

**NOTE: There could be differences between this document and the official printed *Hansard*, Vol. 318**

**WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 1991**

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

**PETITIONS**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

**Education of Deaf Children**

From **Mr Burns** (854 signatories) praying that the Minister for Education investigate the possibility of classes for deaf children being conducted in the inner suburbs.

**Mr W. Gynther, Principal, Toowoomba State High School**

From **Dr Flynn** (765 signatories) praying that Mr W. Gynther be retained as principal of the Toowoomba State High School.

**Outpatient Facilities, Wynnum Hospital**

From **Mr Burns** (777 signatories) praying that outpatient and casualty facilities be installed at the Wynnum Hospital as announced by the Minister for Health.

**Freight Transport, Winton-Hughenden**

From **Mr Johnson** (323 signatories) praying that the Winton to Hughenden road be urgently upgraded and that rail freight concessions be granted.

**Station Nightclub, Burpengary**

From **Mr Hayward** (541 signatories) praying that the Licensing Commission be instructed to revoke the licence of the Station Nightclub at Burpengary or cause it to be permanently closed.

Petitions received.

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table—

Report of the National Crime Authority for the year ended 30 June 1990

Reports for the year ended 31 December 1990—

Ministerial Consultative Council on Curriculum

Board of Teacher Registration

Orders in Council under—

Gas Act 1965-1990

Grammar Schools Act 1975-1989 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1990

Education (General Provisions) Act 1989

Fauna Conservation Act 1974-1990

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975-1990

Proclamations under—

Griffith University Act 1971-1990

Education (Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority) Act 1990  
Regulations under—  
Education (Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority) Act 1990  
Adoption of Children Act 1964-1991  
Statutes under—  
University of Southern Queensland Act 1989  
Queensland University of Technology Act 1988-1990  
By-laws under the Recreation Areas Management Act 1988-1990.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Conservation, Management and Use of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region**

**Hon. W. K. GOSS** (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (2.34 p.m.), by leave: Today, I table in this House the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conservation, Management and Use of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. The release of this report today represents the final stage of the implementation of the Government's pre-election commitments in relation to this unique area for Queensland.

Prior to the 1989 State election, the parliamentary Labor Party promised the people of Queensland three things in relation to Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. Firstly, it promised that my Government would immediately expand the Great Sandy national park on Fraser Island and extend Cooloola national park. On 12 January 1990, only one month after the election of my Government, the Environment Minister, Pat Comben, visited Fraser Island to announce the extension of the Great Sandy national park by 23 000 hectares, a 44 per cent increase. At the same time, Mr Comben announced that Cooloola national park was to be enlarged by 22 per cent to cover almost 55 000 hectares. Secondly, we promised to protect the environmentally sensitive areas and the scientific reserves on Fraser Island. That, too, was done within weeks of our taking office. The third, and in this Government's view the most important, promise that we made in relation to Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region was that we would establish an overall conservation and management plan for this significant region.

The release of the commission of inquiry's report today sees the development of the promised overall conservation and management plan for the region enter its final phase. The commission's report and its associated papers are the most comprehensive set of documents ever prepared on Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region, or on any environmental issue in Queensland. The central volume of the report has been confined to conclusions in a brief form, which is able to be easily read and understood by every Queenslander, so that the entire community can form an overview of the difficulties, understand their complexities and comprehend the decisions and the reasons they are made. The report and the associated papers represent the work that has never been done in relation to conservation and management regarding Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. This is the work that had to be done before a comprehensive conservation and management plan could be implemented.

As I said in February at the National Public Issue Dispute Resolution Conference, the decision to commission this inquiry was not based solely on our pre-election commitment to develop a long-term conservation and management strategy for this unique and environmentally significant area. It was also based on a real understanding of the complexity of the issues involved and a desire to ensure wide public consultation and involvement in the development of a long-term plan for the region.

In conducting this investigation, the commission of inquiry has undertaken an exhaustive study of many complex and difficult issues associated with the region. In

doing so, the commission held three public hearings, undertook numerous inspections of the region, received 544 submissions, published an initial discussion paper and a detailed final discussion paper, which were available for public comment, and in February, in Brisbane, held the national conference on public issue dispute resolution. The commission of inquiry was conducted in the most professional, open, fair and proper manner. As I have said on numerous occasions, Governments that set in train processes which are comprehensive, orderly and fair, at some public expense, should not do so unless they intend to base their decisions on the outcome of those processes. This Government was fully committed to the commission of inquiry, its staff and its work. Now that it is completed, the Government will base its actions on the recommendations and the material considerations of this report.

The report contains some 94 recommendations relating to Fraser Island, the Great Sandy Region and public issue dispute resolution dealing with a broad range of issues. I draw honourable members' attention to the more significant recommendations of the report. Perhaps most significantly, the report recommends that the Queensland Government request the Commonwealth Government to nominate the Great Sandy Region for inscription on the World Heritage List. For an area to be considered to be of outstanding universal value and nominated for World Heritage listing, it must meet one or more of the four criteria set down by the World Heritage Committee and the conditions of integrity fulfilled. In making the recommendation, the report states—

"Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region overall meet the four prescribed criteria for World Heritage listing, plus the associated conditions of integrity. Fraser Island possesses an overwhelming range of features not found elsewhere in Australia and is unique in a global context."

Further, it states—

"World Heritage listing of this area would be compatible with the optimum conservation, management and use of the region, and would emphasise the need to maintain its ecological integrity."

Clearly, if this recommendation of the report was to be implemented, it can only be done after careful consideration and individual decisions by each level of government. There will also be a need for close consultation and cooperation between the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government. Today, I have written to the Prime Minister, forwarding a copy of the commission's report and seeking further discussions regarding this recommendation, including the financial implications of this proposal.

In addition, the report recommends the enactment of separate legislation, tentatively titled the Great Sandy Regional Park Act, to provide for the management, planning and control of the region. In doing so, it recommends that the management plan cover a broad range of issues, including strategies for conservation, marine and wetland areas, development, access and infrastructure, forestry management, mining management, recreation, tourism and visitor management, Aboriginal management, visual resource management, water quality management, waste management and fire management. These recommendations are a clear recognition of the complexity of the issues involved in the conservation and management of this unique region of Queensland and, I believe, confirmation of the need to embark on this wide-ranging inquiry.

Clearly, contrary to what some in the community would have us believe, the issues surrounding this region are much more than simply logging. After detailed examination of forestry practices on Fraser Island, the commission of inquiry has recommended that logging generally be phased out over a six-month period, with the possible exception of continued logging of blackbutt trees in previously logged areas for an initial period of five years, if such limited continued logging is feasible. In order to leave no stone unturned, and in the interests of the Maryborough community, the feasibility of the limited logging proposal will be investigated urgently. If it is found that the limited logging is not feasible, that will be taken into account in the development of a package for the Maryborough district. The commission of inquiry was, and the Government is, very aware of the implications of such a recommendation on the Maryborough community.

The report recommends the need for the Government to monitor the effects of the implementation of this logging phase-out and specifically noted the need for Government to provide appropriate incentives and a specific job-creation program for the Maryborough region to decrease the effects of the phase-out of logging on the community. The Government is committed to the welfare of the people of the Maryborough district and economic development of the region, and it will be working closely with that community to minimise any adverse effects as a result of the implementation of this report.

The report also makes a number of recommendations in relation to public issue dispute resolution, and I draw honourable members' attention to those in chapter 5 of the report. Because of the broad range of recommendations made in the report and, in particular, because of the possible consequences of the recommendations on the Maryborough region, the Government will be establishing a special purpose Cabinet committee to consider the inquiry's recommendations and report back to Cabinet. Of course, in respect of the recommendations, all relevant decisions, including the timing and manner of implementation, are ultimately for the Government and/or Parliament.

Finally, I want to record my Government's sincere gratitude and appreciation to the commission of inquiry staff for their diligence and commitment. Often under trying conditions, public attack and tight time-frames, they performed in the most professional manner and did as was required. Of course, I must place on record the gratitude of the Government and the community to commission chairman, Mr Tony Fitzgerald. When Mr Fitzgerald agreed to undertake this task, neither he nor I appreciated the time and work that it would involve. Despite the onerous volume of work, the long hours, other work and personal commitments and occasional public criticism, Mr Fitzgerald has conducted the inquiry as expeditiously as possible, professionally and fairly. It should be remembered that Mr Fitzgerald agreed to undertake this task as a community service and for the past 14 months has worked, often for very long hours, without remuneration for his services. On behalf of the Government and the community, I place on record our appreciation of his efforts and our indebtedness to him. I encourage honourable members to read the report. I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT** **State Budget**

**Hon. K. E. De LACY** (Cairns—Treasurer) (2.45 p.m.), by leave: The purpose of this statement is to provide further information to honourable members on the position of the State Budget. As at the end of March 1991, Consolidated Revenue Fund expenditure totalled \$5,771m, representing 71.4 per cent of Budget outlays. Actual receipts to the end of March totalled \$6,007m, or 74 per cent of the Budget estimate, resulting in an operating surplus of \$236m. This operating surplus compares to the 1990-91 half-year operating surplus of \$143m and a surplus of \$232m for the same period in the last financial year. This operating surplus is predominantly a reflection of the timing of cash flows and is not necessarily an accurate indicator of the overall Budget position or, indeed, of the final likely Budget outcome. Overall, it is considered that a Budget outcome for 1990-91 of a small accumulated surplus will be achieved.

State taxation receipts have remained subdued, as expected, although some improvement was evident towards the end of the quarter. Royalty receipts have declined significantly, due to lower volumes as a result of flooding and lower Australian dollar commodity prices. Lower CPI figures than were originally estimated will result in lower Commonwealth financial assistance grant payments. The reduction in State taxation receipts has been largely offset by improvements in other revenue areas, including gambling taxes and interest, and outlay savings flowing from lower general award outcomes for 1990-91. On the expenditure side, there is some further prospect, as evidenced by year-to-date expenditure, of additional savings, particularly in the capital program area as works are carried forward into 1991-92. Outlays will increase in the

final quarter, however, as the accelerated capital works program gears up further and flood restoration works are carried out.

As Ministers would no doubt be aware, there has been substantial press coverage recently given to the worsening budgetary positions being experienced by other States, and in particular Victoria and New South Wales. Recent information published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics provides details of Commonwealth, State and local government financial transactions, including estimates of the financial position of those Governments for 1990-91. The ABS data shows that in comparative terms Queensland is estimated to achieve a surplus of \$5m for this financial year. The combined deficit of the other States is \$1,325m. Queensland is the only State to achieve a surplus without resort to asset sales. There are some difficulties in comparing underlying State positions on the basis of ABS data. However, no matter which way one seeks to interpret the ABS information, the conclusion remains the same, that Queensland's financial performance is enviable, both on an absolute basis and particularly on a comparative basis with other State Governments and the Commonwealth Government. After adjusting for the inconsistent treatment by the ABS of housing finance and advances and adjusting for major asset sales, which really only constitute one-off revenue items and otherwise distort the underlying financial position, the relative deficit-surplus positions of the Australian States reported by the ABS confirm Queensland's dramatically superior position. Queensland is estimated to achieve a surplus of \$220m.

**Mr Stoneman:** Five times less than the last time.

**Mr De LACY:** I ask the honourable member to listen to this, because it will do him some good. New South Wales, on the other hand, is estimated to be in deficit to the tune of \$1.3 billion. I should also note that these figures are based on Budget-time estimates. Since then, the position in New South Wales is reported to have deteriorated severely. Contrary to what the Opposition Treasury spokesman has been saying, Queensland's Budget has experienced no such deterioration. For the benefit of honourable members so that they can assess the true position of Queensland's finances both in an absolute sense and compared to other States, I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a table of the deficit surplus position in each State.

Leave granted.

#### FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS OF THE STATES

	Estimated Deficit 1990-91 * (\$ Million)
Queensland	-220
New South Wales	1,329
Victoria	1,674
South Australia	386
Western Australia	471
Tasmania	262
Northern Territory	125
ACT	119

\* Notes: ABS Government Financial Estimates 1990-91 adjusted for housing finance and advances and major assets sales. Minus figures represent a surplus.

**Mr De LACY:** The ABS figures also show that Queensland's net debt per capita is the lowest of all the Australian States. For the record, I point out that, as at 30 June 1990, net debt per capita in Queensland was \$1,153. That compares with an average debt per capita for all States of \$4,079. Queensland continues to remain the envy of all other Australian State Governments in terms of its overall financial strength. This position has not been achieved fortuitously and, indeed, reflects the consistent application of sound financial practices and policies. Major international and national credit-rating

agencies continue to affirm Queensland's credit-standing. Queensland's domestic long-term credit-ratings remain at AAA and may be contrasted to the recent down-grading in the long-term credit-ratings of other States. Indeed, if the electors of New South Wales looked north instead of south for their interstate fiscal comparisons, they would elect a Labor Government on Saturday.

The March Budget position, which I have outlined briefly, together with detailed information on State deficit-surplus positions and debt positions are provided in the March quarter edition of the *Queensland Economic Review*, which will be published this week. I encourage all honourable members to read that document and note its contents. For the information of honourable members, I table a statement of Queensland's Budget position as at the end of March 1991.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

##### **Capital Works Programs**

**Hon. R. T. McLEAN** (Bulimba—Minister for Administrative Services) (2.52 p.m.), by leave: Yesterday in the House, the Opposition Leader accused the Government of having done nothing to create jobs. He said, "It does not have to do everything but it can certainly advance capital works programs and it can encourage and support industry." I do not know where the Opposition Leader has been for the past five months, but he should have said, "The Goss Government is doing everything that it can, and has certainly advanced the capital works program, and is encouraging and supporting industry." Other Governments are only now talking about the possibility of introducing accelerated capital works programs. The Goss Government could see the way that the wind was blowing last year. Let us make no mistake here. This recession is not restricted to Australia. Other Western economies, including those under non-Labor Governments, are also suffering.

Five months ago, we talked to both sides of the building industry. We also talked to employer and employee bodies. This was not a seat-of-the-pants decision. It was well thought out after many hours of meetings. In December, we decided to introduce an accelerated capital works program. In January, we identified about 100 schools, police stations, health facilities and other projects on which we could start work. Then we increased that figure to 150 projects, at a cost of up to \$348m. More than 40 of those projects are already in the hands of construction companies, and tenders have been invited for more than 60 other projects. Others, including State Government office blocks in Brisbane and Rockhampton, are nearing the tendering stage. My department has been processing projects at double the normal rate, and I thank the many people who have worked late nights and weekends. That dedication means that before the end of this financial year we are likely to have an extra \$26m injected into the Queensland economy. We estimate that this program is creating more than 250 000 man-weeks of employment on building sites alone. That equates to about 2 600 jobs, without the follow-up to other industries associated with the building industry.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

##### **Absence of Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (2.54 p.m.), by leave: Due to illness, the Deputy Premier will not be here for question-time today.

#### **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

##### **Reports**

**Mr BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central) (2.54 p.m.): I seek leave to lay upon the table of the House the report of the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice, being the

*Hansard* record of the public hearing held between the Criminal Justice Commission and the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice that was held on 15 April 1991. I also seek leave to table six associated reports and two registers, the first being the register of the CJC's comments on issues papers and the second being the register of the CJC's comments on draft legislation.

The public hearing was held by the committee pursuant to section 4.8 of the Criminal Justice Act 1989-1990 to monitor and review the activities of the commission. That public hearing was the third such open hearing that the committee has held with the Criminal Justice Commission over the past 12 months in carrying out its monitoring and reviewing role. The committee is of the view that the report will provide an insight into both the activities of the commission and the manner in which the committee scrutinises those activities. It is therefore intended to be educative for honourable members and the community as well as being part of the accountability process. The report will be distributed widely in the community.

I thank the members of the committee for their hard work and commitment; that is, the deputy chairman, Bill Gunn, Wendy Edmond, Neville Harper, Santo Santoro, Robert Schwarten and Margaret Woodgate. I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

### **PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO AMBULANCE SERVICES Minutes of Committee Meetings**

**Mr ELDER** (Manly) (2.56 p.m.): In accordance with the resolution of the House of 29 November 1990 and as the Speaker informed the House yesterday, on 30 April 1990 I tabled with the Clerk of the Parliament the second and final report as well as accompanying submissions of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services. The issues dealt with in the report concern the role of aerial ambulance services and aero-health retrievals. I express my appreciation to the members of the select committee for their total and unyielding commitment to the process, all working unselfishly and in a bipartisan manner to ensure two unanimous reports.

I thank the deputy chairman, Tony Fitzgerald and the members of the committee during the life of the inquiry—Mr Warren Pitt, Mr Vaughan Johnson, Dr John Flynn, Mr John Sullivan, Mr Trevor Coomber and Mr Tom Gilmore. I thank also the committee's support staff for their hard work and tireless endeavour, in particular, Rayna Tsourgas, Jan Shuttlewood and Jan Warren. I also place on record the committee's appreciation of the professional assistance, invaluable support and commitment to the task of the committee's research director, Debbie McLoughlin.

With the completion of the committee's work, I now table the formal minutes of the committee's meetings and again congratulate the committee and staff on a job well done.

### **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE Unemployment**

**Mr COOPER:** In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to Queensland's 10.7 per cent adult unemployment rate and the fact that one in four young Queenslanders cannot find work, and I ask: what action will the Government take to save the 580 threatened jobs at the Collinsville coalmine and the 750 jobs at the Yabulu nickel refinery? What action does the Government intend to take to create 1 000 jobs in Gladstone—in other words, will the Government sell the Gladstone Power Station or will it not? What action will the Government take to boost the confidence of business in this State and to help the creation of jobs?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** Firstly, in respect of Collinsville, both the Treasurer and I and, separately, Government representatives have had discussions with the company. A proposition has been put to the company but, separately from and subsequently to that, a series of negotiations are occurring between the company and a consortium of bankers. In the past week or so, there were some press reports of that. We are basically awaiting the outcome of that. The Government has indicated that it is prepared to play its part. That matter will have to await the outcome of the deliberations of the consortium of banks.

In relation to the nickel refinery in Townsville—once again, that is a matter of ongoing and increasingly cooperative and positive discussions between the Government and the company concerned. We believe that the matter can be resolved satisfactorily with a constructive approach and goodwill on both sides and, while there was difficulty in generating that sort of approach in the early stages of the discussions, the situation does appear to have improved over the last several months. The capacity of the port to facilitate the level of imports needed appears to be there and, with certain further work and agreement which we expect and hope to reach in the near future, the future of that particular plant should be secure.

The third aspect of the question dealt with the potential sale of the Gladstone Power Station. I repeat what I have said before—that, despite the attempts of the National Party and the Liberal Party to undermine those negotiations in the hope that they could do damage to the Queensland economy and score a point, our door remains open. Both the company and the Government once again have adopted a positive and constructive approach to the relationship, and whether or not there will be an outcome will depend on the continuation of the discussions that have been taking place for some time. Once again, we will not sell out the taxpayers or the electricity consumers of this State in the way that both the present Leader of the Opposition and his predecessor, as leaders of the National Party, did. They took the absolutely irresponsible and non-commercial approach that, notwithstanding the fact that they had valuations for one sum provided both from the public sector and independently, offered the power station for sale at a figure half that sum. I have never known a seller, particularly one who kneels so frequently at the altar of free enterprise, to start at the bottom and try to work the buyer up. That seems to have been their approach.

The fourth part of the question dealt with the climate for business generally. The Leader of the Opposition should talk to the business community in Queensland and interstate. They will tell him, as they tell us, that the mood and the climate for investment in terms of confidence and the actual framework for investment are better here than in any other State, including New South Wales.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There will be one interjection at a time.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The downturn in the economy is serious. We all know that. It is having a profound and severe impact on a range of people, particularly those who have become unemployed and the small businesses that have failed. It will take some time and some circumstances for that to turn around. I hope that the advice we are getting and the advice that other Governments are getting, including the Government led by Mr Greiner, that we can expect to see an improvement or an upturn later this year will prove to be correct.

### **Aboriginal Land Rights**

**Mr COOPER:** Will the Premier explain to the people of Queensland—both the black people and the white people of Queensland—his duplicitous approach to land rights in which one version of the policy expounded by him suggests a modest regime of land rights while, on the other hand, another document entitled "Gains for Aboriginal People" states that the Queensland model "will be potentially the most expansive regime



in the country" and, further, "In Queensland we are potentially opening the way for the application of the Uluru model to literally hundreds of national parks." I ask the Premier which version of his land rights we should believe.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** Let me assure the honourable member that there is nothing duplicitous about the Uluru model. What we have in Queensland at present is National Party land rights over several million acres of this State. But that land rights system has not worked. That land rights system, which is an expensive grant of land rights in the form of deeds of grant in trust granted by the previous Government, is not working.

**Mr Cooper:** Seven million acres.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The Leader of the Opposition confirms that the National Party Government gave seven million acres of land rights to the Aboriginal people. Those land rights are an abject failure. That is due partly to the paternalistic administration of the policy that was pursued and also, in fairness, largely to a long history, under various parties and various Governments in this country, of a failure of policy. I believe also that there is a need for the community and Governments of all parties and at all levels to recognise this and to act accordingly.

What we have done in relation to the proposal that has been under consideration for some months is try to strike a balance between what is sought on the one hand and what some people would offer on the other hand. There is a wide gap between them and it is very hard to strike a balance that would receive the broad support of the community. Feelings on the issue generally, on particular aspects of the issue—whether it be mining, timber and quarry rights, form of title, title-holding bodies or whatever—and on individual issues run high and strong. What we have endeavoured to do is strike a balance that fairly takes into account the competing interests of all the Queensland community—all stake-holders, including the Aboriginal people—and, at the same time, do something positive in terms of providing recognition of the principle, which the legislation will do, and providing machinery for the grant and the claim of land, which the legislation will do, and which I believe is, in principle and in symbol, an important step forward and a positive social reform of which this Government will be proud.

I was asked also about what the various sectors of the Aboriginal community would seek. It is fair to say that the proposal does not meet all the requirements and certainly does not meet the more radical claims or ambit claims. But it does improve the situation substantially and provides the basis for further improvement. The Government has met with a wide range of people. I have circulated, and am happy to give to the honourable member, a detailed list of all those organisations consulted, which includes a wide range of Aboriginal groups and other community groups, such as industry groups. As the honourable member points out, there are significant gains in this legislation for Aboriginal and Islander people, and they have been tabulated. I will take as an example one of the most prominent organisations, which is the Cape York Land Council. I have not read all of the submission, but when one examines the legislative proposal and the Cape York Land Council's submission, one can see that on a significant number of aspects of the claim, agreement has been reached, and that has been reflected in the legislation. On a number of points, there is at least general compatibility, with minor variations in terms of the claims that were made. In relation to some issues, there is disagreement, but it is a positive package.

I am amazed by the hypocrisy and—get this word—duplicity of the Leader of the Opposition who sought for months to take the most base approach that one could take in relation to this debate. He sought to incite envy, bitterness, jealousy and social division and he has sought to do so on the grounds of race. What do we see reflected in his public comments, and particularly his public comments in Monday's *Courier-Mail*? We see the Leader of the Opposition trying to present himself as someone who is saying that the Aboriginal people have been disappointed because the package is not good enough. Does the Leader of the Opposition say that this package does not go far enough? Where does the Leader of the Opposition stand?

In conclusion, let me state that the position of the Leader of the Opposition is plain. On the one foot, he seeks to incite racial prejudice, bitterness and division. On the other foot, he says that the proposal does not go far enough. I hope that the barbed wire is aggravating his present painful position.

#### **Truck Registration Fees and Fuel Costs**

**Mr PREST:** I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development: is he aware that sections of the road transport industry have been upset by reports in the media recently concerning proposed increases in truck registration fees and fuel tax? Can he explain the validity of these reports in the light of those concerns?

**Mr HAMILL:** As I stated in the debate that took place in this House yesterday, some wild claims have been made by people purporting to speak for the road transport industry and, of course, by some people who purport to speak for the National Party Opposition. Those claims centre on last year's report of the Inter-State Commission. Let me again place on record that the report was rejected by this Government and by other Governments at a Transport Minister's conference in Hobart last year. It has been superseded by the commitment made at the Special Premiers Conference to look into a national system of charging for heavy vehicles.

I note that some spokespeople for the Opposition—in particular, the member for Flinders—keep talking about heavy increases in diesel excise, etc. I do not know what his sources of information are, but they are about as reliable as the other claims he makes in respect of a whole range of other public issues. The road transport industry has been very closely involved in the consultations taking place prior to the next Special Premiers Conference. I have had the opportunity to speak personally to a range of industry groups, including the Livestock Transporters Association, whose point about empty running was taken up by this Government in discussions with representatives of the Inter-State commission prior to the meeting that was held in September last year. All in all, the bottom line—and this is the important one—is that this Government has a standing commitment to cut through the red tape, the costly duplication and the often contradictory regulations that apply to the movement of goods across State boundaries. Through those types of reforms, the Government believes that substantial benefits can be provided to the road transport industry, thereby reducing the cost of road freight transport in this nation.

#### **Aboriginal Land Policy**

**Mr PREST:** Considering the answer given to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I ask the Premier: can he outline to the House the process of consultation that took place prior to the Government's considering proposals for the Aboriginal land policy in Queensland?

**Mr Littleproud:** He just answered that. It was the first question.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** I thank the member for Port Curtis for the question. This is a separate issue, but it is an important issue and it relates to the process of consultation that has occurred. The process of consultation did not occur in the middle of the street. It did not occur under the glare of television cameras. It occurred in a very intense and detailed way over the last couple of months.

Let me first deal with those groups that are other than Aboriginal and Islander groups—those that have the greatest concerns. I will make brief reference to other organisations that were entitled to be consulted, were consulted and are happy with the consultation process, which has been exactly the same in relation to all parties. Firstly, consultation took place with the Queensland Mining Council, the Australian Mining Industry Council and the Australian Petroleum Exploration Association, in addition to individual companies, such as Comalco, MIM, BHP Utah, and Western Mining, that were consulted for obvious reasons.

Secondly, in respect of the pastoral industry and primary industries generally, consultation took place with the Queensland Farmers Federation, the United Graziers Association, the Cattlemen's Union, the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Association, the Queensland Graingrowers Association, the Queensland Cane Growers Council and the Queensland Timber Board. Thirdly, consultation took place with organisations such as the Queensland Confederation of Industry, the Queensland Chamber of Commerce, the Queensland Metal Trades Industry Association and the Queensland Tourist Industry Association. Fourthly, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church, the Queensland Baptist Union and the Lutheran Church were also consulted.

Fifthly, in respect of Aboriginal and Islander people, a wide range of organisations were consulted, and a wide range of organisations were not only consulted but also were part of meetings that were established with the working group to make progress with this proposal. Those groups included the Cape York Land Council, the Torres Strait ATSIC Regional Council, the Indigenous Council of Deputies, the Townsville ATSIC Regional Council and the Cairns/Palm Island ATSIC Regional Council. There are numerous other groups. I seek leave to table a list of the organisations and community groups that were consulted and to have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

ATTACHMENT C

#### CONSULTATION

1. The Queensland Mining Council (QMC), the Australian Mining Industry Council (AMIC), the Australian Petroleum Exploration Association (APEA), in addition to the following individual companies:
  - (a) Comalco (QLD),
  - (b) MIM,
  - (c) BHP Utah,
  - (d) Western Mining.
2. The Queensland Farmers' Federation, the United Graziers' Association, the Cattlemen's Union, the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Association, the Queensland Graingrowers Association and the Queensland Canegrowers Council, the Queensland Timber Board.
3. The Queensland Confederation of Industry, the Queensland Chamber of Commerce, the Queensland Metal Trades and Industry Association, the Queensland Tourist Industry Association;
4. The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church, the Queensland Baptist Union, the Lutheran Church,.
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Groups:
  - (a) Consultation teams from the Government's Working Group have met separately with the following groups:
    - Cape York Land Council
    - Torres Strait ATSIC Regional Council
    - Indigenous Council of Deputies (Brisbane Regional ATSIC Council)
    - Townsville ATSIC Regional Council
    - Cairns/Palm Island ATSIC Regional Council
    - Wadja Wadja/Wakka Wakka ATSIC Regional Council
    - Rockhampton ATSIC Regional Council
    - Mt Isa ATSIC Regional Council

- Cairns ATSIC Regional Council
  - South West ATSIC Queensland Regional Council
  - Mainland Torres Strait Islanders (through Megani Malu Kes)
  - Peninsula ATSIC Regional Council
  - Attendance of officers of the Land Rights Working Group at a Conference of delegates from throughout the State organised by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
- (b) Written submissions have thus far been received from the following groups:
- Mt Isa and Gulf Regional Councils
  - Queensland Aboriginal Federation of Land Councils
  - Cape York Land Council
  - Keppel Island People
  - Yarrabah/Palm Island
  - Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council
  - Cherbourg Lands Council
  - Gurang Lands Council
  - Muralug Tribal Torres Strait Islander Corporation
  - Buai Torres Strait Islander Corporation
  - Ang Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation
6. The following conservation organizations:
- (a) The Wildlife Preservation Society
  - (b) The Australian Littoral Society
  - (c) The Wilderness Society
  - (d) Australian Conservation Foundation
  - (e) National Parks Association of Queensland
  - (f) Queensland Conservation Council
  - (g) Rainforest Conservation Society
  - (h) Australian Conservation Foundation

Most Interest Groups (industry and non-industry) have lodged written submissions.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** In conclusion, let me say that I acknowledge that some people would have liked the consultation process to have gone on longer. Because of the importance of this issue to them, that is an understandable claim. But the time comes to act. There have been a million seminars and conferences and decades of debate. When one reaches the point at which the work has been done and a judgment has been made that what has been discussed and drawn up is achievable at this time, the time comes for action. That is basically the decision that the Government has made, balancing all the competing requirements as to consultation, on the one hand, and action, on the other, in relation to the interests of various groups, on the one hand, and the interests of competing groups, on the other. The result is that, in the near future, a legislative proposal will be put before this House.

#### **South African Coal Imports**

**Mr BEANLAND:** In directing a question to the Treasurer, I point out that he would be well aware that, recently, CRA has announced that, because of new competition from South Africa's mines, it has lost \$20m in sales from its Blair Athol coal mine. I ask: what ramifications does this emerging South African coal market have for Queensland miners and the State economy? What will the State Government do, especially in the

area of the coal freight rates supertax, to lower the cost burden on Queensland miners to ensure that they are not priced out of world markets?

**Mr De LACY:** I thank the honourable member for his question and I also compliment him on his effective representation on behalf of the big mining companies. Let me say that those big mining companies are quite capable of looking after themselves. The honourable member would curry more favour with the Queensland electorate if he decided to look after taxpayers.

**Mr Beanland:** I'm looking after jobs.

**Opposition members:** Jobs!

**Mr De LACY:** Honourable members ask, "What about jobs?" We will not create jobs by cutting coal freight rates to existing mines when those mines are currently operating. That would mean that we would get a Budget deficit, we would increase our debt, we would get a blow-out in debt, we would send out all the wrong signals to the community and we would again be appearing to be like the other States of Australia. In these tough times, the best thing that a Government can do is make sure that it runs the State properly, balances its Budget, keeps tax levels down and so on. If we start giving concessions to mining companies when there is no real objective, we will not keep tax levels down.

In answer to the specific question—the coal-mining sector is very competitive. The Queensland coal-mining sector is competitive; however, there is a big world and it needs to compete. Queensland has a royalty regime and a coal freight regime which are aimed at retaining current mines in production. I draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that throughout the 1980s, during the difficult time for coal mines—this regime was implemented and supported by a National Party Government; it is funny that it does not now support it—Queensland did not lose a single coal mine. Honourable members should compare that to what happened in New South Wales and other States. Substantial incentives have been provided to enable new mines to come on stream. That has been proven by the fact that Gordonstone and Jellinbah East have been committed during the last 12 months. Those companies would not be committing themselves in a climate in which the rail freight regime was such as to make them uncompetitive.

In conclusion, let me say that we are always discussing issues with the mining companies. We do talk to CRA. We will ensure that we play our part to ensure that they are competitive. But the mining companies need to understand—and the Liberal Party needs to understand—that those resources are owned by the people of Queensland and they need to pay something to the people of Queensland for exploiting those resources.

#### **Use of Government Aircraft by Minister for Police and Emergency Services**

**Mr BEANLAND:** In directing a question to the Minister for Police, I refer to his now ill-fated political dash in the Government jet to Port Macquarie and his indisputable use of taxpayers' funds for political purposes, as documented last Saturday by Mr Peter Morley in his State political column in the *Courier-Mail*. I ask: as it is clear that the Minister has misused funds, will he stand down from his ministerial post until the completion of a Criminal Justice Commission investigation?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** The answer is, "No."

#### **Commission of Inquiry into Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region**

**Mr DOLLIN:** In directing a question to the Premier, I refer him to the report of the commission of inquiry into Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. I ask: in view of the reported recommendations contained in the report, will the Government give consideration to compensation for people in the region adversely affected by any recommendations accepted by the Government?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is appropriate that the matter should be raised by him. I hope that members of the public and the press note the glee and the smiles on the faces of members of the National Party and the Liberal Party at the prospect that people in Maryborough might lose their jobs. It is the most disgusting effort that I have seen in a long time.

As to the report—it makes it plain that there are financial consequences and that the community should be prepared to compensate those adversely affected by the implementation of recommendations. That compensation question will have to be considered very carefully and very sensitively by the Government and by the community. It seems to me that it will have to take at least two forms: direct compensation to companies or individuals affected and/or more indirect compensation in terms of industry or other activity that will either train people or provide other forms of employment for them.

The member for Maryborough has expressed concern to me, as has the member for Isis, about the need for the Government to pay serious attention to this aspect of the report and the recommendations. The Government certainly will be doing that. I have indicated to those honourable members that they will be working in close collaboration with the Cabinet committee that will be making recommendations to Cabinet and to the Government in respect of the compensation issue.

#### **Visit by Police Commissioner to Fraser Island**

**Mr DOLLIN:** I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to comments made last week that the Police Commissioner is to set up a command post on Fraser Island for a massive police exercise, and I ask: can he confirm that the commissioner is going to be on Fraser Island, and can he inform the House of the purpose of his visit?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** Yes, I did see claims made last week by the Leader of the Opposition, who at times tends to fantasise—in fact, some of his fantasies have cost the Government a lot of money. This particular fantasy of his that a trip by the Police Commissioner to Fraser Island is to set up a command post probably takes the cake. The Police Commissioner does travel throughout the State and visit policemen and policewomen and talk to his commanders out in the field.

In relation to Fraser Island—the Police Commissioner has informed the assistant commissioner for that region that he will be going to Fraser Island for one night, and that is the full extent of his visit there. I would imagine that in the days of the Bjelke-Petersen Government, a Police Commissioner could make arrangements to go somewhere for one night to clear up a problem that may exist. The Police Service does not send out hundreds of police officers to bash people's heads in. This Government and certainly the Police Service do not approach things in that way. Things are done in a much different way. Yes, the Police Commissioner is going to visit Fraser Island. That visit has nothing whatsoever to do with setting up a command post or digging into the sand to start fighting anyone who wants to demonstrate, or whatever the case may be. This was only one of the many fantasies that honourable members witnessed last week. I am sure that it had nothing whatsoever to do with the by-election.

#### **Commission of Inquiry into Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region**

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I refer the Premier to the report of the Fraser Island inquiry and also to comments attributed to him that his Government intends to accept those recommendations restricting four-wheel-drive access to Fraser Island—which is, of course, by far the most popular means of visiting the island for families—and I ask: in light of his decision to accept that particular recommendation, what alternative access arrangements will be put in place by his Government? When will new arrangements restricting four-wheel-drive access to the island be introduced?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** As usual, the factual premise of the honourable member's question is false. I know that it is his standard modus operandi but, as I say, the factual premise of his question is false.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I can understand the Premier's difficulty in answering simple questions.

#### **Rental Increases on Crown Industrial Estates**

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I refer the Minister for Land Management to the Premier's recent comments, reported today, that the main priority of his and other Governments should be "Jobs, jobs and jobs", and I ask: how does he justify rental increases for businesses located on Crown industrial estates of in excess of 1 500 per cent, which will cause substantial job losses and business closures in the midst of a recession?

**Mr EATON:** The Premier and other members of the Government have been concerned for some time about the loss of jobs in Queensland. In answer to the second part of the honourable member's question—the percentage increase is 3 per cent of the unimproved capital value. The standard was introduced and set by the previous Government.

**Mr Borbidge:** 1 500 per cent.

**Mr EATON:** For the first five years it is set by the Department of Industrial Development, or DBIRD, as it is now called. After that five-year period, it comes back to the land valuation and it applies to the system that exists at the time, which, at present, is 3 per cent of the unimproved capital value.

#### **Sale of Lindeman Island to Club Med**

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I direct a question to the Premier. On 18 April this year, the Leader of the Liberal Party tabled in this House a document which he claimed was a contract submitted by an Australian company with an overseas joint venture partner offering \$21m for the Lindeman Island resort. I ask: in light of this document, will the Premier please explain to the House why the Government supported the sale of Lindeman Island to Club Med for an amount less than \$21m?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The offer concerned was accepted not by the Government but by the receiver because it was the best offer received after 18 months of international and national advertising and one auction and one tender, which were both unsuccessful. So that is the true situation, contrary to what the member for Toowong tried to suggest or imply, quite wrongly, in April when he raised this matter. The document tabled by the member for Toowong represented just one of a number of expressions of interest. None of those expressions of interest complied with the receiver's own criteria. I draw to the attention of honourable members that the document tabled by Mr Beanland was undated and unsigned. Furthermore, any commentators who are really interested in this matter might like to inquire as to the identity of the Gold Coast representative of the company known as Goldco. I think when people find out the identity of the person whom Mr Beanland was representing in this place and when they see the lack of date and the signature on the document that he tabled, that will speak volumes for the member's credibility.

#### **Rural Adjustment Scheme**

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** My second question is directed to the Treasurer, and I refer to reports in today's press that yesterday's meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers on the Rural Adjustment Scheme failed to reach agreement on the Commonwealth's proposals for increased funding in 1991-92. I ask: will the Treasurer inform the House what the impact of this disagreement will be on Queensland's rural producers?

**Mr De LACY:** I thank the honourable member for Archerfield for the question. Yesterday, in Canberra, I did indeed attend a meeting with those State Ministers responsible for the administration of Rural Adjustment Scheme funding—RAS funding—with Mr Kerin. At the outset, let me say that I went to Canberra determined to cooperate with the Commonwealth Government to see what we could do for the ailing rural sector. If I could just start by making a couple of points—firstly, the proposed RAS package, which came from Mr Kerin and was announced about a month ago, does involve additional funding for Queensland—for that we are thankful—and, in overall terms, I believe that the funding levels in the package are adequate. However, my point of contention with Mr Kerin is that the Part A section of RAS, the component which provides structural adjustment assistance, is inadequate. My point of view was definitely shared by all of the other States.

I suggested that one way of overcoming this problem would be to move the new proposed element of RAS, which Mr Kerin calls the Debt Reconstruction with Interest Subsidy Scheme, or DRISS, from Part B, where it does not fit, into Part A. I suggested that we would not then hold out for seven years' funding because the reason that he said that he put it in Part B is that he wanted to make it just two-year funding instead of seven-year funding, which is normally the case in Part A. Mr Kerin undertook to give serious consideration to the Queensland proposal. I did read with interest reports in this morning's press of a back-down by Mr Kerin and a victory for New South Wales and Victoria. What I saw at yesterday's meeting was the two States, New South Wales and Victoria, so strapped for cash that they were unwilling to commit to providing 50 per cent of any carry-on finance under either Part B or Part C of RAS. That is for New South Wales and Victoria to explain to their rural producers, but rural producers in this State can rest assured that this Government stands ready to activate Part B of the Rural Adjustment Scheme. Before the end of June, there will be a further meeting of RAS Ministers and I hope that we can reach agreement and come up with some improvements. But, whatever happens, let me make the point that Queensland rural producers can be confident of the fact that the Goss Government is prepared to do its bit and provide appropriate assistance to help them out of this very severe rural downturn.

#### **ALP Submission to EARC on Electoral Boundaries**

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** In directing a question to the Premier, I draw the attention of honourable members to a copy of what I am assured is the official submission by the ALP to EARC. It contains some 42 pages. The last seven pages in fact are headed "Sport and recreation policy of the Australian Labor Party". I ask the Premier—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! What is the relevance of that?

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** I am going to ask a question of the Premier about that. I ask: can the Premier explain to the House the relevance to the electoral redistribution process of the ALP's sports policy, which is an official part of the ALP's submission to EARC on electoral boundaries? Secondly, is the Premier sure, in the wake of the looming loss of Nundah, his party's dismal performance in Toowoomba South and now this latest embarrassment, that he pulled the right rein in getting rid of Terry Hampson and replacing him with Wayne Swan?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** I admit that the member for—

**Mr Littleproud:** Condamine.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** Sorry. I was confused by the National Party's submission which I sighted yesterday. I was about to say "Roma".

I admit to being stumped by the member for Condamine's question. I can only think of two possible answers to this Exocet question. The first possibility is that it has been an accidental oversight and that is the reason why it the sports policy been annexed to the submission. The second possibility is that Wayne Swan, who, I understand, delivered it, thought that, given that the way in which the National Party appeared to



be approaching this issue was very sporting, that Opposition members might find it of some relevance. I am sure that he has now changed his mind and that his view now is reflected with the same sadness that we all share that the process in the National Party has turned from one of sport to blood sport.

**Unabridged Cooke Inquiry Reports; Access by Leader of Opposition and Member for Toowong**

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** My second question is also directed to the Premier. I remind him of his promise of open and honest Government and alert him to accusations that the abridged Cooke inquiry reports are in fact hiding damaging revelations about ALP members, including some parliamentary members of the ALP. I also remind him that the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review recommends in its report on freedom of information legislation that the reports of commissions of inquiry should be accessible to the public. In light of those facts, I ask: will the Premier prove his commitment to honest and open Government by allowing, on a confidential basis, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Toowong access to the original, unabridged Cooke inquiry reports, or is it true that he has got something to hide?

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The reports have been tabled by the Minister for Employment.

**Mr Littleproud:** Abridged.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** That is so, but the essential report and all the information that is capable of legally being tabled has been tabled. As for the so-called damaging information to which the honourable member refers, I do not know because I have not read the unabridged reports.

**Mr Littleproud:** Put it beyond doubt.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** The process that has been followed is the process that was recommended on the highest legal advice, and that is that information naming individuals or organisations, that would prejudice their trial and which related to the prospect that charges would be laid against those people, be sent to the Director of Prosecutions. The Minister concerned, Mr Warburton, has acted entirely properly and entirely in accordance with legal advice. No decision has been made by this Government nor by the Minister concerned to abridge anything. Those decisions have been made by the Solicitor-General.

**Mr Littleproud:** You are hiding something.

**Mr W. K. GOSS:** No. Those decisions have not been made by this Government; they have been made by the Solicitor-General. We played no role other than to accept absolutely the Solicitor-General's advice. That is what we should do.

**Port Curtis Dairy Cooperative**

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: is he aware of reports in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* which indicate that the Port Curtis Dairy Cooperative does not intend to reintroduce bottled milk onto the Rockhampton market? If so, could he indicate what action he intends to take in this regard?

**Mr CASEY:** The honourable member's question relates to statements that I made earlier this year in this House in relation to the closure of the Mackay milk factory. The Port Curtis Dairy Cooperative was supplying milk in bottles from the Mackay factory to Rockhampton, to Gladstone and to other areas within its franchise area. With the closure of the plant in Mackay because of quality control problems, even Mackay milk had to be placed either in cartons or in two-litre bottles in Rockhampton and then taken to Mackay.

On previous occasions, in several ministerial statements, I announced to this House the reasons behind the closure and what was actually happening. In answering the

question, it is not my intention to go back over that. However, since the closure, the Mackay plant has carried out structural alterations. The Queensland Dairy Industry Authority has given it approval to operate on a trial basis. It is now supplying quality-controlled milk to the Mackay region. As yet, the plant is not in full operational activity. When it is, the undertaking that was originally given will stand. That undertaking was that, in accordance with its franchise, it would operate in exactly the same way as it had before. Somewhere along the line, a management official of the cooperative made the statement that the plant would not be returning to the practice of bottling milk. That was contrary to the agreement which was made between him, the chairman of directors of the cooperative and me. Subsequent to that, I spoke to the chairman of directors of the cooperative, who indicated that, as soon as the cooperative was able to do so, the plant would return to dealing with bottled milk. That occurred in April, just before the plant was due to reopen.

The general manager of the cooperative has made a further statement that the cooperative did not want to go back to bottled milk operations. Only this week, I discussed this matter again with the chairman of the Port Curtis Dairy Cooperative, who agreed with my direction to the Queensland Dairy Industry Authority that the authority ensure that correct quality-control procedures are implemented at the Mackay plant and that it returns to producing bottled milk. The factory sees this as an economic factor. Because of the problems that existed, it sustained severe economic loss. Prior to that time, the cooperative had before the Queensland Dairy Industry Authority an application for special consideration to be given to the pricing of milk in northern areas generally. That was to apply to the cooperative in Mackay and to the cooperative on the Atherton tableland. That application is now under consideration. As the Dairy Industry Authority reviews milk prices on an annual basis, the prices must be kept as separate items in a normal run.

There is agreement between the chairman of directors of the factory and me that, as soon as the cooperative is in a position to do so, it will return to bottling milk in Mackay and follow through its distribution system into Rockhampton and Gladstone.

#### **State Budget**

**Mr STONEMAN:** In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to his oft-stated claim—and the claim again today—that the first Goss Budget will balance and come in on target with a small surplus. Using the figures provided by the Treasurer's own department and, in part, those tabled today, I point out that there has been a massive change in the deficit and net financing requirement when assessed against the previous year's result, a budgetary structure which I note was put in place by the previous National Party Government. I ask the Treasurer: given his own figures—and I advise the House that the \$220m surplus noted today has moved down from the \$1,069m the previous year—does he still maintain that the State economy has improved under Labor management? Would he explain to the House the significant deterioration in the State's internal comparative financial position?

**Mr De LACY:** Yes, I would be very pleased to do so. The honourable member is way off beam. The financial position has not deteriorated. The honourable member is comparing an actual outcome for the previous financial year with an estimated outcome for this financial year. They are two very different things. I will draw the honourable member's attention to the fact——

**Mr Stoneman:** I am quoting your own figures.

**Mr De LACY:** Yes, but it is still an estimated outcome because, in case the honourable member does not know, this year has not finished. The ABS figures are being quoted, not my figures. Before the last Budget, the ABS estimated that the net financing requirement for that Budget would be \$330m. The honourable member will note that the ABS is estimating a negative net financing requirement for this year. As the ABS went through the year, as it usually does, it changed the estimation. It was

changed from a deficit of \$331m to something like minus \$4m, which is a \$4m surplus. The final outcome was a \$691m surplus. The ABS is notorious for underestimating the underlying surplus of the Queensland Budget. That has been the case for many years. If the honourable member is to compare anything, he should compare like with like. He should compare the estimates for 1989-90 with the estimates for 1990-91, or he should compare the actual outcomes.

Despite the fact that the honourable member is trying to portray the fact that there is some underlying problem with the Government's Budget, the statement I made today proves absolutely the opposite. It is the only State Budget in Australia which is on track. It is the only State Budget which will finish up with a surplus. It is the only State Budget which has an underlying surplus. If the honourable member were to compare it with the Budget in the tory State of New South Wales, he would find that it is Queensland first and daylight second, with New South Wales a long way behind.

Opposition members are crowing about the fact that the 1989-90 Budget had an underlying surplus of \$691m, that is, a negative NFR. That Budget was managed by this Labor Party Government in seven months. When I became Treasurer, the first thing that I did was to pay off the \$111m debt that the National Party Government had committed to social infrastructure. This Government established a policy of not funding social infrastructure from budget. That was never the case with the National Party Government in Queensland. That measure, which was implemented by the Goss Government, was new in Queensland and Australia as a whole. With the great benefit of a convenient memory, Opposition members are going around the countryside pretending that it was their policy. It never was. This Government is servicing something like \$700m from its Budget for social infrastructure—hospitals, schools and what have you. As I said, as soon as I became the Treasurer I paid off that \$111m debt. There was a good outcome because for seven months of that financial year the Goss Government was in power. If the National Party had remained in Government, Queensland would have had a deficit. Prior to the last election, the National Party was running that ridiculous public works campaign in an attempt to get back into office. But that did not work. Despite the best efforts of the Opposition to talk the economy down and bad mouth Queensland, everybody in the community knows that Queensland is by far the best-managed State in Australia.

#### **Public Sector Reform Program**

**Mr STONEMAN:** We certainly know why Queensland is in the best position. I ask a second question of the Treasurer: will he detail to the House to what extent the Government's public sector reform program has contributed to the State's relatively good budget position when compared to other States? To what extent have the savage cuts in finances for the delivery of essential services had an effect on the capacity of key departments to deliver in line with community needs?

**Mr De LACY:** I believe that this is a very confusing question from a very confused mind. One of the reasons that Queensland has a good Budget outcome is that this Government has implemented efficiencies in the public sector. There is no way that I will back away from that statement. This Government has not balanced its Budget by making cuts in the delivery of important services. I do not know what public sector the honourable member is talking about. Under this Labor Government, all important service areas have received increased funding. There has been a 14 per cent increase in education funding, a 9 per cent increase in health funding and more than a 50 per cent increase in conservation funding. In the last Budget, there were increases in the important services. For many years, the National Party Government underfunded those services. As I said, I do not know what public sector the honourable member is referring to. However, if he wants to ask me a specific question, I will answer it. There is no reason for those services to be cut, because funding was not cut in the last Budget.

### **Intruders on School Premises**

**Mr LIVINGSTONE:** I ask the Minister for Administrative Services: is he aware of the serious problem that exists throughout the State with regard to intruders on school premises? I point out that this is a particular problem in my electorate of Ipswich West. Is the Minister aware of the trauma that it causes to teachers and students? Is anything being done to address the problem of vandalism and break-and-enter offences in schools?

**Mr McLEAN:** I congratulate the honourable member on his interest in this issue, which is a serious problem to us all. Each year, the State spends an enormous amount of money on handling the problems of arson, vandalism and wilful damage of school property. Most people would be aware that, last weekend, three schools were burnt down. Recently, I visited Cairns. During the week prior to my visit, eight separate acts of vandalism had occurred on school premises in the area. This problem exists right across the State, and is not confined to any specific area.

In 1990, the Government installed electronic surveillance equipment in schools in the Logan and Maryborough districts. At that time, Maryborough was experiencing a spate of fires that were lit by a particular arsonist who has since been caught. This Government then installed equipment in Beenleigh, Inala and Richlands schools. We are working around the State on the basis of treating the worst cases first. It is no easy task. At this stage, electronic school surveillance systems are installed in schools in the Logan, Maryborough, Beenleigh, Inala and Richlands districts. Those surveillance systems are proving to be very successful. There is no 100 per cent answer to this problem. However, to date, the surveillance system has been very successful. Further equipment is now being installed in schools in the Townsville area. I am told that, at this stage, the next district on the list is Ipswich, which includes Mr Livingstone's electorate. Schools in the Gold Coast area will soon be fitted with surveillance equipment. I am not sure which schools are involved. In fact, the Government prefers not to reveal in which particular schools the equipment is installed. The benefit of this system lies in the fact that we broadcast that the equipment has been installed in a particular area without disclosing the actual schools involved. The areas that will be covered next include Camira, Carole Park, Goodna, Redbank Plains, Bundamba and Bremer. All new schools are fitted with the new surveillance equipment. Hopefully, in the near future we will be able to cover all the problem areas, including Mr Livingstone's electorate.

### **Queensland Police Service**

**Mr LIVINGSTONE:** I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: is he aware of continuing claims that the low morale that exists in the Queensland Police Service is causing record resignation rates? Are those claims correct? What is the situation in relation to resignations in the Queensland Police Service?

**Mr MACKENROTH:** Yes, I am aware of those claims. They continue to be made by both Opposition members of Parliament and some police officers throughout Queensland. The claims are not correct. Following the report of the Fitzgerald inquiry, the number of resignations certainly increased. In his report, Tony Fitzgerald said that the resignation rate would rise. He went further to say that we should encourage some people to leave. The Government took that step. We brought in special superannuation entitlements for commissioned officers who wished to leave. Some of those people have left. With the high standards that are now being put in place in the Queensland Police Service, this year the service had a record number of dismissals. That being the case, this financial year we set out with the expectation that the resignation rate, or the wastage rate, in the Police Service would be between 6 per cent and a worst case of 7 per cent.

We have recruited officers and a plan is in place to replace those officers who leave the service and to continue to increase the number of police in Queensland to meet our target of 1 200 operational police in our first term in office. The resignation rate over the past 10 months of this financial year is about 3.5 per cent, or the same percentage

at which it always ran previously. In other words, the high rate of resignations and numbers of people leaving the Police Service lasted for one year. We are now back to the number of officers that one would normally expect to leave by retiring, finding different jobs, resigning through ill health or being dismissed from the service. Those stories that are being related throughout the State by some politicians and some police officers are totally incorrect. I am certain that we will finish off the whole of this year on a very positive note, with wastage rates being maintained at approximately 3.5 per cent.

#### **Union Activities**

**Mr SANTORO:** I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations: will he confirm that he is arranging for legislation to be prepared, which, if and when passed by this House, would have the effect of legitimising retrospectively the unlawful actions of certain unions, including the failure to hold elections in accordance with their registered rules? If that is the case, will the Minister inform the House why he is taking that action instead of requiring the offending unions or any other industrial organisation to comply with existing laws?

**Mr WARBURTON:** I would have thought that the honourable member had been in this place for sufficient time to understand that, when a Bill is pending, it would be quite improper for me as a Minister to advise honourable members of this place what is contained within it. If the honourable member were to be a little more patient, I am sure that he will get his answer.

#### **Crown Industrial Estates**

**Mr TURNER:** In directing a question to the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, I refer to the Government's major small business initiative of the year, namely, the 1 500 per cent increase in rentals on Crown industrial estates, and I ask: what action does he intend to take as Minister responsible for small business to review that decision, which will have disastrous economic consequences in job losses and business closures?

**Mr SMITH:** I suggest that the honourable member pay attention to the proceedings of the House. Virtually the same question was asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. As the Minister for Land Management has already spelt out, my department sets initial rentals for industrial land. After the initial concession period of five years, the rate reverts to that set by the Department of Lands, which is 3 per cent of the unimproved capital value, which is exactly the same as it was when the National Party was in Government.

#### **Visits by School Students to Wacol Correctional Centre**

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I ask the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services: is he aware of a project that is currently being undertaken by the Corrective Services Commission inviting school students to visit the Wacol Correctional Centre and, if so, will he inform the House of the purpose of the visits and what the commission hopes to achieve by them?

**Mr MILLINER:** Yes, I am aware of the visits to the Wacol Correctional Centre by students from a number of schools, in particular, schools in the Toowoomba area.

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

#### **MATTER OF SPECIAL PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

##### **Government Service Provision**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members, I advise the House that I have received a proposal for a Special Public Importance debate pursuant to the Sessional

Order agreed to by the House on 3 October 1990. The proposal submitted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition is for a debate on the following matter—

"The denial of Government Services which has occurred under this Government and the failure of the Government to recognise its responsibility in order to maintain Queensland as a decentralised State."

I now call the member for Auburn to speak to the proposal.

**Hon. N. J. HARPER** (Auburn) (3.59 .m.): At the instigation of the Opposition in this House, we are to debate the denial of Government services that has occurred under the Goss Labor Government and the failure of that Government to recognise that it has a responsibility to maintain Queensland as a decentralised State. Over the past 18 months, we have seen a systematic and deliberate process through which this Government has progressively taken away services to decentralised areas of this State, particularly from the smaller country towns and communities which comprise the decentralised areas that are so important to the economy and to the productivity for which rural Queensland has been well known. It is a denial of services for which the Government rightly has a responsibility. I suggest that it would serve the members of the Government well to consider those services for which the Government rightly has a responsibility and which have been denied to decentralised rural Queensland by the Government. These services will be restored when the National Party is returned to Government.

**Mr Smyth:** When will that be?

**Mr HARPER:** Much sooner than the honourable member thinks. Whenever he goes to the people, he will be given the same message the Labor representative got in Toowoomba South. The honourable member should not worry too much about that. Let me outline some of the affected areas. The list is long. I shall start with the policy of the Government in disbanding fire brigade boards and so taking away the community contribution which, for decades, has been put into country fire services. The Government has taken away that contribution which the community had voluntarily made and, in most cases, made in an honorary capacity or for very small recompense. The Government could do much the same thing in country areas if it had the ability to disband services clubs such as Apex and Lions. Fortunately, country communities will be able to maintain community input and community interest through those services. But the disbandment of fire brigade boards was the first step towards taking away the community's contribution and interest.

Next was the move towards so-called regionalisation of hospitals boards. It went almost unnoticed in the media. We saw, obviously to appease Labor politicians, regionalisation of Bundaberg and Maryborough to Hervey Bay. The important thing is that, again, the Goss Government eliminated what was essentially community involvement— the opportunity for members of the community to be part of the hospital system and have a personal interest in what is happening in their local hospitals, and for the community at large to be able to contact people who live in their area, who they know trust and respect, and who will put forward their point of view. Again, there is this deliberate action on the part of the Labor Government to eliminate that local pride and community involvement in essential services which were provided previously by the composition of hospitals boards.

I turn next to Queensland Railways. The Opposition in this House views with great concern and condemns the attack which the Goss Labor Government has made on rail services. We have called on the Government to rescind its decision to withdraw staff from smaller country railway centres for redeployment in larger centralised areas. We call on the Government, in the interests of road safety and overall economic efficiency in the Transport Department, to rescind that decision to create rail distribution centres throughout Queensland. We call on the Government to reconsider the removal of staff—

**Mr Hamill:** Why?

**Mr HARPER:** The Minister asks why he should reconsider the decision to transfer staff from country centres. I will give him a typical example. If the Government takes four or five fettlers from a small town such as Baralaba or takes 25 railway employees from a town the size of Moura and shifts them to Biloela, what effect does it have not only on those people who may own their homes in those towns and have to shift—

**Mr HAMILL:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is grossly misleading the House. I have in my hand a list of 43 railway stations that were closed by the National Party in its last year of office and I table that document.

**Mr HARPER:** The Minister is obviously and understandably very sensitive in this area. So he should be, because he is helping to bring about the destruction of small business in country towns. He is helping to bring about the destruction of a decentralised Queensland that was developed not only by conservative Governments—Liberal/National and National—but also by Labor Governments in past years. He will be one of those who preside over the destruction of decentralised development in this State because the moves that he is taking in the railways are contributing to the downfall of small business in country areas.

Likewise, the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services, by closing country courthouses, is taking away a service for which the Government rightly has a responsibility. Sure, the name "courthouse" may be a misnomer because it covers many other services such as those provided for the Queensland Housing Commission, the Public Trustee, the Lands Department and the Transport Department. So many services are provided at country courthouses. What is this Government doing? Taking them away. The Government says that it is causing no trouble because the bureaucrats down here have looked at a map and said that Moura and Monto are only an hour's drive from Biloela, so the local people can catch a bus. The bureaucrats, in their sheltered glasshouses down here, do not understand that there are no bus services or other means of public transport between centres such as those.

Many of the people who live in Housing Commission homes in Moura would not have motor vehicles of their own, but if they were able to go to another centre an hour's drive away, that would have an adverse effect on the businesses in Moura, and the same can be said about towns such as Monto, Mundubbera and Eidsvold. People will not only move to another centre to transact their Government business, but also they will take the opportunity to visit the butcher and the grocery store, and the ladies will visit the fashion houses that can be found in those centres. They will buy goods outside their home town which will lead eventually to the closing of businesses or the loss of job opportunities, to say the very least, in Queensland's decentralised towns. This is all heading towards this Government's philosophy of regionalisation and centralisation, which is the Canberra concept that began in the Whitlam era and which is designed to centralise services and build monoliths for the Labor Party. There has also been a loss of advisory services to primary industries, which are the productive sector of the community and the very sector that this Government should be building up. The Government should be assisting in the production of wealth that will take this country out of the economic crisis it is in, but instead it takes away the advisory services for which it has a responsibility.

**Mr McGRADY** (Mount Isa) (4.09 p.m.): I am delighted to participate in this debate which has been brought on by the leadership of the National Party in this Parliament. Members of the Labor Party know that this is an attempt to defuse the ructions that are going on inside the National Party as its members search for a new leader. Let me say at the outset that it is Mr Cooper and members of the parliamentary National Party who stand in the dock today. They are accused of selling out their true constituency, the people who live in rural and remote parts of Queensland.

I make that claim after having travelled many thousands of kilometres throughout outback Queensland and meeting with local councils, community groups and individuals who genuinely expressed the concerns that they have for the future of their areas, for

their families and for themselves. To date, members of the Premier's rural and northern task force have travelled to Townsville, Charters Towers, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry, Mount Isa, Ingham, Innisfail, Babinda, Cairns, Mossman, Bloomfield, Cooktown, Lakeland in Cairns, Proserpine, Airlie Beach, Bowen, Collinsville, Mount Coolum, Moranbah, Clermont, Dysart, Norwich Park, Middlemount, Warwick, Goondiwindi, St George, Dirranbandi, Balonne, Cunnamulla, Thargomindah, Charleville, Morven, Mitchell, Roma, Chinchilla and Gatton. Let me inform the House that the task force intends to take three more trips over the next month or two. In all the places visited, the people expressed very strongly their contempt for the National Party and for the individuals who represent them in this Parliament.

At Warwick, the local member turned up—trilby hat and all. To be fair, he made a contribution to the discussions that I felt was constructive and to the point. The task force then went to the Carnarvon electorate where, again, the member attended the meeting and spoke in a sincere, constructive manner. However, that cannot be said of the task force's visit to Charleville, where the local member attended the public meeting and agreed that the problems facing rural Queensland were too great to be dealt with on a party-political basis. After agreement had been reached and the audience applauded, he nearly broke his neck getting to a telephone to throw a bucket over me and members of the task force. This is the sort of representation that the people in the Charleville area have.

No-one in this Parliament can deny that the people of rural Queensland are hurting, but they are hurting for a number of reasons. For example, many of the causes of the hurt are outside the scope or jurisdiction of the Queensland State Government. A massive downturn in wool prices has occurred, and the same can be said about prices in the wheat industry. However, I can find no suggestions made by the leadership of the National Party about how these problems can best be overcome. The National Party cannot speak with one voice on problems affecting the wool industry. Some sections of the National Party are saying that, even though wool cannot be sold on world markets, it should still be sold through the Australian Wool Corporation, which is a wool-growers' organisation. This section of the National Party wants the growers to continue to have the corporation buy their wool. I think it is fair to ask the question of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Cooper, and the Opposition spokesman for Primary Industries: where does the National Party stand on this issue? I also ask this question of the same two gentlemen: where do they stand on the problems confronting the wool industry and the wheat industry? What is their recipe for the upturn in those important industries?

In Mr Cooper's reply to the 1990-91 Budget Speech, he claimed that there was no micro-economic reform contained in Treasurer De Lacy's Budget. Of course, that was a nonsense, but could Mr Cooper tell this Parliament today where he would like micro-economic reform to begin in this State? Should it begin with railways, health services, courthouses or the Department of Primary Industries? As a responsible Leader of the Opposition, he has a duty to his party, to the Parliament and to the people of this State to spell out in detail his policies on these important matters.

During my recent trip as chairman of the Premier's rural and northern task force, we visited places in the heart of National Party territory where it was stated to us at public meetings that the people had not seen a politician since Kevin Hooper and Tom Burns last visited their town. The late Kevin Hooper has been dead for approximately seven years, so one would not need to be a Rhodes Scholar to work out the last time a politician visited the heartland of National Party territory. That is a shocking indictment of the kind of representation that the people in the remote towns of Queensland have received from the National Party. As we travelled around the State, we saw the terror that prominent members of the National Party have put into the hearts and minds of men, women and children with their scaremongering tactics about the closing down of railways and the retrenchment of 10 000 men, the closing down of hospitals in those small towns and the total withdrawal of DPI staff. Need I go on! The latest rumour is that the district lands office in Cloncurry will close down. That is just another out and out lie being perpetrated by the National Party for its own devious political needs. Let



me use this opportunity in this Parliament today to give the people of Cloncurry an assurance that the district office of the Lands Department in their town will not be closing down. I have no doubt at all that, as we proceed in this debate, we will hear criticism of the reforms of the ambulance services in this State. Again, I totally dismiss and reject those criticisms, for those proposals were recommended by an all-party committee that consisted of Labor, National and Liberal Party members and were carried unanimously.

I turn now to the subject of health services and hospitals in remote areas. Again, members of the National Party were busy in the township of Dirranbandi alleging that its hospital was to close down. Again, that was an out and out lie, because under Mr McElligott's proposals for the Queensland health service, local hospitals and, in particular, the people who work in those hospitals, will have far more autonomy than they have ever had. Some of the cronyism which existed prior to the reforms no longer exists. Let me take this opportunity today to express my thanks and appreciation to those board members who have given years of valuable service to their local communities and who, in the main, are supportive of the new measures. Can I also say that recently the Minister for Health announced that breast-screening will be provided by a mobile unit right through the far-flung places of this State. For years, that is something which country women through the CWA and Quota clubs have been appealing for. It took a Labor Government to bring those urgently required services for women to the outback. The cost of construction and installation of the machine is approximately half a million dollars. I certainly hope that country women will take advantage of that service and that breast cancer can be detected and treated in the early stages.

Let me turn briefly to the colleagues of National Party members in New South Wales. Today, we see the Greiner Government closing down country hospitals. Those so-called defenders of country people are actually taking away health services from the people of the outback. Contrast that with the Goss Labor Government in Queensland. We often hear members of the Opposition referring to Victoria and to South Australia. However, today in New South Wales, because of the policies of colleagues of Opposition members, country people are locking up National Party Ministers and burning tractors and farm equipment. Today, the National Party is in the dock. In its quest to secure its mates in the Gold Coasts of this State, it has neglected outback people. The Minister for Transport mentioned previously that, to date, nine railway stations have been closed down by the Goss Labor Government. Honourable members should contrast that with the last 18 months of the National Party Government when 43 stations were closed down.

Time expired.

**Mr BOOTH** (Warwick) (4.20 p.m.): I rise to speak on the denial of services to the people of Queensland. It is more apparent in country areas, but I believe that it will spread also to the cities. In this debate I am pleased to follow the honourable member for Mount Isa. I support his remark that he came to Warwick and listened to the people. In company with the honourable member for Isis, he sat there and listened. They received the best two hours of complaints that I have ever heard in my life. I cannot believe that he does not know that a problem exists in that area. I realise that he does not like the shape of my hat, but I have worn it for many years.

**Mr McGrady:** I thought it was quite smart.

**Mr BOOTH:** It is quite a good hat. People attended the meeting with a preconceived idea that Mr McGrady and his colleagues would not listen. They did listen.

**Mr Harper:** They didn't learn, though.

**Mr BOOTH:** I hope that they did learn, but I am inclined to believe that they did not. However, they did listen, and I am sure that he went away fully aware of some of the problems that those people had. I am not trying to start a fight between country people and city people, nor do I believe any benefit could be derived from that. They

need each other. If country people wish to sell their products, they need the city people, and they must have enough money in their pockets to buy the products. However, that is not a major issue. The denial of services appears to have started in the country, where many services have been reduced. I notice the member for Whitsunday listening carefully. She has probably had services reduced in her electorate and is not pleased. It does not please me, either. When the control of fire brigades and hospitals boards is taken away from towns, they lose something that cannot be measured. Earlier, Mr McGrady talked about cronyism in the hospitals boards. I do not believe it was too bad. However, if cronyism did exist, that was not right. Now we have a different kind of cronyism. A man who is a doctor of agriculture is to be appointed to the regional hospital board to be established in Toowoomba. His only claim to fame is that they say he is a new face and he will not take notice of anything that has occurred in the past. We have been happy with our hospitals in that area. If he intends to change things simply because he is a new face, we will not appreciate that.

I would like to respond to the remarks by the member for Mount Isa about a recipe for an upturn in the wool and grain industries. He may have even mentioned another industry. I would be Saint Des tomorrow if I could fix up the problems in the wool industry. I think that people are sincere when they say that they do not know where to start. I think that the wool industry will recover but, because of the stockpile, it will take a long time to recover. However, there is no doubt that the Federal Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Kerin, caused the collapse in the grain industry when he deregulated the price of wheat. The deregulation of the price of wheat put feed wheat directly into the feed market, and all coarse grains were affected.

**Mr Harper:** He did the same with wool.

**Mr BOOTH:** What he did to the wool industry accentuated the problems in that industry. I am not sure that that industry would not have experienced problems, anyway, but I believe that Mr Kerin caused some of the problems.

The withdrawal or the denial of services in a town or a suburb lessens the importance of that town or suburb. People will not shop there to the same extent. I have been fortunate that in Warwick not many services have been withdrawn, but before I resume my seat I will mention a couple that have been. Not only does the withdrawal or denial of services lessen the importance of a town or suburb but also it drastically reduces morale in the public service. It has been said—and one can read it in the press—that if one has a brilliant student, one should not put that student in the DPI, because that department is finished. It is going to be more or less wound up.

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr BOOTH:** That is true.

**Mr Beattie:** Be fair.

**Mr BOOTH:** I am just telling honourable members what happens when the Government starts offering redundancies willy-nilly. I will cite a classic example. Two of the top plant-breeders and I think the foremost weeds expert in Queensland—possibly in Australia—have just accepted redundancy. I do not know the exact age of the weeds expert. I think he is about 50 years old. I think that that man, with his expertise in regard to weeds, will be able to find work somewhere else. I am not sure that the plant-breeders will find it so easy. Seed companies already have a lot of plant-breeders. Morale in the DPI is down to zero. If the honourable member for Brisbane Central had visited any of the research stations two years ago, he would have been quite a hero. They would have loved him. Warwick is famous for hitting people with eggs. Because of his political affiliation, the people of Warwick would love him. They have hit people with eggs before. If the honourable member visits Warwick, he ought to be very careful.

**Mr Springborg:** A direct hit, too.

**Mr BOOTH:** That is right, a direct hit. I might add that the Brosnans are going to have a reunion in Warwick this weekend. It is expected that 500 people will turn up. I would advise the honourable member for Brisbane Central to keep away from Warwick this weekend. I will be there because my wife is a Brosnan.

The things that really count in country areas are health, education and the DPI—especially extension work. I have already said that morale in the DPI is down to zero. I also want to make the point that it is not much good having a stock-inspector if the mileage that he can claim is restricted. If a farmer telephones an extension officer and says, "I have a crop that should have been good but it is just not performing the way it should be", the first thing that he wants to do is have a look at it and take some samples. It is not much good if he cannot do that. It has not happened yet, but any day now we could see the closure of small one-man offices of the DPI. The officer concerned is usually a stock-inspector. The stock-inspectors provide a great service to the people in country areas. The bigger offices are some distance away. These reductions in the numbers of employees are being made under the guise of regionalisation or rationalisation. I am not opposed, and I do not suppose anyone on the Opposition side is opposed, to closing down a service when it is not getting any business. The Opposition knows that the Government cannot operate that way. If no-one is using the services of a stock-inspector, the service cannot be kept going. The Opposition is not so stupid as to suggest that it should be.

Other things are happening that are going to have a drastic effect on employment. Last Friday, a shire council in my electorate put off six of its staff. The reason given was that funding under what was known as the shared roads grants was not coming through freely, so these six men had to go. They were put off on a last-on, first-off basis, which was fair, I suppose. I think that the men knew that they could not be kept on unless there was work for them. As I have said, I do not think anyone is foolish enough to think that people can be kept in employment if there is no work for them to do. However, it must be remembered that, when men who have been building roads for shire councils are put off, the roads will go to pieces, too. Although I think that the road system in Queensland is quite good, I do not think that it should be allowed to deteriorate any further. I believe that people would be worried if it did.

**Mr De Lacy:** You people want to reduce taxes all the time. You want to cut land tax and payroll tax.

**Mr BOOTH:** I am glad that the Treasurer interjected. I was going to leave him alone. A short time ago in this Chamber the Treasurer said that the Government is going to balance the Budget, yet all these services are being withdrawn. Every day the Government says that the Budget expenditure is going up. The answer is, "Oh, well, put off another six men."

**Mr De Lacy:** You want to cut taxes more.

**Mr BOOTH:** Of course, if it can be done. What else is the Government going to do to put confidence back into business? Putting taxes up every day will not do that.

**Mr De Lacy** interjected.

**Mr BOOTH:** Not completely. There are many ways in which good management can get the Government out of trouble. The problem with the Goss Government is bad management—really bad management.

Time expired.

**Mr BREDHAUER** (Cook) (4.30 p.m.): I want to take up where the member for Warwick has just left off.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I do wear a hat, but I do not wear a trilby. Along with Mr McGrady and other members of the rural and northern task force, I have travelled to

country centres throughout Queensland and, of course, in my electorate of Cook. There are undoubtedly people who are demanding that more and more services be provided by the Government in their particular community or that services should be maintained under circumstances in which the cost of providing the service is increasing. However, at the same time, the same people are making demands that taxes and charges be lowered. In the equation, it just cannot be done. An open-ended commitment to providing more or improved services and reducing the Government's revenue base cannot continue unless it goes further and further into debt. That is what this Government has tried to avoid in Queensland. But there is a mechanism by which it can be done. There is a mechanism by which one can look at maintaining services or increasing the services that are provided in rural and remote parts of Queensland without increasing the revenue base.

I acknowledge the commitment of Queensland's Treasurer and its Government to not introducing any new taxes and limiting taxes and charges to CPI increase levels. That is what this Government has done and that is what it is committed to doing, and that is what the people of Queensland are acknowledging. They say, "Yes, we do not like tax increases but at least you did not introduce the tobacco tax as you promised you wouldn't and at least you have managed to keep your taxes and charges down." The way that that can be done is by improving the efficiency of the delivery of the service. It is ironic that members, such as the member for Auburn, the member for Warwick and others, stand up in this House and complain about boards being abolished and complain about other actions which the Government is taking. What they do not appreciate is that the process that the Government is undertaking is rationalising the delivery of services so that it can maintain the service by reducing administration and management costs. That is the only way to ensure that services are maintained. Just because the Government has reduced the number of hospitals boards or fire brigade boards does not mean that it has reduced the hospital services or the fire services. Those services are still there. It is just that the Government has reduced the cost of administration. It is trying to deliver those services more efficiently.

What Opposition members do not seem to understand is that the only way to meet the dual demands of society to limit taxes and charges to a reasonable level and maintain and increase the level of services that are being offered by the Government is by improving the efficiency of the system. That is the task that this Government is undertaking. I make no apology for the fact that, from time to time, a school may close down. I used to work for the Teachers Union. I have driven around the electorate of the member for Flinders. I have seen schools in his electorate with one child or three children in them. I have been to Maxwellton where three children were being taught by a teacher and a teacher aide, who were doing a very good job. The teachers whom I visited at Maxwellton were always good, confident and conscientious teachers. The teacher aide, Carmel Chalmers, was active not only in her school but also in her community. She is still active in the ICPA, which works for the education of children in country areas. At one stage when I visited that school, there were three students. One cannot justify an argument that says that teachers should remain at a school ad infinitum when only three children are enrolled. Ultimately, because of a political decision, new teacher accommodation was erected at that centre. The following year, the school was closed. A teacher was transferred to Maxwellton, but there were no students. The school was closed and the teacher was transferred somewhere else and the Government is stuck with the new teacher accommodation. I am not sure whether it has been subsequently sold. It is policies such as that that this Government is attempting to redress—the waste of money and the inefficient use of resources. Those types of things have to be looked at in order to meet community demands and the demands of responsible Governments, such as this one, that services to the community are maintained at a reasonable level while at the same time increases in charges are restrained.

I listened to the member for Warwick talk about health and education services that have been reduced. I want to address some of those issues because they happen to be very important issues in the Cook electorate. By and large, the Cook electorate was

neglected by the previous Government. It is a remote area that was regarded by the previous National Party Government as a safe Labor electorate. That Government ignored many of the needs of the constituents in my electorate because it did not particularly suit it to provide for them. Because he is a former Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs in this Parliament, I would like to take the member for Flinders around the medical aid posts, as they call them in the Torres Strait islands. The facilities on Yorke Island, on Dauan Island, at Saint Pauls community and on Coconut Island are a disgrace.

The member for Callide complained, in an unwarranted fashion, about the health services at the Cairns Base Hospital. She should get out into the Torres Strait and have a look at the legacy of 32 years of National Party Government. They have establishments that are falling down around their ears. Health workers in the Torres Strait region have been putting up with those conditions for years and years because previous Governments never did anything about them. This Government, through its accelerated capital works program, is out there on the ground now trying to do something about upgrading those facilities. The Government is doing something about upgrading the capital infrastructure for health facilities in such places. I include Doomadgee, where the Government is in the process of building a long overdue hospital for a community of over 1 000 people, whose health workers have to perform under appalling physical conditions. Conscientious, well-trained and inspired health workers are trying to do a very tough job in a remote area such as Doomadgee where services such as water and sewerage are still uncertain. They are operating under unsatisfactory conditions with which they were left by the previous Government. This Government is correcting that position.

The Government is not just looking at improvements in capital infrastructure. I cite the training program for Aboriginal and Islander health workers. It has been jointly supported by the State and Federal Governments. The TAFE college will be operating soon. At this stage, I mention Mick Miller, who launched the course at the Cairns TAFE in Cairns on Monday of this week. It will be staffed by health workers from Aboriginal and Islander communities. Over 100 applications were received for the initial round of vacancies. It will be an extraordinarily successful course because it has the support of the State and Federal Governments. For the first time, those people will be provided with an adequate level of training so that they can better serve the people for whom they have been working for many years.

Whilst speaking about training programs, I also refer to a training program that has just commenced for Aboriginal and Islander community police. The member for Tablelands, another former Minister responsible for Aboriginal affairs, is in the House. The position with Aboriginal and Islander community police has been most unsatisfactory for many years. Those people do not even have the resources to buy uniforms. Half of them get around in tatty old blue shirts. They are not proud to get around dressed like that; they just do not have the resources provided to buy uniforms. The Government has taken the initiative and started a training program for Aboriginal and Islander community police. The Government is looking not merely at maintaining services, but at improving them as well. That improvement is being made not only through capital expenditure but also through training and through other mechanisms that are designed to allow people from the Torres Strait and Aboriginal communities to provide a better standard of service to the communities in which they operate.

In that vein, I will refer briefly to the remote area teacher education program that has been commenced in that area. This Government supported that program in many ways. Most recently, it was supported through the accelerated capital works program by the provision of houses on Yorke Island provide accommodation for those working in the remote area teacher education program. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being trained to work in their own communities, to work amongst themselves and to deliver a better standard of education. The Government is trying to think a little bit smarter. It is not just throwing dollars into a project and hoping that improvements will flow from that; the Government is trying to implement more efficient organisation and better management so that more and better services can

be delivered and maintained. That is being done within the reasonable constraints expected by the people of Queensland so that they will not be forced to pay massive hikes in their taxes and charges and to keep the promise that no new taxes and charges will be introduced.

I want to speak briefly about railways. When I have approached the Minister for Transport, I have found him most responsive, reasonable and rational to my issues of concern. I do not fly around my electorate like a chook without its head, as the member for Flinders does. He tries to create antipathy from one end of Charters Towers to the other end of Cloncurry by telling people lies such as that 10 000 people will lose their jobs. That is not the way to do business. If a member wants something done, he should go to the Minister and tell him that he has a problem and try to resolve it.

Time expired.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Carnarvon) (4.40 p.m.): As all members of this House would realise, essential to a decentralisation policy in this State and to the well-being of the people of country Queensland is an indication from their Government, whether it be State or Federal, that it cares about them. In many cases, the attitude of people in country Queensland is that this State Government does not care for the people of the decentralised parts of Queensland. As I continue, I will enlighten members opposite about that. I will give credit to the honourable member for Mount Isa and the honourable member for Isis for visiting my electorate as a part of the Premier's rural task force and at least listening to the problems of the people in that region. By no means are their problems very simple to fix. However, they are problems that the Government can certainly go some way towards addressing. If nothing else, I hope that there is at least a recognition on the part of the Premier's rural task force that a problem exists.

Government members who have spoken in this debate have waxed lyrical about a few services that the Government has provided in some parts of Queensland since it came to office. I point out that, since the Labor Party came to Government, it has taken away far more services in country Queensland than it has provided. I will refer firstly to country courthouses. In 53 towns in Queensland, police officers no longer act as clerks of the court. One of the towns affected by that decision was Texas, which is in my electorate. By no means is 53 a small number. In January 1991, the Magistrates Courts in 16 towns were closed. Those courts were operated by civilian clerks of the court. The courthouse at Inglewood, which is also in my electorate, is due to be closed on 1 July 1991. I certainly hope that the Minister for Justice will take on board my concerns and the arguments that I have advanced for keeping that courthouse open. It is not simply a matter of economics; it is not simply a matter of regionalisation or centralisation and providing a better service.

I was somewhat amused to hear the honourable member for Cook, Mr Steve Bredhauer, suggest that, although the Government is scaling down some services, it is being done in order to provide a better service elsewhere. A better service is not being provided. Instead, it is far more difficult for people to get from point A to point B to make use of the service. If a person lives within 50 kilometres of two courthouses, how will he be provided with a better service if they are closed and he has to travel to a courthouse that is 100 kilometres away? People have told me that, in such circumstances, that will result in people not paying their bills. One of the more cryptic aspects that members opposite may fail to understand is that people will not be able to afford to drive for an hour and spend a half a day in another town in the far-flung reaches of the State. The cost of travelling to such a place to recover something like \$10, \$20 or \$30 from a person who will not pay his bill will more than outweigh the amount that will be recovered.

In my area as well as in many other areas throughout the State, the number of police personnel has been cut back. At the time when the Government came to power, the police force had morale problems. Those morale problems have not improved. A lot of promises were made about increasing the number of police. The Government said that an extra 1 200 police would be appointed in the first three years of its term, 400 of whom would be appointed in the first year. What has happened? Good police officers

cannot be just plucked out of the air. That is what the Government thought it could do.

**Mrs Edmond:** They are pouring in.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** They are certainly not pouring into my area; they have been taken out of it. Police officers are taken out of an area and put into areas in which they are deemed to be more essential. As a result, one area loses a police service. That affects the morale and the psychology of a town. It affects how a town views itself.

**Mr Smyth:** You would make a good police officer after you get knocked off in the preselection.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I probably will. I am afraid that I am not in charge of that. The powers that be are in charge of it. I will go back to the farm and be a humble farmer—a struggling farmer—and hopefully raise a family.

As I said before, many Government services have been taken away. Although the 28 DPI research stations may not have been closed, I assure the House that their resources have certainly been downgraded. The ability of the staff at those stations—whether they be agronomists or others involved in various areas of research—to go out and service their areas has been downgraded.

**Mr Harper:** Soil conservation.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There is soil conservation and so on. For a number of years, the DPI station at Inglewood, which comes to mind immediately, has been trying to get a replacement for the agronomist who went to another area. The fact is that we are trying. The Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Casey, gave an indication that something could be happening. The next minute, the stock-inspector disappeared. When the people of that area put up a case against his disappearance, they were told, "You are a low-priority area. You can be serviced from Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe or somewhere else." The fact is that people cannot be serviced as well or as adequately as they can from a branch in their area. That fundamental point seems to be misunderstood by Government members. It is all very well for the Government to talk about providing better services by scaling them back and regionalising them, but I really cannot see how that works.

I turn now to soil conservation, which is very important to the future well-being of this State. The number of soil conservation officers in this State has been cut back. We must preserve our most wonderful natural resource, namely, our soil. We must also implement the correct technology. Some agricultural producers might not be aware of the correct way to use that technology, even though I believe that the majority of them are aware of how to protect their land. When people are being pushed into a corner by economic adversity—and not all of it is a problem of the State; the majority of the problem lies with the Federal Government—perhaps they are forced to get more productivity out of their land. This Government can do a lot more to help those people. The Railways has been mentioned in this debate. I believe that far more can be done—and quickly—to address some of the misapprehensions and concerns of people who use rail services and those who are employed by the Railways.

As to the scaling-down of research projects in the Department of Primary Industries--the Prime Minister has stated that if Australians are to become more productive, better people, they must produce better products and become smarter by embracing the latest technology. How can he suggest that cutting back of sunflower research and viticultural research will lead to better production and the development of produce that is in line with the ever-changing palates of Queenslanders? It does not. There is a deliberate trend away from the productive sector in this State towards what I would term the non-productive sector. I believe in social justice for country people. But I am afraid that, under this Government, social justice has been going down the tube. When one considers the services that have been taken away, one realises why the people in country areas are expressing concern and how they are feeling. This issue affects their psychology.

The Minister for Administrative Services, Ron McLean, who I believe has his heart in the job, has been going around the State saying that this Government will give a dollar-for-dollar subsidy to schools to enable them to purchase lawn-mowers or whatever. Similar programs were in place when the National Party was in Government in this State. People hear about such programs and think, "Great, you are giving us a lawn-mower, but what are you taking away?" The people of Miles are saying, "You took away our railway station. What are you going to give us in return? A toxic waste dump!" One cannot blame them for thinking along those lines.

This Government has indicated that things might be tight fiscally in the forthcoming Budget. The point has been made that floods, droughts and goodness knows what other natural disasters will take their toll on balancing the books. Floods and droughts occurred when the National Party was in Government, but it was still able to do a good job with the Queensland economy. That fact has been conceded by almost every commentator in this State. In fact, I believe that it has been recognised by some Government members. The former National Party Government nurtured the productive sector in this State. It did not take away from that sector. It did not introduce policies that gave too much consideration to social justice in relation to environment and Aboriginal and Islander affairs. It gave social justice to everybody. It developed an infrastructure across this State.

Time expired.

**Hon. K. E. De LACY** (Cairns—Treasurer) (4.50 p.m.): I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate. I welcome the opportunity to debate this issue. The Labor Party is proud of its contribution to the rural sector during the 18 months that it has been in Government in this State. I was disappointed by the quality of debate by Opposition members. It was the same old rhetoric—the same old us-versus-them, country-versus-city, small-minded rhetoric that was rejected by the people of Queensland in 1989. It has not been improved upon or upgraded. There is nothing new about it. It is out of date and will get the National Party nowhere. Unless it wants to move into the 1990s and the modern era, the National Party will languish in Opposition, representing very few people at all. I recognise the contribution of the rural sector to the economy of Queensland and that of Australia as a whole. The Labor Party and the Goss Government recognise that contribution. We would be silly not to, because the rural sector is a vital aspect of the Queensland economy. This Government will do everything that it can to ensure that the rural sector remains viable.

As to the campaign that members of the Opposition are running—that somehow the Labor Party is anti-rural—it is not anti-rural. It never has been, and never will be. The Labor Party started in country Queensland. Only a couple of weeks ago, members of the Labor Party went back to Barcaldine. That is where the Labor Party started. Members of the Labor Party recognise that their roots are in rural Queensland. They also recognise the importance of rural Queensland. However, they also realise that there is a rural downturn. The task force that Mr Tony McGrady has been leading did talk to country people and did get the message. All Labor Party members are getting that message. We know that things are tough in country Queensland and in Australia as a whole. We will be doing our bit to ensure that country Queensland remains viable. The single, best thing that we can do for rural people is to run the economy properly and to do all those things that I keep talking about day after day. We must keep taxes down. We could have introduced a petrol tax, such as the one in New South Wales. Queensland has no petrol tax. This Government did not increase taxes. It is working to ensure that the public sector is efficient. If we do all of those things, the people who will benefit most of all will be the productive people in the economy.

Day after day, Opposition members say that primary producers are the productive people. I recognise that. If we have an efficient economy, the productive people will benefit most of all. In the past, the National Party Government tried to establish its bona fides with country people by a whole range of little concessions and those sorts of things. In the long run, that does not do any good; it helps only at the margin. What



helps most of all is getting the economy efficient and keeping it on track. If members opposite deny that, they do not know what it is all about.

We have spoken a lot about services, which is what the debate is about. I will make a few points. How many times do the conservative people call for a smaller public sector? In one breath, Opposition members call for a smaller public sector, yet, as soon as the Government tries to make a more efficient public sector, Opposition members stand and scream that this has gone, that has gone, and something else has gone. The public sector cannot be more efficient unless it is rationalised. At times, rationalising means that a service will be lost in a certain area. However, we cannot keep up with the times unless we pay due regard to advances in technology and communications, demographic changes and a whole range of other matters. I cannot say to my Ministers that they must deliver services at a cheaper cost and that they must be more efficient if, every time they try to do something that makes the delivery of services more efficient, it has a political consequence and they back off. We must accept that. If we can achieve a more efficient delivery of services, more services will be provided for the same dollar and everybody will benefit. That is what it is all about.

The Government has committed more money to a whole range of services, such as education, housing and police. Those services benefit all Queenslanders. They do not benefit only Queenslanders who live in big cities; they benefit Queenslanders throughout the length and breadth of this State. To the extent that the Government has increased funding for education, that is the extent to which people in country areas will be benefited. The Government has a practice—which is a novel practice in Queensland—of spending money and providing services where they are needed, not on the basis of politics or political patronage. If Opposition members consider that some country areas are disadvantaged, those areas will benefit under this system.

The second question that must be asked is: what is the purpose of the public service and for what do we have services? Is it to keep alive country towns that are dying? Members opposite stand up in this place and say to the Government, "You have shifted out some public servant. We needed that public servant because he was good for the community. He or she was another person who went into the butcher, the baker, etc." That is true, but the Government must ask the question: for what do we have the public service? It is to deliver services, and they must be delivered in the most cost-effective way. The Government cannot leave railway workers or DPI workers in a town simply because the town needs that population. That is not the objective of the public service. Members opposite must accept that.

**Mr Harper:** You only centralise. That is all you are doing.

**Mr De LACY:** The honourable member talks about centralisation. The Government is into regionalisation. In the health service, approximately 600 people were regionalised out of Brisbane and into regional Queensland. Many of those people do not like it. However, they are feeling the blunt end of the Government's policies of looking after regional Queensland. People are going to those areas. In some instances, people in smaller centres may have been brought into larger, more central areas. That is all about rationalisation and efficiency. One cannot have a commitment to efficiency on the one hand and, on the other hand, say that people must be put in certain places for political reasons.

Honourable members raised the matter of taxes. Members of the National Party and the Liberal Party said that the Government should reduce taxes and that that would be good for everyone. Then Mr Booth said that the Government must increase services to country areas and improve infrastructure. Members opposite must face it: they cannot have it both ways. The Government cannot cut taxes and increase services. It must strike the right balance. In Queensland, we have the right balance. The Government is not increasing taxes. It is improving services by delivering them more efficiently. That is what it is all about, and that is for the benefit of all Queenslanders, including country Queenslanders.

I turn to fire brigade boards. Members opposite seem to think that having many local cronies as members of fire brigade boards will ensure a better delivery of fire brigade services. Surely, it is all about delivery of service, not looking after a party's political mates. For the first time in a decade, the fire services deficit has been reduced, which means that the same services are being provided for a cheaper cost. That is what good government is all about. The National Party has lost all of its appointees to hospitals boards. The regional health authorities deal with the whole of the delivery of health care in a regional area, not just the running of hospitals. There is more to health care than the running of hospitals. Keeping people out of hospitals is just as important as running the hospitals.

In relation to rail services—the member for Flinders made those magnificent statements that 10 000 people would be sacked. As Mr Hamill said by way of interjection, in the last 18 months of the National Party Government, 43 stations were closed. In the first 18 months of the Labor Party Government, nine stations were closed. Members of the Opposition should start looking at the facts instead of believing their own rhetoric. In the final 12 months of the National Party Government, passenger rail services from Cairns to Mareeba, Cairns to Ravenshoe and Cairns to Tully were closed. Also, services were reduced on the routes from Townsville to Charters Towers, Townsville to Bowen and on the Brisbane-Toowoomba-Roma line. The former National Party Government closed down more railway lines than this Government is ever likely to close down, yet members opposite believe their own rhetoric—their own nonsense—that the Labor Government is somehow or other against country people. The Labor Party is concerned about what is happening in rural areas. It has proved that with the rural task force and with its record.

Time expired.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired.

### **HEALTH SERVICES BILL**

#### **Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 16 April (see p. 7181).

**Mrs McCAULEY** (Callide) (5 p.m.): When the Goss Government came to power in Queensland at the end of 1989, high hopes were held that it would provide the answer to perceived problems in this State, not the least of which were the Health Department and the provision of health services to the people of Queensland. So it was with great interest that I watched and monitored what the Health Minister set out to do. Of course, I was not the only one watching and checking, so I was not the only one to be disappointed at the way Mr McElligott has handled this very sensitive portfolio. Expectations were high that, finally, the massive, centralised bureaucracy, which is the Health Department in Queensland, was going to get a shake-up, and I was fully supportive of that. The little battler whom Tom Burns is so fond of mentioning was going to get a better deal from this Labor Government, and that is what the battler voted the Government in for. There was to be an improvement in health services, nurses were to get higher wages and we would all live happily ever after. Unfortunately, things have not turned out quite as they were expected to. Changes within the Queensland Health Department have upset a large number of people and given them cause for grave concern. The Minister has been a disappointment to those who hoped that he was one of the more perspicacious of the generally untalented brigade on that side of the House. He has fallen in with the dictates of the bureaucrats, and his unwillingness to exert himself has led to bureaucratic decision-making which he simply endorses.

This legislation epitomises everything that the Labor Government stands for and everything it has done so far with this great State. For that reason, it is important to fully canvass what has happened since the Minister took control. What we have witnessed are scenes unprecedented in Queensland health circles. We have seen directors of nursing

from throughout the State marching on Parliament House in a silent protest at the removal of the chief nursing officer's position from the Health Department, and a lack of consultation with directors of nursing. We have seen a mass meeting of some 300 concerned people involved in mental health care in this State and a desire at that meeting from the secretary of the Fairfield branch of the ALP to move a vote of no confidence in the Minister. Daily we read articles in the newspapers about the diminishing standard of health care in this State. We have also seen rural health downgraded and given lip-service but very little else.

What does the Minister do while the empire he controls falls into disrepair around his ears? Well, he wrote to the directors of nursing ticking them off for their actions and he declined to attend the mental health rally at city hall, but he sent the organiser a curt letter threatening to cut off funding if they did not settle down. He removed the Rural Doctors Association representative, Dr Owen, from the Queensland Health Council because he spoke out about problems as he saw them; for example, the rural health report which has not been released publicly to this very day. The Minister also attacked the medical profession in Queensland and said that it must take its fair share of the blame for problems in Queensland hospitals. He made a complete hash of the Ward 10B inquiry when it was first mooted by saying that there would not be an inquiry and then being forced to change his mind and saying that there would be an inquiry, but finally not implementing any worthwhile action at all in respect of the Carter report. That report cost \$5m of our very scarce health dollars. All this happened in spite of his having a Canberra minder, as do all the other Goss Ministers who cannot be trusted to speak or act with some degree of intelligence, and it is not, I am afraid, an inspiring performance. What the Labor Government has done to the health services in Queensland is evidenced by the closure of the outpatient clinics in provincial hospitals; a decrease in funding in real terms by 5 per cent during the past 12 months—according to AMA figures; professional medical positions vacant and no money to employ staff to fill those positions—and these are in all the allied support services such as physiotherapists, psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, social workers, and child health nurses; the list is endless—and a refusal to make up the shortfall in the home medical aid scheme funding so that incontinent people who need aid and people who need wheelchairs, surgical boots, callipers or breast prostheses cannot get such necessary items without a long wait. This causes inconvenience and hardship. I know of one case on the Gold Coast where a child cannot move around without a wheelchair and has to stay in the same spot until someone has the time to come along and shift her. She has had to wait some 18 months for a wheelchair. Because of the sweeping changes and the way in which they are being implemented, morale in the Health Department is at an all-time low. Lastly, there has been the removal from the Queensland Health Commission of those who thought that free speech was still allowable in this State.

When the Green Paper on regionalisation, on which this legislation is based, was released for comment, 413 responses were received. The Minister has declined to say how many submissions were against the changes being proposed and how many supported them. I am quite sure from the copies that were forwarded to me that most of those responses would have been against the proposal. As is usual with this Government, the time frame for interested parties to make submissions on the Green Paper was exceedingly short and, with the scenario of floods throughout many parts of Queensland, difficulties were experienced by many country people in, firstly, obtaining the Green Paper and, secondly, getting their response in within the required time-frame. Even the Queensland Nurses Union said it was regrettable that a deadline was set which severely limited the amount of consultation and consideration able to be given to the proposal.

Hospital boards, which consisted of community representatives, have run public hospitals in Queensland efficiently and cheaply for many years. At the rural doctors conference at Longreach at Easter last year, the Minister himself admitted that 98 per cent of hospital boards did a good job but their time was up and they had to go. He did say that, and I do not think that that is a very good reason to change something.

Under the proposed changes, the 59 hospital boards throughout Queensland will be scrapped at a saving of some \$600,000 per annum or 0.000419 per cent of the annual Health budget for Queensland. They will be replaced by regions, each with an area director and an area authority at a substantially higher cost. For example, in New South Wales, regional directors receive up to \$167,000 a year in remuneration packages which contract them to the Government for five years. Some of the anomalies that came to light in proposed regions were that Bundaberg, which is a large medical centre in its own right, will be under the control of a centre situated at Hervey Bay. Of course, that was to avoid infighting between the two Labor members representing Bundaberg and Maryborough, both of whom are such lightweights that they could not persuade the Minister to favour their particular area. Kingaroy is situated in the middle of the South Burnett area and is only two hours' drive from Toowoomba, but it will also be controlled from Hervey Bay. Some of the other strange affiliations, which involved Redcliffe, Gympie, and Widgee and Beaudesert Shires, have been changed after considerable community lobbying.

I believe it is worth while quoting some of the submissions received by the Minister about regionalisation because some excellent points were made. The concerns expressed have not been addressed by the Minister. The points that were made were reiterated over and over again by hospitals boards from one end of Queensland to the other. The Gold Coast Hospitals Board stated—

"The proposed policy option appears to be significantly less cost effective than the present Board structure."

The Tully Hospitals Board stated—

"As we see it, the larger Hospitals will prosper to the detriment of the smaller hospitals."

The submission also stated—

"Lack of local input jeopardises strong ties established over many years with the general public and in particular, service clubs which have been extremely generous with purchases of equipment, and with provision of expertise in many fields."

The Local Government Association of Queensland stated—

"It would be of immense concern to the Association if the guarantee of local authority representation were not to be continued in respect of membership of Area Health Authorities."

The Ipswich Hospitals Board stated—

"It is in the area of accountability that the proposal will have the most effect and this effect will be detrimental."

The submission went on to state—

"Rural areas will be especially disadvantaged by the proposed system."

The Goondiwindi Hospitals Board stated—

"The existence of hospital boards is the most decentralised form of administration."

The submission also mentioned the support of community groups, the local knowledge possessed by hospitals boards and the concern that the district hospitals will be disadvantaged by the larger base hospitals when it comes to funding. The submission from the Blackall Hospitals Board states—

"Small centres will no longer have representation."

The submission from the National Party Women's Section, Wide Bay Zone, states—

"Bureaucracy and its growth within the latter part of the 20th century has proven a universal problem. Instead of attaining de-centralisation, the proposed Area Health Authority has the potential to become a miniature bureaucracy, and without community input a dangerously closed autonomous body."

Finally, a submission was received from the chairman of one of the northern hospitals boards, who referred to the increased costs of the new system and stated—

"Just as an example an Area Director based in Cairns, with his Area Health Authority holds a meeting on Thursday Island."

All honourable members would know that these health authorities will travel around their respective areas. The submission goes on to state—

"Based on a journey up one day, meeting next day and return the day after, the costs would be:

Air fares some \$3920. Expenses for travelling allowances etc as paid to public servants \$5960.40."

This is a total of almost \$10,000 for one meeting. This gentleman, who has 30 years' association with the administration of the hospital service, goes on to describe the proposals as an "administrative nightmare" which will "increase rather than diminish the cost of the administration of providing health care throughout the State". Unfortunately, the Minister was impervious to the points being made consistently by interested parties and throughout Queensland. The only matter he reconsidered was the plan for district hospitals to work through the base hospitals administrative triumvirate, without having any direct access to the regional director. This was such a patently unworkable proposal that it was scrapped.

At this stage, it is relevant to examine a study carried out in 1989 by the Economic Planning Advisory Council, EPAC, which comprises prominent advisers and which was set up by Bob Hawke to give input on health and education matters. This study compares Health Departments in various Australian States, and states that there is little evidence that the Queensland Health Department is substandard. It also states that the department handles a similar case mix to the departments in the other States and does not appear to hold down costs by turning people away.

The paper attributes the cost differential to Queensland's comparatively low staff and salary levels, which are, in turn, due to the previous National Party Government's administrative and industrial relations policies. It is interesting to note that while Queensland employs much the same number of medical, nursing and diagnostic staff per bed as the other States, its clerical, domestic and other administrative staff complement is 18.2 per cent below the national average and 31.5 per cent below the Victorian figure. Victoria—the State of disrepair—is being run by a Labor Government. The study goes on to state that that style of administration, of course, has the effect of lowering the per capita cost of health in Queensland compared to that in the other States. In fact, 90 per cent of the cost differential between the Queensland health system and its interstate equivalents is due to its lower staff and administrative costs. The paper also goes on to state—

"Centralised controls"—

such as those that are found in Queensland—

"decrease the need for hospital based administrative staff, and reduce the unions' ability to influence the administrative decision-making process."

The study concludes—

"There is no doubt that the Queensland departments"—

both Health and Education—

"are, to an extent, underfunded. They do not, however, deliver sub-standard services; their low levels of expenditure are largely efficiency related."

The former Under Secretary, Dr Peter Stanley—or the director-general as he is now known—said when he took office in 1990—

"Queensland has excellent public health services, and we won't diminish that in any way."

The summary I have outlined indicates the state of play that existed when the Goss Labor Government took control of Queensland. My recurring nightmare is that in 12

months' time, the Minister will go to the media and say, "Eureka! We've done it. Our per capita spending on health has gone from the lowest in Australia to the highest", because none of that will be reflected in the provision of services. It will all have been spent on an additional level of bureaucracy which will not help the people of this State at all. A senior public servant has been quoted as saying, "If they are going to spend a lot more on administration, it seems likely that clinical services have got to suffer." One would not have to be Einstein to work that out.

Since Mr McElligott has taken over the Health Department in Queensland, communications and public relations' costs have soared. We have the *Update* propaganda-laden bulletin, of which at least 13 have been produced. Then there is the *State of Health*, the official publication of Queensland's public sector health services. There is also the publication entitled *Future Directions*, which is a total non-event if I have ever seen one. As well, there has now been a change of name for the department, which has resulted in changed letterheads, business cards, brochures and other material produced by central office, the regional authorities and other Queensland health facilities--at who knows what cost to the taxpayer. I assure honourable members that none of that has much impact on the upgrading of health services in Queensland. In fact, I would be very interested to know just how much the glossy brochures and name change cost in light of the fact that the Home Medical Aids Scheme ran out of funding in February this year and has to mark time until the new financial year. Volume 1 No. 1 of the *State of Health* news sheet dated January/February 1991 quotes the Minister as saying—

"Strategies in line with the Government's commitment to social justice and equity are now being put in place in communities throughout the State."

That is nonsense. That sort of gobbledegook is on a par with Mr Mackenroth's suicide dash—a whole lot of what we saw in abundance at Beef '91 that was shovelled up in wheelbarrows and carted away. I am far too polite to say what it is. If the Minister was interested in social justice and equity, he would not have denied additional funding to the Home Medical Aids Scheme so that incontinent children of 10 would not be forced back into wearing nappies to school and tempting the ridicule of classmates who were not yet aware that the said child was in any way different from his peers. In the same glossy brochure, the Minister goes on to state—

"The community is already having increased input into health service decision-making through the establishment of the Queensland Health Council."

The directors of nursing are not represented on the Queensland Health Council, and now rural doctors are not represented on it, either. That is the primary advisory body on health services in this State. It would seem that only yes-men are welcome to serve on that august body, as the Minister has made it quite clear that he will not tolerate opinions contrary to his own.

Dr Coaldrake's PSMC has also laid its hands on the Health Department and left it with the PSMC's own peculiar brand of notifiable disease. In fact, Dr Coaldrake excelled himself in his efforts when it came to the appointment of regional directors. He, Dr Stanley and one other person got through 35 interviews for those senior management positions in two days. Professional firms whose job it is to conduct such interviews say that they only ever interview four such senior people in a day. But the redoubtable Coaldrake did 17. At half an hour per person, he was obviously only skimming the surface. Or was it correct, as the dogs had been barking all round Brisbane, that the results were already predetermined and the interviews were simply window-dressing? Even the unions voiced their concern at the selection process for top posts. Whatever the reason, the whole process does not stand close scrutiny and is a sad indictment of Coaldrake, the Director-General of Health, and, of course, the Minister and the Goss Government. It is shonky, sleight-of-hand stuff and I would not be surprised to see more Labor backbenchers do a "Phil Heath" if Goss continues that *modus operandi*.

The changes within the Health Department saw the establishment of a placement unit designed to assist those people who suddenly found themselves without a job to go

to. That unit, which has a staff of five plus the coordinator, offers assistance in improving job-seeking skills, but only to those in Brisbane. That ignores the displaced hospital managers who have a need for assistance in preparing resumes, interview training and the like. That assistance is not for the likes of them—no, sir. They can find their own way through the maze of potential unemployment. However, the most sinister of all the changes implemented by the Government has to be the formation of the executive support services unit, which has some 29 officers working in five sections—parliamentary and ministerial services, communications, executive services, legal services and freedom of information. The new director of that unit is one David Butt, former private secretary to Blewett and former secretary/minder to Mr McElligott. One does not obtain that type of position in Labor political circles unless one is a committed party person, as Mr Butt obviously is. I have personally found Mr Butt to be quite helpful and have no grievance against him at all. In fact, I quite appreciated the briefing that he organised. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that that unit, comprising some 29 people, is politically motivated and tied closely to the Labor Party and, more essentially, to the Minister, Mr McElligott, in an effort to keep his nose clean and to keep him out of trouble. The official blurb about the responsibilities of that unit—

**Mr McElligott:** Have you really thought about what you are going to say?

**Mrs McCAULEY:** I have touched a sore point. The material about the executive support services unit states—

"A key responsibility will be to maintain information systems between the Central Office and Regional Health Authorities to ensure effective communications and advice."

In other words, David Butt will run the show, and the Minister will sign the letters which Butt dictates and take the actions which Mr Butt deems necessary. If the Minister does not want to get himself into any trouble or to exert himself, I suppose that is all right. However, I give an unequivocal commitment that that unit will be examined very closely when the conservatives regain power in this State. When we have a Minister who is not willing to make the hard decisions, that is obviously where the power lies within the Health Department. I am philosophically opposed to such an arrangement. The executive support services unit has such extensive power and far-reaching responsibilities that one is left wondering what the central office in Brisbane will do. The official description is "that the Central Office will maintain responsibility for policy determination, State-wide co-ordination, financial management and evaluation, and health services will be co-ordinated at a regional or sub-regional level". From talking to health personnel in my travels around the State, it is apparent that, although many can see that there could be advantages in the new system, everyone is sceptical as to whether it will work in the way it is intended. There is always the question in the back of everyone's mind: will the Health Department in Brisbane relinquish the reins or will this all be window-dressing, at which the Goss Government is so good? Time will tell.

On examining regionalisation closely, it is obvious that problems have already arisen. For example, why are the regional directors for the central-west region, based on Longreach, and the south-west region, based on Roma, appointed only in an acting capacity, particularly when all the other regions have permanent heads appointed? Is it possible, as I have heard, that the regions will not work effectively on less than 200 000 population, and so those western zones will be scrapped at some time in the future? If the Minister was to say "No" and give me an ironclad guarantee, I would be very happy to receive it.

Is it possible that the Minister did not read the Sir Raphael Cilento oration of 1990 given by Dr Amos of the New South Wales Department of Health in which he clearly warns that areas which had been established without a referral hospital have a very hard row to hoe? In fact, in New South Wales the rural areas were not regionalised, and the hospitals boards were retained. This was brought about partly because of the National Party's lobbying for rural areas within the coalition framework but also because of the relatively low population centres which exist in rural New South Wales, the number of

small hospitals and the very strong local interests created by hospitals in small towns. Such hospitals are often a town's biggest employer, and there is a strong demand for hospital accommodation, particularly for the aged, to be available locally in the country. I think the point that I have raised about those western regions is a very valid one. As people will see when I come to the Bill itself, there is provision in it for the Minister to amalgamate those regions without even coming back to the House to do it. It can be done by regulation. I think that that is quite a bogey. There are many similarities between rural New South Wales and rural Queensland. I do not need to point that out to any member of this Parliament—except perhaps some members of the Government. However, I seek the Minister's assurance that these two regions will not be amalgamated with other regions and that they will continue to operate autonomously. There will be no joy whatsoever for the people of Longreach in having their health needs administered from Rockhampton, nor for the Roma district to be overseen from Toowoomba.

Having mentioned earlier the directors of nursing and the concerns that they have had about a lack of consultation in the regionalisation process, I would like to expand briefly on the reasons why nurses, as a group, are so upset. This legislation includes no definition of organisational structures at the health facility level. The tripartite management structure, consisting of the hospital manager, the director of nursing and the medical superintendent, is not defined in this Bill. There has been much talk about single-point accountability. It is the buzz word of the day. The Opposition is aware, of course, that this is the ultimate goal of the whole reorganisation. I understand that the large hospitals will have a chief executive officer position. That chief executive officer will be superior to the existing hospital executive. But what happens at the smaller hospitals? Increasing concern is being expressed at the potential for the establishment of a clinical unit structure. A variety of models for the clinical unit structure exist but, basically, this means that all staff within a unit are accountable to the medical director of the unit. There exists in this Bill the potential for the abolition of nursing hierarchical positions, thereby eroding the nurses' career structure and their participation in executive management. Instead of consulting with health workers, the Minister has tried to distance himself from them, dismissing representatives of the directors of nursing and the rural doctors from the Queensland Health Council, which was set up to act as an advisory body. The role of the council was to provide community input into ministerial decision-making, yet two of the most important groups in health care in this State are no longer represented.

I fully support the statement on nursing put out by Queensland directors of nursing, in which they say that nursing, as a profession, is entitled to its own legitimate leadership processes and development through education, administration and research activities which provide the impetus for necessary change. I also agree with their statement that regionalised nursing structures require leadership from within the profession to ensure that the appropriate resources are developed to promote single-point accountability in nursing. They go on to say that no other worker can be accountable for nursing. I fully agree that no other worker can be accountable for nursing. They go on to point out that Statewide departmental nursing leadership—

**Mr Szczerbanik:** I disagree.

**Mrs McCAULEY:** To be quite honest, I am not very worried about the honourable member's opinion. Statewide departmental nursing leadership is essential for the profession's right to legitimate autonomy. The chief nursing officer role provides the highest nursing profile through leadership in its broadest sense and represents nursing in Statewide health policy planning. It is also the State's nursing advocate and monitor on all issues related to nursing and nurses.

The Division of Nursing which existed under the previous Health Department structure has been abolished and nursing will no longer be represented at the departmental senior executive level. This removes a representative position from nurses in Queensland which is established in other States and was established in New South Wales as recently as last year. That State is just putting it into place and Queensland is throwing it out. Work that one out! The Minister might think that he has solved the problem by carrying



on about nurses having more opportunities rather than less to be in positions of influence within the Health Department. It is my observation that he is talking rubbish. The directors of nursing heard Dr Stanley loud and clear at their annual conference. He said, "Doctors will run health in Queensland, and you lot—you ladies—can just sit back and do as you're told." That is what he said. I understand full well that attitude. I have not been in this job for four and a half years without finding out a bit about that sort of attitude.

**Ms Power:** Only on your side of the House.

**Mrs McCAULEY:** Why is it then that it is members of the Government who complain the most? I am most sympathetic to the concerns of the directors of nursing, and I would not countenance any move to have their positions abandoned in this State.

Having thoroughly canvassed the lead-up to the Green Paper and the setting for regionalisation, I would like to touch briefly on rural health which, of course, is an important part of the provision of health services in this State and, as such, is very involved in what this Bill is attempting to achieve. When the Labor Government came to power in Queensland, it did so on a policy which said—

"The ALP totally supports the Division of Rural Health and will ensure proper funding and staffing of the Division.

The prime task of the Division of Rural Health under Labor will be the co-ordination and improvement of Queensland's rural health services."

However, it was not long before Mr McElligott was saying—

"The Division of Health was established by the previous government, but to me it reeks of tokenism."

That was at the beginning of 1990—some two months after the Labor Government took office. This profound statement was followed by the news that the Rural Health Division would be put on hold pending a six-month investigation of its role. The Minister was apparently concerned that the division could turn into an expensive public relations exercise. After initial delays, the report was, I understand, presented to the Health Department executive in the first week of September instead of June when it was expected. The report contained over 400 pages of details of serious problems in rural health, with some 342 recommendations being made. It had taken eight months and some \$200,000 of taxpayers' money to compile. What happened to that report? The Minister was quoted as saying—

"There is little purpose in releasing a review document that consists entirely of statistics and findings."

Rural Doctors Association secretary, Dr Bruce Chater, had a different opinion. He said—

"We were assured by the Minister it would be an open inquiry and that the report would be released into Parliament."

Dr Owen, the previous rural doctors representative on the Queensland Health Council, stated in an article in the *AMAQ Newsbulletin*—

"The current report is not the same as the review team's first draft. There have been alterations, amendments and deletions to the recommendations from within the Health Department."

For his comments, the good doctor was summarily thrown off the Queensland Health Council and the report still has not been made public. So much for input and consultation! Just like Mr Goss and his consultation with the Aborigines over land rights. The point I wish to make about rural health and regionalisation is that there is no provision for a Government adviser to be appointed to each region to provide advice on rural health. The position of Director of the Rural Health Division has been advertised at a 25 per cent lower salary than previously. If that is not a downgrading, I do not know what is! There is still no rural policy in Queensland. Although regionalisation was able to be

fast-tracked, obviously the rural policy is not that important. Finally, I refer to the promised Rural Policy Advisory Committee. All honourable members would appreciate it if the Minister could enlighten them as to who is to be appointed to this committee and what its role will entail. So much for Labor Party promises when it comes to rural health!

Because this Bill abolishes hospitals boards, in recent months there has been a concerted effort to bring some boards into disrepute. This has been quite blatant. On behalf of all those decent people who have served on hospitals boards in Queensland during the past 30 years, I wish to register a strong protest at such disgraceful conduct. A prime example is the Rockhampton Base Hospital, which was subject to a random audit similar to those carried out at the Maryborough and Bundaberg hospitals. The barrage of public complaints which the Minister received about the Rockhampton Base Hospital turned out to total six. The report's chief recommendation seemed to be that the hospital appoint a public relations officer. There was obviously very little wrong with the service being provided by the hospital, so the Minister resorted to leaking part of the report which complained about the Director of Nursing receiving table service in the dining room, obviously in an effort to discredit a very fine and capable staff member and to show people that the report had not been in vain. What a disgrace and what a load of rubbish, and what an insult to the people of Rockhampton. In fact, the hospital's annual report shows that the hospital is treating more people than previously, while at the same time trying to cope with staff shortages and rising costs. The cost of administrative expenses at the hospital actually decreased from \$2,279,155 the previous year to \$1,768,876 in the 1989-90 financial year. That is a remarkable effort and a highly commendable one. Ted Loane should be congratulated for his splendid work as chairman of the board over a long period--and I do not know how he votes.

Queensland's large public hospitals have been in a state of siege ever since this Government took office, and it is simply not good enough for the Minister to bleat about the previous Government and try and blame it for all the problems that he cannot come to grips with. An excellent example of his prevarication under stress is his reply to my comments about the Cairns Base Hospital. The Minister attacked me for casting dreadful aspersions on the staff at the Cairns Base Hospital, which I quite simply did not do. In fact, I in no way spoke about the staff at the Cairns Base Hospital. I have the highest regard for those people who can work under the prevailing conditions. I stand by my comment that as far as facilities go it is the worst major provincial hospital that I have seen in this State. I am quite sure that members opposite would not like to have their morning tea or their dialysis in the type of conditions experienced by the people in Cairns. The Minister has used this smokescreen to cover up his failure to address the issue I raised about why the Labor Government has put on hold the building of a new hospital in Cairns. He still has not given this House a reason. He may like to address that issue in his reply and inform the House why the people of Cairns and district will not get this much-needed facility in the foreseeable future. I can assist him if he wants a few hints on where to get the money. A new Government office building, which is not needed, is being erected in Rockhampton at a cost of some \$24m. All of the big businesspeople in the town say that it is not needed and that the site could be sold for \$50m. That is a total of \$74m. It is a pretty good start. I would proceed on that basis.

At the end of last year, an article in the *Courier-Mail* gave a run-down on the grave shortage of medical specialists in Queensland's public hospitals. The point was made that full-time medical specialists in public hospitals received the same pay as part-time visiting consultants working half their hours, and that such personnel could earn \$40,000 a year more as salaried full-timers in New South Wales public hospitals than they would in Queensland. A list of vacancies in some of Queensland's public hospitals has been compiled by the Professional Officers Association, and it bears repeating. It is an up-to-date list dated April this year. The Gold Coast Hospital lacks two anaesthetists, one physician, one orthopaedic surgeon and two psychiatrists; QEII Hospital lacks two staff anaesthetists, one director of surgery and one staff radiologist; Ipswich Hospital lacks

two staff anaesthetists; Toowoomba Hospital lacks one director of obstetrics and gynaecology and one director of surgery; Nambour Hospital lacks two psychiatrists and one radiologist; Rockhampton Base Hospital lacks four staff anaesthetists, one director of orthopaedics, one psychiatrist, one obstetrician, one physician and one radiologist; Cairns Base Hospital lacks one anaesthetist, one orthopaedic surgeon, one radiologist and one physician; Townsville Hospital lacks three anaesthetists, one director of surgery, one director of obstetrics and gynaecology, one psychiatrist, one radiologist and two pathologists; Mackay Base Hospital lacks one orthopaedic surgeon and one obstetrician; Royal Brisbane Hospital lacks two physicians, one paediatric intensivist, one psychiatrist, five anaesthetists, one radiotherapist and one pathologist; Princess Alexandra Hospital lacks two anaesthetists and one radiologist; and Logan Hospital lacks a senior accident and emergency specialist and has no psychiatric social worker. The list goes on and on.

While addressing the lack of specialists in Queensland, it is relevant to note that, at the opening of the first National Rural Health Conference in Toowoomba on 14 February this year, the Minister highlighted the maldistribution and severe shortage of medical specialists. In fact, he made a scurrilous and quite calculated attack on the medical profession, and in particular on the specialist colleges and associations, for what he claimed were deliberate moves to restrict specialist numbers throughout the Queensland health system. However, as the Minister is aware, the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists has approved Townsville as an accredited teaching post. The ophthalmologists in Townsville, Cairns and Mackay have agreed to participate in a training program. Despite the willingness of the college and the specialists to participate, the Health Department has refused to provide funding for this position. The Minister talks about the long-term detriment to health care due to the actions of the medical profession, but he needs to acknowledge the actions of his own department in refusing to fund this position, despite the recognised need. It is more than a little ironic that, during his keynote address at the rural doctors conference in Toowoomba, the Minister reminded those present that the Labor Party was elected to Government with a "policy aimed at reducing the relative disadvantages faced by Queenslanders living outside the capital cities" and to minimise the "special burden" of suffering for those living in rural Queensland.

He spoke also of his commitment to provide regionalisation, which would mean that treatment, service delivery and resource management would be available to people at a local level. In view of those comments made by the Minister, perhaps he could explain to the House why he is not supporting the establishment of the training post at Townsville. He could also give a guarantee that regionalisation will mean that the next unit of linear accelerators, due to be received, I believe, in the 1991-92 financial year, will go to Townsville, so that such facilities are not confined to the south-east corner of this State. If he does this, I promise not to criticise him for looking after his own area.

The Queensland branch of the Australian Medical Association concurs with the Professional Officers Association in its summary that health services in Queensland are in crisis, and points out that lack of equipment is as much a problem as lack of specialist staff. On 21 April this year, Dr Rob Hodge, state secretary of the AMA, was quoted as saying that dramatic lack of funding for two of the State's busiest hospitals—the Royal Brisbane and the Princess Alexandra—was putting patient lives at risk. Dr Hodge said that 1 500 operations had been cancelled or postponed this year because of lack of equipment and that, every day, two of Royal Brisbane Hospital's—

**Mrs EDMOND:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. The present secretary of the Queensland branch of the AMA is Dr Graham Row. I would like the honourable member to acknowledge that instead of referring to other people.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mrs McCAULEY:** I am quite happy to acknowledge—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the honourable member to acknowledge the correct person.

**Mrs McCAULEY:** I am sorry, those comments were made by Dr Rob Hodge. Although he may have been the previous state secretary, the fact remains that he said that. The secretary may change, but the facts do not. Dr Hodge said that, every day, because of a lack of equipment, two of Royal Brisbane Hospital's 12 operating theatres were closed. Also, at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, all joint replacement operations have been stopped. However, before the cut-back in funds, some 40 such operations were performed every week. The reason for the cessation of such replacement operations is that they cost about \$3,000 each. So, the Government is saving over \$100,000 per week. But at what cost to the Queensland taxpayer?

The claims have been backed up by visiting specialists who have cited a lack of bronchoscopes, children's surgical splints and operating microscopes. Those are other areas in which there was simply not enough equipment. At a recent weekend medical work force seminar in Brisbane, the Health Minister said that he was aware of the problems but that the Premier and the Treasurer had told him that there was no more money for hospitals. Dr Hodge said—

"The Goss Government was elected on a platform of social justice but these quite savage cutbacks are hurting the poor and disadvantaged people who depend on the public hospital system."

He went on to say—

"It seems the Goss Government is now more interested in winning the next State election than providing adequate funds for the public hospitals around the State."

In Mount Isa, efforts to follow a State Health Department order not to go over 1990-91 budget figures have resulted in drug supplies running out and the cancellation of elective surgery. The acting medical superintendent at the Mount Isa Base Hospital said that instructions to stop using the patients transfer scheme to fly serious medical cases to larger hospitals and to fly in equipment-repair tradesmen had so far been ignored. He went on to comment—

"What we are looking at is a health system being gradually run down to provide less and less services all the time and that is what is happening throughout Queensland."

This tale of woe simply highlights the points which I wish to make very clear—this Goss Labor Government is spending its Health dollar unwisely and in ways which will not provide a better service for the people of Queensland.

**Mr McGrady:** You are not telling the truth.

**Mrs McCAULEY:** The honourable member will get his chance. The Minister has admitted that regionalisation will not cost less, and may well cost a good deal more than the system which this Bill sets out to abolish. There is no doubt that it will be years before the funds that are needed to tackle some of the problems which I have outlined are available. While there is scope for revenue-generating aspects to be fostered in some of our larger hospitals—for example, contract laundry work and waste disposal for the private sector could be done in Toowoomba, where the general hospital is very well serviced with a high-tech industrial incinerator—this Bill does not provide that any moneys generated in such ways will stay within a region. So, there is absolutely no incentive for such steps to be taken. Why should hospitals do that if they cannot keep the money and make their own service more efficient? If the money has to be returned to Brisbane, why would they bother?

A few minor points still need to be picked up on at this stage. The record of this House will show that I have never been a person to talk at great length unless I have had something important to say. Honourable members can gather from the length of this speech that I have had something very important to say. A constant criticism of this Bill is that it is couched in such broad and imprecise terms that it is difficult to analyse. There is no doubt that the regulations, which of course do not have to come

before the House, will determine how this legislation operates. While the broad thrust of regionalisation aims to incorporate community health under the same umbrella as that of hospitals, I am mindful of the warning issued by Dr Amos in his Cilento oration about community health staff. As Dr Amos observed, community health staff were fairly reluctant draftees into the area system in New South Wales. Because of a fundamental difference in outlook on health care, it is a very difficult process to amalgamate community health with hospitals and the service that they provide. Indeed, Dr Amos observed that "it was only by careful support and access to enhancement funds from the areas that won the day in the community services". I would not like to hold my breath waiting for the community health people to get some enhancement funds from this Government. It would be a great shame if either sector were to suffer through amalgamation under the regional area authority umbrella.

Another aspect that I wish to touch upon briefly is the employment of contract labour in areas such as catering, cleaning, security, management and supervision. It would seem that the Goss Labor Government is not keen to follow that path. That is not surprising, because of its opposition to VEAs in this State. However, it is of concern, because the Labor gurus seem to be taking the more expensive course, which the taxpayers of Queensland will have to fund. A good example of that occurred in April last year when a private company, which had been asked to evaluate the cost of services for the Logan Community Hospital, was contracted for two months to do the work. After the hospital was up and running and the local member—who was, incidentally, the Premier—had swanned around and officially opened the hospital, which was built by the previous National Party Government, that private company was summarily dismissed, and employees of the hospital took over the cleaning, cooking, etc. I would be greatly interested to ascertain the cost comparison in the provision of services from those two sources. I challenge the Minister to provide same for the House to peruse. There is no doubt in my mind, or in the mind of the private company that was originally contracted to do the work, that the service that it provides is so much cheaper than that provided by the Government employees.

**Mr McEiliggott:** Just for my records, are you opposing the Bill or supporting it?

**Mrs McCauley:** Another issue of concern relates to the many support services connected with health services in the State. An article on regionalisation in the latest edition of the Schizophrenia Fellowship newsletter sounds somewhat despairing when it says—

"With regard to the funding of non-Government organisations such as ourselves, we feel that not enough thought has been put into that area as yet. Questions on how funding would be handled were not really answered satisfactorily."

A complaint that I registered with the Minister about dental health services in Gladstone received the reply that the matter would be considered when regionalisation came into being—as though a magic wand would be waved and all would be well. Perhaps closer to the truth was the fact that the Minister was doing a soft-shoe shuffle. I believe that I have every right to canvass this entire issue very fully, because this is the first major health Bill to come into this House in many years. What is being done affects every aspect of health care throughout this State. If the Minister has not yet got the message that the Opposition is opposing this Bill, I am very sorry. He might need to ask one of his minders about it.

At present in Gladstone, the hospital dentist is on holidays. There is no replacement for him. An invalid pensioner from Gladstone who last weekend broke his front tooth in half has been told—and I am not talking about Mr Prest—that the earliest urgent appointment that he can get is on 13 June. There is a seven-month wait for a dental check-up. Pensioners cannot afford to go to a private dentist, the cheapest of whom charges \$49 for an extraction. As I intend to speak to some of the clauses at the Committee stage of this Bill, I will conclude my remarks at this point. Suffice it to say that, as this is the first major legislative change within the Health Department in many years, it is important that it be carefully catalogued and discussed.

**Ms POWER** (Mansfield) (5.50 p.m.): Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Mrs Edmond:** Have you read the Bill?

**Ms POWER:** It is with much pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Minister for Health and this Bill. In reply to the interjection by the member for Mount Coot-tha—yes, I have read the Bill. I will be relying on the contents of the Bill—not pathetic, low-level rhetoric that members have heard for the past 40 minutes. In his second-reading speech, the Minister outlined the purpose of this Bill. In short, it is the reform of the organisation, management and delivery of public health services in Queensland. The member for Callide would do well to read the Bill and understand the clauses, instead of simply reciting stories that have been heard around Queensland. If the honourable member were familiar with the Bill, she would realise how far from the mark that she is, such as not knowing who is the secretary of the AMA.

The present health system in Queensland has existed for 40 years. It is time for a change—a change to meet the needs of the consumer population of Queensland and the changes that have occurred in Queensland hospitals. On 1 July 1991, when the Hospitals Act is repealed and hospital boards are abolished, a new era for health services will dawn in Queensland. The regionalisation of Government services is not new, nor is it to be unique to health services. For many years the Education Department has been regionalised and operated reasonably successfully. This fact has been endorsed in various speeches in this House by the members for Condamine and Fassifern. My experience of regionalisation has been in education. The notion of regionalisation is not the problem. Problems occur when adequate resourcing is not given, when inappropriate personnel are placed or when training is unavailable. The list goes on. The regionalisation of public health services has not occurred overnight. The process began in December 1989 when a review into organisational arrangements of Queensland public hospitals was commissioned by the Minister. That review analysed various health systems both in Australia and overseas. A preferred option was presented and released in a Green Paper. In response to the doubters and critics, I reiterate that 431 responses were received, and the great majority supported a regionalised model of health services planning and delivery.

It is clear that the Opposition knockers have not read the available documentation or simply do not understand the operation. I will explain it in simple terms. The department has adopted a corporate name—Queensland Health—and a corporate image. Unlike the member for Callide, I believe that that will be an important step in improving the way in which people in the health service view their delivery of services. Queensland Health will now develop a corporate plan. Under legislation, regional health authorities will be required to follow the policy framework outlined in the strategic plan for public sector health services. The State's 13 regional health authorities will assume responsibility for all public sector health service delivery and coordination at regional level. The regional directors who will be appointed will be autonomous and experienced in management of health services, including community health, and services at hospitals, schools and nursing homes. Regionalisation will ensure a more efficient management system of all health services. Presently, under the hospitals boards, control starts and finishes at the hospital gates. Other health services simply act willy-nilly. We are dealing with a multimillion dollar enterprise and we, as a responsible Government, must ensure the best use of taxpayers' dollars.

The five to seven members of the regional health authorities will be appointed by the Minister. Previous members of hospitals boards, local government representatives and people with managerial, legal, financial and community representation expertise will be encouraged to apply. Allowing each regional authority to be autonomous will enable the services to be delivered in a responsive manner to meet the needs of regional areas. For example, in an area with an ageing population, services for the aged may be increased and not wasted in an area where they are not needed. Regional authorities will have the power to draw up their own consultative processes to meet the needs of the health services in that district. Critics who have suggested that the devolution of authority will not happen are pessimists.

I turn to some of the rumours that are being spread. A number of complaints have been made about the communications system that people do not know what is going on. I have with me a number of documents that have been produced. People who have those documents on their table would be well informed about what is going on, why it is taking place and what purpose it has. So far, 13 issues of *Update* have been published at an average cost of \$3,000 an issue. The regionalisation video was produced at a cost of \$7,000 for 350 copies. Because the majority of work is done in house, costs are kept to a minimum. As I travelled around the State, people told me that, when they received that documentation, it was a first for them. They said that they had a better understanding of what is going on. They welcomed some of the changes. The words "good sense" were better used than the word "propaganda".

I turn to the position of chief nursing officer and the positions of nursing in the regionalisation program. I assure the member for Callide that, if women remain in a separate track from other medicos, equity for women will never be reached in the health sector.

**Mr Szczerbanik:** What about men?

**Ms POWER:** Men, too. It has been suggested that, with the abolition of the position of chief nursing officer, nurses are losing representation at the highest level. Because of the lack of single-point accountability, the PSMC recommended the abolition of the tripartite system of management. That system also came under attack in the responses to the Green Paper, with respondents supporting single-point accountability. The abolition of the tripartite system will mean the abolition of the position of chief nursing officer. That is not an attempt to down-grade the power of the nursing profession. In the past, nurses were cosseted within the system, as their role was considered an adjunct to that of the medical profession. Now that nurses are professionally qualified, they have far greater opportunities to be represented at senior management levels. Nurses can be employed throughout Queensland Health and can advance to positions of director, executive director and even director-general. Already, in the past couple of months, nurses have moved into top positions. I cite the example of Geri Taylor, a qualified nurse, who was appointed Regional Director for West Moreton. I congratulate Geri on that appointment. Sally Goold is the Acting Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Branch. Sandra Thomson is the acting Manager for Executive Services.

There have also been rumours to the effect that the director of nursing positions are to be phased out. That is not so. Under the new career structure, we are establishing additional director of nursing positions in community health. It will be an exciting time for the nursing profession. All barriers to their advancement to the top in the profession that they have chosen are being removed and they will no longer be the underlings of doctors. For that advance alone, the Minister and his consultants should be thanked. During our travels with the rural and northern task force, it was suggested that the abolition of hospitals boards will lead to a loss of community input into health care at local level. That will not be the case. Since 1945, the management of public hospitals has been by hospitals boards. One would not criticise the excellent work that was done by those hospitals boards during that time. However, times have changed. Now, we must respond to those changes to make the delivery of health services throughout the State more meaningful. With the appointment of professional administrators, regionalisation will retain community representation but will replace the boards with a more efficient management system.

Sitting suspended from 6 till 7.30 p.m.

**Ms POWER:** Prior to the dinner recess, I was dispelling the fears expressed to me regarding regionalisation. Many of the concerns that have been raised are actually good reasons for regionalisation. The Minister, in his second-reading speech, said—

"Regionalisation will mean that decision-making about treatment and service delivery, together with financial and resource management decisions, will be made by people at a local level. Regionalisation allows for decisions about local services

to be made by local people with the benefit of local knowledge. The key features of the Bill include—

- provision for a Queensland Health Corporate Plan and strategic management of policy, planning and resource allocation;
- decentralisation of the organisation, management and delivery of health services through the establishment of regional management structures;
- integration and coordination of all health services at the local level; and
- an emphasis on community needs and community participation in the planning and delivery of health services."

I remind the House that I am the chairperson of the management committee of the Women's Health Centre and, for a long time, these have been issues that we have been discussing. We welcome these changes. I look forward to the passage of the Bill. It is a historical moment for Queensland health and will bring us into the twenty-first century in providing health services to all Queenslanders. I support the Bill.

**Mrs SHELDON** (Landsborough) (7.32 p.m.): I rise tonight to debate one of the most important health Bills to come before the House for many years. It is the Health Services Bill. It is designed to repeal the Hospitals Act of 1936 and all its subsequent amendments, the Maternity Act of 1922, the Health (Provision of Facilities for Food and Other Services) Act 1979, the Prince Charles Hospital Development Centre Trust Act 1980, the Homes for the Aged Act 1984 and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act and Another Act Amendment Act 1988, Part III. The Bill is "to provide for and in respect of the organisation, management and delivery of certain health services and the establishment of regional health authorities and for other purposes". I thank the Minister for Health, Mr McElligott, for offering the valued services of departmental officers to brief me on the contents of this Bill. It is a great pity that some other Ministers of this Government do not understand the structure of parliamentary procedures and the important role of the Opposition in the Westminster system and so do likewise.

The idea of the regionalisation of the Queensland Health Department is not new. It has been around for the past 15 years at least. At the outset, I should like to state that the terms of the Bill are far too general to gauge the precise direction that the Minister intends to take. If realistic assessments are to be made of the documentation, draft regulations should accompany this Bill. I have sought and received widespread input to the Bill from individuals, associations, unions, hospital superintendents and employees, Health Department workers and the community in both Queensland and interstate. I thank them for their interest and their time. Many of the comments I shall make during this debate are reflective not only of my concerns but also of theirs. I hope that the Minister takes cognisance of this fact.

I have travelled interstate and closely examined the various concepts of regionalisation employed there. I have made a particular study of the system operating in New South Wales. I am and the Liberal Party is sympathetic to the theoretical concept of regionalised management of health services to accommodate local issues. For true regionalisation to occur, there must be actual decentralisation of the Health Department. Regionalisation must move towards autonomy. This Bill does not ensure this. To ensure the effective use of the health dollar, it is important that there be established a State health plan which will deliver an optimal level of care for all Queenslanders. Common sense dictates that a regional health service consist of a public sector and a private sector. A comprehensive State health plan should recognise this make-up. The private sector should be involved in all planning processes and the Bill should be clear about this. It is not. The purpose of the Bill is "to provide for . . . delivery of our public sector health services", which directly contradicts the key features of the Bill which lists—

- "provision for . . . a Corporate Plan . . . and . . . management of policy, planning and resource allocation;



decentralisation of . . . health services . . .  
integration and coordination of all health services at the local level; and  
an emphasis on community needs . . . in the . . . delivery of health services."

The contradiction is that the key points read as though they are for all health services, whereas the opening statement refers to public health services. Part of the Liberal Party's philosophy is that we are for the fulfilment of the individual essentially by the individual and we see the Government's involvement in that process where it is necessary for it to be so. One of the bases of democracy is people looking after themselves. In essence, the regional health service should be functionally designed to fill in the gaps that the private sector cannot meet. The Minister talks about the concept of social justice and equity, and these words actually appear in the Bill. However, the concept of social justice and equity carries within it an expectation that all classes of people will be treated in a similar way. However, Part 5 of the Bill quite clearly allows for regulations which, if introduced, would allow for the exclusion from treatment of very many classes of people.

Of utmost importance to make any concept of regionalisation work is adequate funding provisions. The Health budget will need to be significantly increased from its current 18 per cent to about 20 per cent of the State Budget. Bureaucratic administrative costs will need to be significantly decreased so that the precious health dollar will be spent where it should be—on upgrading the health care of individuals. The Bill states that the regionalisation of central functions "will ensure that the Central Department is not involved with unnecessary administrative duplication". This is fine, but the impact of this on the central establishment is not mentioned. There is no definition of approved funds. This might mean that the Minister might approve that only 40 per cent of total funds will go to the regions. The Minister should state the percentage of total funds that will be allocated to the regions, and he should be accountable for this decision. Anything under 70 per cent makes regionalisation a joke. Unless it can be demonstrated that significant costs will be saved at the centre to offset the increased regional costs, the exercise makes no economic sense. Indeed, it is merely a shuffling of deckchairs on the Titanic. The opening and closing of health facilities in a region must be approved by the Minister. This flies in the face of global budgeting and disbursement of central control.

When consideration is given to a State health plan, there is an obvious need to ensure an adequate level of primary, secondary and tertiary health care to all Queenslanders. Of considerable concern to many involved in the provision of health care is that nowhere in the Bill is the word "patient" used. The care of the patient and procurement of the best medical help available should be the primary object of the Bill. This ought to be central to the legislation. It is most important to keep the focus of what health care is all about sharply to the fore; that is, accessibility and the provision of the best possible health service to the individual members of the community, specifically as well as generally. Now that quality programs are being incorporated into health services, the focus should be on outcomes. The point of any health legislation is being able to demonstrate that the service works because patients are saying that it works and that it really is effective. Systems must be put in place to facilitate easy access to the service. This concept has been ignored in the Bill. To ensure the development of a health plan that provides an optimum level of health care, it is essential that consultation between all relevant groups be carried out. These groups should include not only those within the existing health system but also community-based groups and professionals. Although a Green Paper was produced by the Minister regarding regionalisation, it is not clear how much community consultation took place and the input that the community really had into the formation of the Bill. Certainly, the great majority of the people to whom I circulated a copy of the Bill had not seen it. One queries whether the Minister is merely making a pretence at undertaking widespread consultation.

The Bill should be redrafted to define "regional health corporate plan" and "regional strategic plans". These plans will be developed by the public sector and may carry

negative implications for the private sector. As the contents of the plans are unknown at this time, the private sector should participate equally in their drafting. It is simply not good enough for the regional director to consult in their preparation. If community participation in a real sense does not occur in the planning process, the chances of communitywide acceptance of those plans are significantly reduced. It must be stated that it takes more than a restructuring of the Health Department to truly devolve power. The functions and powers of the chief executive as stated in the Bill deserve close scrutiny. At present, the chief executive officer has to be medically qualified, but I see no provision that will ensure that this continues in the future. The chief executive has a great deal of power indeed, and this is not directed to the authority. In fact, each authority directs absolute power centrally. In reality, this is a socialist type of central control that has been dressed up as a Thatcher-type devolution. Authorities may well end up functioning as rubber stamps for centralist policies and programs. Each regional director should be answerable to his authority. In fact, in the Bill, the regional director is answerable to the chief executive officer. The function of the regional director is as follows—

"subject to the delegation of the Authority concerned, enter into an annual agreement with the chief executive"—

and, Mr Speaker, these are possibly the most important words in the Bill—

"at the chief executive's discretion . . . specifies those services, functions and standards of health care to be provided or performed by the Authority in discharge of the allocation of a specified level of funds."

Why should the chief executive officer have this discretion? Is there a hidden agenda? Any discretionary power—if not resting with the individual authorities—should rest with the Minister. The regional director will be a public service employee appointed by the chief executive officer. It would be preferable for the authority to be able to hire and fire its own director because this would give full autonomy and responsibility to the Regional Health Authority. The employment agreement should contain a wage performance award. If the regional director performs well, bonus payments should be determined in part by the chairman of the authority. If regionalisation is to work, it has to be accepted that regions may differ in many ways. The information exists at local levels and cannot be easily transmitted to a central arena. The fact that each Regional Health Authority will be a body corporate and the employer of all public sector health staff in a particular region should provide a great opportunity for enterprise-based industrial relations. The United Kingdom has just moved to full enterprise bargaining on a hospital-by-hospital basis. However, this Government—which is obsessed by mediocrity—will not be taking that enterprise bargaining approach and is requiring all staff to be employed subject to a centralised system.

**Mr Welford:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs SHELDON:** The CEO is to be taken to be the employer of all officers and employees of every authority. I remind the honourable member for Stafford that the Government should be regionalising, not centralising. Moreover, an authority will not be entitled to enter into any industrial agreement without the consent in writing of the chief executive officer. It should be noted also that the CEO will still offer specialist services, and this needs clarification. What is the definition of "a specialist service"? Will an obstetrician in Cairns be responsible to the chief executive officer or to the regional director? This provision is tailor-made to weaken the regional structure. The chief executive officer is also responsible for research, and this is also disguised centralism. It will be intellectually debilitating for the professionals who will be in the region. Moreover, "research" needs to be defined. There is pure clinical research, which may well need a Statewide overview; but any individual region should be able to develop a specific area of research that is possibly specific to it; for example, research into tropical medicine in northern regions or research into rural health services in areas such as Toowoomba.

Authority constitution is a major issue. Authorities are not defined in terms of membership and role. Qualifications for appointment to the various positions, such as regional director, are not stipulated. This allows a situation of patronage to develop. The position is so critical that the appointee should have qualifications as a health care professional and as a health industry administrator.

The members of an authority are appointed by the Minister "having regard to expertise and experience and the need for continuing representations". That leaves the way open for the appointment of union mates and party hacks. The authority is responsible for the implementation of the corporate plan, a regional health plan and the assessment of health needs. Those plans will have a major impact on the private health service. Authority membership should reflect that impact. Constitution of the authority should be one-third public health, one-third private health and one-third consumer representatives.

The Government has abolished all hospitals boards. In a vast State such as Queensland, that is a recipe for disaster. Boards were a vehicle for community representation and input into the health services provided and necessary for that particular community. That was particularly important for small, scattered rural communities. Those communities have had a great pride in their hospitals boards. Those boards did not need to be abolished but could have been made subject to the regional authority. It is interesting to compare what is happening here with what has happened in the UK where the individual hospitals boards were abolished when a regional structure was adopted. Now legislation is operative from 1 April this year allowing hospitals to become trusts and to go back to having independent hospitals boards. In every region there should be networking between the various types of hospitals, for example, community, district and tertiary. There should be a natural line of referrals. The administrative models that regularly appear in the Bill show no community access through involvement apart from through regional health authorities, each comprising five to seven people. It is difficult to believe that that number of people can adequately represent the health needs of a region, especially on a part-time basis and especially in the geographically large and remote regions.

The Bill allows for the appointment of committees. However, district community health and/or hospital committees would allow input, involvement, an element of participation and a sense of continuity, but would have no real influence or authority, because the financial disbursement centre has been shifted, at best, regionally and, at worst, centrally. I commend the Minister on the inclusion of a section on quality assurance. That is really a lift-out from the New South Wales legislation but it goes further in that it does not prohibit investigation into clinical practices and is complementary of individuals. The Liberal Government in New South Wales is to be admired for its achievements with the Area Health Services Board.

With regard to teaching hospitals, it is noted in the legislation that the Minister may approve such institutions via a procedure set out in the Bill. That should be compared with the procedure in New South Wales, where teaching hospital status is conferred administratively, usually in consultation with the Australian Medical Association. Teaching hospitals seem to refer only to undergraduate teaching and make no mention of other allied health professionals, for example physiotherapists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists. They also usually have postgraduate students. The profession of nursing also seems to rate no mention, despite having a major part in the provision of health services. It is generally recognised that such hospitals should receive favoured institution consideration when it comes to funding, and there does not seem, therefore, to be any recognition of that. Some clarification of the term "academic unit" would be useful. Would a hospital such as the Toowoomba Base Hospital, which has a skilled unit in education and research in health services, be regarded as a teaching hospital for the purposes of the Bill?

By providing for wide-ranging powers for hospital inspectors, the Bill contains somewhat draconian provisions. It states that matters related to clinical practice and standards of health care in the public health sector are to be the responsibility of

inspectors. It does not state that any of the inspectors are to be medically qualified, but there is reference later to the fact that medical records will be able to be demanded only by an authorised officer who is a medical practitioner. That leaves the question open as to whether inspectors have the power to demand private medical records of any patient who has ever been a public hospital patient. An inspector who is not a medical person should not be able to photocopy medical records without the patient's and the medical superintendent's consent.

In the section on indemnity, of some concern is the inclusion of the term "without negligence" and its potential effect on the doctrine of vicarious liability. That seems to mean that authorities may join individual employees in any action for negligence rather than the usual procedures under vicarious liability whereby employing authorities bear the brunt of those actions. Some attention needs to be directed to the definition of "professional association". The Minister should list at the commencement of the Bill the associations that will be approved to ensure no-one is left out. That term should also include reference to appropriate unions. If that does not occur, the present wording can be used to exclude bodies such as the Queensland Nurses Union and the Australian Nursing Federation, Queensland Branch.

In summary, I reiterate my support for the concept of true regionalisation of Queensland health services. However, there must be certain changes to the proposed Health Services Bill to fully accommodate that, to ensure actual decentralisation of the Health Department. The most important change to bring that about would be the devolution of certain decisions made by the chief executive officer to be given to the regional director, the person most knowledgeable about the needs of his region. I have spoken of the need for the involvement of the private sector within the public health services, and urge the Minister to approve the necessary amendments to allow that. I have also expressed my concern about the possible intrusion through the powers vested in hospital inspectors. That is a matter that would need clarifying. I have been advised by many workers within the public health sector that to fully accommodate all the health needs of the community, an increase in funding is necessary. I appeal to the Government for an increase in the percentage of funds for health services in the 1991-92 Budget.

Finally, the Bill should contain a sunset clause that requires the Act to be reviewed within a set period of time, say for example, in five years. That would serve to ensure that the Minister reviews the Act at the specified period of time, in spite of the then current chief executive officer's and other senior bureaucrats' possible objection to that being done. Owing to the ever-increasing cost of health services, that is essential. The Government needs every discretion of its power available to keep the rising costs under control. The Liberal Party will be supporting the Bill; but, because there are sections that give us grave concern, I will be moving amendments that I ask the Minister to consider seriously.

**Mrs EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha) (7.52 p.m.): I am glad that the member for Landsborough did explain that she was supporting the Bill. I waited all the way through her speech to find out. I join this debate with a sense of history on my side. My electorate is based in and centres around the former electorate of Ithaca. It was a former member for Ithaca, Mr Ned Hanlon, who was the first Health Secretary and later Premier, who did so much to progress the Queensland health system. It is small wonder, therefore, that, as the member for Callide has acknowledged, the people of Queensland were waiting patiently for a Labor Government to improve health services in Queensland. They knew that they could not expect anything else from a National Party Government or a coalition Government.

This Bill is largely concerned with the restructuring of the Health Department and the provision of health services along regional lines and is the result of a long and widespread consultation process in which I have been pleased to play an active role and to bring to bear my personal experience from 25 years of health work in a variety of hospital systems, including those so praised by the member for Landsborough. The discussion paper or Green Paper—and I stress that it was a discussion paper or a Green

Paper—was a starting point; it was not the final result. Last year, that paper was widely circulated and made available to all interested bodies. Through my professional and friendly contacts, I personally made that paper available to some 25 interested groups or individuals in the varied health professions. I did not make it available to, and seek consultation with, my purely political friends. I consulted people who had experience in the health system. Between us all we have hundreds of years of experience in the health system.

**Mr Littleproud:** Say that again.

**Mrs EDMOND:** Between us all we have hundreds of years of accumulated experience. I have 25 years experience and many of the others have 30 years or 20 years experience. Even former Ministers for Education can work out that that adds up to hundreds of years of experience. Some 431 responses were received to that Green Paper, and a second working paper was produced, incorporating many of the positive criticisms. In June last year, I cut short my holidays to be involved in a vigorous brainstorming exercise which was enormously stimulating and productive.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs EDMOND:** I had holidays that were well earned and paid for by me. That brainstorming session drew together a diverse group of people, all of whom are committed to the betterment of health facilities in Queensland. I cannot recall everyone who was there, but it certainly involved representatives of regional hospital directors, nurses, health union representatives, Health Department officers, lecturers in medicine, women's health workers, rural doctors and community health workers. There were probably many others there as well. I was amazed and pleased at the amount of agreement amongst this varied group, their acceptance of the consultation process and their open recognition of the benefits of a regionalised system.

Recently, in my electorate, I hosted a meeting involving the Health Minister and about 40 doctors, most of whom were senior specialists in the State health system. Once again, I was pleased to receive general support for regionalisation from this dedicated group, although there was of course energetic debate about priorities, funding and the roles of different services. I have to say that we all agreed that we would love to have available the unlimited funds that the Liberal Party wants to pour into health services. Similarly, I have had discussions with representatives of the AMA. I stress that I am talking about the current executive of the AMA, not someone from the past who is long gone. The AMA is also in general agreement with the thrust of regionalisation and supports the Government's attempts at improving the efficiency and quality of the health service. I want to acknowledge the positive contribution that the AMA has made to the suggestions that were received in the consultation process. I have even received a very positive response from a member of the Liberal health policy committee, who felt that there was nothing in this Bill that any reasonable person could criticise. Throughout this discussion and consultation phase, the remark that I have heard most often—sometimes from very senior medicos and health officials—is that it is the first time their opinion has ever been canvassed, their feelings considered and their concerns listened to. The member for Callide states that large numbers of people are upset. Where are they? Are they all hiding behind the ratbag gun lobby group in Callide?

The medical professions recognise that we, as a Government, cannot cure all of the ills of medical practice in Queensland overnight. However, they also recognise that the Government does care, that it is prepared to tackle the problems and that it is prepared to consult and involve the very people on whom the health service relies most, instead of ignoring them, as has been the case in the past. I think that most of us in the health service with any sort of memory remember the Health Minister who refused to meet with members of the AMA. She was too busy wandering about the Grand Prix circuit in Adelaide. She was too busy worrying about her hairstyle to meet with members of the AMA or health professionals and listen to their concerns.

**Mr Schwarten:** You have worked in the health system?

**Mrs EDMOND:** I have worked in the health system for a long time. I worked under many different systems, including public and private, throughout the States of Australia and in many countries around the world. Regionalisation involves decentralisation and a devolution of power to the regions. It is a management structure that will be welcomed and appreciated, especially in rural areas, because it allows the local health service to be flexible, sensitive to local priorities and responsive to their needs, rather than controlled by a centralised department in Brisbane. That is something that every hospital I know of has been calling out for.

A performance agreement will be negotiated between each regional health authority and the chief executive of the department. This agreement will ensure the services to the region and will include not "headline" services but essential services such as immunisation programs and preventive health measures—the ones that do not make it into the newspapers. But within that general framework, regional directors will be given operational and administrative autonomy to achieve Government policy objectives and attend to local needs. Each regional health authority will develop its own strategic plan, establishing priorities for the local area in consultation with local community groups and service-providers. This may mean the amalgamation of some services in small communities where competing services may leave one aspect underutilised and another overworked, thus providing a more rational, comprehensive and viable service. Regional health authorities will be made up of community representatives whose primary function will be to manage the health service. But they will serve a dual role—as boards of management and community representatives—and will be formed by an appropriate blend of expertise and sincere proven interest in community health issues.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of many of the people who have served on hospitals boards throughout the State. But it must also be recognised that for a prominent group these positions provided social status with little or no real acceptance of any form of responsibility for the function, management or quality of the hospital that they were nominated to administer. In fact, when there has been legitimate criticism of the health services with which they were connected, they have abrogated all responsibility and said, "Don't blame us. We're just lay people." Never again will we have the disgraceful situation in which a political hopeful is appointed to a major hospitals board purely to gain some pre-eminence and status to be used as a platform for her political ambitions. No wonder the boards went squealing to the Opposition! What a pity the Opposition did not seek comments from the actual workers and providers of health services instead of just the members of the boards—their own little appointees. This practice is on a par with the disgraceful use of school name signs, which I think is the lowest in political pamphleteering, which implies endorsement of that particular candidate by that particular school to the intense embarrassment of, and ignoring the rights of, the children, parents and teachers of that school. If political aspirations can only achieve seeming endorsement by stealth and subterfuge, why even bother!

While the importance of the community and its right to be heard has been openly recognised throughout this Bill, and in fact regionalisation is based on that premise, I would like to point out that this concept is written into the Bill in clause 3.18 (3). I congratulate the Minister on this important formal recognition. The concept has already been accepted by the Government with relation to Aboriginal health. I welcome the absorption of Aboriginal health into the general health portfolio where it can be more appropriately and constructively administered, but an even more important step forward was the recent formation of the tripartite forum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Queensland is the first State to implement this major recommendation of the national Aboriginal health strategy working party.

Just as it is important for community groups to have involvement in their regional health services, it is especially important that we involve at every level community representatives from the Aboriginal and Islander groups in exploration of their health needs. I very much enjoyed meeting and discussing issues with those representatives when they were in Brisbane for the first forum. We must bear in mind the need to make

any health program culturally acceptable and appropriate to its target group or it just will not work.

I shall make some quick comments on various sections of the Bill. Clause 1.6 sets out the objects of the Bill, in particular to ensure—

"(a) that the health and well-being of all Queenslanders is promoted, maintained and improved according to principles of social justice and equity;".

And in answer to the member for Callide, yes, thankfully, this Bill does epitomise everything Labor stands for. I advise the member to read and consider this clause, and actually urge her to read the whole Bill. Part 2, Division 1, establishes the functions and powers of the central department and the chief executive. The focus of the restructured central office will be on strategic planning, setting policy objectives and standards to be fulfilled. It will continue to provide and administer specialist Statewide services. Division 2 acknowledges the special role of teaching hospitals within the health service and recognises their importance within the dual framework of education and health areas. Division 3 provides for the Minister to approve the establishment of quality assurance committees by an authority and sets out the functions, limits and liabilities of such committees. I am glad that the member for Landsborough recognised that, and I join with her in commending the Minister for this provision. It also provides for patient privacy. Part 3 deals with the actual establishment and organisation of the regional health authorities, and I have spoken about that aspect fully already. Clause 3.36 relates to the appointment of regional directors and is consistent with the expressed need in the majority of Green Paper submissions that called for single point accountability.

The previous tripartite system, with administration, medical and nursing streams, was widely criticised as resulting in dysfunctional decision-making and leading to disunity among the various groups represented and resentment by the many groups not represented. As someone who worked for a long time within this latter group, I can vouch for the frustration and resentment felt by them. It was a system that attracted a lot of criticism as inefficient, that it delayed decision-making, and it confused points of accountability. It led to wasteful parallel systems with often duplication of functions. All Australian States, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada have now moved to a unified system with one central executive officer providing single point accountability. All suitably qualified personnel can now aspire to this position—even Directors of Nurses should they so desire—something I fully endorse, and I am pleased to note that in the newly named regional directors there is a diversity of backgrounds and, may I say, sexes in the highly qualified personnel appointed. I look forward to some future appointment of a radiographer or nuclear medical technologist who is suitably qualified, of course.

Part 4 of the Bill deals with personnel management of the regional authorities. Part 5 details the strict provisions that cover all aspects of patient confidentiality. Clause 5.8 allows for the special circumstance of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospital and its arrangements with the Department of Health to continue. Parts 6 to 11 deal with the procedural arrangements ensuing from the Bill.

I have nothing but admiration for my many former colleagues in health services around the State. I know how hard they work, often in tiring and thankless situations. But anyone who has worked in the system knows also of the inefficiencies, hidden and not so hidden, in the system. We have all suffered the frustration of being forced to spend budget money before 30 June, or suffering a cut in the next year's budget, to buy a piece of suspect equipment, and sometimes very expensive equipment, in May or June when a far better and more reliable model will be available in September.

With today's increased cost and health expectations, it is even more important to get the best possible cost-effective quality health care that we can provide. I was disappointed to note that recently some hospital managements have taken the simplistic line of limiting services to cut costs when they have exceeded their budgets, instead of looking for real efficiency improvements. They seem to seek the most newsworthy

method, and I would question whether their management methods are more in the interests of health care or politics. I am surprised that the Opposition spokesperson wishes to encourage financial irresponsibility. Certainly, in my experience there has been little incentive to be efficient in any way and hopefully this will change.

There have been obvious inefficient and inappropriate uses of personnel; for example, technologists who are in short supply have been doing clerical/appointment-making work; highly skilled specialists are doing two-finger typing of their own research and reports. Although the member for Callide seems to believe that this is good, economical management and to be encouraged, I believe that it is an inexcusable waste of highly skilled resources. I was pleased to hear the Minister recently comment on attracting and keeping specialists in the health service, especially in regional centres, and I do want to encourage him in this. The creation of undergraduate medical teaching facilities at Townsville hospital is a commendable exercise in lateral thinking. It will enhance the range of medical services to the area and provide assistance in attracting specialist staff to the northern part of the State in the hope that those who see and like the area will return after completing their training.

Many of the specialists I know personally here in Brisbane also get despondent over lack of research opportunity, feeling they often have to prostitute themselves to obtain basic equipment such as computers to carry out any research work whatsoever. They want to stay within the system and they are deeply committed to the State health system, even though they know they are financially disadvantaged by staying. But they also need to be able to have some family life, to obtain on-call relief and to attend some conferences to update and maintain their skills. In the past, in many departments it has been customary for only the head of the department to attend all conferences, with other attendances shared between all the other staff, if and when funds are available. There is a recognised need for ongoing in-hospital research facilities as well as the significant funding boost this Government has granted to QIMR. It often appears that those with the most time available to make impressive submissions are most likely to gain in services, staff, funding and equipment, while those who are too busy working are more likely to miss out. I have derived much pleasure and satisfaction from being involved with this major overhaul of health services in Queensland. I am proud to be a member of the Minister's committee and equally proud to support this Bill.

**Mr BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.10 p.m.): In supporting the comments made by my colleague the honourable member for Callide in respect of the Health Services Bill, I want to make some remarks about the contributions made by honourable members opposite.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Southport and the member for Archerfield can go outside and have a discussion. I would like to listen to the member for Surfers Paradise.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** As is the case in so many debates, we are again witnessing from the Government back bench an almost complete and abysmal lack of knowledge of the real world. In case Government members have not noticed it, I point out that today, 18 months into the life of the Goss Government and half-way through the term of this Minister, the administration of health services in the State of Queensland is in turmoil. The much-vaunted regionalisation program introduced with such fanfare by the Minister and which is contained in this legislation has received the comprehensive thumbs down by public servants and unions. Members opposite cannot even convince their own trade union base that the Government is improving the health system in Queensland. We are witnessing the latest costly Labor fraud being perpetrated on the people of Queensland under the guise of administrative reform. The Minister has a lot to answer for. I look forward to hearing his responses to some of the questions that I will raise during this debate and to my comments about some of his very dubious appointments to the health system in Queensland.

**Mr Veivers:** Cronyism.



**Mr BORBIDGE:** As the honourable member for Southport indicated, it is cronyism or, as the Labor Party calls it, mateship, which has been refined to an art form by this Government and most particularly by this Minister. This great new scheme that is before us tonight in this legislation has yet to be approved by those operating at the point of service delivery. For the first time in the proud history of the department, the two major unions covering State Health Department public servants directed their members not to cooperate with the regionalisation review team. That is an unprecedented plea that has never occurred in the history of the Department of Health in Queensland. Public servants have heard the assurances of the Minister and now they know that they have been conned. They have seen the political appointments on a scale never before witnessed in health administration in this State. They have seen the top jobs in the department go to southern-based applicants. They have seen health professionals here in Queensland ignored, overlooked and treated with contempt. They have been overlooked and deceived by a State Labor Government that promised so much and has in reality delivered so little. It has reached the point at which a sticker, which reads "New South Wales Department of Health, Queensland Branch" has been produced, and I am told that it is displayed prominently throughout the department.

**Government members:** Ha, ha!

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Members opposite should go down to the Health Department and see it. It has been displayed by public servants within the department here in Brisbane.

The regionalisation model foisted on the department by Mr Coaldrake and his aides at the Public Sector Management Commission has been derailed. Let us consider the appointments for one moment. Earlier in the debate, honourable members opposite spoke about appointments to hospitals boards. Let us talk about appointments to the Department of Health, to the key senior management positions in this new centralised bureaucracy that the Government is creating. The new Director-General of Health, Dr Peter Stanley, is from New South Wales. Mr Ian Cumming, the Regional Director (Darling Downs), hails from Canberra. He curiously lists his qualifications as a Bachelor of Agricultural Science. Then there is Mr Paul Kelly, the Regional Director (Wide Bay). He is a former assistant regional director from New South Wales. Next is Susan Bradshaw, the Regional Director (Central), who is an appointee from Victoria.

**Mrs McCauley:** With a degree in criminology.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** As the honourable member for Callide said, she has a degree in criminology. If one was working for the Victorian Government, one would almost need a degree in criminology. The next appointment is Gareth Goodier, the Regional Director (Peninsula). He was formerly the Regional Director (Western Australia). The list goes on. Allan Hicks was appointed Regional Director (Northern). He was formerly from Canberra.

**Mr Smyth:** Where were you born? You were born in Victoria.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I can understand the sensitivity of the honourable member who, through indifference and because of all the problems up in his part of the world, has been busy selling out his electorate. Government members raised the matter of appointments to hospitals boards. I am telling them about their Government's appointments to the department under the mastermind of cronyism in Queensland, the Minister who sits opposite. Another appointment was that of Geraldine Taylor as the Regional Director (West Moreton).

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard on six occasions that the member for Surfers Paradise was born in Victoria. I do not want to hear it again.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I understand the sensitivity of honourable members opposite. I was referring to the appointment of Geraldine Taylor, the Regional Director (West

Moreton). I ask honourable members to guess where she came from—the Department of Community Services in Canberra! Mary Miller, who is the Regional Director (Mackay), is a former Deputy Director, New South Wales.

**Mr Veivers:** If we had a transfer fee on them, we would make a million dollars.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** As the honourable member for Southport suggests, perhaps the Treasurer might like to consider a transfer fee or a licence fee. The list goes on.

**Mrs Edmond:** Mr Borbidge—

**Mr BORBIDGE:** The honourable member started this, and now she can cop it. She raised the issue of political appointments. Now she can cop it.

Mr Peter Read is the Executive Directive (Policy and Planning). Where does he come from? Surprise, surprise! He comes from Canberra, where he was once the private secretary to Federal Labor Minister, Neal Blewett. In the eyes of the Goss Labor Government, Mr Read is eminently well qualified. Then there is Ann Kern, the Executive Director (Corporate Services). At least she comes from Switzerland. Then we have the piece de resistance: Mr David Butt, a former private secretary to the Minister and former private secretary to Neal Blewett. Of the top 16 appointments to the Department of Health, only four were resident Queenslanders. Only four of them were deemed to have had sufficient by way of experience and qualifications to meet the exacting standards of Peter Coaldrake and the Public Sector Management Commission. The impact of all this is that the people appointed to oversee the regionalisation program do not, and cannot, have the hands-on experience of how health services operate in Queensland. One would have thought that if the apparent void of ability allegedly identified by the Public Sector Management Commission had been true, the health system of this State would have been in ruins. But was it? Was it not motivated—as the Minister has said repeatedly in the media—by political pork-barrelling? Those statements were an absolute disgrace. They did a great disservice to those who are dedicated to making health services in Queensland more efficient and more effective.

It is important to point out to the Parliament that while we are busy dismantling the old health system in Queensland and putting in place a new, beaut model allegedly based on the great success stories of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and the Wran/Unsworth era in New South Wales, in its comparison of State public services the very prestigious Institute of Public Affairs made special mention of Queensland's health system as being the most cost-effective system in the country. That was achieved under the stewardship of those very same health professionals who were comprehensively overlooked by the Public Sector Management Commission. I look forward to a future conservative Government undertaking a very detailed investigation into the activities and affairs of the PSMC. Health professionals who, according to the IPA, ran the best system to be found anywhere in the Commonwealth of Australia, are now on the public service scrap heap. There is little doubt that the Department of Health in this State is now in turmoil. Morale in the department is at an all-time low, and it is reflecting in the Government's plans to introduce regionalisation.

Public servants in the department would like a few answers to a few questions that I should like to pose to the Minister. I would like to know how the Minister's private secretary met the selection criteria for the \$80,000-per-year job to which he was appointed. I trust that, in his reply, the Minister will point out the tertiary qualifications that his former private secretary has that make him suitable for that position and, according to the PSMC, were a requirement for that non-political appointment. I look forward to the Minister's response. Public servants within the department want to know about salary maintenance. Since the Minister took over the Health portfolio, there have been some incredible goings-on within the Department of Health. The Minister sits there coolly and calmly, yet behind the scenes he is a master political manipulator—far smarter than most of the poor old backbench members would ever realise.

The most incredible number of promotions have occurred under the stewardship of this Minister. Over 150 people were promoted before the findings of the Public Sector

Management Commission were released and with the full knowledge that the department would undergo regionalisation. That did not stop the Minister from undertaking 150 promotions of particular people within the department. The Opposition supports those promotions which, in many cases, were long overdue. But those very same promotions have now been invalidated by the regionalisation program. The Minister is unable to give a simple guarantee that those public servants will remain on the very same salary. What a farce! Therefore, it is understandable that a great deal of concern is being expressed by State Health public servants.

**Mr McEiligott:** Salary maintenance.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I look forward to the Minister's reply. He can tell us all about that and answer all the other questions that I am posing. On so many occasions the Minister has backflipped on his promises, and he is no longer trusted within his department. So we have the call by both the State Service Union and the Professional Officers Association that their members should not comply with, or support, the process of regionalisation. It is about time that the Minister got out of his ivory tower on the nineteenth floor of the Health building, got away from the minders who have been imposed upon him by the Premier and others, and got around that building to hear the concerns of his employees who, over the years, have made a very substantial contribution to a health service in Queensland which, under the old regime, the Institute of Public Affairs ranked as the most effective and efficient in Australia at its point of delivery. This Bill removes hospitals boards from Queensland.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Good.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** The honourable member said, "Good". I am glad that that is on the record. Although it is pointed out by the Minister that his new regionalised health service will provide better outcomes at the point of delivery, it will also remove a valuable resource that was present in the hospitals boards. Although I acknowledge that reform of the board structure was necessary, to eliminate it entirely was completely unnecessary. Today, I pay tribute to the many men and women who have dedicated themselves to the health system by serving on hospitals boards, those people who have contributed to what was the best health service in the country. I refer particularly to Earle Lever, the Chairman of the Gold Coast Hospitals Board and to all of the people who served for a long period on that board. They were not political appointments but people who brought into the system from the private sector enormous expertise and talent and who have been treated with the absolute contempt that is so familiar on the part of this Government. During my term in this Parliament, I have had the privilege of working with three or four hospitals boards. At all times, the degree of professionalism that came out of the Gold Coast Hospitals Board under successive chairmen and under successive members was of an extremely high standard. I observed with some regret the enthusiasm of some honourable members opposite in taking local knowledge away from the decision-making process so that it can be transferred into the academy of cronyism that I detailed before—massive, unfettered cronyism or, as the Labor Party likes to call it, mateship, that has never been witnessed in the history of this once great department.

Opposition members wait with interest to see whether Queensland taxpayers will receive a better service at the point of delivery. If we consider the lessons that have been learned interstate and if we consider the independent analysis of the health system in Queensland, what we witness today will certainly not achieve that priority. It will not achieve that objective. At the end of the day, the health service in Queensland will not be as effective or as efficient. For that reason, as indicated by my colleague the honourable member for Callide, the Opposition will strongly oppose the legislation.

**Mr PITT (Mulgrave)** (8.26 p.m.): I noticed with great interest that the member for Surfers Paradise elevated the Minister to the exalted status of political guru. I am not sure whether the Minister requires that title. However, with this Bill and the work that the Minister has been doing in the 18 months in his portfolio, I have no doubt that he will go down as one of the most reformist Health Ministers that we have seen in this

State. For nearly half a century, the public health system in Queensland rested squarely on two units of management. The first was the highly centralised Department of Health, which carried the overall responsibility for the delivery of health services in this State. That was supported in turn by a system of local hospitals boards that were set up ostensibly to provide some degree of local input. I do not wish to cast any aspersions on the people who sat on those boards, because I believe that generally—although there are some exceptions—they did their utmost to reflect the needs and aspirations of the clients who utilised the local hospitals. However, in the final analysis, their real impact was negligible. It was negligible insofar as almost no real decision-making power rested with them. All important matters and, indeed, some of a more trivial nature, were dealt with in Brisbane.

There is no doubt in my mind that, under the previous Government, the Department of Health had adopted a very insular approach towards the administration of public health. The department had shifted its focus away from patient-care and the delivery of quality services towards an emphasis on administrative procedures and all of the unnecessary red tape that results from such an inward-looking view. Unfortunately, local hospitals boards tended to do two things. Firstly, when a major hospital in a rural area was responsible for a number of smaller hospitals, that board tended to centralise the expenditure of the limited tax dollar at the major hospital. Secondly, more often than not, personalities played a disproportionate role in decision-making. Quite often, people were appointed to those boards with scant regard to their management capabilities. In many cases, political appointments seemed to take precedence over other more appropriate criteria.

At this juncture, I wish to acquaint members with a typical example of interference by a board, which impacted negatively on the delivery of health services to a group of my constituents at Malanda. I draw the attention of members to the difficulties experienced in relation to the maintenance of services at the Malanda outpatients centre. Last year, I made representations to the Minister with respect to the withdrawal of visitations by a medical practitioner based at the Atherton Hospital. At that time, I was quite critical of the role played by the Atherton Hospitals Board and I suggested that the board was systematically withdrawing services from the Eacham Shire in favour of those provided in Atherton. Subsequent events gave me no reason to change my attitude. In fact, I was firmly of the belief that, regardless of the veracity of any arguments contrary to its stated opinion, the Atherton Hospitals Board was determined to have its way on that issue.

It came to my notice that a report had been presented by the northern health services team on the Atherton Hospitals Board. I failed to comprehend how the team could make any determination as to the needs within the Eacham Shire without having any detailed consultation with the elected council representing the people in that area or, indeed, myself. In section 3 of its report, the team claimed to have met with a number of interested citizens from the Malanda and Millaa Millaa areas. One wonders who those citizens were and whether or not the local member and the elected councillors should be considered as interested citizens. The conclusion that I drew from the team's failure to contact either myself or the Eacham Shire Council is that it was prepared to take the advice of the Atherton Hospitals Board alone on that issue. There is no evidence to suggest that the team made any conscious effort to seek information from anything but a narrow source.

Section 1 of the executive summary of that report stated—

"In recent years the range of medical services in the town has increased and Team believes that there is no longer a need for the Outpatient Centre."

It stated further—

". . . it is recommended that the hours of service provided from the Clinic be slowly reduced by the Hospitals Board."

By the team's own admission in section 7.1 of the report, the level of service provided by private medical practitioners early in 1990 was no longer available. One

therefore finds it hard to understand the rationale for further reducing the services available through the outpatient centre. Claims that Malanda was only a short distance from Atherton and therefore the people of that area could adequately be serviced by the Atherton Hospital indicated a distinct lack of knowledge of the area's demography. Statistics show that the majority of the population of the Malanda district live outside the township and, in many cases, a considerable distance is travelled in just reaching the township of Malanda without having to go on to Atherton. Therefore, hospital medical services are not merely a matter of 15 minutes away, as suggested in the report. I accept that a daily bus service is provided to Atherton, but I point out that the return cost per passenger is \$11 and this places a serious financial burden on certain sections of the community least able to afford it, namely, pensioners and others on benefits.

It is noted that the team was of the opinion that, since 1985, the level of usage at the centre has fallen at a significant rate. It was cited that the 1988-89 average occasion of service was 9.3 per day and further offered justification for the gradual withdrawal of services until medical clinics ceased in 1990. I suggest to honourable members that the Atherton Hospitals Board had done everything in its power to discourage residents to use the Malanda centre. Indications were that the sister in charge had been given very clear instructions to limit the number of patients accepted on clinic days. This, of course, would assist to deflate usage figures. The uncertainty surrounding service availability led to a decline in attendance, with many people preferring to travel to Millaa Millaa where it would appear services were more likely to continue.

Strangely enough, the Atherton Hospitals Board entertained the idea of expending public money—\$250,000, I believe—for the construction of a hospital facility at the much smaller township of Millaa Millaa. As part of the board's support for the Millaa Millaa centre and its possible upgrading, the team conveniently indicated that the clinic in that centre was being heavily utilised. The claim was made that the Friday clinic at Millaa Millaa had an average daily occasion of service of 15.07. Whilst I do not dispute these figures, I point out that inquiries made by me indicated that almost 55 per cent of those utilising the Millaa Millaa clinic actually travelled from Malanda. At that time I was quite critical of the role played by a Mr Wallwork of Millaa Millaa who had served on the board for over 32 years. Anyone more cynical than I am would perhaps assert that the closer relationship between the then medical superintendent at the Atherton Hospital and Mr Wallwork had worked in favour of the Millaa Millaa clinic and to the detriment of the Malanda centre. I must thank the Minister for his personal interest in this issue. In his busy schedule, he found time to visit my electorate and assessed the situation at first hand. As a consequence, there will be no downgrading of this very important element of health services in the Eacham Shire, pending a thorough investigation by the new regional health authority.

A review of the organisational arrangements of Queensland public hospitals was undertaken, and a report made to the Minister by the end of February 1990. A thorough assessment of a variety of health systems both in Australia and selected overseas systems resulted in the production of a Green Paper, for which I believe there was record demand. A key recommendation of the review was the regionalisation of public sector health services within the context of an overall move towards decentralisation. Regionalisation, besides reducing the need for a large Brisbane-based bureaucracy, will result in the positioning of key personnel out in the regions where they can be closer to the delivery of services. As the Minister has said in a newspaper report—

"It will take decision-making away from bureaucrats in Brisbane and place it back in the hands of local people."

I fully support that. The charter for regional health authorities is quite explicit. In particular, each authority will oversee the implementation of the corporate plan for Queensland public sector health services in the region; the development and implementation of a regional strategic plan for health services in the region, in consultation with the director-general; the funding of public sector health services in the region; the provision, management and delivery of public sector health services within approved budget

allocations; and the assessment of health needs in the region. That will be on the ground assessment.

Interest in public health in Queensland is very high if the response to calls for nominations for positions on health authorities is any indication. More than 550 applications were received for the 13 authorities, with over 50 of them in the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait region. I am sure that the quality of the applicants will be high and that those who are eventually successful will bring a variety of depth and expertise to health decision-making in the region. Those who are unsuccessful will, in my opinion, still be able to make a valuable contribution, as the Minister has indicated that a number of advisory committees are to be established. Community consultation in a number of areas will no doubt be necessary.

I am very pleased to note that the gentleman who has been appointed the regional director of the Kimberley health region is a very high-quality person. He was the inaugural regional director of the Kimberley health region with the Western Australian Department of Health. He is considered to be one of the truly expert Australian regional directors with a solid track record in working in rural Australia. His particular expertise is his knowledge of the special needs of Aboriginal communities, which is very appropriate in far-north Queensland. Apart from holding senior medical posts in other Western Australian regions, he has worked in the Middle East and in metropolitan hospitals in Perth and his native United Kingdom.

**Mrs Edmond:** The Opposition does not want someone with expertise in that field.

**Mr PITT:** I am not overconcerned where these people come from, as long as we get the best people for our system so that our system will become the very best in this nation. I am hopeful that the Gordonvale Hospital will be a beneficiary of the passage of this Bill. The regional health authority, with its more hands-on approach and a more clearly defined charter, will be in a position to make decisions which could utilise more fully the resources available to it. I have felt for some years that a sensible development of public health services in the Cairns region would include the expansion of the Gordonvale Hospital away from its cottage hospital image and to be a subcentre of a busy general hospital, such as in Cairns. I believe that it would be utilised for some of the outpatient services currently provided in Cairns. This would be particularly of benefit for people in the southern catchment area of the city. Whilst I realise that Gordonvale is within the Mulgrave Shire, to all intents and purposes it is no longer really a country town and, in reality, is more a suburb of the greater Cairns region. I also believe that it could be utilised for some of the facilities currently taking up space at the Cairns Base Hospital. I refer particularly to the geriatric services unit and probably also some activities within the department of psychiatry. I believe that this would enhance the Gordonvale area. I also believe that it would also take pressure off space and staff requirements at the Cairns Base Hospital. Because most of the buildings already exist at Gordonvale and can be utilised, this proposal would involve very little extra capital outlay by the department and would also make room available for other developments that are obviously much needed in Cairns.

In contrast to the resiting of the present Cairns Base Hospital that has been promoted, there would seem to be no great time-lag in relocating some of those services to an existing structure. As I said, it could be utilised immediately to subserve some of the functions that are carried on in Cairns at present. I refer again to outpatient facilities, such as medical outpatient services and, perhaps, orthopaedic, gynaecological and psychiatric units. These could subserve the needs of people in the area extending south from Whiterock. I would also like to see a rehabilitation facility developed in this area together with the utilisation of paramedical personnel, such as occupational therapists and clinical psychologists. I believe that those steps would be in keeping with the philosophy of delivering services to the consumer.

At this juncture, I congratulate the Minister and the revamped, service-oriented Queensland Health Department for a recent and long overdue initiative. I refer to the

mammography unit. I believe that the State Government has accepted a tender to construct a specially designed mobile mammography unit to provide breast-screening services for north Queensland and the north-west regions. The unit is being constructed to enable it to travel long distances over rough terrain and to withstand tropical conditions--something that would be obvious to anyone who lives in northern Queensland. It is the first mobile mammography unit to be specially designed and built for the health environment in which it will work. The unit—which will provide services to women who live north of Townsville, in the Cairns and Tableland districts, in the peninsular region and in the north-west region as far away as Mount Isa—is expected to be ready for use by the end of the year. I understand that tenders were called for the project in February and that the proposal by Trans Commercial-SVD was accepted. The mobile unit will be constructed at a cost of \$378,370 and will consist of a specially designed 12.5 metre semitrailer that will have the capacity to provide screening and assessment services. A mammography machine costing \$93,000 brings the overall cost to \$480,000. It is a very important investment in the health of women who live in north Queensland. Importantly, the unique design is both functional and aesthetically appropriate for the nature of the services it will provide. Necessary funding for the mobile unit has been jointly provided by the Commonwealth Government, under the rural women's health strategy, and by the State Government, which has provided a \$1m budget for breast and cervical cancer screening in 1991-92. The mobile mammography unit will operate from the fixed-site, breast-screening and assessment centre at Townsville Hospital and is expected to begin screening services later this year. The construction of the mobile mammography unit will be an important step in the expansion of breast-screening services in Queensland. I again congratulate the Minister for ensuring that women who live in far-north Queensland, western Queensland and north-west Queensland have this service available to them.

Along with the development of a responsive education system, the maintenance of law and order and protection of the environment, I regard the provision of adequate health services as a priority area for any Government. I am pleased that the Minister has grasped the nettle and introduced the Bill at this time. When passed, this legislation will chart the course for a public health system that will again place its focus where it belongs, that is, on service delivery where it is most needed. I therefore support the Bill.

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego) (8.42 p.m.): It is my pleasure to join in the debate on this Bill. Major changes have taken place in health services throughout Queensland, and I believe it is appropriate to observe a minute's silence to mark the death of an efficient health system that is about to be replaced by a system of dubious quality. At the outset, I wish to refer to the Minister's second-reading speech because I did not get very far in my reading of it when I came across this statement—

"This Bill represents the most wide-ranging change to public sector health services in Queensland in more than 40 years. It enshrines the principles of social justice, equity, responsiveness, efficiency and accountability . . ."

**Mrs Edmond:** Hear, hear!

**Mr HOBBS:** That is just socialist claptrap amounting to nothing more than words. Let me examine this Labor Government's administration of health services in relation to social justice. What does "social justice" mean? Does it mean that the Government will provide a better health service for the underprivileged or the aged?

**Mrs Edmond:** Yes.

**Mr HOBBS:** The funny thing is that the queues seem to be getting longer and, even at present, the system does not seem to be working well. The Minister has already had quite some time to implement a proper health services system. In his second-reading speech, he also referred to "equity", and one wonders whether that means making available equal medical facilities to all Queenslanders. Presently, the pensioners and the aged are copping it in the neck. The lengthy queues indicate that the system is not

working. The Minister also referred to "responsiveness", but I point out that in some cases it takes people nearly five weeks to obtain an appointment with a dentist. The waiting period is getting longer. Even when the National Party was in Government it was not as long as it is now. The Minister also mentions "efficiency", which is a fine term. It seems to me that the proposed system will be top heavy. Presently, the Minister is sacking orthopaedic surgeons and specialist staff. Obviously, the Government is unable to fund the system that is presently operating, so how will it be able to fund the massive programs that are referred to in the Bill?

"Accountability" is a term that is mentioned frequently by members of the Labor Government. This Bill provides for no accountability measures because the Minister will change everything by regulation. The Bill is really establishing services for different classes of people. This indicates that the Government is getting further and further away from reality. The Minister's statement contains nothing more than words. I do not know who the "Wordsworth" was who wrote the speech, but I make the observation that although it sounds very nice and reads well, it really does not mean a thing.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that the Government came into power with a commitment to regionalise the public sector health services and that that historic decision would come into effect after 30 June this year. Prior to the election, Labor did not publish any policy or any philosophy about regionalising the health system and abolishing hospitals boards. The Government even put out a Green Paper which stated that the health system in Queensland was very efficient and the best in Australia. The Green Paper sought submissions so that the Government could digest them and implement a better health system. When the Minister visited the hospitals and boards, they all wanted to talk to him about the future of hospitals boards and to inform him of their achievements over the years. But he did not want to talk to them about the future of the hospitals boards. Before the Green Paper was put out, he knew that the hospitals boards were gone. It was an absolute farce. In all stages leading to the introduction of this Bill the Government has lost credibility. It led the people up the garden path by making meaningless statements about improvements to the public sector health.

The Government talks about regionalisation. Most sane people would think that regionalisation means that people will be scattered over the length and breadth of the State. However, to this Government it means that people will be spread along the coast where they can get the smell of the sea breeze and a few fresh prawns.

**Mr Booth:** The salt water is good for them, too.

**Mr HOBBS:** The salt water probably is good for them, too. I believe that salt water is very good for wounds. In the near future, the Government will have a few wounds. It might be a good idea if those people are appointed to positions near the coast. I particularly wish to address the regional areas along the coast which are a long way from the hospitals that they have to administer in the west. There will be 13 regions in Queensland. Approximately two months ago, directors were appointed to 11 of those regions. However, the two directors who have not been appointed are the ones at Roma and Longreach. Two people were appointed as acting directors to those boards. Can the Minister guarantee that those two people will be appointed as directors of those regions?

**Mr McEiligott:** You mean those two particular people?

**Mr HOBBS:** The two people in Longreach and in Roma.

**Mr McEiligott:** No. The reason they are acting is that we got insufficient applications in the first round. We have readvertised and are currently interviewing. There will be permanent appointments made to those two regions, not necessarily the people who are currently acting in the positions.

**Mr HOBBS:** I am pleased that the Minister has indicated that two permanent appointments will be made.



**Mr Elliott:** If they can't smell the sea, they won't be in it.

**Mr HOBBS:** They will not be able to smell the sea out there. However, I appreciate the Minister's comments.

**Mr McElligott:** I don't understand your point. We are trying to fill the positions. What is your point?

**Mr HOBBS:** I will continue. We believe that the positions should have been filled earlier. However, I accept that the Minister has indicated that he will appoint two directors. I hope that that is done sooner rather than later. The Roma hospital region extends to the south-west corner of Queensland. It is similar to having the headquarters of the Brisbane hospital system in Canberra; it is the same distance away. How would the people of Brisbane like to have the Brisbane hospital system administered from Canberra? They would not like it. That is why we are expressing our concerns tonight.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Whingeing Howard.

**Mr HOBBS:** The honourable member should be one person who knows. He often travels through western Queensland. People attempt to talk to him. They tell me, "Look, it is a waste of time talking to Henry. He can't get anything done. He is not able to talk rationally, anyway." If he keeps coming to the west, he might learn something. By the time he finishes, he might even know where western Queensland is!

**Mrs Edmond:** They used to be administered from Brisbane.

**Mr HOBBS:** I am sorry. I did not understand what the honourable member said.

**Mrs Edmond:** They will now be administered from rural areas. They used to be administered from Brisbane. I would have thought you would have appreciated that.

**Mr HOBBS:** The honourable member still has not learnt. At least within those regional areas people were on the ground locally to handle the day-to-day issues. The majority of the problems were able to be handled in an efficient manner. Even the Government's Green Paper stated that the health system was very efficient. Government members have the whole thing back to front. I suppose that, in due course, they will get it right.

**Mr McElligott:** Do you really believe that the hospitals board ran your hospital?

**Mr HOBBS:** The hospitals board did a great job. It did not run the hospital entirely, but it played a very large part in its administration. It communicated with Brisbane, but it had input into the running of the hospital, which was appreciated. It did an efficient job. Even now, the Government is trying to close down some of the country hospital centres.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** You're whingeing again.

**Mr HOBBS:** I am telling the truth. The honourable member should cop it. During his travels in the west, if he has not heard what is happening, he should have his ears cleaned out. The town of Isisford is in the electorate of the member for Gregory and close to the boundary of the electorate of Warrego. The hospital at Isisford runs very efficiently. It asked for funding to upgrade hospital buildings and was knocked back. It has been suggested that that hospital should open twice a week. A person might live 200 miles out of town but can be sick on only two days a week. On those two days, the hospital might only be open from 9 o'clock till 4 o'clock. That is not progress. The Government talks about accountability. A health service has to be provided across the board. Are people who live in remote areas inferior? Are they not able to have at least a reasonable service delivered to them, the same as people who live in more populated areas? Country people are not asking for a better service than the service provided for city people. No-one is saying that every service that is available in the city is needed in the country. All these people want is a reasonable service so that people who are sick or injured can receive the best possible medical attention.

Another matter of grave concern to people in country areas is the lack of doctors. This has been a problem for some time. No doubt the Minister is well aware of it. I recall that an inquiry was conducted in Western Australia into the problems associated with attracting doctors to rural areas. Basically, that inquiry revealed three problems. Firstly, doctors are frightened to go out west because they hear on the news that the Barcoo is flooding or that Cooper Creek is rising. The doctors or their wives think to themselves, "Oh, dear, I might not get back to Brisbane for another six months." The second problem is that they are a long way from specialist assistance. Of course, the third problem is that doctors in remote areas find difficulty in getting back-up so that they can have a break. They are on call 24 hours a day, sometimes for four, five or six weeks at a time. They and their wives do not get much of a break. The review that was conducted in Western Australia found that doctors who originally came from rural areas had much less difficulty adapting. They were not afraid. They knew that the far-western areas of the State would not bite them and that they would be all right. They know about the flies, the heat, the floods and the droughts.

There is a need for some sort of a system whereby students from, say, Dalby, Charleville, Longreach and Mount Isa, who eventually go on to become doctors, can be attracted to these areas. I know that the scholarship system does not seem to work. Perhaps a different tertiary qualification could be acceptable. I could never understand why, under the old system, a student had to have a 990 TE score to become a doctor. Students with a much lower TE score could make very efficient doctors. Of course, the TE score that was required for nursing was crazy, too. The Government should try to put in place some system that cuts out at least one of the complications. I am aware that something has been done to improve the remuneration for doctors in remote areas. At present, that remuneration does not seem to be too bad. The other problem that the Government has to face—and it will have to face it sooner rather than later—is trying to obtain relief staff to give those doctors assistance. I understand that that is under way, but I think that a bit more work needs to be done on that aspect.

I want to make two other points. The first point is that centres such as Charleville have suffered a great loss because Dr Lou Ariotti has left.

**Mr Rowell:** A great doctor.

**Mr HOBBS:** He is a great man, a great doctor and a great surgeon. He could deal with anything from a cold to an amputation. He did acupuncture. I know that the previous National Party Government tried—and I presume that this Government has been trying—to find a replacement for Dr Ariotti. The Minister might be able to give honourable members some clue as to how Charleville will benefit under this new system and attract surgeons like Lou Ariotti.

The other point that I wanted to make related to mobile breast screening units. It is no secret that more women die from breast cancer than die on our roads each year, yet I do not think enough is being done to get mobile screening clinics moving throughout the State. As the member for Mulgrave mentioned, the cost of one of those units is about \$300,000. I know that a great deal of money was donated from various sources to purchase a unit. No doubt the State contributed as well. More emphasis should be placed on that. Governments try to stop people from killing themselves on the roads, which is probably costing millions of dollars a year. Police are out on patrol, chasing people. On many occasions, I think that they are wasting their time on trivial matters. That is the way it goes. That is the system, and we have to live with it. However, because breast cancer causes such loss of life, I believe that more emphasis needs to be placed on mobile breast screening units.

It has been my pleasure to participate in this debate. I am disappointed that we are going to go through this phase. I have made only a few of the points that could be made. Many Opposition members have spoken in the debate. I commend the shadow spokesperson, the member for Callide, who spoke very extensively and very thoroughly

on the issues concerned. She covered much of what I had intended to say. I do not intend to waste the time of the House by repeating them. I just express again my disappointment at the way the Government is going with regard to the health system. Nevertheless, it is hoped that we can make the best of the system that we are going to inherit.

**Dr FLYNN** (Toowoomba North) (9 p.m.): This is obviously a very important piece of legislation and I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to it. Basically, I would like to make a few general points about where we are coming from in our health administration system and where we are going—especially from a clinical viewpoint—from the viewpoint of a service-provider. All honourable members in this House need to remember that the most important person in the health system is the patient. The next most important group in the health system is the health team that treats that patient. Probably the least important people in the health system is the system of administration itself, although, obviously by its very nature, it is critical that it is working well and that it is geared and aimed towards maximising the health dollar and ensuring that it gets to the service-providers. I think members on both sides of the House would agree that the system in Queensland is a good public health system, especially when it is compared with health systems in overseas countries. It also compares very favourably within Australia.

Queensland has a system of hospitals that have been managed by a board that has had legal responsibility for most of the decision-making to do with property and so forth, but in practice the day-to-day management has been carried out by the medical superintendent, the director of nursing and the hospital manager, referred to as the tripartite arrangement, where those three people meet and provide advice to the board, and then the board makes the decisions.

I do not think that the Opposition has acknowledged that—perhaps it never really understood it—there is a very heavy overlay of direction from the Health Department in Brisbane. Alongside the hospitals with their boards have been the community health services run on a divisional basis. The various aspects of community health services—such as the HACC workers, Aboriginal health and child health—have been run on a divisional basis and, basically, wherever the service-providers are, they report up through their chain of command to their divisional head in Brisbane.

Psychiatric services have also been administered separately. There has been a separate Division of Psychiatric Services, which has been in charge of Queensland's major psychiatric institutions and other aspects of psychiatric services as well, but, in recent times, not so much in charge of acute psychiatry, which has been provided through the acute hospitals and the boards. As I said before, overriding this whole system has been a very heavy layer of central control from the Health Department in Brisbane. I have had an interest in this system since 1979 when I was a senior medical student and also at that time started to work as a pathology technician at Royal Brisbane Hospital. Over the years, I have heard this system widely criticised. It has been criticised by medical officers in the public health system, criticised by private health professionals, criticised by nursing staff and criticised by management. That criticism has taken a number of forms. I will mention the types of comments that I have heard over the years and problems perceived with the structure from which we are coming.

First of all, I refer to the boards. One would have to go a long way when speaking with medical superintendents and dons before one would find anyone who would stand up for the hospitals boards. By and large, most dons, most medical superintendents and most medical officers throughout the State in rural Queensland, as well as the provincial cities and Brisbane, will advise that the boards are a nuisance. I would not be as uncharitable as that because I have never been in the position of having to report directly to a board. I agree that the boards have been composed of well-meaning people, often with considerable administrative experience—this obviously varies throughout the State—but basically they have been unable to provide any real guidelines on health policy because, by

and large, appointees to the boards have not had any experience or interest in various issues to do with health. They have not been doctors, nurses or consumers. That point was made earlier tonight by an interjector.

**Mr Booth** interjected.

**Dr FLYNN:** Obviously it varies, but the honourable member would find in provincial cities and in Brisbane that, if the people who are on those boards take sick, most of them would be private patients in a private hospital; they would not be consumers of a public health system. Obviously, in a small rural community there is only one hospital and the board member would certainly be in the public hospital, but even then he could well be a private patient, but he would still be receiving treatment from the same doctor, who is usually the only one. It would be the best that is locally available. I agree with the honourable member on that point.

The point I am making is that, by and large, the boards have been capable of providing some administrative experience, some useful business knowledge in terms of decisions about buildings, acquiring property and general management affairs, but they have been incapable of providing any guidance in terms of health policy and in terms of what services are needed and they have not been really able to provide any representative point of view from the consumer. Now, that is my view and I believe honourable members would find that it is the view widely held among the medical and the nursing professions throughout Queensland.

The second criticism that I have heard about the system that we are coming from is its fragmented responsibility. Who is in charge at a hospital, especially if something goes wrong? Obviously, the director of nursing is in charge of nursing issues and managing her staff; the medical superintendent is in charge of medical issues; the hospital manager is in charge of administration; and the board is legally responsible. But who is responsible when something goes wrong?

**Mrs Edmond:** The other one!

**Dr FLYNN:** Basically, that is it, the other one. Recently, honourable members saw that situation in Townsville. Quite often, it is the hospital manager who tends to get the blame because he is the only one employed by the Health Department.

Another criticism of the present system is the fragmentation of the community health service. Because of its provisional structure, especially in small rural communities, it can be quite fragmented. A town such as Warwick, for instance, might have enough home and community care work for, say, two and a half nurses but they receive only two. At the same time, in the Warwick area nurses might be providing health care to Aborigines. Because their workload may not be as great as the workload elsewhere, they may have a spare half staff member. That slack work cannot be picked up and sent over to an area of need, because everyone has to report to different divisional heads. Although it might sound simple to tell a person to go and help someone who is busier, I can inform honourable members that that has been tried in Toowoomba and in other places but, because of the current structure, it is impossible to operate such a system effectively.

I have heard criticism from medical staff, nursing staff and others about the degree of control that is imposed by the Health Department in Brisbane. I know that the Opposition does not acknowledge that. Over the years, that control has been extensive. As the Minister pointed out recently, it was really a myth that most small hospitals and their boards made their own decisions. In every way, they were locked in by the Health Department. If anything other than a routine administrative decision had to be made, Health Department approval was needed.

Another aspect of my personal criticism is the way in which the Baillie Henderson and Wolston Park hospitals have developed over the years. Because they have been administered by an entirely different system and because they have been kept separate without having their own boards, as psychiatric health care has changed in Queensland, they have been left out of those changes. A lot of opportunity has been missed. Over the years, a system has evolved under which more people are now being treated in the

community than in institutions. However, there is still a need for those institutions. At the same time, as acute psychiatry has developed and as acute psychiatric wards have been established in hospitals, by and large institutions such as Baillie Henderson and Wolston Park have been left out in terms of both professional development and opportunities for cross-referrals. Basically, those institutions are used only when every other avenue has been exhausted and there is a need for long-term institutional care. In terms of professional development, such institutions have become backwaters.

That is the sort of system that has existed. Where does this legislation take health services? Basically, it introduces a system under which our hospitals, on a day-to-day basis, will continue to be run in the same fashion as previously. There will still be a director of nursing, a medical superintendent and a professional manager. Depending on the size of the hospital, any of those staff or an additional chief executive officer will be the person responsible. For the first time, somebody will definitely be in charge of a hospital. That person will be responsible for the implementation of all the decisions made in that hospital. At the same time, no input is lost from any of the other professionals. If the medical superintendent is not the chief executive officer, he will still provide the same sort of input to the chief executive officer as he provided formerly to the board. I turn now to the matter relating to reporting to a regional health director. An opportunity will exist to take a regional approach to health policy, health planning and the provision of services.

**Mrs Sheldon** interjected.

**Dr FLYNN:** I will come to that later. For the first time, community services will be integrated, which means that all health-providers—the people who are actually helping patients to recover or helping them in their homes—will be able to be used where the need exists. They will be able to change from one area to another. That system will be fully integrated on a regional approach. More flexibility and decision-making will be introduced. Many decisions that are currently being made in Brisbane will be made by the regional health director and, I hope, even delegated further back to the hospital.

The sorts of things that have had to be considered by the Health Department in the past are amazing. Although I could cite example after example, I shall refer to only one. Not very long ago in Toowoomba, there existed a medical vacancy which the hospital had been trying to fill for quite some time. Eventually, the hospital was successful in finding the appropriate person. However, because it was February and the vacancy rate in Toowoomba at that time was about 0.3 per cent, this person and his family had nowhere to live. All of the hospital houses were full and all of the accommodation was being used. But the Baillie Henderson hospital had four spare houses, all in good order and not being used. However, because of the old system under which the hospitals and the board were separate from Baillie Henderson and its direct chain of command back to Brisbane, no-one in Toowoomba had sufficient power to give approval for the doctor and his family to move into one of those spare houses. Six weeks later, there was still no approval. In those six weeks, that doctor could have been in Toowoomba doing his job. Eventually, through a local arrangement and without permission, the doctor moved into the house. I do not know whether permission was ever finally granted.

It is ridiculous that decisions such as that have to be made in Brisbane. In the past, myriad such instances have occurred. The system set out in this Bill is the cure for that. I have talked about the scope for integrating community health services. In a number of areas, many attempts have already been made to do this. In Toowoomba, because of the enthusiasm and the vision, I suppose, of people on the ground, it has already happened to quite a considerable degree. Again, those people have been hampered by not having the power to be able to direct an employee who is working on one job to go and help another where the need is greater. Community input is not being lost through this Bill, it is being increased. The regional health authorities will comprise five to seven members appointed by the Minister. In a couple of weeks, we will know who those appointees are. No doubt, at that time there will be both praise and criticism, depending on who one is and where one lives. However, the regional health authorities provide a

lot of opportunity for community involvement. I am sure that consumer representatives will be appointed to the authorities. They will be people who can be critical—I do not mean negative—and who can coordinate the views of the community on the services that are being provided. They will be people who can identify areas of need and who can point out where the service is going wrong and ask for it to be rectified. In addition, there will obviously be input from the medical profession, the nursing profession and people in business. So, instead of the skills of the old boards being lost, they will be advanced considerably.

**Mrs Sheldon** interjected.

**Dr FLYNN:** I am sure that we will hear about that very soon.

**Mrs Sheldon** interjected.

**Dr FLYNN:** The Government considered doing that in the legislation. However, the boards are to comprise five to seven members. As soon as one starts saying that there should be one person from business, someone with a legal background, somebody representing public medicine, another person representing private medicine, and someone representing the health professionals, before very long there would be 20 people on a board. Those sorts of people will be members of the health authorities, but it will be impossible to have all of those people on every health authority.

The new system gives immense opportunity to improve the liaison between public and private health care, especially in the planning role. For example, I am not sure whether the Toowoomba General Hospital has just obtained a CT scanner or is about to obtain one, but that hospital is the third Toowoomba hospital to receive a CT scanner. The first hospital to receive one was St Vincents, next was St Andrews and, finally, the Toowoomba General Hospital. A CT scanner, which is a very useful diagnostic aid for a number of conditions, is of critical importance when an unconscious patient has a head injury. For many years, patients who arrived at the Toowoomba General Hospital had to be sent to St Vincents if they needed a CT scan. The first CT scanner in Toowoomba should have been provided to the Toowoomba General Hospital, because that is where it is needed most as an acute diagnostic tool. That CT scanner is available for use by anybody who needs it. Obviously, it was not installed initially at the Toowoomba General Hospital because it could not be funded by the public hospital system. Why could we not have liaised with and induced a private medical practitioner to put that CT scanner in the Toowoomba General Hospital? The hospital could still have been paid for its use by public patients, but it would not have needed to go to the inconvenience of moving them. Its use in private practice could have continued.

The new health-care system will have greater scope for planning and flexibility, taking regional needs into account. In terms of staffing—for the first time there will be one unified health team with everyone being employed by the regional health authority, instead of the current mishmash in which some employees are public servants, some are Crown employees and others are board employees. Although it will be a while before differences between various awards and so forth are sorted out, when that happens there will be an improvement to the health-care system. The member for Callide mentioned a long list of what she saw as deficiencies in the health system. I am sure that her information is basically accurate. The honourable member would know that the public health system is always bulging at the seams. The items that she listed will probably be fixed within 6 months or 12 months, and then she will be able to give the House another list of deficiencies. I am not knocking her for that. But those sorts of factors have nothing to do with this Bill.

The honourable member might like to listen to this. I turn now to some decisions that have been debated in other Legislatures in this world. I refer to an article titled "A Healthier Approach to Health Care", which was reprinted from a publication of the

National Academy of Sciences. It is about the State of Oregon in America and a debate that occurred in its Legislature. The article states—

"This was the situation in Oregon in 1987 when the state legislature, faced with over \$48 million in immediate social program needs and only \$21 million available in the budget, voted to discontinue funding for most organ transplants for people on Medicaid."

That system is basically for the poor people. The article continues—

"It was argued that these were high-cost procedures that would benefit only about 30 individuals during the next two years.

. . .

The legislature's decision received little attention at first. But in late 1987 a young boy with leukemia, unable to receive state funds to pay for a bone marrow transplant, died while his parents sought public contributions to finance the operation."

There was another debate about whether or not to finance 12 organ transplants, and it was decided not to, basically because it was said that, if more money was to be spent, that was not the best way to spend it. I do not believe that that article contains any lessons for us. Obviously, Queensland is nowhere near that point at this stage. The fact that a wealthy country such as America is having debates such as that in its State Legislatures is scandalous and demonstrates how resources are used in that country. Obviously, too much money is given to their farmers to subsidise their exports. That country should be spending more money on health. That article makes the point that the health budget anywhere is finite. During the next couple of decades, we will have to make hard decisions. The member for Callide will be here next year with another list of deficiencies. We must put in place a structure that allows for the best possible decision-making in every region to take into account the community's needs, local factors and the needs of the local population, and be prepared to make some decisions about what services are most appropriate to that region. The system that is being put in place is the best available system.

Time expired.

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (9.21 p.m.): It is with a certain sense of *deja vu* that I rise to speak to the Health Services Bill. In November last year, during the Estimates debate, I spoke about the health services proposals. At that time I had the Green Papers and some of the early health updates, and I tried to guess what the system would look like and what the potential problems would be. Tonight the Bill is before the House, so members can actually revisit some of those issues, but can flesh out the legislation in detail to give a better idea of exactly the kinds of problems that the proposed system will encounter. Last year, I said that the Minister is, of course, the Minister for Health. I said that to point out that the issue of health and the psyche that this demonstrates actually flows right through the department. It flows through the update reports, the publication titled *State of Health* and the annual reports of the department. Whether or not it is deliberate, the emphasis is upon healthy individuals. But most people come in contact with the health system when they are ill or in need of some kind of treatment or diagnosis.

Last year, it concerned me that, in relation to health, there would not be an emphasis on patients—on those in our society who are ill and need some correction. In the Minister's second-reading speech, the issue of patients was relegated to the last one or two paragraphs. It was only then that I found that the Minister might have some interest in patients. What did the Minister highlight in the early part of his speech? He said—

"The key features of the Bill include—

provision for a Queensland Health Corporate Plan and strategic management . . . decentralisation of the organisation, management and delivery of health services . . . integration and coordination of all health services . . . and an emphasis on community needs and community participation in . . . planning . . ."

In addition, the objectives of the Bill place emphasis on the health and well-being of all Queenslanders according to some principles of social justice and equity. The major objectives of the Bill are a strategic framework for planning, managing and evaluating the health services, the establishment of regional health authorities and Statewide policy development and planning and resource allocation, with an emphasis on community needs. Conspicuous by its absence is any emphasis on patients. The Bill contains no definition of a patient. The objectives of the Bill include nothing relating to the quality of care that patients should receive. The Bill does not refer to the moral or ethical standards that will be required in treating ill patients. The Bill places absolutely no emphasis on individuals, whom I would have thought should have been a central focus in any health service reorganisation in this State.

The Bill places emphasis on the bureaucratic structure of the health system. The Bill looks after the rights of the chief executive officer, the inspectors, the Minister and some—perhaps not all—health professionals. However, no emphasis is placed on the rights of patients to receive high-quality health care. Nowhere in the objectives of the Bill and nowhere in the Minister's second-reading speech, except as an afterthought in the last one or two paragraphs, do we see that emphasis. The Bill is for the bureaucracy of the Health Department, not for the average Queenslanders, not for the people who are sick and not for the people who require treatment or diagnosis. The Bill is about the bureaucracy; it is not about individuals. After hearing statements made last year by the Health Minister, I said that I could see that emphasis emerging. I am extremely disappointed to find that sort of emphasis flowing through the Health Services Bill.

Another important aspect that I discussed last year is that of decentralisation. The Liberal Party supports the concept of decentralisation. We believe that there is an argument for having a regional health service—a true regional health service—in this State. Reasons exist for decentralisation. They revolve around the fact that it is more efficient and that better decisions are made by giving the authority and the responsibility for making those decisions to different regions or to different levels in the organisation of the health service. It is more efficient, because one cannot transmit all of the information that is required to be transmitted for the central organisation to make an appropriate decision. That is the rationale for decentralisation and that is the kind of thing that we would have expected to see permeate the Bill. Again, an examination of the details of the Bill reveals that exactly the opposite seems to be occurring with frightening regularity. For example, there is nothing in the objectives of the Bill about the advantages or otherwise of decentralisation. What do we see in the Bill? We see the opposite. The objectives of the Bill include matters such as the Statewide planning of policy and resource allocation. In relation to those matters—the Bill refers to centralisation rather than decentralisation. The question that concerned me last year and which concerns me when I read the details of the Bill is whether we are getting regionalisation, or decentralisation, in practice or in rhetoric. From looking at the Bill, my conclusion is that we are getting a decentralisation of rhetoric, not of substance.

It is worth examining a number of clauses of the Bill and pulling out some examples to demonstrate what is going on. At the Committee stage, the member for Landsborough will move some amendments to the Bill, which we believe address the issue of real decentralisation in the health system rather than the pseudo decentralisation on which the Minister wants to concentrate. Under clauses 3.7 and 3.21, the Minister retains a residual control to intervene in the affairs of the authorities established under this Bill. I believe that that is an appropriate residual power for the Minister to retain. It would not concern me if that were the limit of the centralisation in the Bill. Under the Westminster system, the Minister is responsible for the running of his department and should be able to make sure that he can enter into various aspects of the department when things may be going off the rails. But that is not the end of the centralisation process in this Bill. It does not revolve around just the Minister's discretion. In fact, it revolves around significant discretion for the chief executive of the organisation. Another clause determines the opening and closing of health services, which I understand, through the honourable member for Landsborough, the Minister may amend. It seems absolutely



ridiculous that, when a health authority wants to open, close or establish a new health service in an area, it has to have the prior approval of the Minister. If the Government believes in decentralisation and believes that it is in the best interests of the health service to make decisions close to where the information is on what kind of health services a local community needs, why in the heck would it require the Minister for Health to approve or not approve of the addition or subtraction of a particular health service? Yet that is in the Bill, although I understand it might be changed. Other provisions involve the same kind of principle.

The Bill provides for the transfer of powers between the department and the regional health authority. If a couple of clauses are taken together, it is found that the power to transfer resources is extremely limited. First of all, it is constrained by industrial awards. It is constrained by the Public Sector Management Commission Act. It is constrained, in a very important way, by the chief executive. When it comes to industrial relations, it is constrained not only by the clauses that are concerned with the acceptance of industry awards but also by the fact that the authority is not entitled to institute proceedings before the Industrial Court or the Industrial commission. It is not entitled to enter into any industrial agreement and it cannot be represented in any proceeding before the Industrial Court without the consent in writing of the chief executive. If one believes in decentralisation and if one believes there is a rationale for splitting up the State, it must be because one believes that the various regions are different in substantive ways. If one does not believe that, one might as well have a centralised system.

There is plenty of research which says unequivocally that, in the absence of compelling reasons for a decentralised system, the best and most efficient source is a central decision-making one. So, if the Government intends to go after a decentralised system, it has to be based upon the Government's belief or rationale for substantive differences occurring between regions. If that is true, one of the things the Government would want to be able to do, one of the kinds of flexibility it would want, is the authority to be able to negotiate and come to agreement on work conditions and work practices in the regions. If there are substantive differences that are important, one of the things that have to be varied is the work conditions for those areas, and the best people to make the agreements and to enter into those agreements are the authorities themselves. That is if the Government believes it. If it does not believe it, it does not matter; it has only the pseudo decentralisation.

**Mr McElligott:** What? Are you going to have 13 different awards?

**Dr WATSON:** That is the issue that will face Australia and Queensland in the industrial relations area over the next decade. If the Minister believes what is in the Bill, he is behind the eight ball; he is out of step with what is going on and even with the rhetoric that his Federal colleagues are starting to sprout in this area. This is the issue that will face Australia. I am saying that, if the Minister believes there are differences, he ought to have the flexibility. If he does not—and I do not think he does—this is just a farce; it is just a pseudo decentralisation and there is no actual decentralisation.

There are other aspects of the Bill, one of which refers to the authority to obtain services. It is interesting to look at clause 4.4 (1) and (2). Under subclause (1), personnel can go from the Health Department to the authority with the approval of the department whereas, under subclause (2), it is the other way round and the department can pull them back. The chief executive can pull them back not with approval, but with consultation. There is an asymmetric relationship between the department and the authority. If the Minister does not believe in decentralisation and does not believe that there is any real value in having that decentralised organisation, it does not worry him but, if he is really interested in making sure that the decisions are appropriate and are made at the right level and if he is going to have an efficient and appropriate service, there ought to be at least an equal sharing of power between those things.

Other clauses of the Bill go along a similar path. Under clause 3.37 (e), the director may—  
"subject to the delegation of the Authority concerned, enter into an annual agreement with the chief executive, at the chief executive's discretion . . ."

If the Minister has a rationale or a reason for decentralisation it has to be because there is some efficiency in having the regional authority possessing some kind of power. The annual agreement provided in the Bill does not specify that agreement has to be reached between the authority and the chief executive; rather, it is reached at the chief executive's discretion. I will not examine other parts of the Bill. I will simply indicate that the overriding impression gained from this Bill is that the Government wants to talk about regionalisation but it does not want to give the actual authority to make decisions on a day-to-day basis—consistent with that authority—to the chief executive.

There are other aspects of this Bill that I believe I ought to address in the short time available to me. I must admit that I am concerned that the role of a hospital is not well defined. It seems to me that most people first come in contact with the health system via a hospital, and I would have thought that some type of articulation between hospitals and regional authorities would have been specified in the Bill. I would like to know what kind of decisions will be sent right down to the hospital level, but there is no indication of that in the Bill.

Finally, I believe it is interesting to examine the funding. Last year I raised this matter, and I think that problems arise when an attempt is made to establish a centralised funding mechanism while trying to establish a decentralised organisation. This is an important matter because not only are the funds between the regions allocated by the chief executive but also any moneys collected must be remitted to the Department of Health on a regular basis in accordance with the provisions of the Bill. The question might be asked: how will the Minister encourage authorities to improve efficiency and become innovative in the utilisation of resources when any money the authorities may gain from doing so must be remitted immediately to the authority? It seems to me that if the Government really believes in decentralisation, those provisions should not be contained in the Bill. I do not believe this Bill will accomplish what the Minister has stated in the past he wishes to achieve. However, it will take time to determine whether that is the case. If the Minister wants to achieve real decentralisation, I suggest that he rescind some of the powers of the chief executive. At the Committee stage, the member for Landsborough will give him the opportunity to establish a real decentralised organisation.

**Mr FOLEY** (Yeronga) (9.41 p.m.): During this debate, one must be aware of the presence of Ned Hanlon. This year, the Parliament of Queensland has addressed the two important legacies left by that great Labor leader, Ned Hanlon. The first legacy is one that this Parliament has very wisely disposed of, namely, the electoral gerrymander. However, I am pleased to say that Ned Hanlon's other great legacy to Queensland, namely, the free hospital system, has been left in the very fine hands of the Minister for Health, Mr McElligott. Let Mr Hanlon be remembered in the annals of Queensland's history for his care of the health of Queenslanders, if not for electoral reform.

I turn now to the important reform introduced by this Bill, which is quality assurance. For too long, it has been the practise in health services for decisions to be made on a hierarchical basis without the benefit of consumer input and without the benefit of quality assurance controls. Anyone who has worked in the provision of human services knows that it is necessary to have feedback and to allow consumers of the services to have a say. I am delighted that this Bill makes provision for quality assurance to be an integral part of the system because it is not sufficient to move from the institution of the hospital into the community. It is also necessary to ensure that the provision of services is maintained at a high standard. Many legal impediments stand in the way of introducing a consumer perspective and quality assurance control. Those legal impediments have largely been disposed of by the provisions of clauses 2.10 and subsequent clauses contained in the Bill.

It has been said by some members of the medical fraternity that the systems of quality assurance might tend to be draconian and that those systems might fail to give due recognition to the rights of health care providers. I am delighted that, under this Government, respect is shown for the rules of natural justice. Indeed, they have been enshrined in the Bill in clause 2.10. The provisions to which I refer are supplementary

to the other provisions that appear in subsequent clauses to ensure that this is not a Star Chamber, but is indeed a responsible, modern and progressive instrument for ensuring that the health of Queenslanders is properly protected.

Provision is made in clause 2.11 to ensure confidentiality. If those bodies are to function effectively, that is vitally important, because true candour is not possible in such circumstances unless there be a guarantee of confidentiality. Moreover, these are not witch-hunts; they are not a committee set up to gather evidence for other purposes; and, lest there be any shadow of misunderstanding about that, the legislation disposes of any such misconception in the provisions of clause 2.13, which provides that the findings of a committee are not evidence of certain matters and, indeed, are not admissible as evidence in any proceedings that the procedure or practice was careless or inadequate.

The problem faced by those who would venture into this area of reforming health administration so as to make it more accountable is that many are deterred by threat of legal liability. It is good to see, accordingly, that the Bill provides for protection from personal liability and, in particular, that the law of defamation has been addressed so as to ensure that the law relating, for example, to qualified privilege in defamation proceedings is properly integrated with this provision. Clause 2.14 (2) of the Bill sets out the relevant provisions with respect to defamation to cover the defence of qualified privilege arising—in short, to ensure that the inquiries of this committee will not be sabotaged by fear unnecessarily of proceedings for defamation. The necessity of having such committees is, of course, no substitute for the establishment of democratic input by consumers and by members of the community. So that those important quality control measures do need to be read together with the general functions of regional health authorities as set out in the provisions of clause 3.18. Let me draw the attention of the House to a most important aspect of that legislation, namely, the provision in clause 3.18 (3) for the establishment of consultative committees. What a refreshing breath of air into a system which came to resemble Cronin's *Citadel*!

**Mr Schwarten:** There are no explosives in this one, though.

**Mr FOLEY:** Quite so. That is quite appropriately noted. What that makes possible for the first time under our health care system is the establishment of a forum for members of the community or for relevant community organisations in relation to health services to consult—to have an input—and in that respect it is pleasing to see that the health professionals are moving in such a progressive way. Dare I say that they are moving in a more progressive way in this respect than the members of my own profession, the legal profession, who have much to learn from the provisions so wisely introduced by the Honourable Minister for Health.

In modern times, accountability is the name of the game and professional providers of services can no longer hide behind the mystique of the stethoscope any more than they can hide behind the mystique of the wig and gown. What this does is to take the great achievements that Ned Hanlon gave this State to ensure that ordinary working men and women and their families would have access to a free hospital system and it takes it out into the community. It says that health care is not just about the institution, it is about the community at large, and it is also about the community and the patients having a say. It echoes in that respect the important provisions introduced last year in this House by the Honourable Deputy Premier, Mr Burns, which enshrined in legislation—

**Mrs McCAULEY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the state of the House

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark):** Order! Ring the bells.

**Mr FOLEY:** I am not sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether my speech has driven them from the House or whether my speech is now in the process of summoning them back to the Chamber. I prefer the latter construction.

**Mr McGrady:** I am sure that the latter is correct, Mr Foley.

**Mr FOLEY:** I thank the honourable member for Mount Isa for his generous observation. They—  
"Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

In short, this Bill sets up a legal structure to enable health services to be democratised.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member should not continue until a quorum is formed.

**Mr FOLEY:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

*Quorum formed.*

**Mr FOLEY:** I am delighted with the influx of members to hear the peroration of this address. I am particularly delighted that the members of the National Party have come back into the Chamber to hear the sentiments of praise I have expressed in respect of our earlier Labor leader, Mr Hanlon, whose views in relation to electoral reform so greatly resemble their own current views.

In short, this provides for the democratisation of health services. It means that the ordinary citizen can have a say in the running of the system, and it means that the system will no longer be dominated by professionals who have a vested interest in their own position but will be subject to proper scrutiny through quality assurance committees which will have integrated with them proper legal protection. I congratulate the Minister on introducing the legislation.

**Mr GILMORE** (Tablelands) (9.54 p.m.): One must question some of the things that have been said in this Chamber today, and certainly tonight, in respect of the ideologies that are apparently driving the Minister in what he is intending to do with changes to the Queensland health system. One of the questions that I believe should always be asked about legislation when it is introduced relates to the benefit that is to be gained from it, what that legislation will mean to the person on the street or, in this case, the person who arrives at a hospital, for whatever reason. What benefit will there be for that person, and what will be the ultimate benefit to the community that provides the service? One has to question the strengths or the weaknesses behind this legislation and, indeed, the determination to pursue it.

I will speak fairly briefly, but I will address the Home Medical Aids Scheme, which has been a matter of some concern to me for some time. I am very concerned that since this Government came to power and since this Minister took over the Health Department, there have been some serious deficits indeed in respect of the provision of home medical aids to those people in our community who cannot look after themselves. I refer to paraplegics and other people who are unable to look after themselves, the chronically ill and so on. In so doing, I want to read from a letter that I received from the Minister and the attached briefing notes because I think it is very important that these matters be brought to the attention of the Parliament. The Minister addressed the letter to me as the member for Tablelands. I believe that it was subsequent to some requests that I made of the Minister for special assistance for a particular constituent of mine and, at a later time, for other constituents who had been wheelchair bound or in other ways found that they were in need of medical assistance for chronic disability. In that letter the Minister says—

"You may have been contacted by constituents in respect of changes that have had to be made"—

and I emphasise the word "had"—

"to the Home Medical Aids Scheme. The Home Medical Aids Scheme is, of course, designed to assist disabled persons by providing medical aids and equipment to allow them a basic level of independence in their own home."

He goes on to say—

"Unfortunately, there are considerable cost pressures on the Scheme brought about by increased costs of equipment and a massive increase in demand.

Although it is possible to make some estimate of likely cost increase, it is impossible to forecast demand and the additional demand has exceeded all forecasts.

At the present rate of expenditure, the Scheme will run out of money completely in about February of next year.

Consequently, I have had to make some urgent adjustments to the Scheme."

What the Minister is saying in that letter is that the health requirements of the disabled and the chronically ill in this State are no longer dictated by need; they are dictated by the Treasury. It is a Budget-driven piece of correspondence which is an absolute disgrace and an indictment on this Government's lack of concern for those people who are simply unable to help themselves. The Minister goes on to say— "A briefing paper is attached which sets out the details so that you might respond to your constituents. Obviously there will be some negative impact on some people but costs have to be contained."

**Mr McElligott:** How old is this?

**Mr Comben:** This was in your speech last year.

**Mr GILMORE:** That is okay. I have not finished with it yet. This issue is still current. It is a matter of serious concern to my constituents. I will leave the letter and go on to the briefing notes. They are headed "Briefing Notes for Parliamentary Members". The subheading is "Queensland Home Medical Aids Scheme". The notes state—

"The Scheme has provided aids and equipment as under:-

Permanent Loan Items—

Wheelchairs; Pressure Cushions; Bathroom Aids; Walking Aids; Communication Aids; Pumps (Suction and Feeding); Mattresses; Hoists; Home Modifications; Apnoea Alarms; Nebulizers.

and Medical Aids (consumables)—

Incontinence Equipment/Disposable Pads; Oxygen; Breast Prostheses; Wigs; Surgical Shoes; Orthoses."

The Minister goes on to try to explain the need for the changes. He says that there has been "a massive increase in community demand for assistance". I wonder to what the Minister attributes that massive increase in demand. Is it simply people who are acting improperly and making demands upon his department, or are these people genuinely in need? The Minister says—

"The significantly increased cost associated with running the Scheme has therefore necessitated the following policy changes:-

Limiting Departmental Contributions

Incontinence Aids—Disposable Pads

The Department previously provided disposable pads at a usage rate of five (5) pads per day at three (3) monthly intervals (approximately 450 pads per order).

This supply has been reduced"—

and I want honourable members to listen to this because I am talking about people who are confined to wheelchairs and others who are in desperate need—

"to 200 pads per four (4) month order for light moderate absorbency pads and to 300 pads per four (4) month order for heavy pads."

The situation has arisen in which, on the Minister's own admission, people who are confined to wheelchairs and people who are unable to assist themselves—who get insufficient assistance from Government—are being forced into providing between \$100 and \$200 if they are using disposable pads at a higher rate than that provided. The original provision of those pads was accepted as being reasonable. Now it has been cut, and those people who cannot help themselves have been discriminated against by this Government. The notes further state—

"The age for commencing provision of disposable nappies for incontinent children has been raised from 3 years to 5 years."

I will repeat that because I think that some of the ladies on the other side of the House need to hear this—

"The age for commencing provision of disposable nappies for incontinent children has been raised from 3 years to 5 years."

I ask members opposite to consider that statement and think about the implications for those people in the community who have difficult and desperately ill children.

The Government has cut back the benefit for surgical shoes by \$50. In regard to wheelchair repairs—people now have to pay for their own replacement tyres and tubes, etc. I believe that the community should regard this attack on disabled people as horrifying and quite unconscionable. The Minister further states—

"Suspension of supply of certain items for the remainder of 1990/91 financial year.

Supply of the following items have been suspended.

- Home modifications (e.g. wheelchair ramps, relocation of bathroom fittings)."

This is a great way for a caring Government to go! When a person is released from the spinal unit of the Princess Alexandra Hospital, he is sent home in a wheelchair but a wheelchair ramp is not provided at his home. Members of the Government cannot accept that. What is wrong with them? They sit there and say, "That's fine. It doesn't matter if somebody is sitting in a wheelchair and cannot get inside the house. He sits in the garage." That is great!" That is the sort of thing that has happened with this Government. It has also transferred certain items to hospitals with no extra budgetary allocation for this transfer. The Minister stated—

"The following items have been deleted from the Scheme's approved list but will be provided to eligible clients through hospitals.

- Nebulisers

Used for the treatment of asthmatic children and adults.

- SIDS alarms

Monitoring devices for infants at risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome."

The Government says that people do not need those items any more. It does not matter if little children die. Their parents can make new ones. He continues—

"- Pumps

Feeding and suction pumps used for the care and treatment of severely disabled children.

Lymphoedema pumps usually used for the reduction of chronic swelling of the arm following mastectomy."

After having taken away those pumps for that treatment, he has also taken away breast prostheses. I have had serious difficulty getting breast prostheses for women in my electorate who have undergone radical surgery for breast cancer, and there is now a waiting-list for prostheses. It is simply unconscionable conduct by this Government. As if the women who undergo radical surgery for that ailment have not suffered sufficiently from the trauma of losing a breast and the trauma of overcoming the social difficulties that arise as a result of that operation—now they find themselves without access to a breast prostheses. It is an absolute scandal. The Minister cannot tell me that it does not happen. It does happen. It is happening today.

The letter further states—

"- Wigs

Supplied to persons who have suffered loss of hair as a result of disease or medical treatment e.g. cancer therapy."

People lose their hair from chemotherapy. People now do not have access to wigs, and this Government does not care.

**Mr McEiligott:** Why not?

**Mr GILMORE:** Because the hospitals do not have sufficient funds to provide wigs or spectacles. There is a four-month waiting-list for spectacles.

**Mrs McCauley:** Run out of money.

**Mr GILMORE:** The Government has run out of money.

**Mr McEiligott:** Absolute rubbish!

**Mr GILMORE:** It is not absolute rubbish. The Minister should go and find out what is happening in the community. It is happening. It is coming through my electorate office.

**Mr McEiligott:** You write to me and tell me.

**Mr GILMORE:** I do not have to write to the Minister. I am standing in the Parliament of Queensland telling him that it is happening out there, and yet he does not believe me.

**Mr McEiligott:** Give me a specific example.

**Mr GILMORE:** No worries. I will find a dozen examples for him. The Minister has either not provided sufficient funds or simply does not know what is happening in the community. Now I come to the most damning statement of all. After having said that the Government is going to remove their pumps, their breast prostheses and their wigs, the Minister then states—

"Establishment of waiting lists

Supply of items included on the Scheme's approved list, including the items subject to changes as above, will be subject to fund availability on a monthly basis. This will result in waiting lists for supply being introduced. These will be minimised as far as possible."

The Minister now sits there and tells me that it is not happening. Of course it is happening. It is in his own document.

**Mr McEiligott:** How old is that document?

**Mr GILMORE:** It does not matter how old the document is. It is still happening out there.

**Mr McEiligott:** It does matter, because that has been changed.

**Mr GILMORE:** Does the Minister believe that just by waving his hands at me it is going to go away? He should believe me when I say that it is happening out in the community. He only has to ask my colleagues or his colleagues.

**Mr McEiligott:** Write to me.

**Mr GILMORE:** The Minister should ask his colleagues whether they can get breast prostheses for their constituents. A couple of other areas in respect of the provision of health services need to be addressed. This Government is continually talking about equity and the cost-effectiveness of the provision of the service. They are all wonderful things to say. However, at the present time, the Minister is moving to close the limb clinic in Townsville. I have been contacted by many of my constituents, one of whom has one leg and one arm, and he works for a living. That is more than some of the members on the Government benches do. This person has been denied access to the limb clinic in Townsville. If he wants service for his limbs or new limbs provided, he will have to travel to Brisbane. Along with other people who require this service, he is

being denied this service--and yet the Minister talks about equity and cost-effectiveness. He is forgetting about the person in the street. It is just simply not fair.

I turn to the provision of dialysis facilities in far-north Queensland. There are simply insufficient dialysis machines in far-north Queensland, and I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, are fully aware of that position.

**Mr McElligott:** Are you saying this has happened in the last 16 months?

**Mr GILMORE:** I hope that the Minister does not require dialysis facilities. If he does, he should not go to north Queensland.

**Mr McElligott:** Are you saying it is my fault?

**Mr GILMORE:** I am saying that the Minister has not addressed the problem, and this document that I have produced simply says that he is not about to address it. It lists those areas that he is not handling and he is not about to provide sufficient equipment in the Cairns Base Hospital for emergencies. The staff is working with old equipment, and the Minister is doing about it.

The Minister is doing nothing to address the needs of dialysis patients, cancer patients or people who have lost limbs. That is a total indictment of what he is setting out to do. The Minister says continually that this Government is about equity and the provision of services. Earlier in this debate, the member for Yeronga, Mr Foley, went on with a load of idealistic claptrap. He said that it was extraordinary how this new legislation would change the provision of health services to Queenslanders. This legislation will not matter one little bit to the people on the street. It will not matter to the person who wants to receive outpatient service. It will not matter to the people who are ill or those who are sitting in wheelchairs and cannot get incontinence pads. The Minister does not care. What he is attempting to do with this legislation will not improve the provision of health services to the people of Queensland.

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton North) (10.09 p.m.): I thank honourable members for their forbearance in listening to—and I will borrow his words—the claptrap of the honourable member for Tablelands as he attempted to mislead this House by his attack upon the disabled people of this State. He used them as a great cover to mask over the abhorrent dealings that his Government, when in power, perpetrated on the people of Queensland via the health system. He produced some dubious figures which were plucked out of the air. He posted the worst case scenario that could possibly be cited in this place to try to discredit this Government in its attempt to rationalise the health industry in this State. Some 25 years ago, the Department of Education regionalised its activities in this State. It is a credit to those who sit opposite and to their forebears that they had the foresight to do so.

**Mr Littleproud:** But you didn't say anything like that when you represented the teachers.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I inform the disastrous honourable member for Condamine, who was the worst Education Minister whom the Lord ever put breath into, that at that time the legislation was supported by the Labor Party. The honesty of the people opposite in standing up for the health system in this State ought to be seen for what it is. When the National Party was in Government, it was responsible for paying nurses in this State the lowest wage of any being paid to nurses in any State in Australia. The people at the workface had the worst working conditions and the worst pay of any health workers in Australia. Yet members opposite have the hide to stand in this place tonight and preach to us on this side about commitment to health services in this State. In their attempt to exonerate themselves——

**Mr Smyth:** They have gone very quiet.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** They have gone very quiet; I noticed that. In their attempt to exonerate themselves, they have tried to disguise their real agenda in health. When in



Government, the National Party's agenda on health in this State was to appoint its mates to 59 boards throughout the State. In most cases, the appointees were lame-duck people who would not know a bandage from a backside and would not know which end to put it on, either. It is to the credit of some of the people who were appointed that the system worked as well as it did under the circumstances that existed. I do not want any honourable member to get me wrong. I do not want anyone to presume that I think that system worked well, because it did not. The people who were appointed to those boards were there not because they knew anything about medicine, not because—

**Mr Littleproud:** What about teachers on p. and c. associations?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** When the truth comes out, listen to them buck about it. When the truth comes out, members opposite do not want to know about it. But how were those people appointed to those boards? They had the green and gold pass. Some of the appointees were pig-farmers, dairy farmers and goodness knows what. They were probably fairly good at veterinary science but they knew nothing about—

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Listen to the dill opposite wanting to buck about it. He knows nothing about it, either.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** The honourable member is engaging in tedious repetition.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark):** Order! There is no point of order.

**An honourable member:** Didn't you know, he's a chicken-farmer.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I did not hear the honourable member's interjection. It was straight out of *Yes, Minister* when recently in the press the honourable member for Condamine said that, when he was Education Minister, he always did what the director-general told him to do. No wonder the education system was as bad as it was when I worked in it. Mr Littleproud should not interject on me again otherwise his chickens will turn into emus and kick his lavatory down.

The whole point of this debate is to bring about accountability in the health system of this State. Members opposite want to discredit the Government's intentions in its delivery of health services to the people of Queensland. When it suits them, they want to talk about decentralisation, but tonight they do not want decentralisation. This Government wants to bring more people out of the centralist system that was set up by the National Party Government and put them out into the regions. Members opposite do not want that to be done. In addition, they do not want people to be appointed on the basis of merit. The facts remain that, as of 1 July, the people who will be in charge of the regions in this State are very, very well qualified, unlike the people who were appointed by the National Party Government. I challenge any members opposite who are able to read this document to look at the qualifications that are possessed by the people who will be appointed to the Health Department.

At this stage, I congratulate the Minister on making a very appropriate appointment to the central regional health authority. The appointee is Ms Susan Bradshaw, who is eminently well qualified to hold the position to which she has been appointed. For the benefit of those members opposite who are unable to read, I will read her statement. If they want to disagree with this, they should come out and say so now. She said—

"The job will enable me to apply the skills and experience I already have in health service provision at all levels of the health system—central, regional and the local service level—but in a way which will need to be sensitive to the different environment and needs of the Central Region."

That is a great statement. The pretender from Biloela is bucketing the health system in Queensland as much as she can. She is on the beak with the nursing staff—the workers—at the Rockhampton Base Hospital. I do not expect her to acknowledge that the people who are being appointed to the health authorities are human beings and qualified health professionals. That is totally anathema to members of the National Party, who wanted to

put dairy-farmers and pig-farmers in charge of the health system in this State. They thought that that system would work well. I am not deriding pig-farmers or dairy-farmers, but I do not believe that they are the most appropriate people to be put in charge of regional health authorities. I will always disagree with the National Party's proposal, when one needs a green and gold entry pass to gain those particular positions.

**Mrs Sheldon:** Do you need a doctor?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** It is a wonder that the honourable member for Landsborough does not want to treat me. I will take my chance with the dairy-farmers in the National Party. You should not poke your bib into something that you know nothing about. A while ago in this House, you wanted the whole issue thrown out. I understand why the Liberal Party would want to throw the baby out with the bath water. You want to go back to centralism. That is why you are centrally refined and huddled in the corner with one mate in the Liberals.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark):** Order! The member will direct his remarks through the Chair.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I was provoked, Madam Deputy Speaker. I never overreact to any situation. I compliment the Minister on a document that is available——

**Mr Coomber** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** If the honourable member wants another bait, he should keep interjecting—keep it up, boofhead! I know about his dubious dealings in the pharmaceutical industry in this State.

Unlike the dubious pharmacist from the Gold Coast, I compliment the Minister on an excellent document that is provided to every health professional in this State. The document is *State of Health*, which is a very easily understood document that is widely acclaimed by every person in the health industry in this State, including private doctors. Recently, when I visited my local doctor, he had this document on his desk. He said that it was time that the sorts of messages in it were circulated by the State Health Department. The document is easily understood. Even members of the National Party could understand it. The document is in large print, and illustrates that this is an open and accountable Government that is telling the people who work in the industry what it is all about. The myths, legends, lies and deceit that are perpetrated by members who inhabit the Opposition benches do not wash with the people of Queensland. It is to the Minister's credit that he has circulated such a document and visits various health institutions in this State. In fact, the Minister has visited every health-care outlet in Rockhampton, including the base hospital and the Norman Street aged care facility. Because the Minister does that, he is well respected. He does not hide behind the charade of members opposite who believed that they knew what was best for everybody.

**Mr Johnson:** Sit him down.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Once again, I am provoked by the honourable member who wants his mates to be appointed to the Longreach Hospitals Board. The honourable member is crooked that this Government has regionalised the entire hospital service in this State. He does not understand the concept of the delivery of quality health care. He still sees it as a sinecure for his mates. I congratulate this Government on taking the initiative and making the health system in Queensland accountable. As the honourable member for Yeronga said, Ned Hanlon——

**An Opposition member:** "Red Ned".

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** He was not "Red Ned" at all. The honourable member is referring to "Red Ted" Theodore. He is about 30 years out. Ned Hanlon instituted the public hospital system in this State and the system of training doctors in those public hospitals. That system, which continues to this day, has worked very well. Not even the former National Party Government was game to interfere with that program. During the 32 years of National Party neglect of health services in this State, people working

in that industry were relegated to the lowest ranks in terms of pay and professional treatment. They were forced to take strike action, because the former National Party Government would not talk to them. It locked them out of any negotiations. That is not what this Government intends to do. It talks to those people. This Government values trade unionism in this State. The National Party did not talk to those people. It treated them as less than nothing. This Government is not about doing that. Since the Labor Party has been in Government, nurses in this State have been treated not as second-class citizens, not as used vacuum cleaners as members opposite treated them, but as decent human beings who deliver quality health care to the people of this State, and they will be paid accordingly. Honourable members opposite know it as well as I do.

The fact remains that it has taken a Labor Government to redress the health issues in this State. The benign whingeings of members such as the honourable member for Tablelands ought to be taken for what they are. They are hollow. They have a hollow ring to them. When the National Party was in power, it ensured that the health system in this State was treated in the same way that the education system was treated, which was to put it as low as possible. In other words, keep them uneducated and bury their mistakes so that they cannot complain about it. With those few words, I wholeheartedly support the Bill.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory) (10.24 p.m.): What a charade from the member for Rockhampton North. It worries me greatly. I am glad that we have Dr John Flynn in the House. Tonight, he gave me a prescription. I hope that it is not the same one that he gave to the honourable member for Rockhampton North.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. I am feeling quite well as a result of having consulted with Dr Flynn. I hope that he has prescribed cyanide for the honourable member.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Clark): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr Schwarten:** Hide behind a woman's skirt.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I have never done that in my life. The main issue that I want to raise tonight is that of hospitals boards. We are talking about decentralisation of the facilities in the bush. The hands-on approach—the hands-on service—is being taken away. People's ability to deal with hospitals in the bush and in regional areas is being taken away from them. Earlier, the honourable member for Yeronga mentioned democratisation—giving people a say in the running of their own hospitals. This is not my idea of giving people a say; it is my idea of taking people's say away from them. The Government should look long and hard at that issue. Earlier tonight, my colleague the honourable member for Warrego said that the Government has been having difficulty in getting people to manage a couple of regional offices at Roma and Longreach. That will be a problem. The Government will have difficulty in getting people to go to those places. Many people do not want to live in the bush.

Last year, at Easter-time in Longreach, the Minister said that hospitals boards have been efficient for a long period. To date, they have been 98 per cent efficient. They have done a very good job. When something is efficient, why abolish it? That is something that I cannot fathom. It is hypocritical. When something is working, why take it away? The Government rushed Bills through the House on adoption and concessional registration for farmers. The next thing we knew, it gave the services back. It will be the same old trick with this Bill, too. It is a socialist trick to take three steps forward and two steps back. In time, that is exactly what will happen with this Bill.

**Dr Flynn:** At least that's still one step forward.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I do not think that it is one step forward at all. Being a medical man, he would have to agree that we have real problems with medical services in the

bush. This Bill will create more problems. In my electorate, we have problems with the little hospital at Isisford. That clinic will cease to be a seven-day clinic. It has been recommended that it operate only on weekdays. That is just not on. One never knows when a major accident or a disaster will occur requiring the use of that facility. Are the people in isolated and remote areas second-rate citizens who do not deserve the same medical treatment as that received by people in metropolitan areas? It worries me greatly that such facilities can be down-graded. That is exactly the way that I feel about this. Those facilities are being down-graded. It is a very serious state of affairs.

**Mr McEiligott:** You're not fair dinkum.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I am fair dinkum.

**Mr McEiligott:** No, you're not.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Yes, I am. The Minister should take a long, hard look at the problem that confronts the people at Isisford. Tonight, I spoke to one of the people from the Quilpie Hospitals Board. There are fears that the hospital at Quilpie will be made a holding centre from which people will be transferred to Charleville. That is fair enough. Charleville has a good, up-graded hospital. However, it must be remembered that Quilpie is 220 kilometres away from Charleville and that its hospital covers a large area to the west, to the south and to the north. Because those hospitals cover a very large area, they are important facilities in remote areas. Their jurisdiction is very important.

No matter where hospitals are located—whether they are in the bush or in the city—they are similar to railways. They are an essential service. It is paramount that medical treatment in this State be maintained as it is today and that people be given full treatment and service wherever possible. Those little places in regional and remote areas possibly need more attention than the larger hospitals in provincial cities and metropolitan areas. For the people who live in those areas, that is one of the few avenues for health treatment. I do not want to continue any longer. That was the one point that greatly concerned me and it has done so for a long time. I wanted to put it on the record. Certainly, this regionalisation—or decentralisation—worries me greatly. I hope that it works but I cannot see it working.

**Mr DOLLIN** (Maryborough) (10.31 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to debate the Health Services Bill, which reforms the organisation of the health service in the State of Queensland. The Bill will provide for the future management of the public health service and represents the most comprehensive change to our public health system in over 40 years. For 40 years, our public health system has been controlled by the Department of Health centred in Brisbane and hospitals boards that have outlived their usefulness. They served the community well for many years. However, during the past 40 years, better roads, better means of transport and superior communications and techniques have called for a change. If we are to become more responsive to community needs and to supply a cost-efficient, quality health service consistent with what is supplied in the rest of Australia, we need to look at this system and update it.

The Bill will be decentralise the State health services, something which Opposition members really have not caught onto. They have always complained about George Street control of everything. Now that is being altered. This is an attempt to put it out where it belongs—in the regions. The establishment of regions and the regionalisation of services will mean that decision-making, treatment and service delivery, together with financial and resources management decisions, will be made by people at the local level—by local people—with the benefit of local knowledge. That surely has to be an advantage. We have had hospitals boards, and some of them have been very good. They have serviced us well. They were set up in the horse and sulky era when it was difficult to transport a patient even 20 miles. Recently, I took a little drive out to Charleville, up to Barcaldine and out to Longreach. I did not go off the bitumen. In fact, I did not go off a road on which my car did not want to do 140 kilometres an hour, although I did not let it do it.

The key features of this Bill are provided for in the Queensland Health Corporate Plan and the strategic management of policy, planning and resource allocation. The decentralisation of the organisation, management and delivery of health services will be transferred from a central management situation to regional grassroots management. Cop that! Grassroots! These arrangements will ensure that the central department is not involved in unnecessary administrative duplication and that services are sensitive to the needs of the communities. How often have we had the complaint which I have had from the Maryborough Hospital, "Look, it takes three months to get a decision out of Brisbane on these things." At least a regional director can be asked, "Hey, mate, what's the go? Let's get this thing fixed."

**Mr Johnson:** And you can have a swim while you're talking to him.

**Mr DOLLIN:** That is right, down at Hervey Bay where the Wide Bay/Burnett regional office is situated. That is right where Mr Nunn is located. It is handy to Maryborough, handy to Bundaberg and handy to Gympie. It is a good situation. A regional director will be appointed for each health region and will act on behalf of the authority to ensure the effective and efficient management of services in those particular regions. The regional director will hold office under the Public Service Management and Employment Act. We look after all our people. Appointment to the authorities will be made by the Governor in Council following advertisement and application. The selection of members will take into account the need for appropriate community representation as well as the particular expertise and experience each appointee can bring to this role. Nobody wants to rubbish the old boards, but we did have timber-cutters—

**Mr Johnson:** What's going to be the cheapest—the hospitals boards or this new idea?

**Mr DOLLIN:** This will be the most efficient and the cheapest in the long term.

**Mr Johnson:** It will not.

**Mr DOLLIN:** It will be and it is very important that it be the most efficient.

**A Government member:** Spend a dollar to save a dollar.

**Mr DOLLIN:** We are not going to lose one and gain one when it comes to lives.

**Mr Johnson:** What are you taking them away for?

**Mr DOLLIN:** Because, as I said, they belong to the horse and sulky era. They did a good job.

**Mr Johnson:** Why don't you leave them there?

**Mr DOLLIN:** Because we have left the horse and sulky era and we now drive motorcars. In those regions with teaching hospitals, authorities may have additional members appointed from academic institutions to represent those special interests—just like the honourable member and me, academic fellows. The regional health authorities will assume responsibility for all public sector health delivery and coordination at the regional level. They will be required to develop regional plans that are based on an assessment of local health needs. With all due respect to the old boards, in many cases they did not have this ability. They did not have those sort of expert people.

**Mr Johnson:** They had hands on contact though, didn't they?

**Mr DOLLIN:** We are still keeping that. The honourable member should just follow me through.

**Mr Johnson:** They weren't public servants.

**Mr DOLLIN:** No. They will be back out in the regions with the ordinary people. The honourable member has not read the Bill properly. The legitimate interests of the wider community have been recognised in the Bill which provides for the establishment

of consultative committees. This is where we keep to the grassroots stuff. These committees will enable community health organisations, private health services, public and local authorities, as well as the general public, to participate in health planning. This is the bit the honourable member missed when he read the Bill.

**Mr Johnson:** How much is it going to cost you to transport people to get health care?

**Mr DOLLIN:** Nothing, my good friend. The Government is committed to ensuring that health services are of the highest quality, and the Bill provides for the establishment of approved quality assurance committees in our hospitals and other health agencies. These committees will assess and evaluate the quality of services, including the review of clinical practices. Professional associations and other approved organisations will also have the opportunity to establish quality assurance committees with the statutory protection afforded by this Bill. I have explained very plainly all the things that the honourable member was concerned about and I hope that he will now settle down.

This Bill will provide properly constituted quality assurance committees with protection from the threat of legal action, which has been an impediment to development of this area in the past. People were not game to make decisions in case they were dragged before the courts and had to cough up \$1,000 or so. Members can also be assured that the privacy of patients in Queensland's public health system is protected by this legislation. This Bill will be a blessing to the Wide Bay/Burnett region, especially the Maryborough Base Hospital. In spite of all the rhetoric about how perfectly the present system has been working, this Bill will knock it to bits a little bit.

**Mr Johnson:** It worked well, so why "knock it to bits a little bit"?

**Mr DOLLIN:** It worked very well for a long time.

**Mr Johnson:** But why only a little bit?

**Mr DOLLIN:** The honourable member should just listen, and I will explain it all to him. The Maryborough Base Hospital had reached the stage at which it could no longer give the citizens of the Wide Bay/Burnett area a proper, comprehensive health service.

**Mr Johnson:** Why change it?

**Mr DOLLIN:** If the honourable member listens, I will tell him why. In fact, the situation at the Maryborough Base Hospital had deteriorated to a point that the board had to draw up a list of services that were proposed to be discontinued. On 1 October 1990, following the board's executive meeting, the following actions were proposed to be taken: closure of the nurses' quarters; closure of the dining room; cessation of the domestic cleaning of quarters and flats; closure of the outpatient department; closure of a public ward and a disabled persons ward.

**Mr Johnson:** Why not just close the whole lot down?

**Mr DOLLIN:** I inform the honourable member that this was the system administered by the National Party Government. The list also included the closure of the day hospital; the closure of psychiatric services; no staff conferences or seminars; no prosthetic operations—I believe that that involves the hip; no SARAS leave—and I do not know what that means; no relief for shortages in paramedical areas, nurses or orderlies, domestics and wardsmen, and for the dental clinic; reduction of establishments from (a) to (g)—and I do not know what that means, either, but it was going to knock something off.

**Mr Johnson:** Did you write this?

**Mr DOLLIN:** No. This was written by the hospitals board. The list also included the elimination of medical officers paid as specialists; the reduction of the establishment—medical records; and other suggested savings from the floor, that is, no staff accommodation. In the short term, it was requested that the board implement the following: the elimination of elective prosthetic operations; the elimination of psychiatric services; the elimination of conference leave; the elimination of staff relief; the elimination of medical officers paid as specialists; and the elimination of SARAS. As honourable members would no doubt be aware, matters had reached a sad state of affairs. I became so concerned about the likely loss of public health services in my electorate that I asked the Acting Minister for Health to intervene.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr DOLLIN:** Our good Health Minister was overseas picking up points on ways to do things properly in Queensland. A new tri-executive was put in place, and I am pleased to report that the hospital is now back on the rails and going from strength to strength. None of the services on the list I have mentioned was lost. The board was \$600,000 behind in funding because it had overspent, and the loss had to be made up in the next budget.

**Mr Nunn:** Good management!

**Mr DOLLIN:** Yes. I have no doubt that by virtue of this legislation, health services management will continue to improve. For some years, the Lady Musgrave Maternity Hospital at Maryborough did not have an operating theatre where a caesarean birth could be performed. This meant that mothers needing this type of operation had to be placed in an ambulance, transported some hundreds of metres—

**Mr Johnson:** Hundreds of metres?

**Mr DOLLIN:** Yes, hundreds of metres. I could not measure how far away it was, so I left myself some leeway. The mothers then had to be put into a lift to reach the operating theatre at the Maryborough Base Hospital. If the baby was not born by that time, the caesarean operation was performed. The former member for Maryborough, Mr Alison, either would not or could not see this potentially dangerous problem. If he did, he did not do anything to remedy the situation. In fact, he stated that as this had been the practice for a number of years, the service was quite satisfactory because a mother had not died. He could not see any reason to take action to resolve the problems.

**Mr Nunn** interjected.

**Mr DOLLIN:** He said something similar.

**Mr Nunn:** He would.

**Mr DOLLIN:** I brought this problem to the attention of the present Minister, Mr Ken McElligott, who made available \$2m to remedy this potentially dangerous problem—to the eternal gratitude of me and the citizens of Maryborough. The seriousness of the situation can be conveyed by considering that the Minister only had to take one look to make available \$2m after \$150m worth of property had been washed away by floods. Work is still being carried out to improve the operating theatre. In the meantime, I sincerely hope that a mother's life is not lost. I know that the Minister is making all haste to have the problems remedied because he has made funds available and the completion of the project is now up to others.

**Mr Johnson:** While he is building new facilities, he is taking away the ones in the west.

**Mr DOLLIN:** No, the Minister did not take away facilities from the west. Anything that was lost in the west was washed away in the floods. I return now to the provisions of the Bill. The regional director's responsibility will be to manage efficiently and effectively the allocated financial and personnel resources to achieve the delivery of

necessary public sector health services. With all due respect to Queensland's hospitals boards, there can be no doubt that there was not one Labor supporter among them—although that was probably sheer coincidence.

**Mr Johnson:** There won't be too many Labor supporters.

**Mr DOLLIN:** The member for Gregory should take note that to keep a grassroots contact with management and staff, a consultative committee will be set up. Selection of health consultative committees and their members and the location of committees will be determined by the Regional Health Authority. In regions where sectors are based on geographic locations, communities may best be served if these committees are established at sector level. The number of committees may vary considerably from region to region. Sparsely populated regions—for example, the Roma electorate—will be better represented by a greater number of committees with smaller memberships, and the converse will apply to metropolitan areas. It is important that all sectors of the community have equal opportunity of representation and that the constitution of committees reflects the community they serve. Consideration should be given to geographic representation, race/ethnic background, age, gender, established community group representation, representation from residents of health care institutions where appropriate—institutions such as Eventide—and representatives from health-care providers/support groups such as ambulance services and the Blue Nurses.

One way to achieve broad representation is to provide information on the role of consultative committees, followed by a call for expressions of interest. The members on those committees will be voluntary members of the community. No politics will be involved. They will be paid only the costs that are involved. We will not be setting up small cells of political power such as those that existed in the previous system. I concede that that system may not have been introduced by the National Party; I think it was introduced by the Labor Party. Those committees will be depoliticised and their members will be considering issues that they ought to be considering, such as how to best serve the people and how the hospital ought to be run. They will not be concerned with making the local member look good or giving him a higher status in the community. The members of those committees will be concerned with running the hospitals properly. Those people will not be paid large sums of money; they will be acting more or less on a voluntarily basis. We have heard the rhetoric and have seen the crocodile tears from National Party and Liberal Party members. This new system is worth trying. It takes control from George Street and puts it in the bush. I do not say that we will not have difficulties in obtaining directors and doctors for towns such as Roma. Those people like to live on the coast.

**Mr Johnson:** You can't get them now.

**Mr DOLLIN:** I realise that it has not been possible to attract people to those places for a long time. Nevertheless, in the long term they will be appointed and we will see health services being run to look after the sick rather than for other reasons. We may place conditions on the appointment of doctors. In my view, if a young person from Roma wishes to become a doctor, we might assist him to go to university on the condition that he serves for five years at Roma or Charleville. Perhaps we should have introduced that scheme long ago. I am running short of time and I have still got five pages to read. I will not attempt to read them. I am sure that I have given honourable members the benefit of enough wisdom. I support the Bill before the House.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Condamine) (10.49 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Health Services Bill, firstly, I commend the member for Callide on the comprehensive way in which she summed up the contents of the Bill and posed questions for the Minister to answer. The first matter I wish to address comes under the heading of regionalisation. Several members on both sides of the House referred to regionalisation in education. I would like to make a comparison. The idea of regionalisation in education is good, because there is local input from p. and c. associations. Because hospitals boards will no longer exist, there will be no local input with regionalisation in health services. If



the Minister considers that—later, I will develop the point further—he will understand the comparison that I am making and the suggestion that I am putting forward. Previously, I have conceded that the Minister was correct when he said that he was taking services away from a central point in Brisbane and setting up regional areas. I have no problem with that. However, he has taken away the local input. To a person who lives in a town such as Chinchilla or Dalby, which I represent—I am talking from that viewpoint—a system of regionalisation which puts services into Toowoomba from Brisbane but withdraws local input from Dalby amounts to centralism, because that person will be further away from the point of delivery and where decisions are made. That system represents centralism to the people of the Darling Downs. Twenty-five shires will be represented by one authority consisting of five members.

I suggest that the Minister's step towards regionalisation is good but that he can improve it if he allows local input. If he does not like the word "boards", he can use another word, but he should allow some local input. Since I have been a member of Parliament, and before that, it has been my experience that conflicts arise with the manager, the nursing superintendent, who used to be the matron, and the doctors in those places. Often the doctor has the right to private practice. With those three people so preoccupied with the pressure of their own jobs, they do not always have a good understanding of the local feeling. From time to time, they appreciate the advice of well-intentioned local people who understand the services that are required. I acknowledge that there has been a problem with people who have local input and do not have the professional expertise that may be required in some instances. However, that is not the total requirement for the delivery of the service. Health services also need some input from the clientele.

I summarise the matter in this way: with the introduction of this Bill, the Minister will have a service that is driven by professionals. That service will lack representation from the clientele. I took note of comments made by some members yesterday during the condolence motion. One member said that not all the best players were on one side of the House. I recognise that some Government members have ability and that the Minister has some ability. I have wondered why he wants the health service driven by professionals. The scenario has developed in this fashion: the professionals become the staff and the staff in this State seem to be dictated to by the unions. As well-intentioned as the staff may be, they find that the actions they take and their entitlements are dictated from head office. It is not hard to extrapolate that the unions are strongly attached to the ALP. The member for Maryborough commented that there were small cells of power in the country that had to be destroyed. Under this system, the ALP will be the power base which will direct the unions, which will have control over the professional staff in the hospitals. The Minister will break up the social order that he thinks is so terrible in the country. Everything I say about the Minister is not bad. I refer to the delivery of service to the Jandowae Hospital, which is a small hospital.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** Some concern has been expressed that, if Government services are to be rationalised, consideration may be given to closing that hospital. Those fears were heightened when it was decided that the Dalby Ambulance Board should put \$50,000 towards starting an ambulance centre. It was foreseen that the Government would say, "The sick people now have to be taken to Dalby." I was relieved to be telephoned by Dr Gooch from the Darling Downs region. She had been talking to the nursing superintendent and the community welfare nurse out there. They talked about delivering a wider range of services, visiting some of the homes that provide respite care and perhaps some long-stay patients. They will complement the retirement home, look after the acutely sick, births and so on. I congratulate the Minister on that. There is a need for a collection of services to be delivered from a small hospital such as that.

Last weekend, when the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was out there opening the ambulance service, the nursing superintendent spoke to me. She is aware

that the DPI offices are no longer occupied. Another Minister took away those services. There are two rooms that are now vacant. The nursing superintendent says that some sort of an advocacy centre is needed for elderly people and the delivery of health services. I have asked her to write to me about the matter. I will pass her comments on to the Minister so that he might make representations to Mr McLean. It would not have to be relocated. It is right next door to the courthouse and over the road from the post office. It is in a central part of the town. If people need to know something about the medical services that are available, then they could go there and get advice. As it is, I am told by the local chemist that since the clerk of the court and the DPI officers have been removed, he has become the agency for all sorts of advice regarding Government services. The Minister might give that letter serious consideration when he receives it.

I wanted to say something about the regional health authorities, which I note will comprise at least five but no more than seven members. I have some misgivings in that regard. I have already mentioned that every local authority in the downs area will no longer have one or two representatives on the local hospitals board. Now we have a conglomerate of 25 shires, and there is no guarantee that any local authority will have representation on the regional health authority. That is why I referred to centralisation of the service and the loss of local input.

I also want to take the Minister to task because, when I was a member of the former National Party Government and any legislation was being drafted, the ALP Opposition always insisted that the organisations and bodies that had a vested interest in the legislation proposed should have the right to nominate their representatives on any consultative committee or board. Labor, in Opposition, insisted on local representation. It seems that, now that the Labor Party has jumped the fence and occupies the Government benches, it is taking a different tack. My first experience of that was when I was shadow Minister for Education and Mr Braddy introduced a Bill that resulted from the Viviani report into the tertiary entrance system. Lo and behold, a special board was to be set up. I took particular notice of the fact that all of the appointments were to be made by the Minister. No local body or interested body was to have a right to nominate a representative; all of the appointments were to be made by the Minister. I took it up with him. He just shrugged it off and said, "We have got a good reputation. The people do not worry." A couple of weeks ago honourable members debated the Sugar Industry Bill. My colleague the member for Mirani noticed that in that Bill the Honourable Minister, Mr Casey, gave himself the power to appoint all the members of all sorts of committees. There was no provision for the nomination of representatives by interested bodies. I may stand corrected, but it seems that the power to appoint members of these regional health authorities is vested in the Minister. Why has the Labor Party changed its attitude? What has happened to the democracy—the civil rights and civil liberties—that the Labor Party espoused so strongly when it was in Opposition? Now that the Labor Party is in Government, it wants to have total control, yet Government backbenchers talk about the rights of the individual. All of a sudden those ideas are wiped out just for the sake of the cause.

**Mr Springborg:** Phil Heath was one of them.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** As the member for Carnarvon says, Mr Heath became so disillusioned that he had to go to Coffs Harbour and consult a psychiatrist who flies in jet aeroplanes. There is an inconsistency there.

I have spoken to one of the fellows who is about to become a former board member. He was talking about supervision and some sort of control over costs when extensions, repairs, renovations and so on are being carried out on local hospitals. He expressed to me the concern that, when control is regionalised—I say centralised—in Toowoomba, the Government will find that it will lose local expertise. Tenders will be called, and builders from Toowoomba will tender for these jobs. Not all of the jobs are large jobs involving \$500,000 or \$800,000; the smaller jobs involve \$15,000 or \$20,000. It was this fellow's experience that, when these sorts of tenders came before the local board, frequently the local doctor or the manager of the hospital was a little bit naive as to

what the values were in the local area. He said that on many occasions they were able to go to a local builder and say, "Come on, Fred. You're having a bit of a shot at us. Just because it is a Government authority, you're putting a loading on this. That's not the sort of price you're charging the private sector per square. Come back to a realistic price or we'll get someone from out of town to do the job." That saved a lot of money. If the service is to be centralised in Toowoomba, blokes involved in the building industry in Toowoomba will tender and, instead of having the full contract, the local builders will engage subcontractors. The Minister is aware of Mr Burns' experience recently in regard to subcontractors. Quite often the major contractor nicks off and leaves a few dogs tied up or the subcontractors unpaid. I ask the Minister to consider that as one of the down sides to regionalisation.

I heard a previous speaker—I think it was the member for Callide—talk about the cost of delivery of supervision by way of a regional director as compared to the cost of delivery of supervision by way of hospitals boards. I have spoken to a chap whom I know pretty well and who has been a manager of a hospital in a provincial city. He estimated that having a regional director, running a car, incurring travelling expenses, and having an executive secretary back at home base would probably be a form of administration that is four or five times more expensive than having three or four boards getting local input and giving service for a nominal payment. I can understand what the Minister claims is a big push forward in terms of regionalisation. I hope that he has taken note of what I have said and that he can improve the position by using some local input. I hope he took note of what I said about regionalisation of education and the p. and c. associations. The Minister should introduce a system that compares with the p. and c. system to get some sort of local input. I could not help making a couple of points about the inconsistency of the Minister's attitude to local representation now that he has assumed office.

**Mr BREDHAUER** (Cook) (11.01 p.m.): Tonight, there has been as much debate about this Bill as there was following the Minister's original introduction the Bill. Therefore, I will keep my contribution brief. I note that the member for Condamine's last comment was about inconsistencies. If members listened to the speeches delivered by Opposition members tonight, they heard an exercise in consistency, none the least of which is the fact that members opposite were in this Chamber earlier today debating their concerns about the removal of Government services and the failure to maintain Queensland as a decentralised State. Yet here we have a process that is going to decentralise the health industry in Queensland more so than has ever happened before. In fact, some 600 positions in the Health Department are going to be regionalised. Admittedly, some will still apply to the Brisbane region, but about 600 positions will be regionalised throughout the State. It is an exercise which gives the regions a greater degree of autonomy and decision-making.

The members of the National Party, and I think the members of the Liberal Party, are opposing this proposal, although there was a suggestion that members of the Liberal Party were going to support it and move some amendments. After the speech by the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr Watson, I was not quite sure whether they were supporting it or opposing it. I want to address a couple of principles in the Bill in particular. Today, in the Matters of Public Importance debate, I spoke about the delivery of services in the Cook electorate, particularly about the delivery of services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I spoke about the commitment that this Government has made to things such as capital works for health infrastructure in the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the new hospital at Doomadgee and the new medical facilities that are going into Yorke Island, Coconut Island and a number of other islands under the accelerated capital works program. I also spoke about the commitment that is shown by this Government through supporting programs which are training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, people who have been in the front line of health services in their respective communities in the remote parts of the Cook electorate, and in other parts of the State, too. In the past,

they have done so without a great deal of support from the system or from previous Governments.

This week, the Aboriginal and Islander health worker training scheme commenced at the Cairns TAFE. That program is supported by this Government. It is a major achievement and one that is greatly appreciated. Two weeks ago, I spent six days in the Torres Strait and visited seven communities. I made a point of visiting all the medical aid posts, as they are called in the Torres Strait, to talk to the health workers. They were all anxiously waiting their turn to be enrolled in the course to which I referred and to go to Cairns so that they could obtain the training that is on offer. They appreciate the program. But this Government's commitment goes to all facets of the delivery of health services, including their administration. Under previous Governments and under the previous system of hospitals boards in Queensland, and particularly in my area in far-north Queensland with which I am more familiar, Aboriginal and Islander people were precluded from the administration of health services. Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not been represented on the boards that were administering those services, I believe that any improvement in the delivery of health services has been significantly inhibited.

I well remember when the Cairns Hospitals Board was being constituted on the last occasion and someone from Aurukun Shire nominated for the position of local authority representative. That person missed out because someone from the principal local authority in the board area, the Cairns City Council, was deemed to be the appropriate person. That decision meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not represented in administration and there was no direct input from Aboriginal and Islander people into the types of services that were required through the Cairns Base Hospital. Honourable members need to understand that the Cairns hospital is the base for health services right throughout the region. It is an important principle that has been incorporated and supported by the Minister. He has given me and the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in my electorate a commitment that there will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the regional health authority. I think that is a major achievement and I commend the Minister for giving that commitment. I am looking forward to the constitution of that board so that the people who are duly elected can begin to make their contributions.

There has also been established a Torres Strait Health Council, which is a mechanism by which people in the Torres Strait can also get together to discuss health issues, and those people will be obviously making a contribution through their health council and through the Torres Strait representative on the peninsula and Torres Strait regional health authority on the very important health needs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Can I say that, as a general policy, I think that the attitude of this Minister towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the priority which he has accorded health matters of concern to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders has been much appreciated by the people in my electorate and will contribute significantly to positive improvements in health services.

The other thing about which honourable members need to be aware in their electorates, and particularly in my electorate, is the need to coordinate all the health services—the community health services, the Aboriginal health program and the curative health services that are offered through hospitals and other institutions. There is a need for those services to be coordinated because there is a big role, for example, to be played in health education in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which can contribute significantly to improving the health of people in those communities. There is also a significant role to be played in preventive education in areas such as diabetes, STDs and a whole range of other issues which I could raise. I believe there needs to be much greater coordination in the delivery of those health services so that they are all working progressively towards one goal. I noticed that the member for Moggill spoke about the lack of a patient focus in the legislation. I believe it is important that the service does not just concentrate on curing people who are ill but that it does its utmost

to ensure that healthy people do not get ill. Ultimately, it will cost the system less if the focus is on preventive health practices.

I thank the Minister for the change of the name from the Peninsula Regional Health Authority to the Peninsula and Torres Strait Regional Health Authority. The matter of the name change was raised with me on a couple of occasions and I contacted the Minister about it. When the Minister attended the meeting on Thursday Island, the matter was again raised with him personally. Although it may seem to be a minor change, it recognises the different regions. It is a change that is appreciated.

I want to mention a couple of matters that were raised by previous speakers in this debate. The member for Condamine spoke about regionalisation in the Education Department and the role that p. and c. associations played. I have been involved in education in this State for a period approaching 15 years. I know that the member for Condamine has been involved in it for a lot longer. For him to suggest that p. and c. associations in Queensland have had an active role in the administration of education in their regions shows how remote he is from the actual practice that existed in the schools for which he was supposedly responsible as Minister for Education. I have been to thousands of p. and c. meetings, and no doubt the honourable member has, too.

**Mr Littleproud:** They address the area of local input.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** There is no local input from the p. and c. That is the precise issue that I am addressing.

**Mr Littleproud** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order! The honourable member shall not interject from other than his correct seat.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** There is no local input from the p. and c. associations into the regional administrations—or at least there has not been. The really concrete measures to offer p. and c. associations the opportunity for input into the administration of education have occurred through processes such as the "Have your say" campaign and the Viviani report, which have been instigated by the Minister for Education in this Government. Under the honourable member's Government, p. and c. associations could only run around like headless chooks trying to raise money for essentials such as photocopying paper and fuel for motor mowers.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** I rise to a point of order. The member for Cook is not totally correct, because during my administration as Minister for Education, the p. and c. associations shared the responsibility of working out the school budget. The honourable member conveniently forgets that.

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

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I remember the debate over——

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the honourable member to return to the Bill before the House.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I was addressing matters that have been raised by other members in the debate. Numerous speakers opposite seem to equate social justice with socialism and communism. I would not be surprised if, every night before they go to sleep, a few of them, such as the member for Condamine and the member for Gregory, check under their beds looking for a couple of reds. The honourable member for Condamine probably keeps his money in a biscuit tin in the backyard.

Members opposite spoke about health workers and unions covering health workers which have demonstrated in different ways their disapproval of various aspects of the reform process. I do not have any difficulty with that. It is not as though it is new. It is not as though it is something that has happened only under the Labor Government. I can remember that, during a National Party conference in Townsville not very many

years ago, I stood outside the Sheraton Breakwater casino with a group of nurses who were protesting on their particular point. I know that the nurses have protested outside this place over wages. I know that the POA and the QSSU are protesting over a certain point. This Government allows unions to protest and to demonstrate in the interests of their members. Under the honourable member's Government, demonstrators were chased by the Special Branch and locked up.

As I said, I do not have any difficulty with the fact that unions are expressing their point of view and trying to promote the interests of their members. The member for Condamine seems to have the peculiar view that, if there exist award coverage and a centralised process for determining wages and conditions for employees in the health system, the unions will dictate to the staff and therefore the unions will ex officio be running the health system. If the member for Condamine actually believes that, I think he must be off with the fairies somewhere. I have been a union organiser in a public sector union in this State. That is not the way the system works. The unions respond to the demands of the members. If the union organisers and the union executives do not respond to the demands of the members, they get footprints on their forehead. That is exactly what happens to them. It is hardly likely that the unions will control the health system through the process that the honourable member imagines.

For the benefit of the honourable member for Maryborough, I point out that SARAS stands for the Study and Research Assistance Scheme. The direct involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Queenslanders in the administration of the health system is an initiative and an undertaking that I appreciate very much, and I know that the Aboriginal and Islander community in Queensland appreciates it as well.

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett) (11.14 p.m.): In common with everyone else in this House, I appreciate that it is now getting late and that most of the points that could be made about this legislation have already been dealt with. However, I wish to raise a couple of points, one of which relates to the boards. This matter has already been covered. For some time, I served on a board. I felt that the boards did the job that was required of them and that was applicable to the requirements within their capacity in their local areas. It is sad to see the abolition of the boards. They have existed for a long time. The people who served on such boards gave their time willingly. They did not receive big salaries or anything like that. The boards comprised a combination of representatives from the local authorities and Government appointments. However, the present Government makes appointments to various boards, too. As I said, it is sad to see those boards being abolished.

I place on record in this House my appreciation of the work that has been done by the boards in my area in managing hospitals. I know that the Minister questions the contribution of the boards to the overall management of the hospitals. I know he is not denigrating the boards at all when he says that, or that his intention is not to denigrate the boards, and I take that point. However, at the local level, the boards did contribute and perform satisfactorily. They were the go-between for the community and the hospital, the doctor, the matron and so on. As the member for Condamine said, the boards applied themselves to matters involving disputes and tenders. When a local tender was received, the boards knew the people involved. As I said, those who served on the boards gave freely of their time.

**Mrs Edmond:** It didn't help them in Bundaberg.

**Mr SLACK:** In what respect?

**Mrs Edmond:** The hospital board and their tendering system.

**Mr SLACK:** I am sorry. I really do not understand what the honourable member is getting at. I do not see the same problem as she sees in the Bundaberg system. The Bundaberg tendering system worked quite well. The hospital was built. Some accusations were made about the last tender, but the Public Works Committee had an in-depth look at it and found no problems. Although it found that the tenderer may have been a little inexperienced, one cannot hold that against a tenderer.

I turn now to what the honourable member for Yeronga said about Ned Hanlon, who introduced the free hospitals system. Nobody in this House could deny that. However, members should not deny that the National and Liberal Parties in coalition and the National Party in Government in its own right continued with that system. However, it appears that this Government is not going to continue with that system, which the member for Yeronga is proud to talk about.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Where did the rumour come from?

**Mr SLACK:** I am about to explain a point. I ask the honourable member to listen. The outpatients sections of the Toowoomba Base Hospital and the Nambour Hospital have been closed. There is a suggestion that the Bundaberg outpatients section will also be closed.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** You've become a poor man's Bob Katter.

**Mr SLACK:** Is the member for Archerfield interested in listening to my genuine contribution, or does he wish only to criticise?

Queensland has a system of subsidised prescriptions that are available through outpatients sections of public hospitals. That subsidy is provided by the Queensland Government. In the case of pensioners, prescriptions cost about \$2.50 per person, and they are allowed to have four prescriptions filled per day, which works out at \$10. That system operates on a calendar year. A Commonwealth benefit, which is also available through the private sector, also works on a calendar year. People are allowed to have a particular number of prescriptions filled in each system. However, the Commonwealth and State systems will not mix.

If the closure of an outpatients section of a hospital does not coincide with the end of a calendar year, and it closes down, for instance, on 1 July—which has been suggested—people will be denied their rights to health benefit subsidies through the State or Commonwealth. People cannot change mid-year from the State system to the Commonwealth system. That would particularly affect pensioners. As members would be aware, the Commonwealth introduced a benefit of \$2.50 to cover the prescription costs of pensioners. If an outpatients section is closed, people in the State system cannot transfer to the Commonwealth system. I notice that the Minister is nodding his head. I appreciate that he understands the problem. I hope that he will give an assurance that that situation will not arise and that action will be taken to ensure that unemployed people and pensioners are not deprived of a benefit that they have been given legitimately and to which the Commonwealth has contributed. The system applies not only to pensioners and unemployed people but also to people with families, who are entitled to benefits of up to \$375 per year.

The member for Yeronga claimed that the National Party was not likely to continue the free hospitals system and that the Labor Party was going to do all of those nice things. I ask him to think about the technicalities involved when actions are taken by the Health Department in carrying out cost-cutting measures. The Minister has given an assurance in relation to country hospitals. A major concern in country areas is that, because of a lack of direct representation in smaller country towns and areas, services to those areas will gradually deteriorate. Under this Government, cost-cutting measures have already been implemented in some centres. The former National Party Government would not have allowed that to happen. In my electorate, the resident sister at Mount Perry Hospital has gone on holidays, but she is not being replaced. That is the sort of thing that is happening under this Government's administration. Country courthouses have been closed, changes have been made to regionalisation and local fire services boards have been removed. Suddenly, people in the fire services have been told that, because the Government has run out of money, they cannot train for the next three weeks. It is no wonder that people are uneasy about proposals such as the regionalisation of health services.

I commend the Opposition spokesperson for her contribution to this debate. I know that she put a tremendous amount of work into that contribution. She understands the problems associated with this legislation, and she delivered her speech very well.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK** (Albert) (11.23 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to the Bill. Tonight, I have listened to the flow of faeces from that side of the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order!

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I would like the member for Toowoomba North to prescribe some Lomotil for members on that side of the House. If one has worked in the system, one knows what it is like to work in a system that is old and falling apart at the seams. That system, which will be abolished on 30 June 1991, has been in operation since 1945 and has become old and tired. It deserves to be put to rest. No doubt, hospitals boards played a part in the early days of the system, but the boards have become tired and should be put away. There is no doubt that they have outlived their usefulness.

On 1 July 1991, Queensland will have 13 regional health authorities that will address the health system in this State. They will replace the 61 hospitals boards in Queensland. The regional health authorities will assume responsibility for all public health service delivery and coordination at regional level. They will also be the primary unit of management. They will undertake regional strategic planning, budgeting and allocation of resources and facilities in this State. The authorities will be required by legislation to follow the Health Department's strategic plan for public sector health services in this State. They will also be the employer of staff in the regions.

Anyone who has worked in the system knows how terrible the old system is and how it has deteriorated. It was only the dedication of the doctors and nurses that held the system together. I congratulate all of those nurses and doctors who have been so dedicated to their work. They did not let the system fall apart. In this State, it was not the Minister for Health and not all of those bureaucrats in town who held the system together; it was all of those people, including the cleaners, who work in the wards and in the theatres. Honourable members sit in this place and talk about the system deteriorating. It deteriorated many years ago. It was those hardworking people who held it together.

The regionalisation will go beyond the hospital system. It will provide continuing patient care in the home, in the hospitals, if necessary, and in the home again. In the past, people became sick, went to hospital, recovered and were pushed out the gate. They were given no follow-up. Resources were not directed towards keeping those people out of hospital. It is very expensive to put people into hospital. The latest figures I have indicate that it costs about \$500 a day to maintain an empty bed in a hospital. When the bed is occupied, the cost is even more. The regional health authorities will develop a strategic plan to target specific areas in the community that have health care needs.

**Mr Springborg:** That's going to keep people out of hospitals?

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** It will keep people out of hospitals. If people receive health services before they go into hospital, money will be saved. All of the resources will not have to be put into the hospital system. People will get sick in the system, but if they can go into hospital and then back to their homes—back into the community—that will save money. The problem with the system in the past was that we waited for the people to go to hospital. We did not try to keep them out of hospital. The argument of members of the Opposition is that we should retain the hospitals boards system because it works. It does not work. People are going to hospitals because they are sick. Regionalisation will involve strategic planning. In the past, this State had no strategic planning, particularly in community psychiatric services. People became unwell, went into hospital, recovered and returned to the community. No follow-up services were provided. After three months, those people got sick again and were put back into the system. The new system will address all of those matters. People will be looked after in the community.

**Mrs McCauley:** What absolute rubbish.



**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I would like to see the honourable member work in the wards. Members opposite complain about us. I invite them to go into the wards and clean up patients' faeces from beds. They should give someone a bedpan and see how they like it. They should look at what happens on the other side of the fence. The new system will address the Claytons hospital system, as I call it. The Logan Hospitals Board is to the north of my electorate. It did not have a children's ward or a maternity ward. It was a Claytons hospital. If a woman was expecting a child in Logan or Beenleigh, she was expected to go to either the QEII Hospital or the Mater women's hospital. That sort of system is no good. Relatives and family members have to drive from 15 to 20 kilometres to and from the Mater hospital to visit those people. Health services should be delivered in the area where they are required. That is what this system will do. Stage 2 of the Logan Hospital is now on track. I hope that regionalisation will address those problems and that, in the not-too-distant future, some of those resources in the South Brisbane region will be moved to where they are needed. I would like to see the PA pulled down and all of the facilities moved to Logan. People do not realise that 70 per cent of the hospital beds in Brisbane are located within 7 kilometres of the centre of Brisbane.

**Mr Coomber:** You're going to pull PA down and relocate it out to Logan?

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** That is the long-term plan that I would like to see.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr SZCZERBANIK:** I am glad to say that I will be here longer than the honourable member will be. Another problem within the hospital system is that I heard that the Royal Brisbane Hospital was not performing operations because of a lack of facilities. When I was in the system, the theatre at the Royal Brisbane did not even have a pulsimeter and people were embarrassed to go to that hospital to have an operation because of the lack of funds provided by the National Party. Basic facilities for the hospital system were never provided. Some of the anaesthetic equipment used at Royal Brisbane is 40 to 50 years old and it is dangerous. That is because the National Party did not provide the funds to update it.

Another subject addressed by the Bill is quality assurance within the hospital system. Clause 2.9 (3) (b) provides—

"that the committee's functions include the assessment and evaluation of the quality of health services, including the review of clinical practices, the reporting and making recommendations concerning those services and monitoring the implementation of its recommendations."

This is a first for Queensland. Never before in the public health system have we had quality assurance teams. Unlike the member for Surfers Paradise, I have faith in the public hospital system. My children were not born in the private hospital in Surfers Paradise. My wife went to the public hospital in Southport and she received quality care. If she had another baby she would go back there.

Since its election, the Government has had a commitment to nurses in this State. I am glad that the Minister has provided nurses with a career path and a new award. Nurses no longer have to go into a clinical practice if they do not want to do so. They will be paid at the high rate they deserve. If they wish, they can become regional directors, as was evidenced by the appointment of a registered nurse as the regional director at West Moreton. These opportunities had been sadly lacking and I am glad that the Minister has finally done something about them.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Carnarvon) (11.33 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I participate in this debate. I say at the outset that I feel very humble following the honourable member for Albert. I do not think I will be able to come to grips with or to be able to match his medical knowledge. I wish to make several points about the Bill and I want to speak about what I believe will happen to the hospital structure in country Queensland. Fundamental to a hospital system and fundamental—

**Mr McEIligott:** This is not a hospital Bill, it is a health Bill.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am very concerned about the public hospital system in my electorate. That is why I am speaking about it. Fundamental to a well run health service and a well run hospital system is local community involvement; not just token community involvement but community involvement at a level where people come along, having been appointed by whatever means, and contribute to a board or authority by utilising their past business involvement and community involvement and their concern for their community. The Goondiwindi Hospitals Board's submission on the Green Paper, which was put out by the Health Department, in part reads—

"Rather than removing local Hospitals Boards, if the government so desired, a more appropriate method of determining Board membership might be applied as outlined in the discussion paper, but retention of local Boards should be a priority."

I think that is a very valid point. If the Government is worried about cronyism in the health system it should not necessarily take away the very experienced people and community minded people running our hospitals. It could have held elections for them in line with the local government elections. That would have done away with any of the Government's concern about cronyism.

Recently, I heard of something that really concerns me and I hope that the Minister can debunk it. It is alleged that this Bill will result in cronyism by the ALP. I have heard that Dr Peter Stanley, the Minister's under secretary, is a failed ALP Senate candidate. I would like the Minister to tell the House that that is not the case. I certainly hope it is not the case.

**Mr McGrady:** What is the relevance of that?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is very important because Government members, in all piousness, ran round the State while they were in Opposition claiming that there had been too much cronyism. They said that they would appoint people on merit. If they make statements like that and set ground rules like that, they have to stick to them. However, they are not doing it. Members representing the National Party and the Liberal Party have given a litany of those sort of things over the past few months, and the people of Queensland would be upset about them. I recognise the problem that the Minister faces in ensuring that he provides the best quality health care for the people of Queensland. It is not an easy task and the issue is very vexed. He has a particular philosophy and I have a particular philosophy. I am sure that mine is different from the philosophies held by Government members.

One of the things I am concerned about with the abolition of the hospitals boards is that the first people to be hurt in any sort of rationalisation under which hospitals will be considered on an economic basis will be the domestic staff who prepare the food. They are not the high fliers or the people in the hospitals, such as the doctors and nurses, who are saluted.

This brings me to the next point I wish to make about the tendering process that now applies to hospitals boards—at least those in my electorate, although this may not be the case throughout Queensland. The new system means that any domestic needs will be subject to tender. Sometimes, those contracts can be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to local communities because food is bought from local shops, etc. If the Minister takes that type of activity away by having a more centralised system whereby the food is distributed from Brisbane, that will have a significantly adverse effect on the local economy. That is an aspect that certainly concerns me and many people in small towns such as Texas. Those small communities rely heavily on meeting the needs of the local hospital, and there is presently a great deal of concern that the hospital at Texas will be downgraded. I have already expressed my concerns. The Minister may well remember that we had a little spat on the local television station over this issue. I have not received adequate assurances from the Minister; nor have the people who live in that area. I was merely conveying through the media the concerns that had been expressed by the people who live in the area about the implications for small hospitals. I seek a commitment from the Minister that small hospitals in towns such as Texas,

Mungundai and Dirranbandi will not close and that they will not be downgraded to perform a different role, such as accommodation for aged people.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Who told you that?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The member for Archerfield does not seem to understand that this is a matter I considered after reading the Green Paper.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** It is a rumour.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** No, and I have not spread any rumours. The hospitals boards are concerned about this change. There is discussion taking place constantly about the prospect of these changes taking place. What will happen in a couple of years' time when some of these hospitals do in fact close down? Will the member for Archerfield rise in this Chamber, apologise and admit that it has happened? Is he denying me the right to rise in this Parliament and convey those concerns? Fair go! Is it wrong for me to seek an assurance from the Minister that those hospitals will not be downgraded? Is there anything wrong with that? That is all I am trying to do, and I am sure that you, Mr Speaker, would not deny me that right.

I also mention the role of auxiliaries in providing certain facilities for hospitals, such as Eyevac machines or chairs for stroke patients. The auxiliaries are a very important aspect of the operation of hospitals boards, but this is an aspect that is sometimes overlooked in much the same way as the CWA and the Red Cross are overlooked but are often the unsung heroes. I have not instigated these concerns. Some people have actually written to me and said that they cannot see any sense in continuing as a hospital auxiliary if there is the danger that local involvement in the hospital will be removed.

**Mr McGrady:** What do you say to these people?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I say to these people that I will try to obtain an assurance from the Minister, and that is about all I can do. These people want local control and incentives for local community involvement. Hospitals boards and auxiliaries provide a great service in country Queensland because they provide facilities not only for the hospitals but also for doctors to make their lives more comfortable. Sometimes the auxiliaries provide a small tennis court for doctors to make their lives in isolated country areas much easier because medical officers in isolated areas certainly do not enjoy the best living conditions. For quite some time, improvement in those conditions has been the subject of a campaign by the Rural Doctors Association. I am sure that the Minister is conversant with those problems. Contrary to the derogatory comments being made by Government members——

**Mr Palaszczuk:** They are constructive comments.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I hope that I am responding to some of those comments constructively.

**Mr Palaszczuk** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I suggest that the members for Archerfield and Mount Isa allow the member to make his speech.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** I am giving him some help.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I do not think the member for Archerfield is giving the member for Carnarvon any help at all. I think that the member for Carnarvon should be allowed to make his own speech.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know that you are a very compassionate and humble person. Once again, I thank you for your protection. I must say to the Leader of the House, Mr Mackenroth, that because of the comments made by his colleagues, I will probably have to continue my speech for another three or four minutes.

The aspect I wanted to mention was the possible transfer by the Governor in Council of certain facilities at hospitals. This will mean that the Minister has the right to transfer from one regional authority to another apparatus that may have been purchased by a hospitals board. Some of those hospitals boards comprise very forward-thinking members who are not just cronies, hacks, pig-farmers, cow-farmers, chook-farmers and candlestick-makers as suggested by honourable members opposite. More often than not, these hospitals boards comprise very well-qualified businesspeople who have experience in operating and maintaining their own businesses. This is the point that honourable members opposite seem unable to understand. I seek an assurance from the Minister that if the hospitals board or auxiliary has played a role in acquiring important items for which hospitals may not have an overriding need—items such as colposcopes, slit lamps for eye injuries and multiparameter analysers—they will not be taken away from those hospitals and taken to somewhere else where the need is perceived to be greater. This matter is of great concern, and I seek the Minister's assurance in that regard.

A comment has been attributed to the Minister, and I hope that this has been done in error. I understand that the Minister has given credit to the members of hospitals boards as individuals who are no doubt very community-minded and who have no doubt contributed to the health and well-being of the community over a long period. I have heard that the Minister was asked whether he would have current hospitals board members on the Regional Health Authority and that the Minister said, "No, I will not have those cowboys. Those cowboys will not be part of the Regional Health Authority." I ask the Minister to respond because I think that this is a very important aspect that must be considered during this debate.

**Mr McElligott:** I can give you an unequivocal assurance that we will have cowboys and we will have hospitals board members on the Regional Health Authority.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the Minister. I am sure that the Minister will have a better Regional Health Authority because of that move. I am also concerned about something I heard from people who are involved in the provision of health services.

**Mr Prest:** Oh, another rumour!

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is not just a rumour. Since I have been in this place, one thing that has astounded and upset me about honourable members opposite is their ability to move so well and so functionally into personal abuse mode when they are backed into a corner. I have heard that the Minister's Under Secretary, Dr Peter Stanley, has said that he is looking at a system in which the only hospitals that will be performing operations such as appendectomies and tonsillectomies will be the hospitals that have access to blood bank and pathology facilities. I would like the Minister to respond to that matter. It means a downgrading of our hospital facilities and standards in rural Queensland.

During a long period, not merely the period of this Government, a matter that has concerned me and a large number of other people is that, today, not as many operations are performed in the small country hospitals as were performed in the past. In days gone by, the country doctor was a gynaecologist, a general surgeon, a brain surgeon and so on.

**Mr McGrady:** He wasn't a brain surgeon—please!

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am speaking figuratively to demonstrate how the country doctors were viewed by the local people. Perhaps because of necessity and the evil of distance, they were performing many more operations. They were very capable people. Today, the opinion is being expressed in more isolated areas that too many patients are being transported away from hospitals that are capable of performing operations, whether they be appendectomies or caesarean sections, to the major centres. I am sure that the Minister is aware of that. That is not occurring only as a result of this legislation, it has been occurring for a period. I hope that the comments which I alluded to as coming from Dr Peter Stanley regarding the criteria for operations to be performed in country hospitals are not true.

I will summarise my remarks and look forward to the Minister's response. I am concerned about the overall detrimental effect this Bill may have on rural health facilities in Queensland. I do not deny anybody in Queensland the right to proper health facilities. As member for Carnarvon, my obligation is to ensure that the people in my electorate have the best possible health facilities. I am sure that the Minister appreciates that point of view. However, his way of delivering those facilities is not the way in which I consider it should be done. I will refer to one last aspect. Tonight, we have heard that the present system of public administration in this State is terribly inefficient. The present system of public administration in this State is not inefficient; it is one of the most efficient systems anywhere in Australia. I am sure that Government Ministers, the Treasurer in particular, would be aware of that fact and would be aware of the

Institute of Public Affairs' publication which was commissioned by EPAC to examine the efficiency of various Government services. the publication stated—

"An IPA study commissioned by EPAC has found strong evidence that there is potential for nearly \$7 billion to be saved by all States adopting the expenditure levels of the most efficient State. This should be achievable without measurably reducing the quality or level of services.

There are wide differences between States in efficiency of spending and, hence, in the scope for expenditure savings. Victoria appears to be easily the least efficient State and Queensland the most efficient on the basis of 1988/89 Commonwealth Grants Commission data."

That is not biased data; it is Commonwealth Grants Commission data. Queensland has been used as the yardstick to judge the effectiveness of the public sector. The honourable member for Maryborough, Bob Dollin, guaranteed that, as a result of this Bill being passed, we will obtain a more efficient public sector and a more efficient health service. I suggest that that will not be the case.

**Mr De Lacy:** Mr Springborg—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I understand that the Treasurer has an interjection.

**Mr De Lacy:** Are you saying we need less money for health?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am not suggesting that at all. I am saying that problems are not always solved by the amount of money that is made available; it comes down to efficiency and value for money. The publication continued—

"Although some States argue that their higher per capita expenditures are evidence of higher quality services rather than inefficiency, there is no evidence to support this."

That is the crux of the matter. It is not the money that is put into it, it is the efficiency of the service that is delivered that is important. It is not a service that is built up just by providing additional funding, it is the overall structure that is important. I thank members of the House for their indulgence. I look forward to the response of the Minister.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (11.52 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to establish a Senior Executive Service for Queensland, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (11.53 p.m.): I move—  
"That the Bill be now read a second time."

On behalf of the Premier, I seek leave to have the second-reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This Bill amends both the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988 and the Public Sector Management Commission Act 1990 to provide for the establishment of a Senior Executive Service within the Queensland public sector, with initial application to the public service.

In addition, the Bill amends the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988 to provide for the operation of Public Sector Management Standards issued by the Public Sector Management Commission. It also provides amendments which remove impediments to the redeployment process and vests the required authority in chief executives to offer voluntary early retirement schemes during major organisational restructuring.

This legislation supports the implementation of a major element of the Government's reform program for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector through the establishment of a Senior Executive Service. The development of a Senior Executive Service responds to the increasing demand for high quality modern public sector leadership. This requirement was central to the concept of the Senior Executive Service developed in the United States in the late 1970s, a concept applied in Australia at the federal level and in various states during the 1980s.

The arrangements proposed for the Queensland Senior Executive Service resulted from a review of the operation of Senior Executive Service arrangements in other jurisdictions. This supplemented extensive discussion and consultation which was generated by the publication of a Green Paper on the Senior Executive Service in August 1990.

The Government is strongly of the view that there is an important role for a Senior Executive Service within a reformed Queensland public sector. While initial application is limited to the public service, consideration will be given over the next few months to extending the application of the concepts to senior professional positions and to the wider public sector. No further legislative amendments would be required in this event.

The Senior Executive Service is viewed as a major vehicle for enhancing the delivery of Government programs and services. Senior Executives will be encouraged to adopt a perspective which is government-wide rather than agency-confined. Arrangements outlined in the Bill ensure the ongoing input of high quality appointments and new ideas and recognise merit as the basis for recruitment and promotion policies and practices. The Senior Executive Service will foster a high level of performance in senior executives and encourage them, in turn, to promote high levels of performance of their own staff. The management of senior executives will enable development of this groups as a resource of highly skilled managers and policy advisers capable of being deployed with a degree of flexibility by the Government of the day.

Further support for public sector-wide reforms are provided by the Public Sector Management Standards, which require personnel management practices that ensure equity across public sector agencies. Provisions outlined in the Bill will permit the operation of such standards and encourage consistency in the management of human resources.

In addition, the large-scale restructuring of the public service has highlighted the inadequacies in previous redundancy management policies. In particular, the limited range of options available to employees occupying redundant positions and the restrictions offered by the current legislation to the redeployment of staff have been the source of much frustration to individual employees and chief executives alike.

While continuing to affirm redeployment and retraining as the strongly preferred response in the management of surplus staff, the Government recognises the need to provide further options for individuals who do not wish to seek redeployment or retraining. To address this need, the Government's policy includes enhanced choices for individuals in the form of streamlined redeployment processes and voluntary early retirement. The proposed amendments to the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988 are required to permit the full operation of this policy.

These objectives are achieved through amendments to the Public Service Management and Employment Act which provide for the following:

The amendment to Section 7 adjusts the personnel management principles to permit the Government's redeployment policy to operate, enabling more efficient absorption of redeployees into available positions. This amendment also allows the general application of existing personnel management principles to the Senior Executive Service. Further, it provides for the direct translation of serving senior officers into the new Senior Executive Service.

The actual establishment and operation of the Senior Executive Service is provided for in amendments to Part IV. These amendments supplement the existing provisions for Chief Executives, who will form part of the Senior Executive Service. These amendments begin by clearly emphasising the Government's objective in establishing a Senior Executive Service as one component of its strategy to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector.

Additional personnel management principles applying specifically to the Senior Executive Service are provided for in the Bill. These principles reinforce requirements for merit and equity in recruitment and selection processes for executives, foster sector-wide development and mobility and ensure an objective basis for the assessment of executive work performance. These arrangements will clearly stress the non-political nature of appointments of senior executives within the Queensland Public Service.

These principles reflect the Government's intention to attract, retain and develop high quality public sector leaders.

Authority to determine and alter the overall structure of the Senior Executive Service and for the creation and abolition of positions and associated appointments, will be vested in the Governor in Council. The existing authority of chief executive officers to reclassify positions remains, although their authority will be subject to arrangements approved by the Governor in Council.

Chief executives will continue to be employed on a contract basis. This is an entirely appropriate arrangement given the nature of that role which lies at the political-administrative interface.

Further amendments allow for the appointment of other senior executives to a position with tenure at the level of the position. Tenured appointments encourage advice which is impartial and fearless, while the performance measures which will be set in place for senior executives will ensure a responsive and outcome-oriented core of executives.

The Government recognises, however, that there will be some circumstances where contract employment below the chief executive level is appropriate. Contracts therefore will be available for those who occupy positions of a short-term or one-off nature, or who otherwise would prefer a limited term of engagement within the Queensland public sector.

Another key feature of the Senior Executive Service will be increased mobility of senior executives. This will be provided by amendments which enable the direct assignment of executives to alternative positions at the same level. This is intended to enhance opportunities for development of executives and permit greater flexibility in the deployment of resources at senior levels.

The final amendments to Part IV provide for exemption of senior executives from award coverage. This maintains the current arrangements for senior officers. The capacity for the determination by regulation of terms and conditions of employment not specified elsewhere, is also provided in these amendments.

Within Part V of the Act, the first amendment provides for the introduction of voluntary early retirement schemes within agencies undergoing large-scale restructuring. While the Government's policy during such reforms is to encourage retraining and redeployment of staff, this amendment allows individuals to choose an early retirement option.

The circumstances governing retrenchment are also amended to provide greater clarity and definition in their application and ensure consistency with the Government's policy on the management of redundancy.

As a consequence of this Bill, minor amendments to the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988 are also necessary. These amendments provide for an expanded application in the title of the legislation, the addition of required new definitions and the identification of specific Ministerial responsibility regarding proposed new sections of the Act. In addition, Chief Executives' scope of responsibility is extended to cover senior executive positions within their agency. Existing clauses, now provided for elsewhere in the Bill, together with progressional arrangements which will no longer apply, are also deleted.

Provision is made for both tenured appointment as a senior executive and the tenured reappointment of officers currently employed on a contract basis, with the exception of chief executives. Contract arrangements would remain available for short-term employment. Requirements for advertising vacant positions are also amended to ensure consistency with arrangements approved elsewhere in the Bill.

Minor amendments are also required to the Public Sector Management Commission Act 1990, updating definitions to reflect recent legislative changes. With the inclusion of chief executives in the Senior Executive Service, the remaining amendments remove the unnecessary reference to a chief executive service.

This legislation, which provides for the establishment of a Senior Executive Service, and amendments necessary to allow the operation of both the Public Sector Management Standards and the arrangements for the management of redundancy, is a critical element in the Government's public sector reform strategy.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs McCauley, adjourned.

#### **FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. K. E. De LACY** (Cairns—Treasurer) (11.53 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr De Lacy, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. K. E. De LACY** (Cairns—Treasurer) (11.54 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The Financial Administration and Audit Act came into operation in 1978, replacing the Audit Act 1874-1968. The driving forces behind the legislation were the then Auditor-General, Sir Allen Sewell, and one of his senior officers, Mr Pat Craven, who later went on to become Auditor-General himself. From their extensive research of public finance legislation adopted by other Westminster-style Governments throughout the world, three basic principles emerged. The first is that the Executive is accountable to Parliament for its use of public moneys. The second is that the administration should report to Parliament annually, through the responsible Ministers, to give an accounting for public moneys. The third is that the Auditor-General, being independent of both the Executive and the administration, would report to Parliament on whether the financial statements presented to it give a true and fair view of the Government's financial affairs.

At the time of its commencement, the Financial Administration and Audit Act was considered to be the pace-setter in such legislation throughout Australia. Since 1978, the Act has been amended a number of times. The most notable amendments were those passed in 1985 when the scope of the Act was extended to cover statutory bodies. The Act was amended in 1988 to provide for the introduction of Public Finance Standards to replace the overly prescriptive Treasurer's Instructions, which applied to departments, and the various sets of Ministers' directions which had been issued to statutory bodies. The Public Finance Standards were issued by me in 1990. Their introduction has been well received and, I believe, a success. They were drafted with the objective of providing a framework for the development of financial management reforms in the Queensland public sector.

The Government is now proposing amendments to the Act which will underpin these reforms. It should be noted that these amendments will not change, but will serve



to strengthen, the three principles on which the Act is based. The amendments also take up my responses to the reports *Recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts in regard to The Queensland Industry Development Corporation and Other Statutory Authorities* and *Recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts in regard to Timeliness in the Tabling of the Annual Reports of Statutory Bodies*. They do not take up any recommendations of the committee's recently tabled report *Accountability of Government Companies*, which is currently under consideration. If it is decided that further amendments to the Act are necessary, they will be introduced in the near future.

The amendments proposed in this Bill incorporate a number of measures designed to give greater flexibility to the Budget process, coupled with the necessary controls and accountability. It is proposed to amalgamate the Loan Fund and the Consolidated Revenue Fund into a new fund to be called the Consolidated Fund. Having a separate Loan Fund serves no useful purpose, as most capital expenditure is accounted for through consolidated revenue and the trust funds. Another Budget-related reform will be the introduction of a system of net appropriations. This will mean that departments will be able to retain revenue from the sale of goods and services in accordance with arrangements agreed to with the Treasurer. As well as introducing flexibility into the Budget process, such a system of revenue retention through net appropriations will give departments a more commercial orientation in relation to the supply of goods and services. It will be necessary, of course, to carefully review potential candidates for revenue retention to obviate the exploitation of any monopoly power or of windfall gains by departments.

In line with the less prescriptive, results-oriented philosophy underlying the Public Finance Standards, it is proposed to significantly prune the prescriptive provisions in the Act. In particular, the sections detailing how departments must keep their accounts and how they must establish their banking arrangements will be repealed. Only necessary controls will be retained, such as the requirement to seek my approval before a departmental bank account may be overdrawn. Honourable members should be aware that the Government is currently tendering for the supply of banking services for the State. It is expected that, given the amount of interest shown, there will be benefits for Queensland from this tender process.

This limited form of deregulation is being carried out not to satisfy any academic or philosophical commitment but to achieve real efficiencies in Government operations. It will be accompanied by an upgrading in the level of accountability expected of Government departments. In this regard, each accountable officer will be required to establish and maintain an internal audit function in that officer's department. The prime responsibility of the internal audit function will be to assist the accountable officer in the performance of the many statutory duties that the Act imposes. I expect that detailed guidelines on the conduct of internal audit will follow the Government's review of the EARC's *Report on Public Sector Auditing in Queensland*. Another important facet of the accountability improvements proposed for departments is the requirement that they submit an annual report. These reports must contain—

- audited financial statements;
- a list of statutory bodies within the relevant Minister's portfolio;
- disclosures required by the Public Finance Standards; and
- information required by the Minister relating to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the department.

The Public Finance Standards will be the vehicle for upgrading the level of disclosure in annual reports and significant improvements can be expected in relation to 1991-92. The amendments provide that departmental annual reports must be submitted to the relevant Minister within four months of the end of the financial year and be tabled by that Minister in Parliament within 14 days. To cater for the situation in which Parliament is not sitting, there is provision for reports to be deemed to be tabled by being transmitted to the Clerk of the Parliament.

With the lessening of prescription brought about by the introduction of the Public Finance Standards and now by these amendments, it is necessary to re-emphasise the need for accountable officers of departments and for statutory bodies to document the financial management and accounting systems and the internal control mechanisms in place in their organisations. Hence, the amendments will require accountable officers of departments and statutory bodies to prepare Financial Management Practice Manuals. These manuals will have a broader focus than the accounting manuals which the Act currently requires. It is also proposed to broaden the section which specifies the content of the Public Finance Standards so that it more closely reflects the way in which the standards have been drafted. This will provide a sounder base from which to continue improving public sector reporting standards in Queensland.

One of the financial management reforms that the amendments foreshadow is the possibility of introduction of a corporate card for the purchasing of goods and services by the Government. The Commonwealth and some States have realised administrative efficiencies through the use of corporate cards for Government purchasing. Suppliers, especially small business, also have benefited from immediate payment and from a reduction in paperwork. At the same time, the need for a deterrent against misuse of these cards has been recognised. The amendments therefore create a specific offence for such misuse which carries a substantial penalty.

In all, the proposed amendments to the Financial Administration and Audit Act are a necessary and important step in a continuing process of improving financial management and accountability in the Queensland public sector. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs McCauley, adjourned.

### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (PROTECTION FROM INVALIDITIES) BILL**

**Hon. N. G. WARBURTON** (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.01 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to ensure that the registration of an industrial organisation or its actions or those of its officers may not be challenged on certain grounds and for related matters."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Warburton, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. N. G. WARBURTON** (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.02 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The Government is committed to ensuring the integrity and viability of the Queensland industrial relations jurisdiction, and this Bill is a manifestation of that commitment. The purpose of the Bill is to address circumstances, which are essentially the result of two factors, that may result in jeopardy to the system. It is not sectional legislation and it is intended to benefit both employer and employee organisations which operate within the system.

The first of the two factors I have just referred to is the long-recognised constitutional problems attendant on industrial organisations operating in both the State and Federal jurisdictions as separate organisations but which have been administered as if they were the same. Within the State system, many organisations have taken steps to comply with the Federal Industrial Relations Act and then relied on these to satisfy compliance

with the State Act. Examples of this include the keeping of only one membership register and the holding of one ballot for elections to both bodies. This is not to say that there has been any detriment to the members of the State

registered organisations as, by and large, the memberships are identical. Suffice it to say that this practice has been accepted within the State system for many years. It has, in fact, virtually become custom and practice and is widely recognised as such by industrial organisations.

A second factor which the Bill addresses is a situation under which, because of changing circumstances, industrial organisations may have enrolled members not strictly covered by their eligibility rules. I am referring here to actions which were not intended to prejudice the interests of any other organisation. Good faith notwithstanding, however, the end result has been the creation of possible legal grounds to challenge the registration of some industrial organisations, their actions and those of associated individuals who have acted for them. While the shortcomings of the practices I just outlined have been known for many years, there has not been any incentive to take remedial action. However, in recent times there have been instances of parties adopting legalistic approaches which have the potential to destroy the stability of the State system which is serving Queensland well. It is against this background that the Bill is required. While it can be argued that organisations have not complied with the State legislation, this has not always been practicable and, to an extent, such behaviour has been positively condoned by a series of administrations.

The Bill has two main elements. One is directed at protecting the registration of an industrial organisation and allied acts from challenge where this is based only on grounds related to, or flowing from, the intermingling of the affairs of a State and a Federal organisation. This covers matters such as the use of single membership registers and the holding of only one election. It is envisaged that many organisations will rely purely on this provision. This would most likely be possible where the two organisations have the same eligibility criteria. Organisations that cannot rely totally on this provision can use other provisions which are more concerned with actions. This allows the Industrial Relations Commission to issue a certificate that validates certain acts that are specified in the certificates.

There are two ways in which these invalidities can arise. Firstly, the requirements of the State Industrial Relations Act have not been met because it was understood that compliance with Commonwealth requirements was sufficient; or, secondly, as a result of an organisation not maintaining its rules to reflect the changing environment. A certificate can protect an organisation, a branch, a committee of management or persons who acted on behalf of the organisation. They must, however, have acted in good faith. It is important to note that the validities cover a relatively narrow range of issues and that reckless or dishonest behaviour cannot be validated. Central to the Bill is a provision that the Industrial Commission is to issue a certificate if it is satisfied that—

- (1) a relevant invalidity exists;
- (2) the arrangements that are in place or that it puts in place provide for the proper protection and representation of the interests of members of an organisation; and
- (3) that any enrolling of ineligible members was not done to prejudice the interests of any other organisation.

The end result must always be that members of industrial organisations in Queensland are being adequately represented. The Industrial Commission can issue a provisional certificate to an organisation that gives it interim protection while it puts adequate arrangements in place.

The Industrial Registrar is required to give notice to an organisation that he feels would benefit from having a certificate. The organisation must then seek a certificate or

go to the commission to have the notice revoked. Failure to take action is a ground for the Industrial Registrar to seek deregistration. This is appropriate, since a process of the commission has been ignored. If, at a revocation hearing, the commission recommends that a certificate be obtained and this is ignored, then the organisation leaves itself exposed to challenge. There is provision to revoke a certificate if an organisation is not providing adequate representation and/or has breached a condition of a certificate.

It is explicit in the Bill that the Industrial Relations Commission is not given any competency to validate offences that might have occurred under Acts outside its jurisdiction. Obviously, to achieve its purpose, the Act will need to apply retrospectively. The proposed Act will be read as one with the Industrial Relations Act 1990 and so it is unnecessary to include provisions such as the powers of the Industrial Relations Commission. There will be a close monitoring of eventual proceedings to ensure that the objectives are being met.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

### **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT BILL**

**Hon. N. G. WARBURTON** (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.10 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to provide for vocational education, training and employment and related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Warburton, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. N. G. WARBURTON** (Sandgate—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (12.11 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The aim of this Bill is to overhaul the framework for policy formulation and delivery of vocational education, training and employment services throughout the State. In so doing, it implements a major part of the Government's objectives with regard to the provision of vocational education, training and employment services. In particular the Bill—

provides for greater responsiveness to the needs of industry and the community;

establishes an advisory framework for employers, unions and the community to advise the Government on vocational education and training needs and priorities to meet those needs;

provides for open, equitable and accountable system of accreditation of vocational education and training courses to ensure the quality of those courses;

promotes cross-crediting and articulation from courses between providers of vocational education and training and other sectors of education as well as industry to maximise progression of students;

further streamlines regulated training, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

Drafting of this legislation followed an extensive review process during which formal and informal consultations were held with all interested parties. In September 1990, a Green Paper on the "Formation of Technical and Further Education, Training and Employment Commission" was issued to a broad cross-section of industry, the community

and Government. A total of 119 submissions from a broad cross-section of interested parties was received in response to the Green Paper. Whilst there was widespread support for the establishment of a commission of TAFE in line with our election commitment, many submissions offered comment on its nature, functions, responsibilities and reporting arrangements. In particular, there was strong support for the introduction of a clear separation between policy formulation and regulation on the one hand, and the Government-owned vocational education, training and employment service delivery system on the other. This input was used to further refine the commission model and the associated advisory and support arrangements as well as the arrangements for the management of the Government TAFE, training and employment service delivery system. This extensive consultation process was of great assistance in the development of the proposed legislation.

This Bill seeks to establish the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission to advise the Minister on vocational education, training and employment strategies, policies and priorities which will complement State economic and social development. The commission's specific responsibilities will include provision of advice on strategic planning; research, including labour market research; policy development; priority setting; curriculum policy formulation; resource allocation; capital works planning; stimulation of industry training; and relationships with private and enterprise providers.

The commission will also have extensive executive powers in the areas of accreditation, recognition of private and enterprise providers of vocational education and training and the control of regulated training. The commission will be supported by three standing committees—

the Accreditation Council, which will be responsible for accrediting vocational education and training and providing independent advice regarding the quality of courses;

the State Training Council, which will be a tripartite body responsible to the commission for the detailed administration of all matters related to structured training, in particular, apprenticeships and traineeships; and

the State Planning and Development Council, which will be responsible for providing independent advice to the commission on short and long term priorities for vocational education, training and employment services, the application of available resources, and the merit of providing services through the public sector or industry or a combination of both.

The commission will utilise the Industry Training Council network as its principal source of industry advice. The proposed Bill will repeal the Employment, Vocational Education and Training Act 1988 and the Employment, Vocational Education and Training Amendment Act 1988, except for those provisions amending the Education Act which are required to be saved.

There are a number of important differences between the Act and the arrangements contained in the Bill now presented. The QEVET board and the training executive will be replaced by the commission and its standing committees. Powers over accreditation and regulated training previously vested in the Minister will be ceded to the commission. That is, the role of the commission will differ from that of the existing Queensland Employment, Vocational Education and Training Board to the extent that the commission will have full authority over regulated training, that is, apprenticeship and traineeship matters, accreditation and recognition of non-Government vocational education and training establishments.

The director-general will replace the Minister as the corporation sole. This new arrangement is consistent with the Financial Administration and Audit Act and public finance standards, with the director-general being the accountable officer. The legislation provides for the commission, and the director-general as corporation sole, to receive property in trust and to vary and amend those trusts with the approval of the Minister.

It also provides for the appointment of officers to support the commission, and clearly separates commission staff from staff of the department. This is of particular significance in relation to the commission's responsibilities for accreditation and private provider recognition.

The legislation specifies the membership of and operating arrangements for State college councils. Those councils are advisory to the particular college director, regional management and the commission. The Act provides the Minister with a simple head of power to establish State college councils without specifying their membership or detailed operating arrangements.

The Bill contains a number of new provisions relating to apprentices and trainees. These include provision for superannuation entitlements to be extended to apprentices and trainees in accordance with the relevant industrial award or agreement. This new provision affords the same entitlements to apprentices and trainees as those provided to employees under the Industrial Relations Act 1990. The Bill also extends to trainees a compulsory probationary period of three months, as currently prescribed for apprentices, and prevents the prosecution of an employer being heard and determined by an industrial magistrate unless the employer has been given prior notification of the matter.

The Government believes that technical and further education is a critical element in the future prosperity of this State. The development of a highly skilled work force is vital for the achievement of the goals of socioeconomic development and award and industry restructuring. Whilst many of the industrial parties have negotiated arrangements that remove lines of demarcation and restrictive work practices, the real benefits of industry restructuring cannot be achieved until workers attain the necessary skills. Equally, restructuring is dependent on managers having the skills to effectively lead their staff. Skills formation is fundamental to the goals of this Government and to the setting of a new direction for Queensland and Australia. One of the principal reasons for establishing a Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission is to forge a strong partnership between the vocational education, training and employment system and industry. It is important that industry and the community become vitally involved in setting the direction of skills development. Moreover, it is imperative that industry and the community take on greater responsibility for the quality of advice provided to the Government regarding the future directions for vocational education and training and the development of the work force.

The Queensland Government is committed to increasing tertiary education opportunities for people in this State. That commitment includes increasing the number of places in vocational education and training in the TAFE network. This Bill is designed to create a more efficient and effective TAFE sector. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

#### **AUCTIONEERS AND AGENTS AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.20 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971 and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

MR SPEAKER read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Milliner, read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.21 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

It gives me great pleasure to introduce into the House this Bill which is intended both to minimise the amount of paperwork required by real estate agents and motor dealers in trust accounting activities and also to increase the range of community purposes for which moneys that are currently credited to the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund can be used. Pursuant to the Auctioneers and Agents Act, the office of the Registrar of Auctioneers and Agents administers the Fidelity Guarantee Fund, which is used to pay claims by the public where there is a defalcation of trust accounts by real estate agents or a loss as a consequence of a sale by a motor dealer of a vehicle with a defect in its title. There is also a limited range of other uses that can be made from moneys in the fund, but essentially they are limited to matters falling within the purview of the Act. The only time that a large grant of money was made from the fund for another purpose was to assist in the establishment in 1989 of the Rental Bond Authority, and that was only able to occur following an amendment to the Act which was contained in the Rental Bond Act.

Under the Act, every quarter each licensed person is required to pay to the Registrar of Auctioneers and Agents out of the general trust account a sum which is not less than two-thirds of the lowest balance in the trust account in excess of nil on any day during the three months preceding the quarterly period. Where a licensed person has been instructed to place trust moneys in an interest-bearing trust account, the licensed person must in respect of each deposit made to the account retain 10 per cent of the moneys and deposit them with the registrar each quarter at the same time as the moneys out of the agents general trust account are deposited with the registrar. Pending repayment, moneys deposited with the registrar are invested by the Treasurer. Interest earned on those moneys is invested and paid into the Fidelity Guarantee Fund. In addition, interest on the moneys already in the fund is paid by the Treasurer into the fund. In short, the fund is made up of interest earned on the investment of moneys held in licensed persons' trust accounts and interest earned on the investment of the interest. A further, although minor, source of revenue for the fund is contributions made by licensees themselves.

The Act is very specific as to the uses that can be made of moneys in the Fidelity Guarantee Fund. Without indicating each and every one of them, I draw the attention of honourable members to section 93 of the Act. As a result of the limited use made of moneys in the fund, it has grown significantly over the past decade. For example, as at 30 June 1980, the fund had a balance of \$6,140,024. By 30 June 1985, that sum had increased to \$27,480,115. By 1988, the fund was approaching \$55,000,000. In the two years following that date up to 30 June 1990, the fund had increased by \$31,000,000 such that, at that final date, it totalled \$86,015,324. In short, the fund has now reached a level far beyond any foreseeable claims. Common sense demands that use must be made of the moneys standing to its credit. As a result, this Bill broadens the scope for which moneys can be paid out of the fund.

It is proposed to amend section 93 of the Act to provide that the fund can be used to pay for the operation of the Auctioneers and Agents Registry and for the funding of—

- (1) vocational education and training and scholarship programs for auctioneers, real estate agents, real estate salesmen, commercial agents, commercial subagents, motor dealers or motor salesmen;
- (2) community education programs relating to the previously mentioned persons;
- (3) housing assistance programs; or
- (4) any program which, in the Minister's opinion, facilitates the administration of the Auctioneers and Agents Act.

In order that sufficient moneys remain in the fund to deal with defalcations or other criminal or negligent activities by licensees, the subclause provides that the fund must have standing to its credit \$5,000,000 or such greater amount as may from time to time be prescribed after allowing for all ascertained and contingent liabilities. Only after those liabilities are ascertained and the fund still has \$5,000,000 to its credit will other moneys be paid for the previously mentioned objects.

As honourable members would appreciate, as a result of the legislation, a number of useful projects can be funded, not least of which will be the enhancement of vocational education and training programs in the real estate and property management industry and for motor dealers. An educated and informed industry will assist consumers and ensure that breaches of the Act are minimised. In addition, by the funding of the registry from the Fidelity Guarantee Fund, a better service will be able to be provided. This is already the case in Victoria.

As honourable members would note also, the Bill will continue to allow persons to direct that their moneys be paid into interest-bearing trust accounts. However, unlike previous arrangements that were overly bureaucratic and involved much red tape and inconvenience for real estate agents—in the future, a person who directs that his money is placed in such an account will have the whole of the money invested. No proportion of the money will be set aside for the Fidelity Guarantee Fund. The ability of persons to be able to direct that moneys be placed in an interest-bearing trust account will be limited by the requirements—

- (1) that the moneys are received in respect of a sale;
- (2) that the sale is not to be completed within 60 days of receipt of the moneys; and
- (3) that the moneys are received with a direction that they be invested in an interest-bearing trust account.

In addition, as persons who have moneys invested in interest-bearing trust accounts will not contribute to the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund, the Bill provides that such persons will not be able to make a claim against the fund in respect of the stealing, fraudulent misappropriation or misapplication of moneys by a licensed person.

In addition, the Bill will not only reduce significantly the amount of paperwork required by licensed persons but also at the same time increase the amount of moneys which will eventually flow into the Fidelity Guarantee Fund. Under the Bill, a system will be put into place whereby general trust moneys will be paid by licensees to banks approved by the Governor in Council. The approved banks will then credit interest on the total funds held in general trust accounts directly into the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund. That is, interest will be paid on all of the moneys held by banks rather than a much smaller proportion which obtains under the present arrangements. Obviously, approved banks will not credit to the Fidelity Guarantee Fund all of the interest earned on general trust account moneys.

In Victoria, pursuant to similar legislation, arrangements have been entered into with eight banks. Those banks are as follows: Westpac Banking Corporation, the State Bank of Victoria, National Australia Bank, ANZ, Bank of Melbourne, Commonwealth Bank, Macquarie Bank and Bank of New Zealand. The amount of moneys paid to the Victorian equivalent of the Fidelity Guarantee Fund ranges from 72.5 per cent of interest calculated on a 90-day bank bill rate—the interest being calculated on a daily balance—to 80 per cent, based on a percentage of the 90-day bill rate calculated on a minimum monthly balance. The nature of the arrangements entered into with institutions would depend upon a number of factors, including the branch structure of the banks, the services offered and the method of calculating the interest credited to the fund. In addition, it would not be wise to assume that the same arrangements entered into between the Victorian Government and banks would apply also in Queensland. There



are different geographic and demographic factors which will, no doubt, have an impact on the type of arguments that will be raised both by the Government and by the particular banking institutions involved.

However, the important point to keep in mind is that it is anticipated from the experience of both Victoria and South Australia, where a similar system exists, that the amount of interest flowing into the Fidelity Guarantee Fund from general trust accounts will increase significantly. With the expansion of the objects for which moneys can be used in the Fidelity Guarantee Fund, that will ensure that a far greater range of community and industry purposes will be assisted. As I have indicated throughout, the Fidelity Guarantee Fund was established primarily to assist persons who deal with licensees. By the requirement that a minimum level of moneys must be held in the fund, that purpose will be safeguarded.

The proposed changes have been the subject of extensive consultations with industry bodies and the banking sector. Those changes have the full support of the industry groups. It would be fair to say that, due to precedents in other places, banks recognise that those changes are inevitable. However, as honourable members would appreciate, they do not regard them enthusiastically because, instead of banks obtaining the benefit of the interest, the community will obtain the benefit. Over the years, a number of persons, including the Auditor-General, have questioned the need for the Fidelity Guarantee Fund to be at its present level. It is clear that the Fidelity Guarantee Fund has grown far beyond foreseeable claims, so it is far better that it be used rather than sitting in a bank account doing nothing but accumulating interest. Under the existing system, the only winners are the banks; whereas, under the system proposed by the Bill, red tape will be cut. Not only the industry groups will benefit but also the people of Queensland through a number of community purposes and through the funding of the Auctioneers and Agents Registry. I believe that this Bill strikes the right balances and is long overdue. It gives me great pleasure to commend it to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Gilmore, adjourned.

### **FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.30 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act relating to the formation and regulation of friendly societies and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Milliner, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.32 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The Friendly Societies Bill seeks to provide an updated and relevant framework for the operation of friendly societies in our modern community. At the same time, it seeks to maintain flexibility to enable the friendly society movement to cope with change and to continue to provide the types of services friendly societies have traditionally provided their members for years. Friendly societies originated in England in the eighteenth century when workers formed groups to provide for themselves and their families during periods of sickness and unemployment or in case of death. Australia's first friendly society was established in 1830 and, by 1860, the societies were well known for the welfare benefits and social activities provided for members.

As government began to play a larger role in the provision of welfare services to the community during the late 1940s and early 1950s, friendly societies went into decline. Generally, the role of friendly societies contracted to the provision of insurance for medical and hospital expenses, and sickness and funeral benefits. The resurgence of friendly societies in the late 1970s can be attributed to the introduction of the friendly society insurance-based bond. It is true to say that those societies offering insurance investment products are not the fraternal, mutual-help bodies contemplated in the existing 1913 Act. Largely due to the sale of insurance policies, the assets of friendly societies in Australia have increased more than tenfold since June 1980. It is obvious that the system of regulation which was appropriate to fraternal societies is no longer appropriate to these larger, financially based societies. It cannot be accepted that unregulated bodies can operate in the financial markets of this State. Friendly societies at present are uninhibited by the restraints imposed by the Insurance and Superannuation Commissioner and the Australian Securities Commission. This Bill corrects these anomalies.

The Act is demonstrably inadequate in dealing with the changes in the traditional role of friendly societies. The committee of inquiry into non-bank financial institutions, known as the Brady Committee, and set up by the Honourable the Treasurer, said this about the Friendly Societies Act 1913—

"The Act under which Queensland friendly societies currently operate is antiquated and should be reviewed urgently with a view to making it relevant to present day conditions and achieving uniformity with legislation in other States."

This Bill seeks to achieve these aims. Regard has been had to the two most recent enactments in Victoria and New South Wales. In addition, close consultation has occurred with the Commonwealth's Insurance and Superannuation Commissioner. The result is a Bill which achieves a high degree of uniformity, yet is the most up-to-date statement of the law relating to friendly societies in Australia. The inadequacies of the Act were highlighted earlier this year when it was shown that the Registrar of Commercial Acts was virtually powerless to investigate a suspected case of fraud involving a friendly society in Queensland. There was no mechanism for safeguarding the interests of investors. The Government acted promptly and made interim regulations to empower the registrar to take action in that instance. At the same time, Cabinet authorised the preparation of legislation to replace the outmoded 1913 Act. The replacement legislation is before the House tonight. The Queensland Friendly Societies Association has been actively involved in the formulation of this Bill. Its efforts and assistance are much appreciated.

Consultation with New South Wales and Victorian regulators ensured that practical difficulties that have become apparent with their legislation could be corrected in the Queensland Bill. In addition, those who drafted the legislation had access to the reports of two recent inquiries into friendly societies—in Queensland the Brady Committee report noted above and, in Victoria, a report carried out by KPMG Peat Marwick. The recommendations contained in those reports have been largely adopted in this legislation. Just this month, a report of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia was highly critical of the practical effect of a New South Wales Act provision. That criticism was able to be addressed in the Queensland Bill. Under the Bill, friendly societies will be incorporated and managed by directors. This replaces the present structure of unincorporated associations whose property is held by trustees. In the transitional provisions of the Bill, existing societies are automatically incorporated upon commencement of the legislation.

Traditional friendly society objects are preserved by the Bill and additional objects included which reflect the widening scope of the larger societies. There was a conscious intention that the small fraternal societies would not be overlooked in this update of the law. Whilst it was important to tighten up the regulation and prudential supervision of the large investment-offering bodies, this Government recognised the importance of the traditional societies, especially in these difficult economic times. The accounts and audit provisions that will apply to friendly societies are an adaptation of the requirements that companies must comply with under the new corporations law. The registrar and other interested persons will now have comprehensive and comparable accounts to

properly assess a society's activities. Operating standards for friendly societies will be prescribed. These standards will require the maintenance of minimum values of unencumbered assets and the holding of liquid assets.

To bring societies that offer investments into line with insurance companies and fund-raising companies generally, provision has been made for the lodgment of investor information memorandums. These memorandums will be directed to providing a potential investor with information prior to investing. Of importance, the registrar's power to arrange investigations into friendly societies and their activities has been strengthened. These clauses are again based on the corporations law provisions. A criticism of regulators is that they do not have the power to act quickly enough when investors' funds are threatened. Another is that the guilty are often able to evade liability by transferring money or property. These valid criticisms are addressed in the Bill. The registrar is given power to apply to the court for a freeze on a person's assets where there is an investigation, prosecution or civil proceeding in progress. The court will have a wide discretion to prohibit persons from transferring money or property to another person or out of the jurisdiction. In addition, the registrar will be able to apply to the court for an injunction where there is a contravention or a proposed contravention of the legislation. Provisions similar to these in the corporations law were earlier this year used to positive effect in the joint Australian Securities Commission and registrar investigation into the Family Security Friendly Society and related companies.

As I have said, the legislation will be the most up-to-date statement of the law relating to friendly societies in Australia. Indeed, it is expected that the Queensland legislation will be held up as the model for other States in the Special Premiers Conference process. The legislation is long overdue and will at last allow friendly societies in Queensland to compete on a level playing field with interstate societies. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Gilmore, adjourned.

#### **CREDIT ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.39 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Credit Act 1987."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Milliner, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. G. R. MILLINER** (Everton—Minister for Justice and Corrective Services) (12.40 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

This Bill has two main purposes. Firstly, the Bill will validate certain credit contracts which are not in strict compliance with the provisions of the Credit Act 1987 and the Credit Regulations 1988 which require disclosure of information about commission charges paid in connection with a related insurance contract. Secondly, the Bill will introduce a range of legislative measures designed to rationalise and streamline procedures dealing with applications by credit-providers for reinstatement of credit charges. As honourable members would realise, the reason for this legislation arose from the failure of Westpac Banking Corporation Limited to disclose to borrowers that a commission of 25 per cent of the premium for consumer credit insurance on their loans was paid by

the insurance underwriter, Westpac General Insurance Limited, to the insurance broker, Westpac Brokers Limited. Both the broker and the underwriter are wholly owned subsidiaries of Westpac Banking Corporation.

The non-disclosure of the commission breached section 38 of the Queensland Credit Act as well as the comparable provisions of the credit legislation in force in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Consequently, borrowers under affected contracts were relieved from paying credit charges, subject to an application by Westpac for reinstatement of such charges to either a court in Queensland or tribunals in other States. The Westpac breaches fell into two categories. Under the first category, although the commission payable was not disclosed in the contract, it was disclosed on an insurance certificate which was given to debtors at the same time as the credit contracts were executed. Under the second category of contract, the insurance commission was disclosed on neither the face of the contract nor on the insurance certificate given to debtors. Of the 242 168 Westpac credit contracts entered into between 28 February 1985 and 31 August 1990 in the Credit Act States, some 117 399, or 48 per cent, were in breach of the Act. The incidence of breaches, however, varied widely between the States, ranging from a defective total of in excess of 80 per cent in the Australian Capital Territory to only 0.2 per cent in Queensland. In fact there are only 412 defective Queensland credit contracts. This low figure was due partly to the fact that the Queensland Act commenced on 1 May 1989 instead of 1985 as in other jurisdictions and also to the fact that by 1989 Westpac had, apparently, overcome most of the administrative problems leading to the breaches. All Credit Act jurisdictions agreed that legislative action was needed to remedy those breaches committed by Westpac where the insurance commission was disclosed in the insurance certificate.

The view was taken that the spirit, if not the letter, of the law was complied with in this instance because the relevant information was disclosed, albeit not in the face of the contract. Borrowers were made aware of the commission paid because bank procedures require staff to ask borrowers to read, in their presence, the important notices in the insurance certificate which disclose the information. All Credit Act jurisdictions investigated the circumstances of this contravention and all agreed that it was a technical matter which caused no identifiable consumer detriment.

New South Wales already has in place the Credit (Amendment) Act 1990. This statute, which in almost all respects mirrors the Bill, came into force on 12 December 1990. The Victorian Credit (Further Amendment) Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council last week and it is also in similar terms to the Bill. The Bill therefore provides that credit charges will be restored on those credit sale and loan contracts which failed to disclose required information about commission charges payable in connection with insurance contracts financed by the credit contract, as long as disclosures were made at the appropriate time by way of separate documentation, such as an insurance certificate furnished to the debtor. The validation will operate retrospectively but not prospectively and the failure to properly comply with the Act remains an offence.

Lenders are placed on notice that the civil penalty regime remains in place to ensure that if the Act is not strictly complied with, potentially large criminal and civil consequences will flow. The other breaches committed by Westpac, namely where the insurance commission was not disclosed on either the insurance certificate or the credit contract, are not covered by the legislation. As honourable members would appreciate, one reason for the legislative requirement for disclosing the payment of commissions is to alert consumers to the possibility that a commission provides an incentive for a credit-provider or its agent to induce borrowers to take out insurance which they might otherwise reject as unnecessary or not beneficial. As honourable members would also appreciate, this is especially the case with consumer credit insurance, which has been the subject of investigation by the Trade Practices Commission, and which, it would be fair to say, has been abused by many credit-providers and others in recent years.

The misuse of consumer credit insurance is a matter about which I am seriously concerned and one which is being looked at by the Standing Committee of Consumer Affairs Ministers. All Credit Act jurisdictions took the view that no legislative intervention should or would take place to relieve Westpac of the civil penalty consequences of its failure to disclose the insurance commissions in the second category of cases, and that normal procedures for seeking reinstatement in the courts or tribunals would need to be adopted. In fact, Westpac has made application in the tribunals of New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory for reinstatement. Westpac also made an application for reinstatement in the Queensland Supreme Court, and that has been dealt with. His Honour Mr Justice Shepherdson ruled in favour of Westpac's reinstatement application, finding that no Queensland borrower in the case had suffered any harm because of the breaches of the Act. His Honour said that the breaches were honest ones, occurring at a time when a complex Act was being considered. He said that the breaches showed up during the settling-in period of the Act and that in his opinion Westpac Banking Corporation ought reasonably and fairly to be excused from the civil penalty consequences of the breaches. As I have said, the breaches considered by His Honour were of a more serious kind than the breaches sought to be excused under this legislation.

I also want to bring to honourable members' attention the fact that I wrote to Westpac seeking an assurance that there would be no extra costs of any kind imposed on Westpac clients as a result of any need to redraw or amend affected credit contracts. By letter dated 30 October 1990, Mr W. Paget, acting manager of Westpac, said in response to my request—

"You are assured that there will be no extra costs of any kind applied by the bank on affected customers as a consequence of the bank's possible breach of the uniform credit legislation."

The Bill also amends provisions of the Credit Act which require separate disclosure in a relevant credit contract of various types of insurance obtained by the debtor in connection with a credit contract and financed under the credit contract. Taken together, the Act and regulations require insurance against sickness or accidental injury to, or disability or death of, the debtor, to be described as consumer credit insurance and insurance against unemployment of the debtor to be described as unemployment insurance. Failure to use the prescribed descriptive terms gives rise to an automatic civil penalty. However, it is common for consumer credit insurance policies to include a component for unemployment insurance, and this is reflected in the definition of consumer credit insurance under the Commonwealth insurance contracts regulations. The result is that some credit-providers inadvertently contravene the Credit Act by referring only to consumer credit insurance and unemployment insurance. Credit Act jurisdictions all agree that this is a technical breach of the legislation which results in no consumer detriment and for which uniform legislative action is required. The amendments proposed by the Bill enable unemployment insurance to be included in the general description of consumer credit insurance. The amended description is in line with the classes of insurance prescribed under Commonwealth legislation. Contracts which were in breach of the requirement for separate disclosures are validated, whereas those which used and continue to use separate descriptions are not penalised.

Credit Act jurisdictions have also agreed, subject to the introduction of new consumer credit legislation in the near future, that there should be some reform of the civil penalty provisions of the legislation. As a consequence, the Bill seeks to amend civil penalty procedures in the following ways—

1. To reduce the impact of the liability created by automatic loss of credit charges;
2. To facilitate dealing with a large number of contracts tainted by a common error or errors;
3. To more quickly dispose of multiple applications concerning common errors which are unlikely to disadvantage debtors; and
4. To clarify the courts' power in making determinations under section 86 of the Act.

Without going into all of the proposed amendments, I do wish to draw honourable members' attention to clause 7, which proposes to insert amendments in section 87. This clause has been brought about by the fact that a number of credit-providers have made errors due to failures in systems, for example, an incorrect computer program or a print run containing a misdescription of a disclosure item. In these instances errors are likely to affect a large number of contracts. These so-called systemic errors have often remained undetected for years and can affect enormous numbers of contracts. When such contracts are disclosed, significant amounts of money have to be spent by credit-providers in identifying the errors and then making applications to the courts or tribunals seeking to have the civil penalties applying waived and interest charges reinstated.

Implications for the courts and tribunals are considerable, often tying down judges or referees for considerable periods of time and at great public expense. All jurisdictions have agreed that the legislation should be amended to allow a court or tribunal to deal more efficiently with multiple applications concerning common errors. Consequently the proposed amendments to section 87 seek to ensure that a credit-provider need not separately identify each debtor in its application for an order varying civil penalties, and as an alternative to the current requirement that each debtor be personally notified of the application, the court may authorise notice of the application in a newspaper advertisement, if it thinks appropriate, considering the number of debtors involved and the other circumstances of the case. The court's determination may refer to a specified class of contract and all debtors who are a party to a contract in that specified class will be bound by the determination regardless of whether they respond to the advertisement.

Also of interest is the provision in clause 8 for the insertion of a new section 87A which provides an alternative procedure for dealing with applications for the reinstatement of credit charges on two or more contracts with minor errors. A court can deal with the application in the first instance without requiring notification of the debtors, although the Registrar of Commercial Acts must be notified and the registrar may be represented by a duly qualified legal practitioner on the hearing of an application for the purpose of making submissions to the court in relation to the application. By this mechanism the interests of consumers are more fully protected. If a court is satisfied that the errors are minor and ought reasonably to be excused, it may make a determination that credit charges be reinstated.

I do wish to point out to honourable members that, although the thrust of the Bill is to relieve credit-providers from technical breaches that have occurred and to facilitate the hearing of applications for reinstatement of credit charges because of the civil penalty provisions of the Act, the fundamental philosophy underlying the civil penalty regime remains in place and is supported by all Credit Act jurisdictions. The underlying purpose of the Bill is to minimise the negative effects flowing from technical breaches in a large number of contracts. The Bill before the House is, therefore, one aimed at improving the legislation rather than changing its underlying philosophy. The Bill will assist credit-providers in complying with the legislation but is not intended to change the basic ground rules by which credit-providers have to abide. I can also indicate to honourable members that the development of consumer credit legislation under the auspices of the Standing Committee of Consumer Affairs Ministers is proceeding, albeit more slowly than a lot would have hoped.

In the next 12 months, I hope to be in a position to be able to introduce into Parliament new consumer credit legislation as agreed upon by the Standing Committee of Consumer Affairs Ministers. Whether this can be achieved will depend upon whether agreement can be reached at a forthcoming standing committee meeting, but I hope that in the interests of both consumers and credit-providers progress can be made, because it is clear that the existing Credit Act, despite its numerous positive features, is drafted in a very difficult manner and the Bill before the House is an indication of the way in which the legislation can be breached, often inadvertently, because of the technical nature of its provisions. I therefore have pleasure in commending this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Gilmore, adjourned.

**ABORIGINAL LAND BILL**

**Hon. A. M. WARNER** (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (12.53 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act providing for the grant, and the claim and grant, of land as Aboriginal land, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

**First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Warner, read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Hon. A. M. WARNER** (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (12.54 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

I am pleased to introduce into this House the Aboriginal Land Bill. This Bill, for the first time, will provide a scheme under which Aboriginal people can obtain secure title to certain categories of land and can exercise control over the use and management of that land according to Aboriginal tradition. This historic legislation is, I believe, one of the most important social reforms brought before this Parliament. This legislation is an important step towards addressing the years of injustice and neglect of Aboriginal people's need and interests. This Government has made the clear and unequivocal commitment to address the injustices of the past in relation to Aboriginal people and particularly in relation to their need for land. For too long the needs, aspirations and interests of Aboriginal people have been not only ignored but also undermined and destroyed by deliberate policies and measures. My Government is committed to a program of reforms based on the principle of social justice. This legislation is an integral part of that reform package.

Before describing the main provisions of this Bill, I would like to inform the House of the philosophical and historical context in which the legislation has been prepared. As set out in the preamble to the Bill, the passage of this legislation through the House will see, for the first time, a recognition by this Parliament of the prior occupation of this State by Aboriginal people. Prior to European settlement of Australia, Aboriginal people, as a distinct race, had established cultural, social, spiritual and economic systems. Land has special significance in the Aboriginal world view as a spiritual landscape on which Aboriginal people have written their history and culture. This Bill recognises that, as a result of European settlement, many Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land. Those people were removed and systematically dispersed throughout the State. The dispossession of their land has had devastating effects on Aboriginal people.

The recently completed royal commission of inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody clearly identifies the need for land by Aboriginal people as the key to their cultural and economic survival as a people. The report notes that it is the dispossession and removal of Aboriginal people from their land which has had the most profound impact on Aboriginal society and continues to determine the economic and cultural status of Aboriginal people to a very significant degree. Existing Queensland land law does not recognise the social and religious relationships with land which underpin Aboriginal societies and their continued viability. This Bill provides for a measure of statutory recognition of Aboriginal land tenure systems. This is not to deny the changing Aboriginal relationships with land. Aboriginal culture is alive and dynamic, and capable of creating new customs and institutions. Providing a scheme whereby Aboriginal people can obtain secure title over land and exercise control over the use and management of

that land according to their traditions is a long-overdue initiative to enable Aboriginal people to overcome the effects of their dispossession.

It is appropriate at this stage to reflect briefly on the history of the treatment of Aboriginal people in this State. The process of dispossession was formalised around the turn of the century with the passage through this House of the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897. The legislation proposed a system of Government-controlled reserves onto which Aboriginal people would be gathered. Importantly, the legislation conferred on the Minister responsible the power to remove Aboriginal people to any reserve and, furthermore, to keep them within the limits of any reserve. All Aborigines living near towns and centres of settlement were especially singled out for removal. Following the passage of the legislation, there was a ruthless rounding up of Aboriginal people who were transferred to reserves or missions which usually bore little relationship to their traditional country and were often in a different region of the State. It was also common for Aboriginal people to be forcibly removed a number of times from reserve to reserve.

By way of illustration—the first Government-controlled reserve settlement was set up in 1897 on Fraser Island. This settlement was initiated with the removal of about 50 Aborigines from the Maryborough district. Two years later, about 165 others were removed from the mainland to Fraser Island, and in 1904 the entire Fraser Island Aboriginal population was again removed, this time to Yarrabah, near Cairns. Moreover, individuals from this group were again removed to other reserves in the subsequent decades. One of these people is alive today. Aboriginal people were not only removed from their traditional lands; often they were separated from their mothers, fathers and families. Honourable members may think that those actions were taken generations ago. But this policy of removing Aboriginal people whenever expediency required continued until as recently as the 1960s and in isolated instances until the 1980s.

Within the life-time of every member of this Parliament, the Government department for which I am now responsible was still in the business of brutally removing and destroying Aboriginal families and communities. This was achieved by burning and bulldozing their homes and churches and shooting their animals. There are, in our community, Aboriginal people who vividly remember being chained up and taken away forcibly from their mother, father or brothers and sisters. As has been noted elsewhere, Aboriginal people have a history of being ordered, controlled and monitored by the State. It is our responsibility to ensure that future Queenslanders are not haunted by this history.

During the 1970s, the Commonwealth and other State Governments passed legislation to recognise Aboriginal rights, including land rights. While the Commonwealth and other States recognised Aboriginal people's rights to land, to maintain their song, ceremony, language and religion, the Queensland Government continued the paternalistic policies of the past.

At a time when the Commonwealth and the other States were recognising the right of Aboriginal people to choose whether, when and how to identify themselves with the broader society and their right to manage their own affairs, Queensland remained the exception. Even the existing legislation, which gives Aboriginal people a form of secure title to reserve land, is firmly based on the theory of assimilation and ignores traditional ties to specific tracts of land and the Aboriginal principles of land tenure. The existing system in Queensland is a clear example of the failure of these past policies.

As I have said, the royal commission's report into Aboriginal deaths in custody clearly identifies the link between Aboriginal land needs and the position of Aboriginal people in Australian society. It is worth quoting directly from that report to illustrate the point—

"The nexus between inadequate or insufficient land provision for Aboriginal people and behaviour which leads to a high rate of arrests and detention of Aboriginal people has been repeatedly and directly observed in the reports of the deaths which were investigated."



The national report into racist violence conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission had similar findings.

This Government is committed to implementing reform that will provide Aboriginal people with an opportunity to gain secure title to their traditional land and enable them to maintain their identity, spirituality, and cultural and economic viability. Quoting the deaths in custody report again, the need for this reform is highlighted—

"If other Australians can, in a spirit of justice and humanity, accord Aboriginal people this recognition, give them freedom to determine their own future and find their own place as a distinct people within Australian society, and provide them with the resources that are necessary to overcome the handicaps they suffer as a result of what has happened in the past, there can be hope of a freely negotiated reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians."

This Bill is a significant step towards achieving that reconciliation.

Dispossessing non-Aboriginal land-owners will not contribute to the reaching of an equitable settlement for either this generation or future generations, nor can it correct the wrongs of the past. As honourable members would appreciate, the issue of recognising Aboriginal rights to land after nearly two centuries of European occupation is a complex and sensitive one. Achieving the fundamental objective of the Bill, while still preserving existing rights and interests in land, has involved careful and considered consultation and deliberation.

The implementation of this legislation will have an effect on a range of people, interests and groups. Because of the implications of the legislation for other interest groups, I wish to conclude these introductory remarks by making special comment on the general process by which this legislation was developed. The issues dealt with in this legislation are complex and required a balanced consideration of many competing interests. Consequently, the preparation of the legislation was co-ordinated by the recently created Office of the Cabinet. Representatives of a range of Government departments and interest groups, as well as Aboriginal people, have been involved in preparing this Bill. The Bill, as it is presented before the House, testifies to the merits of this approach. In developing this Bill, the Government has also undertaken consultations with a cross-section of the community. Groups consulted in the development of this legislation included representatives from the mining industry, primary industries, manufacturing and commerce, churches, conservation groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make some comments on the consultation process and the time-frame the Government has adopted in implementing this legislation. I do not need to remind the House that the issue of addressing land needs for Aboriginal people is not a new one. The call for land rights has been debated by interest groups and Governments for several decades. As one Aboriginal person said in Cairns recently during the consultations—

"We have been marching for land rights for 25 years. We should know what we want by now."

Since becoming the Minister in December 1989, I have been travelling around the State talking to Aboriginal people about their prospective land interests. As well, many groups have submitted claims to me in anticipation of a process for evaluating them. Until this Bill was drafted, there was no clear process to enable officers of my department to deal with these many requests. Since the Premier's announcement on land rights in February this year, more specific consultations with interested parties have occurred. The Government took the view that prolonging the process of consultation would achieve little.

Interestingly, at the time of introducing the Aboriginal Land Rights Bill in the New South Wales Parliament in 1983, the then Labor Government was criticised for the degree of consultation which preceded the Bill. In introducing the Bill, the then Minister

for Aboriginal Affairs dismissed the criticism. I concur with his thoughts at that time. He said—

"Prolonging the process could raise false expectations, deepen antagonism and broaden the division of this issue in the community. Furthermore, deferment would unacceptably delay the task and deny deserving Aboriginal people enjoyment of their land and prolong deprivation and disadvantage."

I wish to turn specifically to criticism made by some within the Aboriginal community about the legislation on the grounds that it does not go far enough. There is a responsibility, I believe, on them to acknowledge that this legislation is historic, a real advance on previous arrangements. It will offer many groups of Aboriginal people the means by which to obtain secure title to their land for them and their descendants. Aboriginal leaders and organisations, while they have every right to point out what they see as deficiencies in the legislation, also have a duty to understand its advantages.

Before turning to the details of the Bill, I would like to address myself to some of the issues that I know have engaged the hearts and minds of Aboriginal people during the process of preparing this legislation. Many of my Aboriginal friends have expressed their grave concerns and doubts about the content and effect of this Bill. I know that they will obtain copies of the Bill and examine it carefully and critically. Equally, they will monitor its implementation. I understand the deep bonds with the land that motivate their demands for the fullest possible recognition of their pre-existing interests in land, as well as their spiritual affiliations and obligations which flow from their ancient inheritance.

It is the intention of this Bill—as far as it is practically possible in 1991 and in the coming years—that significant areas of Aboriginal land will emerge from its implementation. History cannot be unwritten, but this legislation will make it possible for Aboriginal people to regain those parts of their country that are feasible to obtain at this time. Success will, however, importantly depend on Aboriginal people's initiatives and persistence in taking the fullest advantage of the legislation. I have no doubt that Aboriginal people will do so. The Bill provides the means to return to Aboriginal people some part of what was theirs. It can change their lives and the relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people because it provides the structure for the fundamental and substantial empowerment of Aboriginal people.

I turn now to the details of the Bill. As I said earlier, the purpose of the Bill is to provide a scheme under which Aboriginal people can obtain secure title to certain categories of land and exercise control over the use and management of those lands. In achieving these goals, this Bill represents considerable gains for Aboriginal people, both in terms of obtaining secure title over existing Aboriginal land and in the provision of additional land for claim by Aboriginal people.

Firstly, I turn to the changes to occur to existing Aboriginal land. Under this proposed legislation, the Government is providing Aboriginal land-holders in deed of grant in trust areas with the most secure form of title available—that is, inalienable freehold. Currently, the form of title in deed of grant in trust areas is like a patchwork quilt. Some land is dedicated for public purposes or for possible future public purposes. This Bill will transfer title of all such land to Aboriginal people. The most tangible element of this advance is in relation to land which had been reserved for a future public purpose which is at present vacant. Under these changes schools, hospitals and police stations will remain the property of the Crown, but the land on which they stand will become Aboriginal land.

In relation to the Mornington Island and Aurukun Shire leases—honourable members will be familiar with the history of these leases, granted in 1978 under the Bjelke-Petersen Government in an attempt to thwart efforts by Aboriginal people to become self-managing in accordance with policies developed by the Commonwealth and endorsed by the Uniting Church. These leases represent a very insecure form of title. This Bill will place Aboriginal lands covered by these two leases in exactly the same category as

other Aboriginal inalienable freehold title. As I noted earlier, under past Government policies Aboriginal reserves were gazetted. At present, the trustee for most such reserves is the Director-General of the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs. Aboriginal people who live on these reserves can be moved from this land at any time at the discretion of the trustee. Under the Aboriginal Land Bill, the security of title for Aboriginal reserves will be improved to an inalienable freehold title. Aboriginal land currently represents about 1.8 per cent of the State. A significant measure in this legislation is to make additional areas of Queensland available for claim by Aboriginal people.

Under the Aboriginal Land Bill, the Government intends to make vacant Crown land, that is, unused Government land, available for claim by Aboriginal people. I point out to the House, however, that two important conditions are attached to this provision. Firstly, not all vacant Crown land will be made available for claim immediately, but instead the Governor in Council will gazette such land from time to time. This will enable the accurate identification of vacant Crown land available for claim by Aboriginal people. Secondly, no vacant Crown land in towns or cities will be available for claim.

The Bill establishes three criteria, at least one of which Aboriginal people must meet if they are to successfully advance an interest in land. The first is traditional affiliation, defined as a connection with the land based on spiritual and other associations with, and responsibilities for, that land in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. The second basis for claim under the legislation is that of historical association. This basis recognises an association with the land for some substantial period of time by a group whose members may have been displaced from their traditional land as a result of European occupation and dispersal policies. Thirdly, Aboriginal people may claim land on the basis of economic or cultural viability.

To elaborate—given the limited areas of vacant Crown land available, it is entirely conceivable that certain groups of Aboriginal people will not be able to locate land with which they have a traditional or historical association. For this reason, the Government has decided to create this third basis for claim whereby a group of Aboriginal people can claim land for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing their economic or cultural viability. In lodging such a claim in relation to a particular piece of land, Aboriginal people will be required to declare their proposal for the use of that land. No other jurisdiction in Australian offers these three bases of claim, and Queensland, therefore, will lead the way in providing a comprehensive set of criteria for Aboriginal people to advance their interests in land.

In terms of the machinery for processing land claims, the Government has decided to establish an independent Land Tribunal for the purpose of evaluating the legitimacy of individual land claims. In opting for a Land Tribunal, the Government has the broad support of both industry and Aboriginal groups. For a number of reasons, the Land Tribunal has been judged the best approach. Firstly, the Land Tribunal is the fairest way to process land claims. The chairperson of the tribunal will be an experienced lawyer who will draw on a panel of part-time tribunal members for the evaluation of a particular claim. It is broadly envisaged that this panel of part-time members may include representatives from Aboriginal groups, industry groups, and other relevant community organisations. In the evaluation of any particular case, it is envisaged that the chairperson would be able to appoint both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members to the tribunal.

Secondly, the Land Tribunal will enable all parties to a particular claim to participate in a proper public process, rather than simply rely on internal administrative decision-making procedures out of the public eye. The Land Tribunal proposed under this legislation is also less formal than that of the court-like proceedings before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner under the Commonwealth Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory. The excessive formality and the adversarial nature of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner's hearings have created difficulties for Aboriginal people not accustomed to a formal court room procedure.

Additionally, the Land Tribunal is seen as a highly cost-effective method for processing claims. The tribunal will make recommendations to the Minister in relation to each particular claim. Under the Aboriginal Land Bill, the recommendations of the Land Tribunal will be subject to appeal in the Land Appeal Court. Under the legislation, the Land Appeal Court could confirm the recommendations, make a different recommendation or refer the matter back to the tribunal for rehearing.

The Bill provides for title to be held by local Aboriginal trustees. Land management decisions will be made by these trustees in consultation with the Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land. The Bill provides for Aboriginal land granted or claimed successfully on the basis of traditional affiliation and historical association to be transferred to local Aboriginal trustees in the form of inalienable freehold title. Such land cannot be sold or mortgaged. However, trustees of Aboriginal land may lease all or part of their land to Aboriginal people and, in certain circumstances, to non-Aboriginal people. The Bill also provides for Aboriginal land which is successfully claimed on the basis of economic or cultural viability to be transferred to local Aboriginal trustees only on a leasehold basis. The Government would from time to time examine whether the purposes for which the lease was granted were being adhered to in a fashion similar to the process adopted for review of term leases under the Queensland Land Act. Under this Bill, the Government reserves the right to resume Aboriginal land in the public interest, but only through an Act of Parliament. As with any other private land in Queensland, compensation would be paid for any resumption.

It is important to deal with two other matters relating to this Bill, namely, exploration and mining on Aboriginal land and Aboriginal interests in national parks. Consistent with previous public statements by the Premier, the Crown will retain the sovereign ownership of all minerals and petroleum in Queensland, including those on Aboriginal land. The Government has decided, as a general rule, to maintain and extend to new Aboriginal lands under inalienable freehold title the consent provisions of the Mineral Resources Act 1989 as they relate to existing reserve and deed of grant in trust areas in relation to exploration and mining on Aboriginal land. Under the provisions applying to Aboriginal land, mining companies must obtain the consent of Aboriginal land-holders to exploration or mining activities commencing on their land. If, for whatever reason, consent is withheld, the Governor-in-Council may overturn any refusal by Aboriginal land-holders and approve the application. Clearly the powers of the Governor-in-Council in this respect would be used judiciously and responsibly in the public interest.

These consent provisions were negotiated between the mining industry and the previous Queensland Government at the time of drafting the Mineral Resources Act 1989. In that Act, the then Queensland Government and the mining industry agreed to this arrangement in relation to deed of grant in trust areas. Importantly, the exception to the general rule is that all existing exploration and mining interests on land claimed by Aboriginal people are to be preserved, in addition to the right of renewal and improvement of those interests. Access to these mining interests is also guaranteed. Under the legislation, royalties will continue to be paid to the Crown. The Government will, however, allocate partial royalty equivalents for the general benefit of Aboriginal people under a formula yet to be determined. I am pleased to say that, following negotiations with the mining industry, the Government has secured its support for these measures.

The other matter that this Bill makes provision for is Aboriginal interests in national parks. Queensland's nature conservation legislation has provided protection for flora and fauna and the needs of the community for the use and enjoyment of our national parks. In the past, it has not recognised the interests and responsibilities of Aboriginal people in regard to those lands, particularly where they still have interests and responsibilities. This legislation addresses that issue and provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in the ownership, protection and management of those areas. The approach taken in regard to national parks in this legislation is a Queensland model that takes into account the specific features of Queensland. It draws on the successful models that have been developed for Uluru, Kakadu and Nitmiluk national parks and on proposed

legislation for particular New South Wales national parks. It provides for the gazettal of particular national parks that can be claimed for Aboriginal purposes as inalienable freehold land, but requires the Aboriginal owners to immediately lease back those parks to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. However, existing and future parks that are gazetted from time to time as claimable land will be claimable only on the basis of traditional affiliation and historical association. Not only will the Aboriginal interests be recognised, but the nature conservation values and other values of the parks will continue to be protected. These interests and values will be protected by the preparation of a perpetual lease agreement and a plan of management prior to any changes in the land tenure.

Changes to the National Parks and Wildlife Act will enable the establishment of management boards and provisions dealing with traditional uses. The management board, including the Director of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, will be responsible for the preparation of a plan of management. New management planning provisions will be included in the National Parks and Wildlife Act to enable this to occur. Plans so prepared will be subject to the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the approval of the Governor in Council. As land-holders, Aboriginal owners will have a major role in relation to their representation on management boards, so that Aboriginal interests in the land are protected subject to the management plan and the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The management plans and management board provisions will apply to all parks. Special provisions to take into account the interests and the role in management of Aboriginal people will apply to those parks where they are the land-holders. Amendments and reviews of management plans will also need to be approved by the Governor in Council. The public will be involved in the preparation of those plans in at least two phases: by inviting public submissions and inviting comment on the draft plan. Community interests, such as conservation interests, pastoralists and tourism interests, will be represented on the boards of management where appropriate. The lease agreement and the management plan will specifically include sections that will protect Aboriginal interests and values. The natural, scenic and other values will be protected in line with the requirements of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. This will be enabled by the preparation of zoning maps and management strategies. The public's right of access and use of the national parks will be guaranteed, but special areas will be protected and access may be able to be limited in those locations. Traditional uses will be covered in the lease agreement and management plan, but consistent with the sound conservation management of the park. The Commonwealth Law Reform Commission's report on the recognition of Aboriginal customary laws provides sound principles that can be applied in this area. Those principles, together with the successful examples of Aboriginal involvement in park management elsewhere, will provide a solid basis for any such negotiations in Queensland.

The provisions in this Bill and the proposed changes to the National Parks and Wildlife Act will enable the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service to involve the skills of the Aboriginal people in the management of their land for the benefits of the community as a whole. These changes will go hand in hand with Aboriginal employment and training strategies for the parks. The involvement of Aboriginal people in park management and interpretation has been very successful in other parks in Queensland and in other States, and this will add a new dimension to our park management. It will also provide opportunities for development and recognition of the Aboriginal people and their culture. The funds generated by the parks will go back to manage those parks and provide employment and facilities. In addition, funds will be available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's program for management of those parks. Additional funds will be provided to cover any costs associated with the establishment and management of the parks so that management of other national parks is not jeopardised.

Some concerns have been raised by adjacent land-holders in regard to the management of pests and feral animals, but I provide an assurance that the interests of adjacent land-holders will be protected. This will be done through a consultative process and appropriate

management strategies incorporated in the management plan. The Government has also determined that it is appropriate for a sunset clause to be included in the legislation. Therefore, under the Bill, claims by Aboriginal people for land will have to be lodged within 15 years of the date of proclamation. Nevertheless, the tribunal will continue to hear properly lodged claims submitted up until that time.

I said at the outset that this historic legislation is one of the most important social reforms brought before this House. This legislative package realistically addresses the issue of providing Aboriginal people with real opportunities for managing their land and recognises the legitimate rights of existing land-holders. This Bill therefore establishes a responsible and balanced policy for Aboriginal lands. This Bill recognises the spiritual, social, historical, cultural and economic importance of land to Aboriginal people. It is the first step in providing a foundation for reform upon which Aboriginal people can build a better future. On this basis alone it should receive the full support of all members of this House. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

### **TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LAND BILL**

**Hon. A. M. WARNER** (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (1.24 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act providing for the grant, and the claim and grant, of land as Torres Strait Islander land, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### **First Reading**

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Warner, read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Hon. A. M. WARNER** (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (1.25 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Earlier, I introduced the Aboriginal Land Bill. I am now pleased to introduce to the House the Torres Strait Islander Land Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to enable Torres Strait Islanders to obtain secure title under Queensland law over their ancestral lands and to manage those lands in accordance with island custom. There are many similarities between this Bill and the Aboriginal Land Bill. However, it is not the similarities that I wish to emphasise; rather, it is the differences. Those differences arise because it is necessary to allow for the specific expression of Torres Strait Islander interests in land. The Torres Strait Islander Land Bill not only recognises that Torres Strait Islanders have very different cultural systems and social values from Aboriginal people but also takes into account the fact that the historical interaction of Torres Strait Islanders and non-Torres Strait Islanders was, and is, substantially different from that of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Queenslanders.

In contrast to most Aboriginal societies, Torres Strait Islanders were not dispossessed from their ancestral lands and, in accordance with Government policy, removed to other locations in the State. On the contrary, mission workers intervened early in the period following European contact, and most Torres Strait Islands were protected from European intrusion by the creation of Islander reserves. Consequently, Torres Strait Islanders have been able to maintain a continuous relationship with their lands. This Bill will therefore recognise in Queensland law what Torres Strait Islanders have always taken for granted.

During the course of my recent visit to the Torres Strait, Islander leaders made it clear to the Premier and me that their expectations in terms of this legislation are

directed less towards correcting the mistakes of the past and more towards enabling them to provide for a secure future for themselves and their children. That view was reaffirmed in recent correspondence from the Chairman of the Island Co-ordinating Council, Mr Getano Lui, when he wrote, advising—

"We are glad to accept responsibilities along with rights and as a people we have shown that we are no strangers to weighty responsibilities and practical decision-making."

The Bill creates the conditions in which Torres Strait Islanders can assume those responsibilities. It is imperative that this Parliament discharges its obligation to all Queenslanders to enable them to take responsibility for the well-being of themselves and their families. That is the basis from which self-respect develops and from which stems mutual respect between different cultural groups and individuals. The legislation, rather than creating the basis for division between cultural groups, will lay firm foundations for reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Queenslanders in the future.

In that way, the legislation represents a significant departure from the policies of the previous Government. The deed of grant in trust system was a sinister form of land rights. It was designed to suppress pre-existing Torres Strait Islanders' interests in land and it hindered the expression of principles of island custom in the ownership and management of land. Not only did that result in local conflict over land use but also, perhaps more importantly, it threatened the capacity of Torres Strait Islanders to maintain their cultural identity which is determined through the continuous observance of island custom. The consequences of policies that seek to destroy or deny the legitimate identity of indigenous cultures are demonstrated tragically in the recently completed report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The findings of that commission are a sobering reminder of the failure of policies that have disempowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The legislation will restore responsibility to Torres Strait Islanders for the management of their lands in accordance with island custom. It is only by means such as this that the tide will be turned against continuing dependence on Government-provided welfare.

The legislation is derived not only from the submissions by Torres Strait Islander leaders as part of the consultation process but also from the views that Islanders have put to the Government about their plans and aspirations for future social and economic development. As a result of the work that has been done by Torres Strait Islander leaders, my Government is able to provide a legislative framework that should establish some of the conditions for the maintenance of a viable Islander society in the Torres Strait for generations to come. I have every confidence that Torres Strait Islanders will grasp the opportunities that the legislation offers.

In concluding these introductory remarks, I wish to make special comment on the general process by which this legislation, like the Aboriginal Land Bill, was developed. The issues dealt with in this Bill are complex and required a balanced consideration of many competing interests. Consequently, the preparation of the legislation was coordinated by the recently created Office of the Cabinet. Representatives of a range of Government departments and interest groups, as well as Torres Strait Islanders, have been involved in preparing this Bill. The Bill as it is presented before the House testifies to the merits of that approach.

The legislation provides the means by which this Government can distance itself in a direct and practical way from the racially discriminatory policies of the past. The first part of the Bill highlights this Government's resolve to provide a practical means for the appropriate recognition of the interests and responsibilities which Torres Strait Islanders have in and for their land. It contains a clause which repeals the Queensland Coast Islands Declaratory Act 1985. That Act was a cynical attempt by the Bjelke-Petersen Government to retrospectively extinguish any right that Torres Strait Islanders may have had over the islands of the Torres Strait. The High Court of Australia subsequently found that Act to be in contravention of the Commonwealth's Racial Discrimination Act 1975. It would be abhorrent to this Government and an insult to

this Parliament if the legislation were to remain on the statute book. The judgment of Justice Deane describes succinctly the offensive impact of the Act. His Honour stated—

"The practical operation and effect of the Act . . . are to single out the Torres Strait Islanders (including the Miriam people) for discriminatory treatment in relation to traditional proprietary rights and interests to and in their homelands. The confiscation or extinction of such rights and interests without any compensation or any procedure for ascertaining or assessing the existence and extent of the claims of particular individuals is a denial of the entitlements to ownership and inheritance of property, including the implicit immunity from arbitrary dispossession, which are 'rights' for the purposes of . . . the Commonwealth Act. That denial of rights is confined to the Torres Strait Islanders."

The provisions of this new legislation will be available to the people of Murray Island if they choose to use them. Generally speaking, there are many features in the Torres Strait Islanders Land Bill that are common to the Aboriginal Land Bill. First, the categories of land that are available for transfer and for claim and grant replicate those in the Aboriginal Land Bill. Also, the grounds upon which claims can be made for those lands are identical. The reservations from the title are the same and the powers that are exercisable in relation to the land are parallel in both Bills. There are, however, minor differences expressly included within the legislation to recognise and accommodate the particular interests of Torres Strait Islanders. For example, a separate land tribunal will be established to deal with land claims in the Torres Strait. The degree of flexibility within both pieces of legislation will mean that, when implemented, there may be substantial variations between the way in which statutory provisions apply in the Torres Strait compared to Aboriginal lands. This flexibility is designed to allow for the expression of differences not only between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures but also within each of those societies.

Other provisions of the Bill recognise the specific distinctions that must be drawn to ensure that this legislation meets the specific needs of Torres Strait Islanders. Accordingly, the Bill relies upon island custom as the central tenet upon which many of the claims to land will be based and decisions in relation to its ownership and management are made. This term refers to the largely unwritten set of traditions, observances and beliefs to which Torres Strait Islanders subscribe and through which their cultural identity is maintained.

Torres Strait Islanders' interests in land under island custom differ greatly from Aboriginal interests in land. The main difference is that, unlike Aboriginal interests which are group-oriented, the customary interests of Torres Strait Islanders include the interest of individuals or families in clearly defined plots of land. The legislation therefore contains provisions that allow for the recognition of individual claims by Torres Strait Islanders to land. This contrasts with the Aboriginal Land Bill, which provides for land claims to be made only by groups, except where a single person is the sole currently surviving member of a group. In the Torres Strait, however, this land will be held in trust for any successful individual claimant by an appropriate trustee or group of trustees. This will ensure the inalienability of the title.

The Torres Strait Islanders Land Bill contains additional provisions that require decisions in respect of land claims or devolution of title to existing Torres Strait island lands to take into account specific factors. These include not only the views of the claimant and any other relevant party but also, in particular, the local island council and persons recognised as relevant elders. This provision is designed to ensure that decisions are taken in accordance with island custom while at the same time considering the interests of Torres Strait island local Government bodies. This system will ensure that contemporary requirements for land are balanced against the maintenance of pre-existing customary rights.

The area of land that may be claimed under the Bill is the area that is described in the Torres Strait treaty as within the protected zone. Additional areas of land may be included in the Torres Strait area by Order in Council. This provision is designed to enable the precise boundary between the area covered by this legislation and the area covered by the Aboriginal Land Bill to be determined in close consultation with both



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These areas are in addition to any areas of Islander reserve or deeds of grant in trust land made available under this Bill.

In conclusion, I believe that the Bill provides the basis for the appropriate recognition of the rights of Torres Strait Islanders in their ancestral lands and scope for the expression of the responsibilities that those rights entail. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (1.35 a.m.): I move—  
"That the House do now adjourn."

#### Undarra Lava Tubes

**Mr ELLIOTT** (Cunningham) (1.36 a.m.): I raise a matter that will be of interest to all Queenslanders who are concerned about the management, control and protection of national parks, particularly the Undarra lava tubes. Opposition members are not opposed to the Undarra lava tubes being protected. We realise the need and the significance of having a national park in this area. As long ago as my early days in this place, there was an interest in that area. It must be remembered that the lava tube is the longest in the world. As the Minister responsible for conservation is in the Chamber, I ask him to explain why there is a need for indecent haste with this proposal, because the area is perfectly well protected at the moment. Gerry Collins and the gulf savanna guides know what they are doing. They are taking people into the tubes and controlling them. As recently as 10 days ago, Gerry Collins put on a full-time, professional ranger who was trained at Kakadu. She is about 30 years old, knows exactly what she is doing and is as professional as any of our national park rangers.

I say to the Minister that he does not have a problem in terms of endangering the particularly significant areas. There is no danger from cattle. If the Minister understood the way in which lava tubes are formed, he would know that they are basically underground and that every now and then their roof caves in. Lava tubes have very steep sides and, consequently, cattle cannot gain access to them. I reiterate that livestock cause no problem.

The history of this matter reveals that in October 1989, Cannan and Petersen wrote on behalf of the Collins family to the Director of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, not to the Minister or National Party members of Parliament. An official letter was written to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and, when the Labor Government came to power, an answer was received indicating that the National Parks and Wildlife Service had no further interest in the area. Prior to this, the Collins family had already indicated that it had an interest in the south-eastern corner of Yarramulla.

**Mr Comben** interjected.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** The Minister should not waste my time. He will have his chance later. At that stage, the Collins family invested in excess of \$1m.

**Mr Ardill:** You starved them of funds.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** The honourable member does not know what he is talking about because he has never been there. The Collins family built a resort and spent in excess of \$1m. If it is good enough for the Labor Government to apply a 10-year moratorium on the building of casinos after a casino licence has been granted in Brisbane, it should be good enough for these people who have gone hundreds of miles out into the bush to build a resort, after receiving written confirmation from the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service that it did not wish to acquire more of the lease, to obtain exclusive rights over visitation to these lava tubes. If the Minister negotiates carefully and sensibly,

a strong possibility exists for designating a park that will contain unique features. If part of the Undarra special lease is combined with Yarramulla, and the Kennedy development road is used to link that area to part of the Spring Creek holding, that area would contain all the important landform features in the region. By seeking to include areas near Mount Surprise, the Minister would immediately double the size of the area, which would make it impossible to control and manage. He has lifted the acquisition budgets enormously—13 per cent for the management budget alone—and he does not have sufficient funds to look after the parks that already exist, let alone manage increased areas throughout the State.

Time expired.

### **Rockhampton Economy**

**Mr SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton North) (1.42 a.m.): Following the doom and gloom that has been expressed by the honourable member for wherever, I wish to discuss very favourable aspects of the economy of this State. I wish to refer particularly to the very sound economy of Rockhampton.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Well may it suit members of the Opposition to deride the efforts made by the good Labor people of Rockhampton, because the facts are that Rockhampton's economy is performing very well indeed, thank you very much, with no thanks due to people such as Mr Katter who have turned telling lies to the media into a fine art by spreading stories about jobs that will disappear from Queensland Railways, and so on. His ploy has not worked. The latest statistics reveal that although Rockhampton has a high rate of unemployment, which is 8.5 per cent, it is a significantly lower rate than the average rate of unemployment in this State. I believe that because the Goss Labor Government has really put its shoulder to the wheel and created jobs in central Queensland, the people of Rockhampton have a great deal to be proud of. When the Labor Government first came to power, the Honourable the Minister for Resource Industries, Mr Ken Vaughan, was able to secure the gas pipeline from Gladstone to Rockhampton and that has created significant employment. I know that the Tories on the other side of the House will try to claim that they deserve the credit for that project, because I well recall the media statements at that time. However, the fact is that when the Goss Labor Government won office, the larder was bare, and it was up to this Government to ensure that the expansion took place.

**Mr Katter:** You cut back on the cut-backs pretty quick, didn't you?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I can see the honourable idiot from Flinders engaging in sleight of hand. He has been big-noting himself in the Rockhampton North electorate and saying that he is the great saviour of jobs in central Queensland. The fact is that that is untrue.

**Mr Katter:** That is not what they are saying at the railways in Rockhampton.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I challenge the honourable member to come down to the railways with me any day, because the people there know him for the gutless slob that he is.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order!

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I was provoked. The honourable member takes cheap shots at me about the railways, but everyone knows that he lacks the intestinal fortitude to come down to the railways in Rockhampton.

**Mr Katter:** Why do they believe me and not you?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** On a number of occasions in Rockhampton, I have challenged the honourable member to go with me onto the platform and repeat the mendacious

stories that he has spread in the press. He will not do that because he has the intestinal fortitude of a mouse, and everyone knows it.

**Mr KATTER:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Get up and buck about it, you gutless mongrel.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I will take the honourable member's point of order, and I hope that it is not frivolous.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not a frivolous one. Some offensive remarks have been made, and I ask the honourable member to withdraw them. I also take up his very kind offer, which I appreciate. I thank the honourable member.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Rockhampton North to withdraw those comments.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I do not know what the honourable member is talking about, but I will withdraw whatever it is that offends him.

**A Government member:** He does not know what "mendacious" means.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** He does not know what "mendacious" means, but it means "telling lies". The fact of the matter is that, because of the initiative of the Government, many jobs have been created in the Rockhampton area. Recently, the Government announced a \$2m National Parks and Wildlife Service project which will create 1 400 man-hours of work in my electorate. I thank the Minister for Administrative Services for that initiative. As well, this Government has created work on State Government buildings worth \$23m. When in Government, the Tories prevented that work from coming to pass. Fundamentally, the difference between our Government and their Government is that we care——

**Mr Hobbs:** It means you're going broke and we didn't.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No. Unlike Opposition members, we care about the people of Rockhampton. We have set in train initiatives that have created employment in Queensland, and in Rockhampton especially.

Time expired.

#### **Queensland Railways Job Losses**

**Hon. R. C. KATTER** (Flinders) (1.47 a.m.): It is with great delight that I rise in this debate. I took a great deal of comfort from the kind offer of the member for Rockhampton North. I take up that offer and look forward to talking to the railwaymen in Rockhampton. I have spoken to railwaymen at a number of public meetings. I will simply produce all the evidence that I have in my hands and will leave that with the railwaymen in Rockhampton. It gives me a great opportunity to circulate all that information.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. My statement was sincere. I want it recorded that I invited the honourable member to share a platform with me.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Campbell): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** There is. He has been quoting me.

**Mr KATTER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the honourable member for Rockhampton North to resume his seat.

**Mr KATTER:** I was thanking the honourable member for his kind offer. I look forward to attending the meeting with the railwaymen in Rockhampton. The member for Rockhampton North and I will have an excellent day together.

On the issue of rail freights—on the very day that the Minister stated on Statewide news that there would be no job cut-backs, I read on page 3 of the *North West Star* in Mount Isa that 13 jobs were lost in Hughenden. That was on the very day that the Minister said that there would be no jobs lost in the State.

**Mr Schwarten:** He said no-one would be sacked.

**Mr KATTER:** That is not what he said on the Statewide news. He said that there would be no cut-backs in jobs. In this House, he said that, in Queensland, only 60 jobs would go. Already 13 jobs have gone in Hughenden. I understand that the Tolga Railway Station has closed and that a large number of people have left Tolga. When I was in the Nundah electorate, a number of railwaymen approached me and informed me that a large number of people are leaving the railway workshops in Brisbane. I look forward to talking to those people, as I will be shortly, at a meeting. They have assured me that never again will anyone in the railway workshops in Brisbane vote for the ALP. I do not know whether those people have told me lies; I merely state that I accept any kind invitations to speak at meetings. However, I will be distributing literature at those meetings.

**Mr Schwarten:** They can't wait for you to come down there.

**Mr KATTER:** That literature consists of press releases from the Minister. I will not have to say anything; I will just hand out the press releases. However, there is something extremely lamentable in the behaviour of a Minister when, on the very day that he promises the people of Queensland that there will be no job cut-backs, an announcement comes out in a prominent Queensland newspaper stating that 13 jobs have already gone. What is more, when I was door-knocking at Nundah I found that a stack of other jobs were being removed at the railway workshops. I am being very specific in my allegations. I am also informed that as a result of the closure of the railway station at Tolga, a number of jobs have gone. So much for the Minister's statement that no jobs would be lost! That is an indication of the veracity of the Minister.

**Mr Eider:** You have a propensity to tell untruths.

**Mr KATTER:** On many occasions, I have come into this House and put on the table documentary evidence which backs up the proposition that the Government intends to remove 6 000 jobs. Not one piece of the eight pieces of evidence that I produced in the debate has been mentioned by the Minister.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is completely misleading the House. No evidence has been produced before the House. The honourable member is referring to some dubious documents that have not been accepted in this House. He is not telling the truth.

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

**Mr KATTER:** The honourable member is wasting a lot of my time. For the information of the House, I will reiterate the contents of an article that appeared on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. Perhaps the editor of the *Courier-Mail* woke drunk up one morning and decided that he should put the article on the front page.

Time expired.

#### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education**

**Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (1.51 a.m.):** I wish to talk about the review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, which has recently been announced by the Minister for Education. That subject is a matter of some concern to me both in terms of my constituency and in terms of my past employment with the Queensland Teachers Union and also as a teacher in the Queensland education system. The review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education which has recently been announced is a long-overdue initiative of the Education Department. There have unquestionably been numerous concerns in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, both on the part of

the community members and the people who are delivering the services at a school and regional level, about certain failings in the system that have been evident for quite some time.

I would not say for a second that the failings are due to a lack of effort or a lack of efficiency on the part of the regional administrators or the teachers—in fact, quite the contrary. I have been associated with teachers throughout Cape York peninsula, the gulf and the Torres Strait for approximately 14 years. For the same period, I have been associated with the regional administration of what was known as the northern region and is now known as the peninsula region. I know that the vast majority of people who have been involved in both capacities have genuinely done their utmost to try to ensure that the delivery of education services to Aboriginal and Islander communities is first-class. However, I do not think that one can deny the fact that problems have arisen in regard to attendances at schools such as those that have been highlighted at Aurukun. Those problems are not unique to Aurukun by any means. They occur from time to time, particularly in most of the Aboriginal communities. There are difficulties in the system that need to be addressed.

I think the commendable thing about the way in which the Government has responded is that there has not been some sort of knee-jerk reaction to it. Late last year, the Minister announced the review of Aboriginal education. Earlier this year, I was with the Premier when he visited Aurukun and was apprised first-hand of some of the concerns of people involved in education there. That, of course, brought the review to the front burner, if I could put it that way, and the review is now to be undertaken.

A press release from the Minister's office on 21 May states—

"The inquiry would take three months and would be undertaken by Ross Schuurmans, the co-ordinator of the Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre at the University College of Central Queensland, and Natasha McNamara, the co-ordinator of the Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute in Sydney.

'Both Ms McNamara and Mr Schuurmans have had extensive experience in working in and with aboriginal communities, and are hard-headed enough to see that this is a practical rather than a theoretical exercise,' Mr Braddy said."

I commend the appointment of those two people to head the research into the Aboriginal and Islander education system. However, I do believe that, at present, in the schools in the peninsula and Torres Strait there are many years of collective experience, training, qualifications and expertise in Aboriginal and Islander education on which the inquiry will be able to draw. I believe also that it is fundamentally important that, whatever inquiry takes place, one of the primary objectives of that inquiry must be making some assessment of the expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in regard to the education system. I am confident that the two people appointed to the inquiry will be seeking feedback from the professionals at regional and school level because I believe that they do have a lot to offer. In some cases they have been working on the ground—at the chalk face, as I call it—under difficult circumstances, trying to deliver education services. They have also been working in the communities themselves, talking to the members of the communities, encouraging them to take greater responsibility for making sure that their children attend school, and a range of other factors.

The problems which afflict Aboriginal and Islander communities are not easily resolved. Land rights legislation has just been introduced. Changes have been made to health administration and structures. There are changes to education, changes to law enforcement and other social issues which I think are all important. In recent times, numerous inquiries have been going on in Aboriginal and Islander communities—

Time expired.

**ALP Submission on State Redistribution to EARC**

**Mr STONEMAN** (Burdekin) (1.57 a.m.): I wish to draw the attention of the House to what I think is one of the most disgraceful submissions that has been given the light of day in the history of this State. I refer to the submission made by the Australian Labor Party under the name of Mr Wayne Swan to the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission relating to the Queensland State redistribution. Quite frankly, given the expectations of the community of Queensland, this disgraceful document shows contempt for EARC, for this Parliament and for the processes that I would have thought this Parliament was trying to put in place. It reflects on the integrity of what I would have thought was a once-proud party, a party that said that it was a party of the people. It reflects, as I say, a lack of integrity and shows absolute contempt, and it will no doubt be accepted by one and all as a disgrace.

The ALP attitude disregards the Act. In fact, it notes that disregard in the first few pages of its submission. Reference is made to the fact that EARC recommended that existing boundaries should not be a criterion for the first redistribution to be carried out under the new system. The ALP then proceeds to use the existing boundaries as the basis of some ineffectual descriptive process throughout the balance of a document that is unusual, to say the least. I say that the contempt that the Australian Labor Party has for this process is epitomised by the way in which this Government shows contempt for the processes for which it blasphemed the previous Government. For instance, it is almost 2 a.m., and the Labor Party came to power saying, "There will be no more late-night sittings. Business will be conducted in a smooth, efficient manner." The hypocrisy of that is given substance by this particular submission. The Labor Party has refused to accept the validity of the database that was given by EARC. Everyone knows that it was far from perfect. I would have to say that I am sure that in every submission that is made there will be errors and there will be information that in the limited time available was probably not as accurate as maybe all of us would have liked. However, all players had the same information and, therefore, in that respect one would have thought that the playing field was reasonably even.

The submission was developed along a broadly coherent stream for a few pages, but then it seemed to run out of logic. When one gets to page 25, no doubt the gravy train—which, I am given to understand, this document was largely written on—must have jolted into a siding, arrived at Barcaldine for the big bash where we know many things happened, or the red wine flowed too freely and caused the submission to get out of kilter. The document was quite reasonable until about page 25, in the summation, where the comment with respect to Townsville/Thuringowa underlines the concerns that I am expressing to the House tonight. These words relate to 8, 9 and 10, Townsville 1, Townsville 2 and Thuringowa—

"It was virtually impossible to decipher the CCD numbers from the maps."

The red wine must have been jolting at that stage because it states further—

"As a consequence, a detailed redistribution was not attempted."

That is a disgrace. The major and senior city of this State outside Brisbane was treated with a one-line message of contempt. The Labor Party did not attempt to do any detailed submission because, quite simply, it could not carry the processes of the Act through to the redistribution processes. It is a contempt of the Parliament. It is a contempt of the commission. It is a contempt of the processes that this party would have all honourable members believe that they are trying to put in place. I wonder whether the people of Townsville and Thuringowa, when they find out that this party that has the mayoralty in Townsville, that has three electorates in Townsville, would not even—

Time expired.

**Permanent Court of Appeal**

**Mr FOLEY** (Yeronga) (2.02 a.m.): Last year in this House I urged the consideration of a permanent court of appeal for Queensland. Tonight, I urge the implementation

forthwith of a permanent court of appeal for Queensland. I urge the Government to move in the direction recommended years ago by the Law Reform Commission. I note that the Law Reform Commission report on that matter, as on so many other matters, lay hidden from the public gaze until, following my speech in this House, the Attorney-General tabled it and it was able then to be examined by the public at large. What that revealed was that years ago the Law Reform Commission had recommended the establishment of a permanent court of appeal, but that that recommendation had languished for lack of support.

Since that time, the Bar Association of Queensland has added its voice to the call for reform of Queensland's judicial system by establishing a permanent court of appeal. Let me repeat briefly the arguments in favour of such a reform. Firstly, it has the benefit of enhanced consistency and certainty in the appellate process. This consistency is more easily obtained with a permanent court of appeal than from a bench selected on a rotational basis as at present. Secondly, the degree of specialisation which is able to be achieved as a result of a permanent court of appeal leads to an enhanced quality of the judgments able to be given. As in so many areas of life and work, the trend of modern times is to specialisation. This proposal allows for a specialisation in appellate work and, in so doing, enables the court to focus on the developing issues in the jurisprudence of Queensland and Australia as set out in the judgments of appellate courts.

It is relevant to remember that the Full Court of Queensland or the Court of Criminal Appeal is the highest court to which a right of appeal lies, as appeal to the High Court is now available only by way of special leave. The time is ripe for action. There are currently three judicial vacancies in the Supreme Court. There has been a public call by the Law Society for the filling of these vacancies. I urge the Government to use this opportunity not merely to plug the gaps in the existing system, but rather to use the opportunity to move to establish a permanent court of appeal. This occurs at a time when the Supreme Court is moving to the introduction of a case management system. Lawyers in Queensland have seen the benefit of that operating in the Family Court and in the Federal Court for a number of years, and indeed Mr Justice Carter operated it admirably in the criminal list, as indeed the commercial causes list had been operated. It is important also to consider the possible merger of Supreme and District Courts, but that is a matter which requires close study.

This is a time for action. There has been lengthy reflection, lengthy analysis and lengthy debate. The time for action in this area is now and Queensland may thus join with New South Wales and with England in establishing a permanent court of appeal which can only operate for the betterment of jurisprudence in Queensland.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.07 a.m. (Thursday).