owner of the vehicle in which they are caught should be notified.

I turn now to red lights.

Mr Beattie: Is this an admission?

Mr J. N. GOSS: I will talk to the honourable member later about it.

The Liberal Party supports any road-safety program that is positive and reduces the death and accident statistics on our roads. However, it has a couple of reservations about a number of points that were not raised in the Minister's second-reading speech, which I will raise during this debate.

The idea of the scheme, of course, is to deter motorists from running red lights. It is meant to act as a deterrent. It must be remembered that the scheme is designed to deter people from running red lights, because of the likelihood of their being caught. Recently I was in Sydney, and when driving in from the airport I saw a number of signs with the words "Red Light Intersection Ahead". I can tell honourable members that the taxi-driver certainly took no notice of them. He ran every red light.

In New South Wales the cameras have proven to be cost effective. However, they are doing very little to deter motorists from running red lights. Up until the end of March this year, the New South Wales Government had received \$2.7m from fines imposed on motorists who were caught running red lights. A number of motorists are still willing to run red lights. I think the fine in that State is \$135. The New South Wales Government does not mess around. However, people are still ignoring red lights.

Although the New South Wales Government admits that since the cameras have been installed there has been a small decrease in the number of right-angle collisions at intersections, there has also been a significant increase in the number of tail-end collisions. As soon as the light turns amber, everybody slams on his brakes and the motorists following, particularly the drivers of heavy vehicles, do not have time to stop.

Mrs Edmond: You were just saying they don't take any notice of the red light.

Mr J. N. GOSS: That is right.

Mrs Edmond: Then why are they stopping?

Mr J. N. GOSS: A number of people panic and stop long before they have to.

Mrs Edmond: So they do take notice.

Mr J. N. GOSS: Some people do. However, one can see from the number of fines that are being imposed that a tremendous number of people totally ignore red lights.

In New South Wales there has been a marked increase in nose-to-tail collisions at intersections and people suffer whiplash or back or neck injuries. Most people are able to overcome those injuries. However, I am told that people involved in right-angle collisions can receive severe injury. It is a case of which accident causes the least long-term disability.

Mr Beattie: That was very profound.

Mr J. N. GOSS: It is very cold and calculating.

I turn now to the number of deaths on Queensland roads, which over the last year has decreased to 376. I believe that the largest single factor in the reduction in the number of fatal collisions was the introduction of random breath-testing. Fatal right-angle collisions at intersections resulted in 22 deaths, or 15 per cent of all road deaths. Ten of those deaths occurred at intersections controlled by traffic lights, and the other 12 occurred at intersections at which there was a "Stop" sign, a "Give Way" sign or no sign at all. Of those 376 deaths, 10 deaths resulted from right-angle collisions at intersections controlled by lights. About half of the 376 deaths resulted from single-vehicle accidents, which means that the driver was probably driving beyond his or her capability along that particular stretch of road, that the road was in such poor condition that it caused an accident to occur, or that the driver went to sleep at the wheel. It is interesting to note that the great percentage of fatal road accidents in this country occur on non-urban roads.

Another interesting aspect is that most right-angle collisions at intersections, which result in fatalities, occur between seven and eight seconds after the light has turned red. That means that the drivers were not running through the intersection just one or two seconds after the light had changed because the other vehicles had not moved off. However, these are the people who have accidents because of inattentive driving, because of the failure of the lights—maybe a couple of bulbs are out—or because heavy vehicles are parked right on the intersections. Quite often interstate transports are parked right on the intersections along main trunk routes because usually they are the only free spots at shopping centres in which a driver can park while he goes to the bank. The Chermside shopping centre is a good example of that. Drivers of interstate transports pull up right on the intersections and block the view of the lights. Quite often people are sitting right behind heavy vehicles and cannot observe the lights, particularly on multilane roads.

Another issue is the timing of the light phases at intersections at which "red-light" cameras are to be installed. At intersections on roads where the speed limit is 60 kilometres per hour, the amber phase should be a minimum of four seconds. I believe that at a number of intersections throughout Brisbane the old switch gear is still installed, which is timed at the old standard of three seconds. That was installed by the then deputy mayor. However, the new standard is four seconds.

Mr Beattie: Who was the deputy mayor at the time?

Mr J. N. GOSS: The deputy mayor was Alderman Ardill.

Mr Beattie: An outstanding deputy mayor.

Mr J. N. GOSS: He did a wonderful job out at Sunnybank. There were more traffic lights out at Sunnybank than there were in the rest of the suburbs of Brisbane combined.

The "red-light" cameras should not be installed until normal intersections in 60 kilometre-an-hour zones have a four-second amber light. In an 80 kilometre-an-hour zone, the amber phase will have to be increased to five seconds. On the downhill approach to an intersection in a 60 kilometre-an-hour zone, the amber-time phase should be four and a half seconds.

I have inspected "red-light" cameras and their installations. In Victoria they are housed in light steel boxes. In Sydney, where drivers must be a bit more aggressive, because of their cost the cameras are housed in bullet-proof steel containers.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr J. N. GOSS: Yes, but I am not a good shot.

Vandals sometimes spray black paint onto the camera lens, but I assume that would be too late if their cars had already been photographed.

The circuit activates the "red-light" camera .3 of a second after a car has crossed the circuit. A second photo is taken at .7 of a second after the car has crossed the circuit. If an accident occurs at an intersection that is equipped with a "red-light" camera, it is possible to estimate the speed of a car involved by measuring the distance that it travels in the two surprisingly clear photos. I have seen some photos that show cars in a state of collision at an intersection. The time that had elapsed since the car ran the red light is imprinted on the photo.

In New South Wales, whether or not "red-light" cameras are installed at intersections, flash units are maintained. A motorists who runs a red light and triggers the flash unit spends some time worrying whether or not he will be fined. I hope that similar flash units will be installed at intersections in Queensland.

Consideration must be given to the standard of our roads, the positioning of lights at intersections and the education of drivers. Although Australia and the United States probably have the most restrictive speed laws in the world, their accident rates are high. However, in some European countries where cars travel on autobahns at over 200 kilometres per hour, the accident rates are low. I travelled at 200 kilometres per hour in a car with the Lord Mayor of Munich. I was even praying at 200 kilometres per hour because I have never travelled so fast on the ground. Because the fines in those countries are horrific for drivers who do the wrong thing, drivers tend to do the right thing and stay in their correct lanes. They realise that if they do the wrong thing and have an accident at 200 kilometres per hour they will be saying "Goodbye" because they will be dead.

The Minister has not mentioned that, in Sydney, signs are located at intersections warning drivers from all directions that there is a "red-light" camera ahead. Those signs are present regardless of whether or not a "red-light" camera is installed at those intersections and whether or not it is operating in a particular direction. That is a case of prevention rather than having motorists looking for such cameras instead of watching the road. The NRMA considers that the New South Wales system is the fairest in Australia, although it has not deterred a large number of motorists from running red lights.

Approximately 40 years ago the Australian Government had to decide whether the emphasis on transport in Australia should be placed on rail or road. Unfortunately, the emphasis has been placed on neither form of transport and not one good system has been developed.

As a member of the Travelsafe Committee, I will be mentioning that time is more important to some drivers than is paying a fine. Some people who lose their licences

can still afford to hire young people to drive them around. Constant offenders or dangerous drivers should be forced to attend defensive driving courses unless they are ill.

When people renew their driving licences, all they have to be able to do is see the eye chart. They are not required to upgrade their knowledge of the road rules. Many elderly drivers obtained their licences long before roundabouts were introduced and do not understand that they have to veer left to turn right. Some try to go around a roundabout the wrong way. A better method must be adopted for people when they renew their drivers' licences every five years.

Plastic bubble covers on numberplates will create a problem for "red-light" cameras because they reflect the flash. I understand that motorists have already gone to great lengths to ensure that their numberplates reflect the light so that they cannot be read by a "red-light" camera. In New South Wales, 50 per cent of offenders' numberplates cannot be read clearly, so that 50 per cent of offenders escape fines because the photographs of them going through red lights are not clear enough establish a case against them.

Many numberplates become discoloured. The white, reflective background on older numberplates wears away, and the resultant dark background makes it difficult for "red-light" cameras to accurately photograph the numberplates. Many people spray reflective material onto their numberplates and others install tow bars on their cars to obscure their numberplates.

One of the concerns is that the Government will want to install more and more cameras and have fewer and fewer police on the road. There is no substitute for having the visible police presence on the road. If the cameras are merely installed and the motorists are not warned, it is purely an attempt to raise revenue.

In New South Wales the motorists are allowed to view their photographs. The police have said that a reasonable number of people——

Mr Beattie: Do they get to pick one and take it home?

Mr J. N. GOSS: Not of the actual offender, but the police have enough photos of them.

Mr Beattie: Autographed by Greiner?

Mr J. N. GOSS: I did not see Kermit.

Mr Hamill: You mean the Honourable the Premier?

Mr J. N. GOSS: Sorry, yes.

On the occasions on which motorists come in to see the police, they ask for one of two things. They ask that the summons be sent to another address, because they were out in the company car and they should not have been where they were when the photo was taken. The other is that they want to know whether their wife would be able to identify who was in the car with them. That is true. They are the two matters which cause the most concern to the offenders when they come in to have a look at the photographs.

Mr Beattie: Do they sell them?

Mr J. N. GOSS: No, I am not saying that.

One very important thing that concerns me is that the film that is taken from the cameras should be audited so that no photographs are taken out by the police in order to protect their friends, so that no offenders can escape prosecution.

One example of police accountability in New South Wales is that if a police car runs a red light and does not have its blue flashing light on or if the police have not notified that the car is in pursuit prior to the offence, the driver of that police car is booked and he pays the fine. There is no excuse. Either the police have the blue flashing

light on—and they have to state why they had it on—or the police officer driving the police car is booked. That is how New South Wales is bringing accountability back to its police force. That State's police force has to set the example and obey the road rules.

Whilst I was driving home from Parliament last night, I noticed that a police car, instead of pulling up at a red light, went through it and turned into police headquarters. Obviously, because it was fairly late, the driver considered that it was not worth waiting at the red light until the lights turned green. That was at 10 past 9 last night. That sort of smart action certainly does not do the police any good at all.

If we can be assured that the introduction of this system is purely to prevent accidents, then we are all in favour of it. To give the motorists some warning, we would like to see an education program introduced at the same time as the cameras. Once the motorists get used to stopping at red lights, then perhaps this system will, for some time anyway, prevent the running of red lights. The NRMA has said that it is very happy with the system in New South Wales and it considers it to be probably the fairest system that could be introduced.

Mr HEATH (Nundah) (8.27 p.m.): I also am pleased to speak in support of this Bill and I am pleased that both the other parties are supporting it. The amendments to the Traffic Act will introduce new initiatives which will assist in reducing the State's road toll. But in another area that I will address first, it allows for the correction of an anomaly that has been ignored for far too long.

At present, if a driver is convicted of a drink-driving offence and the consequences of the sentence handed down will lead to undue hardship upon the driver or for the driver's family, an application can be made for a restricted, provisional licence which is commonly referred to as a work licence.

In considering applications for a work licence—and applications can be made only at the time of conviction—the magistrate, in granting the provisional licence, can impose a disqualification period of up to double that which would have been imposed had a work licence not been issued. The work licence, when issued, is limited by restrictions and conditions imposed by the magistrate, but will allow the driver to continue to earn a livelihood.

Obviously, in some cases, the employment circumstances of the driver will change through no fault of his own during the period over which the provisional licence is in effect. For example, the person's employer may go out of business or may purchase a different class of vehicle. In these and similar cases, that driver is effectively put out of work because there is no provision currently made for the conditions under which the work licence has been issued to be altered to suit the new circumstances of the driver's employment. In these cases, that driver who is put out of work is also then stuck with a disqualification period of up to twice that which would otherwise have been imposed.

This amending Bill provides a mechanism under which, in cases such as the examples I have mentioned, these drivers will have an avenue allowing them to go back to a magistrate and apply to have the conditions on the work licence altered to accommodate their new employment circumstances. I believe that this is a very fair and very just provision. But, in saying that, I hope that the legal profession appreciates—and I ask it to note—that the reason for the amendment is to allow for flexibility in line with the original intention of overcoming undue hardship for citizens and their families and not to allow convicted drink-drivers to claim changes in employment conditions spuriously or at will in anticipation that the conditions attached to their work licences will be automatically altered.

Members will have noted that the amendment provides for the applicant and other persons to be called as witnesses before a magistrate and to be liable to cross-examination during a hearing for alteration of conditions.

Further, the Commissioner of Police may also be represented at the hearing should he deem it necessary. I am sure that many honourable members will have received

representations from constituents on this matter and that they will join me in congratulating the Minister for taking the first opportunity he has had to overcome the problem.

As previously mentioned, a further initiative in this amendment Bill will allow for the introduction into Queensland of "red-light" cameras. There is a demonstrable commitment from this Government to improving road safety and reducing Queensland's road toll, and I am delighted that all members and all parties agree that the reduction of the road toll is of primary importance. As the honourable member for Peak Downs said, it transcends party politics.

The Government has endorsed and adopted the 10-point road safety package proposed by the Federal Government and the decision to approve the plan aligns Queensland with the other Australian States. The 10 points of the Federal package are—

- a national .05 alcohol limit.
- national licensing of heavy truck and bus drivers.
- speed limiting for heavy vehicles.
- zero alcohol limits for young drivers.
- increased enforcement to ensure that one in four drivers are random breath tested for alcohol in a year.
- a graduated licensing system for young drivers.
- compulsory bicycle helmet wearing.
- daylight running lights for motor cyclists.
- increased enforcement of seat belt and child restraint use.
- national uniform speed limits.

This Government has added, through this amendment Bill, an eleventh point aimed at reducing the road toll and that is the introduction of "red-light" cameras.

There has been much comment lately, following the series of coach and truck tragedies in northern New South Wales, about black spots on the highways, which are sections of road on which accidents occur regularly.

In Brisbane and at other centres around the State, the equivalent black spots are a number of infamous suburban intersections, which are well known through collated statistics as being the sites of regular, if not frequent, accidents, and on too many occasions, fatalities. In an attempt to limit those accidents, the Main Roads Division and local councils frequently alter the aspect of those intersections, for example, to slow the traffic, to improve the visibility and by the provision of extra turning lanes, red arrows and green arrows. There is a whole range of initiatives that are tried in an endeavour to make those intersections safer, and generally they work.

The Main Roads Division and the police can, with their experience, modify the conditions and position police patrols at these black spots so that motorists are limited by these restraints. Accident numbers do decline. There is no defence for motorists who flout the law and endanger themselves, pedestrians and other motorists by running red lights.

This amendment Bill contains a provision to allow the use of cameras to detect the red-light runners. Here is a process that can begin to limit even further the number of accidents and consequent fatalities at the high-risk intersections or black spots in the city.

Clauses 5 and 6 of the Bill set out the procedures under which offence notices can and will be issued. In addition, there are sections covering procedures to be followed when the registered owner of the vehicle, who is served with the offence notice, was not in fact the driver at the time of the offence, and sections covering instances in which vehicles are registered by companies or in joint names. The officers of the Department of Transport have thoroughly examined those aspects.

In summary, this amendment Bill will enhance the drive toward road safety in Queensland and in the genuineness of this aim I welcome the support of members opposite for it. I am very pleased to support the Bill.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (8.35 p.m.): I take pleasure in joining in this evening's debate. I noted the comment made by the member for Mount Coot-tha that the fuel excise should be spent on hospitalisation rather than on the roads. That might overcome some of the traumas but it is closing the door after the horse has bolted. One should really look at the road conditions, the condition of the car, the ability of the driver and his level of concentration when examining many of these road fatalities.

Earlier in the evening, Mr Beattie said that many road accidents occur out in the country areas, but not all of them. Many different types of road conditions exist, and after a driver has been behind the wheel for many hours, he may tend to lose concentration. One also has to consider the ability of a driver, and I will touch on that point a little later.

Returning to the point made by the honourable member for Mount Coot-tha about the fuel excise, more emphasis needs to be placed on the necessity for the Federal Government—and I refer to a Federal Government of any political colour—to put more of the revenue from fuel excise into the construction and maintenance of roads. In real money terms, the Federal Government's level of contribution has dropped considerably in the past six or seven years.

When one considers the increasing number of vehicles on the roads and the condition of the roads, it is obvious that more money needs to be spent just to catch up on road maintenance, particularly with the increasing number of vehicles using the roads. I urge all members, particularly those opposite who allegedly have some influence with their colleagues in Canberra, to give some consideration to the allocation of extra funding for roads, particularly from the point of view of road safety.

As I said before, that is only one aspect to road safety. This afternoon, Mr Ardill gave notice of a motion to set up the Travelsafe Committee. He emphasised points such as compulsory motor vehicle checks and vehicle safety. Driver education is one aspect that should not be underestimated. Equal emphasis should be given to all those points.

Vehicle checks will cost something like \$30m or \$40m. That may or may not overcome some of the problems. Certainly some vehicles need urgent attention, but I think it is the education of the drivers rather than the condition of the vehicles that we should be concerned about.

I should again like to refer to the role of driver education centres. The driver education centre in Gympie plays a very positive and important role in improving the driving ability of people. Many courses have been offered for schoolchildren, and this is where we should begin.

Mr Smyth: You spoke about this last year.

Mr STEPHAN: I am glad that the honourable member noted that, but it has not sunk in. The amount of funding required and the amount coming from local sources to keep the centre operating are substantial. The amount coming from the Government is not very substantial and it is for that reason that I ask the Minister to visit the centre. I know that he has been approached. The previous Government was making a small contribution of \$10,000 a year but this Government has not continued it.

Mr Hamill: Do you believe that we should support all of these little centres?

Mr STEPHAN: The Minister refers to "little centres". There is only one of this type in Queensland.

Mr Hamill: There are a number of other groups that wish to establish them.

Mr STEPHAN: There is no question about that.

Mr Hamill: Should we be funding all of them?

Mr STEPHAN: There is every indication that funding should be given to all of them. If all of the others are prepared to do what the community has done in Gympie, there would be good value in supporting them. When the Minister visits this centre, he will see the facilities and learn that the operators have a great deal of skill. Very close to \$1m has been contributed to that set-up by local sources. If other centres are willing to contribute half that amount and they build a facility of that nature, many of the problems on the roads will be overcome.

Mr Hamill: What should be the contribution—capital cost or recurrent cost?

Mr STEPHAN: Capital cost to a limited extent. Not too much is needed to cover recurrent cost. The facility is not quite paying its way.

Mr Hamill: So you are after recurrent expenditure?

Mr STEPHAN: Expenditure is required to actually improve the facility.

Mr Hamill: Is this capital investment or recurrent expenditure?

Mr STEPHAN: Capital investment is required. Certainly the centre can continue to operate with the donations that have been coming from local sources, but more money is required to improve safety. During the recent wet weather, the conditions off the track were very slippery. It is necessary for the conditions to be safe so that the driving instruction can give confidence to the students and adults who are taking the course. Instruction on the skidpan gives confidence to drivers so that they can handle a vehicle in a spin. Usually, when the tail of a car starts to come round, a driver usually hits the brakes and turns the steering wheel and ends up in the creek.

Mr Smyth: Have you done the course?

Mr STEPHAN: Yes.

Mr Smyth: How many times?

Mr STEPHAN: Once. I suppose I could do the course every year, but that is not the point. The more people we can get to do the course, the more competent drivers we have. It is well worth anyone's while going to see what the local communities are able to do. I do not take the credit myself because better brains than mine have gone into the construction of this facility, and better brains than mine will keep it going.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: Government members can laugh, but it is not a laughing matter.

Mr Hamill: Are you still chairing the committee?

Mr STEPHAN: Yes, I am still chairing the committee. It is not a task that I looked for because it is difficult to fit it in with all the other things that a member of Parliament does. I willingly give of that time when I can to ensure that this centre keeps going. It is a very worthwhile project and if 10 centres can be provided throughout the State, there will be many more safe drivers on the roads.

Mr Beattie: You spoke about car spins. What would you do in a spin?

Mr STEPHAN: There is what is known as the cadence braking system which ensures that the wheels do not lock. If the wheels lock, the car goes straight ahead irrespective of how the steering wheel is turned. The cadence system allows the wheels to turn slowly, so that the car can be manoeuvred. That is one of the first things that must be learnt. The second is that the driver must not become excited and lose his head; he must know what he is doing. If he does that, he will not end up off the side of the road.

My daughters took part in the course a couple of years ago. Later they said that they were travelling close to a vehicle in front of them when that vehicle stopped suddenly and that, if it had not been for the course, they would have finished up colliding with that vehicle and become another road statistic. I mention that for what it is worth.

I again ask the Minister to visit the centre and to bear in mind the enormous contribution that it makes to road safety.

Many of the people undertaking this course are schoolstudents. In addition, ambulance-drivers must take part in such a course before they can be issued with a licence. This is very important for the safety of those drivers and their patients. After completing the course, some of the students made the comment that they learned much from the hands-on experience because the course was conducted with the right attitude. Practical driving experience and theory are part of the course and both are very good. Practical driving gives them the "how" and the theory gives them the "why".

Much has been said tonight about "red-light" cameras and the 15 possible intersections at which they may be installed. There is no doubt in my mind that more emphasis must be placed on red-light runners. Many drivers run through the light a second after it has changed, and many times they get away with it. However, on some occasions they do not. The mere fact that a driver has a green light does not necessarily mean that it is safe to cross the intersection. When they cross an intersection on a green light, drivers are well advised to ensure that no-one is coming in the opposite direction. Often drivers who are a bit anxious or who are running late tend to take the risk; they run through the red light only to find that they do not quite make it.

Some comparisons have been made between drivers who try to run a red light and those who take the time to stop at red lights. On a trip from the northern part of Brisbane into the Royal Brisbane Hospital area a driver would only save 45 seconds by running all the red lights. He is simply making it very unsafe for other road-users.

Mr Beattie: The lights are synchronised.

Mr STEPHAN: They are synchronised to a large extent, yes. The honourable member should try to tell that to a driver who gets anxious and is running behind schedule. He thinks he has to get through as fast as he can, but in actual fact he is saving very little time. I do not know whether the photographs that will be taken at these intersections will discourage people or not, but they will certainly make a lot of people stop and think before they run the risk.

The Bill provides for issue of a special provisional licence to persons convicted of their first drink-driving offence, but it is restricted to permit driving only during the course of employment. It is important to ensure that such licences are issued only to first offenders and that a well-known drunk is not applying for renewal of his licence. The Bill provides that these special provisional licences can be used only in the course of employment. In his second-reading speech the Minister made the point that there were circumstances in which the loss of a driving licence could result in the loss of employment. This is an emotive issue, because people convicted of drink-driving have been convicted of handling a vehicle in an improper and unsafe manner, thereby putting other people's lives at risk. The granting of such a special provisional licence should make that person respect the fact that he has been given a second chance to use his vehicle, keep his employment and keep his family together.

The Bill increases the maximum penalty for disobeying the restrictions placed on the special licence to 200 penalty units, which is \$1,200 in monetary terms. That is quite a deterrent. If people are caught after they have been given their second chance, they deserve to be given a good kick in the pants to ensure that they toe the line and do the right thing.

With those few words, I support the Bill.

Mr BEANLAND (Toowong—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (8.50 p.m.): I rise to speak in this debate because of my great concern for road safety in Queensland.

This Government has been in office for some five months and I am disappointed that so little has been done in that time. There has been a great deal of rhetoric but little action and very few concrete proposals put forward by the Minister and carried through. If they look at the overall program of road safety in this State, most people would support my comments.

This legislation is all about saving lives. The ALP was very vocal when in Opposition and I would have expected that, in his first few weeks in office, the Minister would have come forward with a number of proposals to be implemented at the first available opportunity. That should have happened some weeks ago if the proposal required legislation and some months ago if the Minister had to implement it through ministerial decree. Five months have gone by and this legislation is only now before the House for debate.

Although these amendments aimed at improving road safety in Queensland are very worth while, there are few of them. One would have expected more from a Minister who spent so long attacking the previous Government in this House over what the ALP believed was the previous Government's short-sightedness about and shortcomings in relation to road safety. I trust that over the next few months many more proposals will be put forward. I know that the Minister is in the process of setting up his road safety committee, but he does not need to set up a road safety committee in order to bring a number of worthwhile proposals into this place. The Travelsafe Committee, notice of which has been given, will fill the current void, but I hope that in the meantime a number of proposals will come forward from the Minister. It is worth while noting that road crashes in Australia are the largest single cause of death of people under the age of 45 years, killing 1 300 more people than all forms of heart disease and 500 more people than cancer. Each year the cost of road crashes to the Queensland community is in excess of \$240m for fatalities and \$700m for injuries. The community cannot afford that cost.

Figures have been published by the Federal Office of Road Safety and show that, during the last five years, the death of 4 000 Australians can be attributed directly to the poor state of the nation's roads. I will deal with that matter in more detail very shortly.

Surely the legislation that is before the House is not intended to take the place of a police presence. I believe that if the road toll is to be tackled in a strong and forthright way, the Government must ensure that the police force maintains a very high profile and an adequate police presence. I am not suggesting that police should be sent out to book people. It is simply a case of reminding people of the provisions of the law. There can be no better way of reminding people than by maintaining a high profile police presence in the community. I hope that the Minister will not syphon police officers from traffic divisions and assign them to other activities, with the result that there will be fewer police officers to enforce these important laws.

Earlier this evening the Liberal Transport spokesman, Mr Goss, expressed his concerns about the installation of "red-light" cameras leading to sudden braking. The problem will be that vehicles that stop suddenly will be rammed by following vehicles and that more accidents will occur. All honourable members would know that a number of people seem to take delight in running red lights. Nevertheless, the Minister must ensure that in attempting to detect these offenders, more accidents or injuries are not caused. I am sure that the Minister will monitor the implementation of this scheme in a very sensitive manner to ensure that, in the interests of road safety, cameras at traffic light intersections function effectively. It is easy to install this type of equipment and then forget all about it, but that simply will not do because it is when this type of equipment is forgotten that things tend to go wrong. I believe that in the short term, a great deal of fine-tuning will be required to have the cameras suitably adjusted.

I could not help but notice that the members of the new Queensland Government have been very soft on their Federal colleagues in relation to road-funding. I remind honourable members that adequate road-funding is very important in maintaining road safety. Earlier I mentioned the large number of deaths that can be attributed directly to

the lack of road-funding throughout the nation, particularly in Queensland. The robber baron, the Federal Treasurer Mr Keating, has been ripping off this nation through the petrol bowsers. The fact is that the Federal Treasurer is using fuel excise as a milking cow to prop up the Federal Government's Budget and improve its budgetary position. Federal Labor parliamentarians now do not even bother to deny that. For the benefit of honourable members who may be unaware of the excise on fuel, I point out that 31c of the cost of each litre of petrol is collected by the Federal Government as fuel excise, but only 5.7c is distributed to the States as revenue. During the last five years, road-funding for Queensland has been cut back by \$75m in real terms.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: I know that members of the Labor Party condone this policy. It is noticeable that, compared to what had been said by the previous Queensland Government, they have said very little about road-funding since the election of the Labor Government in Queensland. Regardless of what might be thought of the previous Minister for Transport and the previous Minister for Main Roads, they stood up for Queensland on the issue of road-funding. In addition, during the recent Federal election campaign, a big issue was made of the fact by local government authorities and by the RACQ. I am sure that fuel excise will continue to be a major issue of concern in the community. The Labor Party cannot fool the people on that issue. People see regularly the parlous state of Queensland's roads and the disgraceful pot-holed condition that so many roads are in. People also know that bad roads contribute significantly to the road accident fatalities that occur.

As I said earlier, the Federal Government's own Federal Office of Road Safety has indicated that 4 000 Australians died on Australian roads in a five-year period. I emphasise that they are not my figures, but figures published by none other than the Federal Government's own agency. If the Federal Government were to give Queensland only one extra cent per litre out of fuel excise revenue, that would result in an additional \$50m in road-funding revenue for this State, which would go a long way towards assisting in providing adequate road safety measures.

At the beginning of this year, a sell-out occurred because \$16m was to be disbursed over a period of three years. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the quiet, meek manner in which that was accepted by the Queensland Government did not go unnoticed. The Government should have stuck up for Queensland and asked for an increase in revenue because that money rightfully belongs to this State. Daily the motorists of this State are being milked at the petrol pump. An amount of \$16m will go a short way only towards resolving the major black-spot areas—the dangerous intersections—that exist in this State. It should be borne in mind that the upgrading of one intersection alone can cost up to \$16m, particularly at intersections where fly-overs at railway crossings are concerned. Quite a large number of those types of intersections can be found along the Queensland coastline. This is an issue of grave concern and one would have expected that the Minister for Transport would have been tackling this issue head on in his efforts to provide adequate road safety in this State.

It is worth while noting that although a 30 per cent tax is imposed on luxury goods, the tax on fuel is 120 per cent. That sheds light on the Federal Government's view of motorists and road safety as a whole.

The recently retired Federal Minister for Finance indicated that he believed that already too much funding was going to roads. Because the road toll has been cut in recent years through much strenuous work by State Governments, he believes that is sufficient and that the Federal Government ought not to be returning additional funds gained through the fuel tax back to the States for road safety. That attitude is not good enough. Not only are State Governments feeling the pinch, but so are local authorities. A number of local authorities are turning bitumen roads back into gravel surfaces. That will have an effect on road safety throughout the State. It might not worry the present Government, because it may not have a member representing those electorates. However,

the Government represents all Queenslanders and it ought to be concerned and ought to be taking positive action to rectify the position, instead of standing back and letting the position worsen, as it has in recent times.

The ALP policy contained a number of aspects on road safety. One policy related to speed limits on roads near schools being reduced to 40 kilometres an hour. One would have thought that that would be a straightforward exercise. The policy provided that school crossings and setting-down areas for vehicles would be clearly marked, and vehicle-parking and the practice of setting down and taking on passengers in close proximity to a pedestrian crossing would be strictly forbidden. I am not sure what that means, but the ALP clearly had something in mind with its road-safety policy. Perhaps it meant that it would insist that, when parents came to set down and pick up their children at school in the morning and the afternoon, they must park further away from schools and pedestrian crossings? If that were the case, it would have been a straightforward exercise. Yet little action has been taken in that regard.

The Minister also made pronouncements about bicycle safety helmets, and then he seemed to back off quickly. That is another area in which the new Labor Government would have been in a position to implement its policy quickly. It is not a matter of prosecuting young children; it is a case of encouraging them to wear safety helmets and having a program on that. The Government has not initiated that program to date. I look forward to the Government at some stage taking up that program in an earnest manner.

The Government proposed to encourage truck-operators to fit tachographs to their vehicles. I would be interested to hear the Minister's position on that matter.

Mr Hamill: Where does it say that?

Mr BEANLAND: It says that on page 15 of Labor policy. It states that Labor will promote a code of conduct amongst truck-operators and encourage the use of tachographs as a monitor against speeding. Perhaps the Minister could inform the House of his position on the matter? Has he been to meetings about the matter? Could he inform me on progress made?

Mr Hamill: Are you arguing for compulsory tachographs?

Mr BEANLAND: I have long been on the record as being against tachographs but supporting speed-limiters. The Minister would be the only person who is not aware of that. Certainly, the heavy vehicle operators throughout Queensland are very much aware of my position.

Labor also proposed a policy on bicycle safety and road safety. To date, nothing has been done about those matters.

To support my contention on upgrading of roads, I point out that between 1977 and 1983 improvements to the Hume Highway in New South Wales, which were principally funded by the Federal Government of the day—we know which Federal Government that was—brought about a 29 per cent reduction in deaths and injuries on that road. The Federal Government has acknowledged that, if it were carried out in a major way, the construction of passing lanes on the Bruce Highway in Queensland would result in further considerable reductions in deaths and injuries. It is fair to say that, to date, the Government's program on road safety has been disappointing.

I will be interested to discover what the Government does with the \$16m it receives over the three-year period and exactly where it will be allocated. What black spots will the Government improve with that funding? Will the Government introduce in coming years a serious black-spot identification program such as the program that is currently operating in New South Wales, and not a pseudo program? It is easy to dream up a program but not so easy to actually institute anything worth while.

In Queensland, I understand that, since the Government came to office, no meetings have been held between the Minister and the Lord Mayor in relation to the Transport

Advisory Committee. There are a number of important matters, some of which were raised by members of the Labor Party when in Opposition in this place, that I hoped might be tackled now that it is in office. One of those matters relates to the heavy vehicles that travel through the city. Another matter relates to vehicles that carry flammable goods. Those issues were important when the Labor Party was in Opposition, but, since it has been in office, it has been very quiet about them.

Those programs can be implemented only with the support of the State Government. There is no purpose in the council's attempting to implement a program in that area unless the State Government is prepared to enforce it.

I understand also that, at the direction of the Minister, the technical working group, which is a working group between what is now the Minister's superdepartment—the Transport Department—and the Brisbane City Council, and which has looked at road safety improvements and road improvements generally around the city, no longer meets. If that is the case, I think it shows that politics is certainly getting in the way of road safety in this city.

It is clear that the Minister is very busy in his new superdepartment. Even some representatives of CART are complaining that the Minister has fobbed them off and has said that he is unable to see them. They also believe that they are being wrongly done by. It is not just people in the city council; it is not just myself; it is the Minister's former supporters who are now questioning his credibility in a number of areas.

Mr Ardill was to speak earlier in the debate. However, we now find that he has purposely put his name further down the list of speakers. All he is going to do is tell honourable members what he is going to do on the Minister's Travelsafe Committee dealing with road safety. I think he is also going to give the Minister a helping hand with his portfolio. Why else would he be so keen to put his name further down the list of speakers, after myself and other members on this side of the Chamber.

Mr J. N. Goss interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: It is quite clear, as my colleague Mr Goss says, that Mr Ardill is trying to get his alley good for the next Transport Ministry and superdepartment.

I trust that we will find that, even though the Minister's department is very large, he will have sufficient time to attend to these very important matters. I know that the Minister will be very busy because Transport is a very involved portfolio. It was under the previous Government; now, of course, it is much bigger, taking in not only the old Main Roads Department but also the Department of Harbours and Marine. Therefore the portfolio will need a great deal more attention. I trust that the Minister will be able to find sufficient time to attend to what is certainly a most important and busy aspect of his portfolio, that is, road safety.

Mr ARDILL (Salisbury) (9.10 p.m.): It is always interesting to sit in this Chamber and listen to members deliver their set speeches. Members of the Government expected the member for Gympie to talk about the Gympie driver training centre. They also took bets on how long it would take the previous speaker to start his negative, carping criticism of the Minister and other levels of Government such as the Federal Government.

Mr Beattie: We were right, too.

Mr ARDILL: We were absolutely correct. I have heard it said in this Chamber that the only time the member for Toowong ever said anything nice about anyone was on a pillow.

This is a very important Bill. It covers three important areas. It is designed to iron out inequities in the granting of restricted work licences for convicted drink-drivers. That is very important. I was not going to speak about that because other honourable members have covered that aspect. I also did not intend to speak on the second aspect of the Bill, which is to allow for the introduction of "red-light" cameras. However, I would like to make a few remarks about that. I was to speak principally on the third

aspect of the Bill, which will prevent house-removalists from moving a house from a site onto the road until such time as they have approval from the local authority to re-erect that house in another area. That is very important.

On one occasion out my way a train-driver rang the station at Kingston in the early hours of the morning and said, "We have just run into a house and we will be held up for quite some time." Of course, the station-master at Kingston said, "How could you run into a house?" He said, "It was on the flaming level crossing at Woodridge.", and so it was. It was parked across the level crossing. The train came around the curve in the dark and ran right into the house, which delayed the rail service.

It is very important that these matters are sorted out. I hope that the shifting of houses will not be further delayed, that local authorities do not see this legislation as an opportunity to prevent the removal of old Queenslanders to their areas. Many local authorities do procrastinate and try to delay the relocation of these houses and, in many instances, they do not have a great deal of justification for doing so. When I was involved in local government, we insisted that a proper foundation be provided and that the building be of a fair standard.

It is now quite common for old Queenslanders to be removed from one location and re-erected in another. It is a legitimate part of providing housing. I personally have respect for this, as my family home down the coast was one of those old Queenslanders removed from Brisbane probably about 70 years ago and re-erected down their. It had quite a deal of character, including a presence which at times scared the daylight out of people alone in the house. We had a great deal of affection for that old house; in fact, I still have affection for it.

As I have said, it is important that councils not be allowed to delay further the removal of houses. I hope that the Minister will keep this in mind if local authorities start using this new provision as an excuse to procrastinate with the intention of stopping the relocation of houses. I hope that the Minister will introduce amendments, if necessary, which will certainly put the matter right.

In regard to the "red-light" cameras, I point out that this Government, and particularly this Minister, have a real commitment to road safety. I have always had a commitment to road safety and been very interested in it. I hope to see a lot of good come out of the committee that I believe will be set up tomorrow to look into all aspects of road safety.

Drivers in Queensland should be persuaded to show a commitment to road safety. The criticism of roads and levels of Government is less important than the education of drivers to adopt the correct attitude to driving and the rights of other road-users. That is the most important aspect of road safety. Hopefully the Travelsafe Committee will be able to do something about that.

Tonight on television, Mr Mathieson of the RACQ spoke about road safety and said that he did not agree with the annual testing of vehicles. However, he said that it was great that politicians were at last talking about road safety—as if we had never done that before. I have news for him. Road safety does exercise the minds of politicians because they are constantly coming face to face with the tragedy of road accidents.

Anybody who is familiar with my old Kingswood would agree that I have a great deal of sympathy for the owners of old cars. However, it is important that cars are maintained in a safe condition, regardless of their age. I always ensure that my car's brakes and tyres are in good condition. Some of the old vintage cars are probably safer than most modern cars on the road today. I well remember driving a Commodore on which the accelerator cable jammed and I ended up in severe trouble. The mechanics who tested the car said that nothing was wrong with it, but then they ran into a post when the accelerator cable seized.

Mr Beattie: You felt like Jack Brabham.

Mr ARDILL: That is right.

The age of a car is not important, it is making sure that it is safe. Mr Mathieson suggested that random checks of vehicles should be undertaken. When police pull up a motorist for a traffic offence such as speeding or when they operate random breath tests, the first thing they do is check a car. Random testing of cars is not a satisfactory alternative to what the Minister mentioned today during a press conference with the media.

I turn now to the introduction of "red-light" cameras. Although it is difficult to convince some people that their driving habits are unsatisfactory, that problem is solved when they lose demerit points by running red lights and eventually lose their licences. Red-light running is a very dangerous practice. Recently, my wife stopped at a red light but the fellow in the car behind her did not.

The member for Aspley was correct in saying that the issue is one of educating people. Education is a very important part of traffic engineering. No traffic engineer would suggest that engineering is the sole answer to road problems and traffic accidents. Traffic engineers claim that the three Es are important, namely, engineering, education and enforcement.

For a long time I have supported the installation of "red-light" cameras at intersections. In fact, I believe that the first question I asked in this House related to the introduction of those cameras. "Red-light" cameras will teach people that it is unwise to run red lights, and if they continue to do so they will lose enough demerit points and lose their licences.

Traffic engineering can reduce road accidents to a remarkable degree. During the latter half of the 1970s, because of the traffic engineering thrust of the Brisbane City Council, the average number of road accidents was cut by 50 per cent when the number of traffic accidents in most areas of Australia, with the exception of Melbourne, was increasing. However, that rate in Brisbane did not continue to fall either because people felt that they did not have to obey the law or because the current Brisbane City Council did not maintain that traffic engineering thrust.

This is a very serious matter. Beyond any shadow of doubt, frustration is one of the worst causes of traffic accidents. I refer to the stop/go traffic lights that have re-emerged in Brisbane. Traffic engineers must be made to realise that such traffic lights are one of the major causes of traffic accidents. I do not know whether honourable members noticed it, but this evening the traffic lights outside Parliament House were not working in proper synchronisation. Peak-hour traffic travelling along George Street could not pass through the previous intersections because the traffic had banked up. Two vehicles blocking an intersection can create a line of cars queued up for several kilometres. That exercise was proved many years ago in Ann Street. Even the traffic in William Street, which has a lesser volume of traffic than George Street, had also banked up, and the resultant traffic jam was quite large. Drivers persist in moving into an intersection when they do not have a clear way ahead of them. That can affect a grid traffic system such as in the inner-city area of Brisbane.

When I was a member of the Brisbane City Council I put a tremendous effort into ensuring that traffic on Mains Road at Sunnybank flowed freely at 60 kilometres per hour in both directions. However, the current Brisbane City Council has switched off the traffic light progression. As a result, the stop/go traffic lights create head-to-tail accidents. Drivers expecting to get a flow of traffic down a major traffic artery such as that, which carries approximately 20 000 vehicles a day, cannot use that road efficiently if the traffic lights are not working properly.

As I said, this is the cause of many of the road accidents and much of the congestion that occurs today. It is time that Queensland brought its traffic engineering technology up to date and got rid of the stop and go method, which is certainly way out of date and disgraced in many cities in the world, including major cities in America which use the Bliss system, devised in Brisbane by Ken Pearce and the Eagle Signal Company nearly two decades ago. It is time that this sort of technology was introduced and that the frustration that causes so many accidents eliminated.

I raised this matter because it causes much of the red-light running. If drivers eventually find out that they get nowhere, as I think was mentioned by the member for Gympie, in a proper synchronised traffic system there is no point in red-light running. If a motorist goes through one red light, he will be faced with another one at the next intersection and so on all the way along the road. If the lights are properly synchronised, much of the perceived need to try to crib a bit is taken away. That is something that has to be tackled if every aspect of road safety is to be dealt with.

The efficiency of the cameras is certainly very important. I think that was mentioned by the member for Peak Downs and the member for Aspley. That is an aspect that was brought home to me when I inspected the system in Sydney. The people operating the system said that with their system they even know in advance what demonstrators are going to do when they stage a march in the city. By using the cameras the operators know what the marchers will do before they do it. That is the extent to which that technology is used. It is efficient to the extent that they can see drivers parking vehicles and they can send a policeman to the spot to remove a driver who is causing a traffic jam.

As with the other traffic-signal cameras, the technology in "red-light" cameras is very efficient. It is great to see it. But none of it will work terribly well unless the system is backed up by computers and clerical staff to send the penalty notices out to drivers as quickly as possible. There should not be any delay in sending out those notices. I trust that the Minister will make sure that the notices are sent out to the drivers, particularly in instances when the vehicle is a company vehicle or it is not being used by its owner. A further delay is caused when the penalty notice has to be sent to a second person. It is very important that notices are sent out on a daily basis. I am sure that the Minister will be able to give us assurances that he has that under control.

This is a very important Bill. It will save lives. Despite the negative, carping criticism we heard from one member tonight, I am sure that everyone in this Chamber is pleased with what the Minister is doing. We look forward to a remarkable reduction in the accident rate at intersections.

Mr COOMBER (Currumbin) (9.27 p.m.): The issues raised tonight have been well canvassed by previous speakers. However, I would like to raise a couple of matters that are peculiar to the Gold Coast. The issues addressed by the amendments are just one aspect of road safety and of saving lives. It is a shame that perhaps we did not see these initiatives in action as of last night. Perhaps they would have saved two lives at a light-controlled intersection on the Gold Coast. The proposed "red-light" camera system will create an awareness in the minds of drivers that, if they run a red light, thus endangering their fellow drivers, passengers and pedestrians, there is a real possibility of being caught.

In my opinion, random impaired driving programs and extensive advertising have been successful in reducing the road toll caused by people driving under the influence of a drug or alcohol. However, with the shocking lack of police numbers, perhaps it is the advertising that has been successful, because the police presence is certainly not evident on the Gold Coast. I hope that the proposed "red-light" camera system does not rely on advertising to be successful.

The New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority instigated a system of "red-light" cameras following their apparently successful operation in Victoria. Errors in the New South Wales legislation have been addressed in this legislation. For example, we need to know not only the registration number of the vehicle and the owner of the vehicle, but also the identity of the driver breaking the law. In New South Wales, legislation was needed also to outlaw plastic covers on numberplates.

In New South Wales, surveys were undertaken before the trial "red-light" camera program commenced. The survey found that there was a declining consciousness in drivers of being caught running a red light. That was particularly so among the professional drivers of vehicles such as taxis and couriers. When introduced, the trial was successful—at least at raising revenue. However, the awareness of being caught for failing to stop at a red light was also heightened.

An added benefit was that if an accident occurred at an intersection at which there was a camera, graphic evidence of the accident was obtained. The number of hit-and-run accidents also declined. The introduction of cameras will not remove the need for more police officers. A physical police presence is a far greater deterrent than any cameras.

The people of the Gold Coast were disturbed to hear the Minister for Police, Mr Mackenroth, indicate that no more police officers will be available for the Gold Coast and that people should not contact him but refer all calls for an increase in police strength to his commissioner, Mr Newnham.

Road safety needs to be improved and the revenue raised from "red-light" cameras could be channelled into the following areas—

- the relocation of SEQEB power poles from the road reserve;
- frangible, or breakable, poles on highways for highway identification or lighting;
- the removal of obstacles from highways and acquiring land for future road reserves--

I would like to talk about that in detail later;

and the refinement of the Traffic Act and public road safety education.

One of the other initiatives in the Bill refers to permits from local authorities for the moving of homes. I support the initiatives as they apply to the dumping of houses on the roadside. This is a particular problem on the Gold Coast. The major benefit to the local authority will be that, before a house is moved, the applicant would have obtained a permit from the local authority and, if the home was to be relocated, building approval would have to be obtained to ensure that the building was sound. With building costs escalating, the practice of relocating homes is increasing, but I am satisfied that these amendments will meet the concerns of local authorities.

Road safety and traffic management need adequate road reserves on which to form and build roads. I use this opportunity to highlight a local problem which frustrates the local Gold Coast City Council in its desire for adequate road reserves in Surfers Paradise. As this House knows, the cost of land acquisitions for a road reserve in Surfers Paradise would cost millions of dollars. The Gold Coast City Council has prepared, in conjunction with the Main Roads Division, a road reserve design for a six-lane highway, plus parking lanes, from the Golden Gate through to Thornton Towers. The council is requiring dedication of land to the council in return for bonus development conditions. The theory of the process is sound and moneys will also be received to construct the road and relocate any services.

The system has failed in the last months. Streets have been closed to be amalgamated with development sites. The Land Administration Commission has decided to sell at market value the road reserve to be closed. There will be no compensation by way of deduction of highway frontages given by condition to the council.

A good example of this is the closure of Pandanus Avenue in Surfers Paradise, which is to be amalgamated with the Gold Coast International Hotel site and a parcel of land next door. It is interesting that the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Land Management are at the moment sitting together in the Chamber because their departments will have to get together and rationalise the approach of the Government towards this practice. It is frustrating for the council to place a condition on a development application requiring the dedication of land which will be used to offset costs of the Main Roads Division in acquiring that land and then find that, when the road is closed, the Land Administration Commission requires the land to be purchased from the department at market value. For example, if the road closure is, say, 2 000 square metres and the road dedication is 1 000 square metres, there is not an offset of the 1 000 square metres as against the cost of the land. It is quite frustrating.

In the end, the developer refuses to agree to set-back conditions asked for by the local authority. Consequently, the Main Roads Division will have to resume and compensate land-owners to achieve the road reserve required for construction. This

matter has to be addressed by both the Minister responsible for main roads and the Minister for Land Management for the benefit of traffic management on the Gold Coast.

My colleagues in the Liberal Party have addressed the other amendments contained in the Bill. Basically, the members of the Liberal Party agree with them, with some reservations about the use of the cameras to generate revenue. However, overall we agree with the amendments.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (9.35 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable members this evening for their contributions to the debate. I am pleased to see that the legislation before the House has such wide-ranging support.

A number of technical issues were raised with respect to the operation of "red-light" cameras and I wish to make a few comments to allay some of the concerns of those honourable members who adverted to those matters. The introduction of the "red-light" cameras will be attended to with some considerable publicity. Obviously their installation—some 15, initially—is designed to have a deterrent effect upon those who would sacrifice their safety and the safety of others by running red lights. Money will be spent on advertising the fact that "red-light" cameras are being installed.

It is also the case that a number of measures are being taken which will overcome some of the problems that have been experienced in other places when "red-light" cameras have been introduced. To that extent, when introducing "red-light" cameras in this State, the Government has the benefit of the experience of other States.

I understand that the matter mentioned by the honourable member for Aspley concerning the visibility of numberplates, etc., will be overcome by the use of negative films. Certainly there will be an audit taken of those films and provision will be made in regulations to enable people to view the prints from those films immediately upon their production.

The technology that is being used is computerised and—I say this in response to comments by the member for Salisbury—because that technology is computerised those films will be available and will be read daily, which will enable the administration of the notices to offenders to be undertaken with great expedition.

Honourable members addressed a number of points in what I consider to be a wide-ranging discussion on traffic and road safety. I am pleased that such interest was shown in these issues this evening. In response to the comments from the honourable members for Peak Downs and Salisbury, both of whom I am delighted to see will be on the Travelsafe Committee following nomination by their respective parties, I say that I am pleased to see such concern in relation to the establishment of that very important select committee. In Opposition, I well recall putting forward motions calling for an all-party committee to deal with road safety. I believed that road safety was an issue that transcended party politics and should not have been an issue on which petty party-political point-scoring was undertaken.

I believe that this committee will serve a very useful purpose in educating not only members of the Parliament but also members of the public in matters pertaining to road safety. That is why I was somewhat disappointed to hear what I considered to be ill-informed comments from the honourable member for Toowong disparaging the committee and seemingly suggesting that it would be another talkfest; another body that would not contribute towards road safety. If that is how the member for Toowong feels about it, I am thankful that he is no longer the Liberal Transport spokesman in this place. The attitude that was exemplified in the remarks of the honourable member for Aspley showed a more balanced approach to road safety and I am pleased that he, too, will be a member of the Travelsafe Committee.

That parliamentary select committee, of course, will have the power to initiate inquiries of its own. It will not be a plaything of the Government. It will have a responsibility to the Parliament. I can assure all members that my department will give

the members of the committee the utmost co-operation in the discharge of their responsibilities.

I notice the presence in the House of the honourable member for Gympie. He referred to the Gympie Driver Education Centre. Contrary to the impression perhaps given by the honourable member, the centre in Gympie still receives considerable support from the Queensland Government, although it is not in the form of cash; the Department of Education has made a teacher available. That is no mean contribution, considering the cost of teachers and the availability of such personnel to driving training centres.

I pay a tribute to the efforts of the people of Gympie and other centres who are seeking to make an important contribution to enhancing driver safety in this State. Obviously, all members will understand that there is not a bottomless pit of State funds.

Certainly the State has a significant investment in the Mount Cotton Driver Training Centre in Brisbane which, I am pleased to report to the House, is fast becoming self-supporting in terms of its own funding arrangements. Two of the country's major oil companies—Shell and Mobil—use that centre extensively in the training of their tanker drivers. In passing, I pay tribute to Mobil for its recent donation of a fuel tanker for use in the training of drivers at the centre. The centre is enjoying very strong industry support and, I suggest, very strong community support. I will welcome the day when that centre stands on its own and is able to fund its activities from the sale of the very important expertise possessed by its trainers.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on the diatribe offered by the honourable member for Toowong this evening. As I said earlier, if he were the Liberal Party Transport spokesman we should all share some pity for that misguided member; but, thankfully for the Liberal Party, he is no longer its Transport spokesman. I often wonder whether he owned a bicycle when he was a child. Had he, I can only assume that he never wore a stack hat and sustained too many head injuries—if one can believe some of the comments he made this evening. For him to say that he was disappointed with the performance of this Government on road safety makes me wonder where he has been hiding.

I wish to put on the record this Government's achievements in road safety in the few months that we have been in office. As the honourable member for Brisbane Central well knows because he was involved in the work in this particular promotion, within six weeks of taking office we launched the back-to-school campaign. The focus of that campaign, which is run on a shoestring budget because we are operating on the budget of our predecessors, is on the wearing of cycle helmets. That is an important road safety initiative which was backed by this Government.

There is also the 10-point plan in relation to accident black spots that the Government endorsed at Cabinet level and which was sponsored by the Commonwealth Government. Among the initiatives in that 10-point plan is a commitment to enhance the wearing of seat belts, the wearing of child harnesses, the wearing of cycle helmets, the use of speed limiters on heavy vehicles—indeed, a whole range of road safety measures. We were the first State to endorse that program. I am pleased, as Minister, to have played a part in that.

Also in the few months that we have been in office we have steadfastly argued the case for road safety when it comes to the heavy transport and coach industry. We have repeatedly turned down the enticements from some of the long-distance coach-operators to relax the strong opposition that we have to the very dangerous practice of two-up driving. Again I heard nothing from the honourable member for Toowong on that issue.

We have also given a very strong commitment to the requirement to fit speed limiters. I have had my department conduct an extensive investigation of long-distance coach timetables so that we can crack down on speeding by long-distance coach-operators. That is an important initiative that will enhance road safety in the State.

I am also pleased to inform the House that the Government has pressed ahead with the implementation of our childsafe program. The first step in that will be the

ready availability of baby capsules at an affordable rate. The program that this Labor Government is putting in place will require only a \$25 payment through the Department of Transport for six months' hire of baby capsules and that \$25 will be refunded when the capsule is returned.

I am pleased that the honourable member for Lockyer endorsed the Government's position with respect to road safety measures. It was a shame that these measures were ignored by the member for Toowong.

This Government is putting in place regulations to prevent young people from taking their lives in their hands by using skateboards on the roads. This Government has also elevated its concern for road safety in the organisation of the Department of Transport by the formation of a separate Road Safety Division which will give due prominence to road-safety issues. Contrary to the assertions of the member for Toowong, the Government has not gone soft on road-funding. One of my earliest initiatives as Minister for Transport was to bring my Federal colleague up to Queensland for very important discussions with respect to the allocation of Commonwealth funds which this Government could make use of in the development of its transport network and Queensland's road system.

What troubles me are the simplistic arguments that members such as the member for Toowong like to use. When I hear the honourable member for Toowong talking about fuel excise and I suspect putting up the proposition that all moneys derived from fuel excise should go into the development of Queensland's road system, I can only scratch my head. Does that mean that all the money derived from the tobacco tax should go into the development of the tobacco industry or that all the money derived from liquor taxes ought to go into the development of the hotel trade? It is a nonsense. I would like to see a greater share of the moneys collected from the transport industry being put back into the development of the transport infrastructure, and I do not simply mean roads. There is a variety of modes of transport which we, as a responsible Government, will be developing to reach the optimal mix. There should not merely be road construction for the sake of it. As the member for Peak Downs lamented in his speech, it is a shame that more dollars are not available for the development and upgrading of Queensland's railway infrastructure. The honourable member recognises that there is much more to transport than simply the road network, although the road network is a very important part.

I wish to clear up one other matter, because I would be most distressed if anyone reading *Hansard* was totally taken in by the comments made this evening by the member for Toowong. I refer to the question of tachographs. The Labor Party policy paper, which I had pleasure in formulating before the election, certainly encouraged the use of tachographs to combat speeding. However, as I have said at numerous road transport industry forums, the position of this Government is that tachographs do not limit speed. They are an important tool by which road transport operators can effect fleet-management techniques and thereby place a monitor on drivers who might otherwise speed; but tachographs do not limit speed. That is why the Queensland Government supports the fitting of speed-limiters, which are effective in limiting speed. This Government encourages road transport operators to use tachographs as an important part of fleet management, and that position is endorsed by the road transport industry.

Apart from the contributions made by the honourable member for Toowong, the contributions made this evening were pertinent and welcome. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Hamill, by leave, read a third time.

FIRE SERVICE BILL**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 20 March (see p. 466).

Mr LINGARD (Fassifern) (9.52 p.m.): This Bill represents one of the first examples of the process of review as practised by a Labor Party Government in this State. Quite obviously it is a return to the Wilenskies, the Delaneys and the Ros Kellys.

Mr Beattie: We've heard all this before.

Mr LINGARD: I saw the honourable member over there and I thought that he would appreciate that remark. It is a return to a centralised and socialist system. The public service legislation is being introduced again and there will be a return to centralised power. The Government wants to do away with free enterprise and local input and introduce centralised control. Centralised control is a great system as long as the Government has the money and can afford the hand-outs to get rid of certain groups.

After six months of rhetoric the Labor Government has presented this House with a Bill which, by all accounts, was supposedly exhaustively researched and carefully framed. In short, this Bill was to have been the torch-bearer of reform for the Labor Party, but really it is a poor effort. In addresses to ambulance workers, the Minister stated that this legislation was to be the flag-bearer; an example of the legislation that the Government would introduce on behalf of ambulance workers. It was supposed to provide Queensland with a modern, flexible firefighting service; but, instead, it offers an out-moded service headed by a commissioner who has been appointed for life.

The people of Queensland were promised a streamlined operation, but by virtue of this Bill they will receive the same old structure that has been in operation for the last 40 years. Members of the Labor Party—in particular, the Minister—made many grand promises about reform of Queensland's fire services. This Bill proves, however, that the Labor Government has no intention whatsoever of introducing it. Once again, the promises of Labor have been broken.

If it does nothing else, this Bill will enshrine a whole new series of broken promises for future consideration. As is exemplified by this Bill, the pattern of Queensland's administration under Labor is crystal clear. It is a pattern of inexperience that is strongly supported by ineptitude. This legislation truly reflects the style and substance of the Labor Party's review process and shows a lack of in-depth consideration. It is also ill-considered, bureaucratic and full of holes. This lack of style and dearth of substance will obviously be the reasons why there will be no hurry to go back to the hustings for a by-election. The bungling and demonstrated lack of ability of the Government bureaucrats who framed this legislation could be behind Wayne Swan's belief that Labor should not campaign at all in Landsborough. The Labor Party now realises that, when it comes to real Government and sound legislation, it will need more than a series of one-liners for the six o'clock news.

This Bill has ignored the proposed restructuring of the fire service. It will not provide the people of Queensland with a modern fire service. The top positions are not being thrown open to the best candidates and the Bill does not set up regional operations. Moreover, the fire service's funding operations have not been brought up to date. My advice to the Minister is to go back to Parliamentary Counsel and ask that the organisational structure recommended by the commission of review be added to this Bill. The Minister said that the fire service boards should not have any formal role in running fire services, and I agree. He also said that getting rid of the boards would not mean the end of community input. He said that regional commanders and deputies

would seek the advice and opinions of local people whenever that was desired. This paternalistic system is no substitute for regular and informed community input.

I believe that the Bill should contain provisions that will allow for local committees to be set up to report to the Government on the requirements of the fire services provided in their area and the operation of the service and its budgetary needs, which is similar to the former "watch" committee concept. The commission of review of fire services had a stage-by-stage plan of reform, whereby the boards would have been replaced by local committees and been without operational power. These committees would then have amalgamated with the ambulance committees so that each area could have had a joint police, fire and ambulance services committee, which would have provided real community input.

This Bill is deficient not only in the area of joint advisory committees but also because it has nothing to say, generally, about joint operations. It is obvious that simple steps, such as basing the three services in one building, would save the State huge amounts of money. It is also obvious that linking the three services and combining their operations centres would make the services more efficient. This Bill, which is supposed to lever Queensland's fire services into the 1990s, is silent on those matters.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that this Bill would lay the foundations for a modern fire service in Queensland.

Mr Mackenroth: This is the Bill you introduced last year.

Mr LINGARD: Although the main part of this Bill may have come from the National Party's legislation, the Minister knows as well as I do that dramatic changes to the original legislation have been made.

The Bill is on a very shaky foundation and has obviously been drafted in haste. Some of its clauses are redundant and others are obsolete. For example, clause 86 empowers fire service officers from other States to cross the border and fight fires in Queensland, but they are not allowed to cross the border to contain chemical fires or spills.

There are many questions that I wish the Minister to answer. Firstly, with whom do the responsibilities for off-site plans along transport routes, that is, along roads, railways and airports, rest? The fire services, and not a bureaucrat from the Transport Department, will have to be present at traffic accidents to protect the public. It is unacceptable to try to protect departmental boundaries by defining Transport as "owning" the safety of the public, because the dangers of transport spills are well known. If one brings to mind small country towns that have tonnes of cyanide and other goods transported through them, for the reasons I have stated it would be unacceptable to have residents put at risk. Fire services officers are the only people who should control the scene of incidents along major transport routes, and they should have the responsibility, training and resources to do so.

Secondly, I ask the Minister: why is the commissioner's appointment not for a five-year term, as is the case with the Police Commissioner? If the Government intends to update the fire services by about four decades of modernisation within a span of a few years, it would be unsafe to make an appointment while allowing the old system to continue to dominate and shows a lack of courage on the part of the Government in getting a new service into operation.

Thirdly, I ask: why is the deputy commissioner not the acting commissioner? This arrangement just allows a political decision to be made on who will fill in for the commissioner, and it is not a professional line responsibility. Clause 19 provides for delegation of the commissioner's responsibilities and should be defined. In its present state, theoretically it allows the commissioner to give responsibilities back to village areas. Responsibilities should be defined and levels of operation should be based on the structure of the Police Service, that is, in regional districts, etc. This clause has been retained because of an idea that the boards had last year. The boards thought that as

long as the commissioner could delegate, they could keep their power because the arrangement was designed to ensure that all the delegated powers would be handed back to them by the commissioner.

I now refer to clause 26 and ask: why is there no stipulation that all fire officers for the new service must have a full medical to assess fitness for work? Clause 49 sets out the functions of the Rural Fires Council and takes away the plan that was designed to have rural fire brigades working in association with proper regional fire operations centres. I suspect that the wording "such other functions as the Commissioner may direct" means that the commissioner can delegate all the old work back to them. That is not acceptable, as the inspectors should be trained to become professional in their approach rather than being run by voluntary council members. There is nothing in the new Act which will upgrade the equipment, budget, training or inspection of the rural firefighting in Queensland. There should be no intention to interfere with the good, voluntary nature of the rural fire brigades, but there has to be an offer to them to get them to a level of professional assistance within four years under the direction of the commissioner. It looks as though the Government, again, does not have the courage to initiate real reform.

In reference to clause 84, why is there no mention of a duty on the commissioner to ensure that the rural fire brigades are adequately equipped to protect life and property to a standard at which the firefighters are protected adequately by clothing and equipment?

In reference to clause 106, the previous plan was to bring fire areas into line with police areas, and later into line with ambulance areas. It is simply inefficient and will cost millions of dollars for this diverse State to run the three emergency services separately.

I turn now to funding. Why is not the funding based on minimum standards of fire response in relation to risk areas? Treasury has been told—and it has been well involved in consultation—that fire safety planning saves lives only if the right number of men and equipment is provided for each risk zone. That formula is needed also for police and ambulance, and gives a life-saving approach rather than antiquated Treasury methods to reduce emergency service spending. The whole system of fire levies should be reviewed by a Treasury and parliamentary committee, as the public should have an opportunity for proper fire safety with adequate funding. Alternatives to fire levies are well known and should be reassessed before this part of the legislation is put into practice. When a service is being reformed, why keep antiquated funding systems which will reduce the capacity of good men to protect the public?

I referred earlier to the joint services approach to emergency operation. This Bill does not go on to recognise the importance of the joint services approach to fires, rescue from road accidents and chemical spills. It is not merely a case of a police officer giving assistance to a fire officer. The three emergency services must be bound together in a planned system of operations. Ad hoc responses seem to have remained in the thinking of the Government. The Boral incident in Sydney should be cited as an instance in which it is not a good idea to have a fire officer casually saying to a policeman, "By the way, can you assist?"

The proposal to use unregistered brigade equipment on roads is dangerous, as the rural fire service vehicles are well known to have been poorly maintained through lack of funds, and men, or members of the public who may be involved in an accident, should not be put at risk with unsafe equipment. There should be a legislative responsibility on the rural fire brigades to maintain their vehicles in a roadworthy condition and for them to be officially inspected.

I turn to charges for services. We argue that the commissioner should have the right to charge industries for off-site plans which require technical work and official work to be done by a brigade. Otherwise, how is a commissioner to know if a plan is adequate?

In conclusion—although the Police Service Administration Bill had its faults, at least it reflected the recommendations of the Fitzgerald inquiry. It is a great pity that

the Fire Service Bill does not reflect the expert comments and advice tendered to the Government by the fire service inquiry.

Mr SANTORO (Merthyr) (10.04 p.m.): The Liberal Party opposes the 1990 Fire Service Bill, because the legislation incorporates within it provisions and intent that are the very worst aspects of the Labor movement's philosophy, including the physical and managerial contradictions, centralisation of the means of providing fire services to Queensland, the creation of insensitive, remote and potentially ever-growing and increasingly costly bureaucracies, an absolute and callous disregard for the wishes and the needs of local communities and local government, and an equally callous disregard for the two groups of people who should count the most, those being the professional, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters and the public of Queensland whom those fine people are entrusted to protect from the threat of fires and other related dangers.

This Bill is not the reforming piece of legislation that the Minister would like us to believe it is. It certainly will not take the Queensland fire services into the 1990s, let alone the twenty-first century, as the Minister claimed in his second-reading speech. In his second-reading speech and in previous speeches, the Minister made regular mention of the recommendations of two major and independent reviews into the Queensland fire services. In his second-reading speech during the debate on the 1989 Fire Services Bill, the then shadow Minister for Emergency Services, who is now the Minister, spoke in glowing terms about the commission of review of fire services in Queensland conducted by Dr Sally Leivesley and about the recommendations contained in her report given to the previous Government in February 1989. The Minister said—

"I believe she furnished an excellent report."

In his second-reading speech on this Bill before us, the Minister chided the previous Government for failing to reform Queensland fire services, despite the recommendations of the two major and independent reports received.

Since early this year, the Minister has several times, to the best of my knowledge, publicly praised Dr Leivesley for her fine work and report. On Rod Henshaw's program in early February, he said that he did not know what the fuss was all about in relation to Dr Leivesley's dismissal as a consultant to the Minister and the Government, given that her report was being implemented.

In another speech to this Parliament last year, the member for Port Curtis similarly endorsed Dr Leivesley's report when on 5 September 1989 he said about the then National Party Government—

"They knew that the Leivesley report contained recommendations that would upgrade the provision of services within this State."

Members of the Liberal Party have closely studied the report and find it to be an authoritative document on the fire services of Queensland, and its recommendations worthy of note and, in the main, deserving of implementation. So a quick review of the findings of the Leivesley report is, in my opinion, in order, for they represent a good yardstick against which the Government's commitment to real, as opposed to superficial, reform can be measured.

What the Leivesley report found was that Queensland had 81 fire brigade boards, 1 498 bush fire brigades and a lack of strategic planning. It found that there was a parochial protection of territory; an independence of decision-making; little cooperation between full-time, auxiliary and voluntary firefighters and bush fire brigades; and a lack of command structure, which meant that the training, management, skill and technical expertise was not imparted to firefighters outside of Brisbane. The report also found that the present boundaries of fire brigade areas were in many ways inappropriate, that they were based on local government boundaries and that account had not been taken of various changes that have occurred, including changes in population distribution, new roadworks, improved communication systems and new fire-fighting equipment. It also found that there was an increase in the transport of hazardous substances, thereby

increasing the number of road vehicle accidents, which is placing new demands on the fire services of Queensland.

The report also found that Queensland fire services were woefully underfunded. For example, the amount spent by the State Government on the provision of fire services increased from approximately \$65m in 1984-85 to \$83m in 1988-89. After inflation is taken into account, this represents a real decrease of more than 10 per cent. In 1988-89 Queensland rural fire boards received only \$2.5m, compared with \$22m in New South Wales. This is to provide training, equipment and so on for approximately 1 500 rural fire brigades and 42 000 volunteer firefighters. In real terms, the Leivesley report also found that the number of permanent firefighters has not kept pace with Queensland's population growth. Of course, one can hold up the report, which contains photographs of equipment which is rotting, rusty, ineffectual and a danger not only to the people that it is supposed to protect but also to the people who are actually using it.

What the Leivesley report recommended was that a modern Queensland Fire Service should be established, that it should be part of a consolidated Department of Emergency Services, that it should basically run in tandem with the Police Department and that it should report to one Minister. It suggested that the various headquarters of the SES, the ambulance services and the fire services should be in one building, now that there is the new Police headquarters in Makerston Street. It suggested that there should be the establishment of joint operational capacity between the above four services, the establishment of joint training facilities, that fire services operations should parallel police regions, and that there should be adequate funding of the Queensland Fire Service so that all sections of the Queensland Fire Service are properly and efficiently funded, including in particular the training and equipment needs of the auxiliary and volunteer components of the Queensland Fire Service—those 42 000 volunteers whom I have mentioned. The report recommended the retention, albeit in a modified form, of the system of fire boards.

Those are the things that Leivesley recommended. The philosophy behind her recommendations and her report were to maintain autonomy and independence of local units and boards, to make them accountable by placing them within a definite chain of operational and administrative command, to develop a formal system of risk-mapping and determining operational priorities, and to adequately fund fire services and not have the burden of the past debt hanging around the neck of the new and revamped Queensland Fire Service. In other words, she recommended the writing-off of that \$34m debt that the new Queensland Fire Service will in fact inherit.

The report also recommended—and, as far as the Liberal Party is concerned, this is the most important point in the report—the presence of community involvement and input via the continuation of the existing boards. However, she suggested that they be depoliticised, made more professionally oriented and given teeth.

In summary, Sally Leivesley recommended—and I stress this—the retention of a system of fire boards with a view to maintaining community involvement, a substantial increase in the level of funding of the Queensland Fire Service, this increase to be arranged in conjunction with a real review of the total funding structure of the Queensland Fire Service, and the establishment of joint operational capacities between the above services, with a view to achieving economies which would see real revenue benefits for those services in combination.

I have outlined the content of the Leivesley report, which has been accepted by the Minister—who was then in Opposition—as a good report, and which has been accepted by others on the Labor side as a good report. The question that needs to be asked is: what does the Bill in fact contain that reflects the Leivesley report? What recommendations of the Leivesley report are contained within the Bill that honourable members are debating tonight?

Mr Welford: Haven't you read the Bill?

Mr SANTORO: I have read it; the honourable member can rest assured about that.

What the Bill contains is, first of all, the abolition of the fire boards. It recommends the maintenance of a low level of priority to funding of volunteer components of the Queensland Fire Service, particularly those which contribute magnificently to the work of the bush brigades and the maintenance of the current and inadequate funding structure. That is what the honourable member for Stafford should take note of. That is basically what the Bill contains. Once one wades through all the waffle, once one wades through its incongruities, one finds that that is basically what it does. It abolishes the boards; it gives a low level of priority to funding of the bush brigades; and it does not seek to review the fire levy system.

Why does the ALP support the scrapping of the boards? The Liberal Party suggests that the boards should be retained; the ALP thinks that they should not be retained. The ALP has two bases for that assertion. It says that the boards have done nothing and that they are stacked with cronies. Those are the words that the Minister has used in several speeches in this place and elsewhere. The most publicly stated reason is that the boards—

Mr Mackenroth: At least I am consistent.

Mr SANTORO: I have read the Minister's speeches, and I do not accuse him of being inconsistent in relation to the boards. He certainly has a commitment to centralising power and to destroying community input within the Queensland Fire Service. I do not accuse him of being inconsistent in that way.

The Minister has said that the reason the boards should be disbanded is that they were stacked with cronies and they basically did nothing. I do not intend to say very much about the allegations of non-performance. Several of my colleagues, particularly those who have local government backgrounds and involvement, will speak about their particular experiences with fire boards. However, it is fair to say that they will outline a picture of board members who are totally dedicated to the protection of life and property from the ravages of uncontrolled fire. Honourable colleagues, such as the honourable members for Aspley, Nicklin and Currumbin, will speak with a knowledge of people who have been members of fire boards or have dealt with fire boards that serve both small and large population centres.

As to cronyism—the Liberal Party places on record its opposition to the existence of cronyism on all boards and Government instrumentalities. Cases of abuse in that regard can undoubtedly be documented. Indeed, last year the Minister mentioned that aspect when he spoke about the introduction of the previous Act. My colleagues will elaborate further on the lack of evidence of widespread cronyism or a controlling influence by cronyism in their areas of involvement.

The real reason why Government members want boards abolished is that they want to centralise power, which would make it very easy for their union cronies to take over the new, revamped Queensland Fire Service.

Mr Welford: What nonsense!

Mr SANTORO: I detect a twinge of sensitivity from the honourable member for Stafford.

That is what will occur. The Government wishes to remove the decision-making ability from local authorities and boards, which would give more scope and power to the union influences within the Queensland Fire Service.

What did the Leivesley report say about the fire boards?

Mr Welford: "Abolish the boards."

Mr SANTORO: No, she did not say that. If the honourable member listens, he will hear what Dr Leivesley had to say.

The Minister has been fond of saying that the abolition of the fire boards is the fundamental recommendation of the Leivesley report and that that is the main reason why the report was kept under wraps, modified into a Green Paper and eventually not implemented. The Minister said that on 17 October of last year. I suggest that he is either misleading the public of Queensland or he has missed the point that one of the report's main recommendations is that the boards are to be maintained but that their functions are to be altered.

What did the Leivesley report say about the boards? It said that they should become policy advisory boards; that they should have representation on a State policy advisory board; and that they should be responsible for the implementation of prevention programs in small business, rural and other residential communication and commercial bases. I note that the member for Stafford is saying nothing more, because that is what the Leivesley report said.

Mr Welford: "Abolish the boards."

Mr SANTORO: No, it said that they should be maintained. I am coming to the major reason why Dr Leivesley said that they should be maintained.

Dr Leivesley said that the boards should be maintained because they involve an amount of community input that has been denied to local communities by the provisions within this particular Act. That is why the Liberal Party supports the retention of an advisory board system. In reality, although Dr Leivesley favours the establishment of a regionalised structure for the Queensland Fire Service, she envisaged the fire boards as having a fundamental role to play particularly in terms of involving the local community in a vital aspect of their lives.

Whilst Dr Leivesley suggested some centralisation, the essential check and balance and element of community involvement was enshrined within the report. The Liberal Party supports that and contends that it is not good enough for the Minister to say that regional commanders and deputies will seek the advice and opinions of local people, particularly community-leaders, whenever they desire it. The Minister should have, and can still make provision for, a formal and effective structure to continue to represent the interests of the local community within the Queensland Fire Service.

The Queensland Liberal Party does not support the abolition of fire boards because it is against the extensive regionalisation within the Act. It is against the heavy, central control orientation of the Act. Regional headquarters control will be less accountable to the local community than is the present case with boards. Boards, and particularly board members and the leaders of communities who are members of boards, are better equipped to encourage and retain local involvement. For example, local government representatives who know members of local communities will be able to encourage them to become involved as volunteers on local auxiliaries.

Certain essential functions which are currently performed by boards are best performed by those boards and not by a centralised structure. For example, building approvals by fire boards are best performed by those particular bodies. However, let it be made clear that the Liberal Party does not support the politicisation of fire boards or any other boards. That is another recommendation of the Leivesley report that the Liberal Party supports. Therefore, it supports the recommendations within the Leivesley report that such boards and appointments to them be strictly apolitical.

That is the major reason why the Liberal Party supports the retention of the boards, which enable that essential component of community input to be maintained and ensure that it is not left to the discretion of regional commanders.

Mr Welford: It hasn't worked.

Mr SANTORO: It has worked. My colleagues will clearly outline their experiences with the workings of fire boards. They know them to be apolitical, fair and efficient. Those members have a genuine dedication to fire services and fire prevention in this State. The Liberal Party is happy and willing to admit that examples of politicisation do exist.

However, in the main, my colleagues and other members of this House will be able to formulate a strong case for the retention of boards.

I turn now to the most essential issue, namely, funding. No amount of reorganisation, restructuring or hiring and firing will lead to anything unless a proper and genuine commitment to funding exists. Unless there is a genuine and resolute commitment to adequate funding not only to properly fund the new service but also to eliminate the existing debt, nothing will really change.

Let us look at how the ALP proposed—and proposes—to address the funding question. Let us look at what the ALP's promise in its pre-election policy, released last year, was.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I will remind the Minister. The pre-election policy stated—

"No fire service can provide effective fire protection unless it is properly funded.

. . .

Worse still, because of the mishandling of the fire levy system, there has been little chance of a fair and equitable means of providing the necessary revenue for fire services in this state."

That was in a preamble. The Minister then went on to state more specifically that—

"A Goss Labor Government will:

Establish a full inquiry into the fire levy system, including broad consultation with firefighters, business groups, local authorities, representatives of the insurance industry, other relevant bodies and members of the public who may wish to make private submissions.

On the basis of this review, provide a level of funding for Queensland's fire services which will allow a Goss Labor Government to implement its reform measures over a determined time span."

The question that we ask arising out of that policy is: what progress has been made by the Minister in relation to arriving at a new funding formula as he in fact promised?

On 6 February, in the media, the Minister floated the idea of an increase in the level of fire levies. The Liberal Party opposed that and it reminded the Minister that prior to the election he and his leader, the now Premier, had made a commitment not to increase taxes and not to introduce new taxes. The Liberal Party regarded a levy as a tax and it reminded the Minister of that.

Mr Mackenroth: Not greater than inflation.

Mr SANTORO: The Minister is giving that particular assurance now. I suggest that at that particular stage he was displaying a reluctance to do so.

Let us have a look—

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I am willing to be corrected on that. I am happy to be corrected on it. I recall that in interviews the Minister expressed a real reluctance to make that qualification. If he did so, I will acknowledge that at another opportune time.

However, even in the second-reading speech, the Minister refused to mention the reform of the fire levy system as it exists at the moment. So the question needs to be asked: what funding system is enshrined within the legislation? The answer to that is very simple—the old system, the system that the Minister suggested should in fact be reformed. This is the case, despite the ALP's pre-election acknowledgment that a restructuring of the funding base and/or an increase in the total level of funding was essential for the proper reform of the Queensland Fire Service. The Minister seems to make a lot out of the estimated \$1.4m saving that will be achieved from the abolition of the 81 fire boards. However, what he fails to claim and recognise is that the \$1.4m saved from the abolition

of the 81 fire boards will certainly not fund the massive restructuring exercise that has been proposed by the Minister or which is necessary if fire services in Queensland are to be brought up to the standard that the community deserves.

The Liberal Party urges the Government to look seriously at various ways in which the funding of fire services can be improved. Again, the Leivesley report provides a good array of options, some of which one would have thought the Government would have had the fortitude to embrace and thus honour some of its election commitments.

Funding initiatives which could have been considered and which the Minister can still consider can include a one-off grant from consolidated revenue, particularly in relation to abolishing the accumulated debt of \$34m.

Mr Mackenroth: Do you disagree with the fire levy system?

Mr SANTORO: The Minister will have an opportunity to answer me.

As I was saying, it could include the greater involvement of the insurance industry and provisions within the Act and regulations with regard to the cover of contents and structure. That was another recommendation in the Leivesley report that certainly bears far greater consideration than it has obviously been given. It could include the planning of a more equitable levy burden on the various users of the fire service. One would have suspected that, prior to the election, when in fact the Minister and the Labor Party suggested that the fire levy system should be reviewed, that that is in fact what they had in mind—a more equitable spread of the burden that the fire levy places on the people upon whom it is levied.

Equally, what Dr Leivesley suggested was that the various emergency services, including the ambulance and the SES, could be combined under one administrative umbrella from the point of view of ensuring that many common overheads be shared by the various branches of the State's emergency services and thus make more resources available to all of those particular entities. We would suggest to the Minister that joint operations and initiatives should be quickly explored and implemented, including joint communications and training programs.

All of the foregoing and other options, including the ALP's much-heralded review, have been pushed aside in the interests of maintaining the inadequate status quo in this most fundamentally important aspect of the Queensland Fire Service.

Irrespective of whether or not the real level of funding is increased, the Minister should insist on the practice of program budgeting within the Queensland Fire Service so as to ensure maximum accountability for the expenditure of public moneys. If, for example, extra moneys are allocated to a particular area for, say, fire prevention, then statistics on the number of fire starts for that area should be compiled so as to evaluate the effectiveness of those extra allocations.

The Liberal Party contends that funding of Queensland Fire Service should be based on the minimum standards of fire response. The attitude that the Liberal Party has in relation to this has been reflected quite adequately by the previous speaker. I will not proceed to elaborate further.

The Bill before us is riddled with many other concerns, far too many to all be mentioned this evening, but I would like to touch on a few others. In the last few minutes remaining to me I would like to emphasise the plight in which rural fire boards and fire brigades find themselves. Currently, the persons and the property of volunteer fire-fighters within the bush fire brigades are adequately defined and provided for in the Rural Fires Act 1946. However, it seems to me, after having read this Bill, that little mention has in fact been made within it of the provisions that are contained within that Act. What I am suggesting to the Minister and his advisers is that in fact those particular conditions and entitlements should be clearly enshrined in the legislation and those people should be looked after by the Government.

The Liberal Party encourages the Minister to continue the present practice in relation to the composition of the Rural Fire Council and the appointment of the chairman. Currently the membership of the Rural Fires Board, which is soon to become the Rural Fire Council, consists of seven members, six of whom are drawn from the associations representing grain-growers, cattlemen and cane-growers, the police, the forestry service and local government and a chairman who, up until very recently, was never in fact a volunteer fire-fighter or a fire-fighter. Bush fire brigades have never had a representative on that board or even had an observer status. In other words, the 1 498 bush fire brigades and the 6 000 volunteer fire-fighters have never had a say in the deliberations of the Rural Fires Board.

Last year the situation changed slightly with the retirement of the then chairman, the hard working, conscientious and congenial Mr Mal Blaikie. As a result of strong lobbying by the vigilant bush volunteers, the present Government agreed to appoint Mr Don Greenhalgh, who was the president of the Bush Fire Brigades Association of Queensland and the immediate past first officer of the Samford Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, as the chairman of that board. The Liberal Party takes this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for that initiative and for giving those volunteer fire-fighters and bush fire brigades an effective, experienced and real voice on that body. The present Government is to be congratulated for making that appointment, and the Liberal Party encourages the Minister, when considering future appointments, to keep to that determination.

As time is in fact running out, I will wind up my comments and reiterate the reasons why the Liberal Party opposes this legislation. It is a Bill that seeks to centralise power and create structures that will in fact provide greater scope and opportunity for union power to become enshrined in a vicious way within the Queensland fire services. It is a Bill that in fact takes away the opportunity of local communities, local people, local fire-fighters, volunteers and professionals to have an input into the administration of the Queensland fire services.

This Bill does not deliver on the promises that were made by the Labor Party prior to and since the last election, particularly in relation to funding. It is a Bill that enshrines the old system and will not deliver for Queensland fire services that will be the pride and the joy of a twenty-first century fire service.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Carnarvon) (10.33 p.m.): Tonight I partake in this debate with a great deal of pleasure. At the outset, I wish to place a rural perspective on tonight's debate. Among the things that one really begins to respect on the land are floods and fires. I believe, as do many of my colleagues in this Parliament and many people out in the real world, those two disasters really affect the functioning of our community. They tend to have serious implications for our community.

I have no doubt about the Minister's credibility with regard to this issue. However, I believe that he is a little bit off track with regard to the question of centralisation, which is the most important aspect of this debate. This Bill will centralise power. It will take power away from those people in the country areas who, up until 30 June, will have had control over the operation of Queensland's fire services. I believe that many disastrous implications, including the loss of life, could emanate from that centralisation of power.

The Bill also contains some good points. If some of those good points were amalgamated with the concept of a rural fires board—and I refer to the 81 fire boards throughout the State—a far better functioning rural fire system would be evolved. However, the Bill provides for the centralisation of rural fire boards in this State and I must say that I oppose that concept.

A few years ago, I awoke one morning—I think it was on my birthday—

Mr Welford: Surprise, surprise!

Mr SPRINGBORG: And I hope that I will be able to do that for at least another 50 or 60 years.

I awoke only to be greeted with reports about the Ash Wednesday bush fires in Victoria. I remember feeling from the bottom of my heart for those 70-odd people who died in those fires. The reason I refer to that tragedy tonight is that I believe that the implications of fires are disastrous, and that is why this State needs to be able to handle fires in the best possible way.

Honourable members on the other side of the House hold the view that those powers must be centralised and that they should be given to some all-governing authority, preferably east of the Great Dividing Range. Members of the National Party are of the view that the powers that are needed for fighting fires should remain in the country in the form of local fire boards—if need be, with the 81 local fire boards that presently exist in Queensland.

Mr Coomber: Or with the local authorities.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Or with the local authorities, and that is extremely important, because in this debate one cannot take away the community of interest. But that is something that this Government will take away from the system that presently exists in Queensland.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister said—

"Auxiliary fire-fighters have a critical role to play, but I believe this role should occur within the State Fire Services framework. The importance of auxiliary fire-fighters in maintaining an effective fire-fighting service throughout Queensland will remain undiminished and, in some areas, may even be increased under the new organisational arrangements."

I am afraid that I have to inform the Minister that that may not be the case. I have spoken to my local fire board and it appears that the auxiliary members of that board cannot see any point in continuing.

Mr McGrady: Why?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Because they are scared of the centralisation aspect of this legislation. When this Bill is passed—I think we must concede that it will be passed—the Government will have to get out and embark on a pretty clever public relations exercise to retain these very valuable members of rural fire boards.

Mr McGrady: Why?

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Let me answer the member for Mount Isa first. Because some of those people have been working in the area for a long time they understand the needs of that local community with regard to fighting fires.

Mr Coomber: Voluntarily.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, voluntarily.

The Government will want to keep that local input and those people see this structure as taking away their ability to have their say. That may be because of some misrepresentation. All I am saying is that the Government will have to talk to these people because it is absolutely imperative that they be kept involved in this structure. We cannot afford to lose them.

I believe also that fires in different areas have to be handled differently. How a fire in Stanthorpe is handled might be different from how a fire in the Cooper Basin is handled.

Mr Welford: You put them out, don't you?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Some fires are different. Anybody who is involved in fighting bush fires gets to understand how they should be combated according to local conditions.

That is why the fire boards should be maintained. Unfortunately, it seems that they are to go because of some misguided idea that appointments to all fire boards have been rorted and that they are the font of all National Party cronyism. I have never been an apologist for cronyism or placing people on boards on the basis of their politics. I say that sincerely and I have gone on the record in my local media as saying that. I hope it is a practice that we will never see in this State—

Mr Milliner: Again.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Again—or in Australia, and I refer to Mick Young and Neville Wran. We are not the only party that has put our people on boards. Quite often the people we put on fire boards had the necessary skills and the credentials. I cannot see anything wrong with putting a member of the Labor Party, the Liberal Party or the National Party on a board on the basis of ability.

Mr McGrady: Your Government placed all the Government appointees on boards simply on the basis of their carrying a National Party card.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is the honourable member's opinion, and I do not share it.

Mrs Woodgate: It happened in Pine Rivers.

Mr SPRINGBORG: What happened in Pine Rivers happened in Pine Rivers, and I have no knowledge of it. I have never disputed the fact that people may have been put on boards because of their political allegiance. I have always opposed putting people on boards because of their political colour but not if they have the credibility and the ability to perform the task.

We must guard against future fire-fighting being conducted on the basis of what is in a textbook and very little else. I have seen this happen in my area. We have old bushies—and I do not use that term in a disparaging way—who have been fighting fires since they were very young, and then we have the academics. What we need is a balance between the practical and the textbook. We do not want an academically minded person coming out and saying that we cannot back-burn.

Mr McGrady: That's not true, though.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is one of the things we have to watch. We must not use textbooks to run our fire service. There must be a little give and take. We should give fire brigades the ability to attend to a particular situation as they see fit.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, that is what I am saying, but only in the form of common sense. That should also be the case with the police force. Police officers should exercise a little common sense.

Mr Mackenroth: The police force was allowed to bend the rules a bit, and it did. That is what got you into trouble. Once people start bending the rules a little bit, they end up bending them a lot.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I think that the Minister is being overly pedantic. I am not talking about that. I am referring to a little common sense in the fighting of fires and in policing. Most honourable members will understand what I am getting at. We do not always have to go by the textbook. There is a real danger that if people go by the textbook the result could be the loss of property and stock.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Quite often in the past we have seen Governments in Queensland, Australia and right round the world quite inadvertently set out with the best of intentions but be attacked in the future by hidden agendas. That is what has to be avoided. Hopefully, this whole system will not be run by the textbook.

I see one extremely positive aspect in this Bill, and that is the area of continuing education. The best way to fight fires is to educate people.

Mr Mackenroth: You realise that the majority of this Bill is exactly the same as the Bill introduced by your party when it was in Government?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Okay. What I am arguing against is centralisation and the possibility of practical people being removed, with a resultant loss of community interest, community spirit and community input. That is a very real possibility. People who have served on fire boards in my area have told me, "We would much prefer to be given back the time we have spent than the money that we have received over the past 30 years for being involved in the local fire board. We have done this work because we believed that we performed a service for the community." They have done that and have done it so very ably. We cannot afford to lose those people, but there is a real danger that that will happen. I hope that the legislation does work for the Government and for the people of Queensland. I am simply putting forward my reservations so that I can be on the record as having said what I think is wrong with the Bill.

Mr McGrady: Couldn't you be accused of starting scare tactics among those firemen?

Mr SPRINGBORG: No. These members have approached me. They are the ones who have these reservations. It is my duty.

Mr McGrady: Why don't you answer them?

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have asked them if they can see any——

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Through you, Mr Speaker, to the honourable member——

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. Mr Innes has just made a statement——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If I may continue, Mr Speaker, without these semantics from the honourable member for Mount Isa.

As their elected representative, it is my duty to take the views and fears of the people of Carnarvon to Parliament and portray them in this House. If I do not do so I am abrogating my responsibilities to them. I asked them if there are any positive aspects in this Bill. They do see some positive aspects, as I do, but the overriding centralisation espoused in the Bill and the fact that, after such a long period of time, community involvement is being taken away upsets people in my electorate.

I commend the Government for the provision concerning education that is contained in the Bill. This is one of its positive aspects, because the best way to alleviate fire problems in the future is to educate people in positive fire practices. People are told that there are certain times of the year when they should not throw cigarette butts out of the car window, which they should probably not do at any time, anyway. People living on rural properties should mow around their houses and sometimes the establishment of tree lines are an advantage. Education in schools is an extremely positive aspect. It is inevitable that this Bill will be passed through the House, but in the future some aspects may come back from the community to haunt the Government, and the Minister should be aware of them.

In conclusion, I am on record in this House as having stuck up for the views of my constituents and supporting decentralisation. I am avidly against centralisation. I do not understand why the Minister has expressed such vehement vitriol in this House against boards, because some boards perform a good function. The people on them are devoted to their communities, which is very important. Sometimes the restructuring of boards can be as good as, if not better than, abolishing them.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (10.48 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I join in this debate this evening on the Fire Service Bill.

It is interesting to see the Minister waving this Bill around in the House and saying that the majority of it was introduced by the previous Government. He is correct, but he made some comments in his second-reading speech concerning the previous Government's lack of care. He said words like "Nero fiddled whilst Rome burned" and that the Nationals did nothing. This evening he had the hide to say that the majority of this Bill was actually introduced by the National Party. He cannot have it both ways. Last year, a Bill went through this House which this Government has now repealed. In its place it introduced this Fire Service Bill, which contains the majority of the provisions of the previous Bill, with a few alterations. The major alterations concern the boards, and a number of speakers have already debated that issue.

I support any legislation that will provide a better fire-protection service for the citizens of Queensland. Any property-owner has the right to demand the best service that he can afford to pay for or that the Government can afford to provide. There is a need for the Government to continue to monitor the legislation. The Minister has been rather negligent in not paying tribute to the previous Government for the massive changes that were contained in the legislation prepared by the now Leader of the Opposition, and which I introduced into this House when I was the Minister. The Minister has gone for cheap, political point-scoring all the way through.

Mr Mackenroth: I would never do that.

Mr FITZGERALD: The Minister now says that he would never do that. I ask honourable members to read his second-reading speech. If the Minister's nose grew like Pinocchio's every time he told a lie, I wonder what length his nose would be now! Honourable members can form their own opinion because they can read in his second-reading speech comment after comment full of vitriol. I had more confidence in the Minister when he was on the Opposition side of the House because then he was fairer than he is now.

I wish to place on record a tribute to the fire brigade boards, which are being abolished under this legislation. I do not say that all fire brigade boards have acted properly at all times, but I pay tribute to all those people who have devoted many years of hard service to the fire protection units in their own local areas. A previous speaker referred to National Party cronies on the boards. He failed to realise how the boards are constructed, how they are formed and who served on them. In the past members of the insurance council have served on the board. Are they all National Party cronies? Are the local authority members appointed to the board all National Party cronies?

Government members: Yes.

Mr FITZGERALD: Government members are saying that all the representatives elected by local authorities to the boards are all National Party cronies. I differ strongly with them on that issue. Next the Government will say that the Government's representatives on the boards are National Party cronies!

Mr Stephan: I think there are some from Widgee and Gympie.

Mr FITZGERALD: Yes.

By way of interjection Government members have indicated that all board members representing local authorities are National Party stooges or cronies. I thank them for that interjection.

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I understand that. Government members say that they are all National Party cronies. As is its right, the Government has appointed members to the boards and it is possible that some of them are not members of the National Party.

When members opposite say that all those appointees are National Party cronies, they are rather far from the mark. It is an insult to local authorities to say that only National Party nominees are appointed to the boards. I also point out to members of the Labor Party that if they were to attend an annual conference of the boards and listen to the members speak, they would know that board members speak their minds. When I was Minister for Emergency Services, I attended the conferences. I can assure members of the Labor Party that board members speak their minds and that they have the welfare of fire services in their particular area at heart. I can assure them also that board members speak very frankly—a fact that the member for Balonne would confirm. They certainly do not pussyfoot around and take any nonsense from the Queensland Government. They have expressed their views in the past, and they will continue to do so. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the people who have been told by this Government that their services are no longer required.

Debate on this legislation has revealed that local fire brigade boards will be wiped out. I acknowledge that it is the Government's right to do this, in accordance with its indication that it is against local input and wishes to centralise control, but I dispute the Government's claim that it will set up the regions so that the structure will be similar to that of the Police Service. I can assure honourable members that, in spite of the fact that it has the hide to say that protection will be provided for people in country towns and in smaller provincial areas, the Government will retain central control. I can assure members of the Labor Party that they will have some problems providing fire service protection in country areas.

There can be no doubt that the Minister is bowing to union pressure.

Government members interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: The Minister is the lackey of the unions and he has made a commitment to them.

Referring once again to the unions issue, I can inform the House that the Minister has spoken to the ambulance unions and has given commitments to them. I am sure that he has done the same in respect of the fire service unions. Members of the Labor Party should ask the Minister whether or not that is true. He would not deny it, because I have transcripts of some of the speeches that he has made. By their interjections, members of the Labor Party indicate that the Minister has not given those commitments. I am afraid that when they talk to the Minister about this, he will put them straight. Obviously, members of the Labor Party are speaking in good faith but are no doubt speaking in ignorance and loyalty to the Minister and to the Labor Party.

I ask the Minister what he will do about the many areas in this State in which permanent officers will not work with auxiliary officers. In his second-reading speech, the Minister acknowledged the necessity of recruiting auxiliary officers. Of course, I acknowledge that, in some areas of Queensland, full fire protection cannot be offered by the employment of permanent fire officers because it is too expensive. Those areas of Queensland have to rely on only a couple of permanent officers to man the stations and be ready to turn out the firefighting equipment in an emergency, and they have to rely on auxiliary firefighters. I point out that these auxiliary officers are not volunteers but are retained on a contract basis and that many less populous areas have to rely on auxiliary officers for fire protection. The point I make is that some of the members of fire services unions in some places in Queensland refuse to serve with auxiliary officers. What will the Minister do about that problem?

It is an absolute shame that, in Ipswich, permanent officers will not serve with auxiliary officers. The position is that the permanent officers do their own thing and so do the auxiliary officers. If the Minister has no solution to that problem, he will have a hell of a time because that problem will spread throughout this State. I suggest to the Minister that in his second-reading speech he has not indicated how he proposes to overcome that problem; nor has he issued a press release to indicate his plans for resolving the problem of certain sections of the fire services union refusing to serve with auxiliary officers.

In contrast to the situation I have outlined, in other areas north of Brisbane, the permanent/auxiliary officers arrangement works very well. I am aware that in some fire service centres, in addition to the permanent fire officers who would usually man the centre, auxiliary firemen are paid \$25 a night to sleep overnight at the centre on a rotational basis. The auxiliary officers not only provide a service to the local community but also undertake training. In those areas in which permanent officers accept the involvement of auxiliary officers, I pay tribute to the permanent officers who acknowledge the responsibility they have to the local community to provide adequate fire protection.

It is often the case that auxiliary fire officers eventually become permanent officers. When a vacancy occurs in a local area, an auxiliary officer will usually apply and later become a permanent officer.

Mr Beattie: What about the boards? They are not on the boards.

Mr FITZGERALD: No. What I am saying is that the Minister is being put under pressure by unions. I am also saying that fire service board members have performed a community service because they have gone to businesspeople and said, "Look, we are short of auxiliary officers. How about one of your employees becoming an auxiliary member of the fire brigade board because this town requires another couple of firemen? I really believe that it would be great, Jack, if you could provide an auxiliary officer to serve." The owner of the business will usually speak to his employees and say, "Would one of you fellows like to join up? It will mean that you will be training one night a week and that you will have to turn out whenever the fire siren goes. There will be an obligation on you to do that; however, I think you will enjoy the work and I know that you will be fulfilling a worthwhile role as an auxiliary fire officer for this particular area." In practical terms, the board has been an active liaison mechanism that has encouraged auxiliary officers to join the fire services. Some of those chaps will later become permanent officers. I believe that in a very short time the Minister will discover that this has been an important function of the boards.

When the Minister confronts some of the funding problems associated with fire services, he will realise that permanent officers will not be able to be appointed right throughout the State. I acknowledge that they are appointed in provincial areas because they are needed. I acknowledge also that auxiliary officers are not suitable for the inner city areas of Brisbane and major provincial areas, but I reiterate that in most other areas they are needed greatly.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister referred to the standard of equipment and standard of training. I do not believe that this Bill will improve in any way whatsoever the standard of training and equipment that was outlined in the Bill that I introduced into the Parliament last year. I would like the Minister to demonstrate the way in which this legislation will improve on the training that is set out in the legislation presently in preparation, which will be repealed by this Bill.

Mr McGrady: Your colleague——

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member has only recently entered this House. My colleague spoke from his experience, and the honourable member is obviously speaking from his experience. From the utterances that he makes, I can tell that his experience is very limited.

The mechanism is already in place to improve training. I agree with the Minister that funding for fire services has been a problem. We know some of the history of that problem. In the past, the Queensland Government changed the method of raising funds for fire brigades. It went from an insurance-based levy to a property-based levy, which caused a huge problem in striking a reasonable levy for all property-owners. At present, people who have insured goods on properties are not paying a levy. Previously, they were paying a levy, because it was collected as a part of their insurance premium and paid to the fire services. The owners of goods that are in warehouses and shops now no longer pay a fire-insurance levy. That has created a shortfall. Previously, property-owners

were paying a levy of \$1.10 for each \$1,000 insured, and there was an indication that it would increase to \$1.30 for each \$1,000 insured. At that stage, the local councils were paying twelve and a half per cent of the cost of local fire services.

When property levies were introduced, the shire councils were relieved of the burden of the twelve and a half per cent that they were contributing towards the funds of fire brigades. When the levy was imposed on households, it was much lower than the average property-owner would have been paying for an average home that was fully insured. For a number of years, property-owners paid a much lower levy than they should have paid. However, there was then a catch-up. A fairly considerably debt is still owed by fire services to consolidated revenue, and it has to be picked up.

In the past, by not charging a high enough levy, the Government made a mistake. Originally, the average household paid \$72 by way of a fire service levy. Then it dropped to \$46. After a couple of years at that level, the levy returned to approximately \$72.

At present, there are different levies for different areas of the State. A property that receives permanent fire-brigade protection pays a different levy to that of a property that receives protection from an auxiliary brigade that has no permanent firemen. Under this legislation, I advise people to ensure that they do not pay any increase in levy that is more than the usual rate of inflation.

I am totally dedicated to an excellent fire service within this State. I have always advocated strongly that we continue to research the coordination of communication between the emergency services. Technology is changing all the time. Radio communications technology that was introduced 10 and five years ago is now almost out of date. Every couple of years, technology changes. Ambulance, police and fire brigade services need common channels of communication, but they must also maintain their own individual communication network, because they should not all be on the one channel.

The tasking of fire engines in metropolitan areas must continue to progress. Last year, I opened the tasking centre on the south side of Brisbane. When a call comes in for the metropolitan area, immediately the officers in that control room can despatch the closest available fire tender to the emergency.

The National Party introduced risk mapping into Queensland. On a map on the wall, fire officers can view problem areas. That concept was to be adopted throughout the State. I strongly support the concept. It is necessary so that firemen who are despatched to a fire know exactly what problems they may encounter in the area of the fire. With modern technology, fax machines will be installed in fire officers' control cars. I understand that, at present, fax machines do not work effectively in fire tenders because they are bounced around on roads. However, technology will continue to improve and will result in a better service being provided to the community.

The Minister raised a further matter.

Mr Beattie: What about training?

Mr FITZGERALD: The member for Brisbane Central has raised this issue with me because he wants me to continue.

More emphasis should be placed on training. I acknowledge that firemen engage in training and there is need for more smoke towers in provincial cities. Unless firemen are trained with the proper equipment, they will not receive the experience necessary to enable them to operate efficiently. It is important that the fire service be supported.

I reiterate the points raised previously by members on this side of the House. I believe that the Minister has gone on an ego jaunt—a union-supporting, board-bashing exercise—with regard to the fire brigade boards.

I wish the Minister well. I hope that the fire services function very well. However, I believe that he will find in the long run that major problems will occur in country areas of the State.

No doubt the service will work very, very well in Brisbane. I do not have many doubts about the board's operation in Brisbane. However, I think that the Minister will run into a lot of problems in country areas.

Debate, on motion of Mr McGrady, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 11.08 p.m.