WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2000

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. R. K. Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

ELECTION OF SENATE CANDIDATE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that His Excellency the Governor has been informed by the President of the Senate of the resignation of Senator Warwick Parer as follows—

"Your Excellency

Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of Queensland through the resignation of Senator the Honourable Warwick Parer on Friday, 11 February 2000.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Reid"

In pursuance of the provisions of Standing Order No. 331, Casual Vacancy in the Senate, I have summoned honourable members to meet in the Legislative Assembly Chamber at 7.35 p.m. on Wednesday, 1 March 2000 for the purposes of electing a senator.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.33 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That so much of Standing Order No. 331 be suspended to allow the debate set down for Wednesday, 1 March 2000 at 7.35 p.m. for the purpose of electing a person to hold the place in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant through the resignation of Senator Warwick Parer, to be postponed until 7.35 p.m. on Tuesday, 16 May 2000."

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Dawson Highway

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (2,348 petitioners) requesting the House to upgrade maintenance and further improve the section of the Dawson Highway between Calliope and Biloela.

Prostitution Laws

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (436 petitioners) requesting the House to oppose any review of prostitution laws unless such review results in the complete abolition of prostitution.

Dayboro Road

From **Mrs Lavarch** (193 petitioners) requesting the House to (a) provide an assurance that the pedestrian crossing supervisor will remain permanently on Dayboro Road at Petrie State School, (b) ensure that Dayboro Road not be upgraded to four lanes (be not considered a major transport route) and (c) ensure that the speed limit on Dayboro Road between Andrew Petrie Drive and Anzac Avenue be reduced during school zone hours.

Vegetation Management Bill 1999

From **Mr Littleproud** (58 petitioners) requesting the House to rescind the Vegetation Management Bill 1999 legislation immediately.

Walsh River Road

From **Mr Nelson** (161 petitioners) requesting the Department of Natural Resources upgrade the Walsh River Road allowing existing lease and permit holders and long-term outstanding applicants to have dedicated access to their homes and receive secure tenure.

Powerlink Power Lines, Cardwell and Johnstone Shires

From **Mr Pitt** (6 petitioners) requesting the House to direct Powerlink to establish the 275kV line on the current alignment where its impact on the community of the Cardwell and Johnstone Shires is minimal.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts (Mr Foley)—

Annual Reports for 1998-99—

National Australia Trustees Limited

Permanent Trustees Company Limited

Perpetual Trustees Australia Limited

Office of the Adult Guardian Limited.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Government Accountability

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: Today I reconfirm my commitment to accountable Government and table the public record of ministerial expenses. This is a report of expenditure for each ministerial office published every six months and in a form that is readily understandable. As Mr Speaker knows, this practice is unprecedented in the Queensland Parliament and for any Government. This report is a continuation of my pledge to account for all my Government's expenses and therefore includes the entire expenses of running ministerial offices, including salaries, superannuation contributions and all other costs associated with all members of staff. Considering the significant work being undertaken by my Ministers, I believe that this report clearly shows that expenditure is being maintained at a reasonable and appropriate level for a can-do Government. I table that report.

While we are discussing the issue of accountability and access to Government, I look forward to seeing as many farmers as possible at the Roma Community Cabinet meeting on Sunday. I invite them. However, I am deeply concerned about the cheap politics that are being played by the National Party. I table for the information of the House an advertisement that is being placed by the National Party in the local press. Community Cabinet is an opportunity for ordinary Queenslanders to talk directly to their Government, not for a political stunt by political parties or bullies in politics who think that they are more important than ordinary Queenslanders. The Leader of the Opposition and the National Party would disrupt a church service if there was a vote in it.

I believe it is un-Australian to be politicising an opportunity for ordinary Australians to talk to their Government. I think it is un-Australian that the Opposition is seeking to politicise this Community Cabinet meeting. I believe it is time that the National Party gave the farmers a go so they can have their opportunity to put their voice and their concerns directly to the people of Queensland. There is a challenge for this Sunday, and it is a challenge that goes out to all Queenslanders—farmers and farm organisations alike—to make sure there is some bipartisanship on Sunday and that they take the opportunity to put some placards up and express their concern about the Opposition's National Party coalition mates in Canberra and what they are doing with the GST and petrol.

One of the problems with petrol is that Roma has one of the highest petrol charges anywhere in Queensland. It is appropriate that the people of Roma and its surrounding district use that opportunity—Mr Borbidge, the Leader of the Opposition, and the National Party are going to be there—to register their protest about petrol prices and the increases that will take place under the GST, as well as the lack of mobile phone services. I am concerned about this cheap politicisation. We saw it with the RFA. I table for the information of the House a letter that Wilson Tuckey wrote in which he said, "Put simply, if I can introduce a modicum of politics, I would prefer to wait for a future Government." What he is trying to do is undermine the RFA for cheap political reasons. That letter from Wilson Tuckey—and he did not know that my Government would end up with a copy of it—is proof of that.

Let us talk about the GST, because petrol is already too expensive in the bush. But the GST will make it even more expensive in many areas. The Commonwealth will reduce Federal fuel excise after 1 July by 7c per litre to make way for the introduction of the GST of 10%.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition admits that he is a strong supporter of the GST. Let the record show that fact. The Leader of the Opposition comes into this place and interjects and supports the GST. He is a great supporter of the GST. Let the farmers exercise their voice about that on Sunday.

Let us come back to Mr Borbidge's and Dr Watson's GST. What does their GST provide? The Commonwealth will reduce Federal fuel excise after 1 July by 7c per litre to make way for the introduction of the GST of 10%. So if petrol is 85c a litre, the excise taxation means a reduction—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is what the deal means, a reduction of 7c per litre to 78c and an addition of 7.8c to nearly 86c a litre. That is what Mr Borbidge supports. That is what Dr Watson supports. So the higher the price now, the higher the tax increase. So this is a tax on rural and remote communities. This is a tax on those who have to travel in the outback. This is a tax on the Heritage Trail. This is a further disincentive for living in regional Queensland. The GST is an attack on the bush. So how can Rob Borbidge justify this attack on rural and regional Queensland? The Leader of the Opposition should tell the farmers on Sunday

why he supports the GST and why he supports an increase in petrol taxes.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have to respond to the question directed to me by the Premier. I just make the observation—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warwick!

Mr BEATTIE: Based on price information for December, the GST, supported by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, will result in price increases in most of Queensland, including Cairns, Charleville, Charters Towers, Emerald, Gladstone, Longreach, Mackay, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Roma and Townsville. That is what Mr Borbidge, the Leader of the Opposition, and Dr Watson support. They support higher petrol prices for farmers.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory will cease interjecting. That is my final warning to him this morning. I now call the Premier.

PRIVILEGE

Standing Order 123A

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.42 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. That is the first time I have been warned this morning, so how can it be my final warning?

Mr SPEAKER: It is, exactly, so the member will resume his seat.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Government Initiatives

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: There has been no holiday break when it comes to the State Government delivering for the people of Queensland. Since Parliament last sat on 10 December 1999, this can-do Government has kept Queensland moving ahead of the rest of Australia.

The Queensland Government beat every other State in attracting Virgin Australia to locate its headquarters, maintenance base, call centre and operations centre in Queensland. We achieved this despite Virgin not putting us on their original short list. That means 750 new jobs at Virgin's headquarters, call centre, maintenance base and operations centre. One hundred and fifty of those jobs will be at a call centre which could be situated in regional Queensland; that is yet to be determined. It means a third national airline based at Brisbane Airport, which will offer low-cost travel. It means a large increase in the number of tourists arriving in Queensland, which means more tourism jobs, more jobs for Queensland. It sends a major signal to businesses all over the world that Queensland is a can-do State suitable for company headquarters. Together with the major Boeing presence and other developments, we will now be viewed as a major aviation centre. We also beat Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne when it came to a site for the Asia Pacific call centre of Qualiflyer Customer Care, which specialises in phone and Internet sales for a group of airlines, car rental companies and hotel chains. There will be up to 200 new jobs there.

A partnership between Australian Meat Holdings and Bremer Institute of TAFE will help create 1,200 new jobs through traineeships at Dinmore. Work started on the broadband communication cable, which the Minister for Communication, the Minister for Transport and I reconfirmed at Roma Street. That communication cable will run from Brisbane to Cairns to help create new communication networks. Work also started on the $72m Roma Street Parklands, which are due to open early in 2001. The equivalent of 450 jobs will be created. Cabinet approved a local industry policy designed to increase the number of contracts available to Queensland business and industry from major projects in this State. We have opened the door for local suppliers and contractors so that not only does the State benefit from the completed project but we can also gain local construction jobs and a boost to local economies. In fact, in January Queensland created a third of all the new jobs in Australia, to give us a total of 63,300 new jobs since June 1998.

I opened the Oakey Power Station on the Darling Downs, and at Winton I announced on behalf of the Government that the State and Commonwealth Governments would be making Remote Area Power Schemes using renewable energy available to property owners in the outback, a submission brought by the Minister for Mines and Energy, the member for Mount Isa.

We announced that we will be tougher on crime by extending the use of DNA sampling to all prisoners serving sentences for indictable offences, people suspected of committing indictable offences and anyone who volunteers. We will test the effectiveness of

special drug courts in breaking the drug-crime cycle by trialling them in Southport, Ipswich and Beenleigh. We announced that Queensland will introduce the first legislation of its kind in Australia giving victims of crime extra protection under the law by amending the Penalties and Sentences Act to allow courts to order offenders to keep away from their victims. And I delivered, on behalf of the Government, on a major election commitment with the release of the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy that is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

We will give increased powers to the Police Service to cover major events such as the Olympic Games and Goodwill Games. Major events, of course, have not stopped there. They do not come any bigger than CHOGM. Brisbane's reputation as a world-class conference and convention centre was recognised by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, who decided to hold their 2001 meeting in Brisbane because Canberra did not have the necessary facilities.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Are members opposite attacking CHOGM now? They do not even want CHOGM in Brisbane. Isn't that typical? Brisbane is now recognised as a world—

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: My Government is prepared to work with the Liberal Prime Minister and his coalition Government if it benefits this State. I know that members opposite put party politics ahead of everything, but when John Howard rang my Government and wanted our assistance with the convention centre and the relocation of a major event, did we say "No"? Of course we said "Yes", and we got in, and we have worked with the Prime Minister to get CHOGM. That is the sort of can-do Government this State has.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The honourable member can undermine it all he likes. We will stand with the Prime Minister and we will work with him to have CHOGM here. Last week when I met the Prime Minister, I made it clear that the Queensland Government is delighted that CHOGM is coming here. We are delighted with that decision, and we will work with him to make it the great success it will be, notwithstanding the undermining by the Liberal Party in Queensland.

Brisbane is now recognised as a world-class city with the capability of hosting world premieres, thanks to the State Government securing the world premiere of Tim Rice's Musical Spectacular. We also remembered our spectacular musical history by handing over a cheque for $270,000 to upgrade the Waltzing Matilda Centre at Winton.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition is undermining Winton. I would have thought that he would have applauded the $270,000 we gave to Winton. He does not like the bush. He spends too much time at home; he does not go to the bush. Let the record show that the Leader of the Opposition was making fun of the decision to give Winton $270,000.

We have won the Australian Athletics Championships for at least three years from 2001, along with the Under 20 Athletic Championships.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr BEATTIE: Members opposite keep whingeing. They do not like good news, because it ruins their opportunity to whinge!

We hosted a very successful round of the World Rugby Union Sevens in Brisbane, and will do so for at least another three years, thanks to the Queensland Events Corporation. The corporation is featuring a showdown between Mark Occhilupo and Kelly Slater on a live world wide web cast from the Billabong Pro on the Gold Coast next month. Then we will be out to attract surfers from all over the world on a new web site called Queensland Wave Finder.

In other sporting developments, we launched the run-up to the 2000 Australian Surf Life Saving Championships and the Asia Pacific Masters Games on the Gold Coast. We announced a $1.3m upgrade of Department of Housing homes in Kingston and opened a State Government-funded housing project for young people in Winton.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here he goes, attacking Winton again. He does not want to see housing projects in Winton. This man absolutely hates the bush. Members opposite would say and do anything if they could get a vote; they hate the bush. Let the record show that when I mention what we are doing for housing—

A Government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: And the bush does not like him either! We are out there fighting for Winton, and he is in here undermining it.

We announced that the Fosters Brewing Group had become the first major sponsor for

the world's biggest sporting event of 2001, the Goodwill Games in Brisbane. In association with the Minister for Health, I opened, on behalf of the Government, a $19.5m expansion of the Logan Hospital. What a can-do Government! It is amazing! I announced a major campaign to try to save the lives of some of the 3,000 Queenslanders who die from smoking-related diseases each year.

In December, I committed the Government to substantially cutting the rate of greenhouse gas produced by the State's electricity industry. The Government offered $111m towards a $214m package for the sort of tree-clearing legislation that was demanded by Senator Robert Hill, only to have it rejected by the Prime Minister last month. In January, Commonwealth Government officials agreed that the State Government's unique regional forest agreement, which protects 425,000 hectares of native forest and creates an extra 350 jobs, complied with all aspects of the Commonwealth's regional forestry agreement conditions. I released for public consultation a draft model for new indigenous cultural heritage legislation.

As honourable members know, trade is vitally important in creating new jobs. In December, my Government appointed three high-profile Queenslanders to positions in a major policy initiative designed to drive a new push to boost the State's exports. Bob Gibbs, Sallyanne Atkinson and Mike Ahern all accepted challenging positions as trade and investment commissioners.

When this list is examined, it is no wonder that the latest Morgan and Banks job index says that Queensland is the number one job State in the nation. It is no wonder that the latest figures reveal that the State's economy grew by 1.6% in the September quarter of 1999. It is no wonder that in February the Queensland Treasury revised Queensland's growth rate for 1999-2000 up a quarter of a percentage point to 4%. That is half a percentage point higher than the growth rate forecast for the nation as a whole.

Those are just some of this Government's achievements in the Christmas/New Year break. It is the sort of performance that has enabled us to win two by-elections. That is not a bad outcome! Let the record show that, as the good news rolled out, those opposite sought to whinge and moan and groan as they always do. Those opposite are the greatest whingers since the beginning of civilisation.

Let me talk about employment. Since coming to office, the Government has been focused on creating jobs and skills development, particularly for disadvantaged groups across Queensland. Unemployment has reduced from 8.8% to 8.2% since June 1998 and some 63,300 jobs have been created in Queensland. Importantly, two-thirds of those jobs created in Queensland have been full-time jobs.

The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative alone has been responsible for the creation of 12,373 jobs as at 31 December 1999. That represents more than 50% of our four-year target in just 15 months, which is a tremendous achievement under anyone's terminology. A major focus for the Government has been to address long-term unemployment through strategies such as the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative.

Since July 1998, long-term unemployment has dropped from 30% to 26.2% of total unemployment—lower than the Australian overall rate of 28.4%. That means that the number of Queenslanders unemployed for more than 12 months has fallen by 6,200 since my Government came to office. Another priority for the Government was to build the skills base and meet skill shortages by creating more opportunities for young Queenslanders to enter apprenticeships and traineeships.

I am pleased to be able to report to the House that there has been strong growth in apprenticeships and traineeships, with a 31% increase reported between July 1998 and December 1999. Apprenticeship numbers are now—

Mr PAFF: I rise to a point of order. What does this have to do with the Evans Deakin employees? There are 250 of them looking for a job.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Apprenticeship numbers are now at record levels after years of stagnation and there are strong signs that this growth will continue.

Mr Paff interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, and let me tell the member for Ipswich West that he will be unemployed in about a year's time, as well. The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative has assisted with the employment of 4,375 apprentices and 4,460 trainees in both the private and public sectors.

I am delighted to say that this Government is leading by example and that we are in the process of engaging another 2,000 trainees in Government departments

and agencies, local government councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils. The Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Paul Braddy, has been spectacular in his success in these programs.

A strong whole-of-Government commitment to boosting job opportunities is also producing positive results, with a growing list of major companies in knowledge-intensive, service-oriented industries establishing a large presence in Queensland. These include: call centres for IBM, 100 jobs; Austar, 1,000 jobs; Saville Systems, 100 jobs; Stellar, 400 jobs; Citibank, 100 jobs; Boeing, 500 jobs; Bechtel Australia's Oceanic headquarters, 200 jobs; National Jet Systems Group heavy maintenance facility, 140 jobs; and Virgin Airlines, 750 jobs. That is jobs, jobs, jobs for Queensland!

Our dynamic approach to industry development is also delivering new jobs in new power stations, such as Millmerran and Tarong North, the AMH expansion at Dinmore and the Danpork piggery at Warwick. Whilst we are seeing success through our new industry growth, our job programs and the decreasing rate of unemployment, we believe that the unemployment rate is not coming down as quickly as we would like.

Members should note that the 1999-2000 Budget forecast for Queensland's economic growth has been revised upwards from 3.75% to 4%. Unlike the coalition, this Government is not sitting on its hands wondering if there are enough jobs to go around. We know that jobs are needed. That is why I am pursuing my Smart State vision to create new industries for Queensland. That is why we are building on the success of our Breaking the Unemployment Cycle programs by renewing our efforts to link people to skills which match new job opportunities. That is why we continue to fight aggressively to win major new investments for Queensland. That is why we are putting our new local content policy into practice to give Queensland suppliers the best opportunity to get work from new investment projects.

I have always acknowledged the complexity of the challenge facing the Queensland Government in tackling unemployment, but it is a challenge that we are determined to meet and beat. We are determined to take advantage of opportunities in the new and emerging industries. We are determined to maintain the focus on providing relevant skills and job opportunities, particularly for the most disadvantaged job seekers.

There are 500,000 Queenslanders aged 25 years and over who do not hold a secondary school or higher qualification. These are the people who are the most vulnerable to changes in the economy, industry and technology. By giving local organisations the ability to skill vulnerable, unqualified workers and job seekers we can help them make Queensland the Smart State. By linking programs such as the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative and the Department of Housing's Community Renewal Program, we can deliver local benefits in terms of jobs. We have seen an excellent example of this in action in the Ipswich region where local community organisations, the council and TAFE are working together to transform the disused Westfalen mine site into a valuable community facility. More importantly, some 70 local job seekers have obtained work on the project to date.

My Government is making a difference in getting Queenslanders into jobs. The Nationals and Liberals—who interjected during this speech—support none of the policy initiatives which I have outlined today. Queenslanders have a right to ask: what would Queensland employment look like in the absence of these positive policies and if the Opposition had continued in office? We would find that 12,373 unemployed Queenslanders would still be craving the chance to prove that they can work. Apprenticeships and traineeships would be 31% lower. There would be no new investment in the meat processing industry. Virgin would be setting up in Melbourne. That is what would be going on in Queensland.

Let me conclude by saying this: the greatest obstacle that my Government faces in delivering the 5% target I set is the GST. Let there be no doubt in anyone's minds about that. Let me tell honourable members about the Yellow Pages survey. The latest Yellow Pages Small Business Index records a dramatic decline in business confidence around the nation. In every State—including Queensland—small and medium size businesses are pessimistic about economic conditions. By far and away the primary concern of small business is the GST.

By contrast, the Yellow Pages survey shows that Queensland has the most supportive State Government policies for small business. The survey reports that 40% of small businesses now oppose the GST. 75% of the 1,200 businesses surveyed said that they were concerned about the complexity of the GST; 56% believe that the GST will hurt their bottom-line profits. Lower profits mean less investment, and mean fewer jobs. The GST

will destroy confidence and destroy jobs. That will make our 5% job target even harder to achieve.

This Government will not give up on its number one priority, which is jobs for Queensland. We will fight on, but the GST is a heavy weight around our ankles.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Regional Forest Agreement

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: Since the House sat in early December last year, some 25,000 trees have been planted at Beerburrum. It is the first stage in the Queensland plan for a regional forest agreement.

I can inform the House that one million trees will be planted by June as the first stage in planting 10 million trees that will form the bulk of the plantations that will give the Queensland timber industry a long-term future. The actions of the Federal Government last week in denying any money at all to Queensland for a regional forest agreement were a disgrace, and that it did so on the advice of the six-pack—those coalition MPs—was a further disgrace.

However, this Government is getting on with the job of providing a secure, long-term future for the Queensland timber industry—one that will preserve rural communities throughout south-east Queensland. The centrepiece of our long-term plan is a move from the harvesting of native forests to the harvesting of plantations. At Miriam Vale more than 300 hectares have been prepared and plantings will commence next month. I might say that there is also considerable private sector interest in plantations in that region, and I anticipate being able to inform the House of further developments in that region. In the Pomona, Gympie, Imbil and Kenilworth region, there are 120 hectares being prepared for plantings, while in the Esk area there are some 150 hectares also being prepared for plantings. In the Central Burnett—the area between Kingaroy and Monto—some 80 hectares are being prepared, and that is due to be planted in April. The types of trees being planted are Gympie messmate, spotted gum and blackbutt, all of which are hardwood trees suitable for a sustainable hardwood industry.

While there is a broad consensus that moving from the harvesting of native forests to plantation harvesting is the way to provide a long-term, viable timber industry, Queensland is the only State where this is happening. The Queensland proposal allows for 25 years' resource security—something that the timber industry has never had before and something that the coalition parties at State and Federal levels seek to deny the industry. As the Premier said, a letter from the Federal Forestry Minister, Wilson Tuckey, to the mill owners last week urged them to "Wait for a future Government that is prepared to negotiate an RFA." This is a clear threat to the industry that the current agreement may change under a State coalition Government. Under those circumstances, I can only back up the words of the Queensland Timber Board last week calling on Minister Tuckey to put forward his proposal for an RFA in south-east Queensland so that Queenslanders can judge whether Tuckey can deliver anything better than the historic agreement that has been brokered by this Government.

I can tell the House, however, that the timber industry is not regarding these attempts to undermine their future with a great deal of concern.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ELDER: At Gympie—and I ask the member to listen—the certainty of resource afforded to the industry by the Queensland Government's RFA has led to the employment of 28 workers at the medium-density fibreboard line. More jobs are likely to be created as the production is ramped up. Finlaysons Timber and Hardware, with support from the State Government, has commenced a program of investment to upgrade their processing of hoop pine plantation timbers into high-value building and joinery products. This has resulted in eight extra jobs in Finlaysons' operations, six of those in the Yarraman/Linville region. Wondai Sawmills has also announced a $750,000 upgrade of their operations because of the resource certainty that they now have under the RFA—a move which secured the jobs of 45 people and created work for six people at Wondai.

In addition, a program has commenced to market the State's attractiveness as a location for new plantation investment. This is a targeted program to address the needs of specific major overseas investors, which are currently examining the feasibility of growing trees both for timber production and for the potential of carbon credits. All of this activity is creating jobs in rural Queensland right now and providing an acceptable environmental outcome—something that the coalition was unable to do when it was in office and

something that the Federal Government is patently unable to do anywhere else in Australia.

The handling of these delicate negotiations by the Federal Government through the Forestry Minister, Wilson Tuckey, has been ham-fisted and clumsy, with the overriding consideration being purely political and Tuckey's press releases—each one that lands on my desk—becoming more outlandish. I seek an assurance from the Federal Government that not one of the 10 million trees being planted in Queensland to assure the timber industry a long-term, viable future will be used to make paper for another one of Tuckey's press releases.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Jobs Plan

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I rise today to thank the Queensland community for supporting and acknowledging the far-reaching benefits of the Community Jobs Plan and the Community Employment Assistance Program.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BRADDY: I can hear the laughing and the sneering starting already. That is disgraceful. These plans have given nearly 7,300 people in Queensland jobs on worthwhile community projects or an opportunity to develop their skills and their job opportunities. One hundred and eighty Community Jobs Plan projects have given 2,500 people jobs on worthwhile community projects and 120 projects under the CEAP are helping nearly 4,800 people develop their work skills and job opportunities.

There is an enormous difference in the way in which this is being received by the people of Queensland and the ragtag members opposite, who have never supported it and who always demean it. One of the interesting things is that we are getting testimonials—in many instances publicly proclaimed—from people throughout Queensland. For example, one such testimonial comes from the Opposition's former National Party parliamentary colleague Yvonne Chapman, who is now the Pine Rivers Mayor. Recently, she wrote to me about the Pine Rivers Heritage Museum project. At least she had the courtesy, the good sense and the honesty to acknowledge what is a good project for the people in her area. In 1999, this project received $363,000 to employ 20 people to construct a significant part of the museum project at the North Pine Country Park—an asset that is valued very much by the local community and visitors. Mrs Chapman wrote to me in support of the project and stated—

> "It is important to acknowledge the benefit of the grant provided for this project under the Community Jobs Plan Scheme.
>
> The project costs would have been much higher if the construction was undertaken without the assistance provided by the participants of the scheme.
>
> This project also gave an opportunity for up to 20 participants to learn invaluable building industry skills that will assist them with longer term employment opportunities.
>
> On behalf of council and those within our community that will benefit from this facility, I thank you for providing the grant to this worthy project."

I challenge the shadow Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and all the other front bench and backbench members opposite to show similar courtesy and commonsense and to publicly acknowledge how worthwhile these schemes have been.

That quote from a former National Party member of this House sums up neatly the spirit of the Community Jobs Plan. It is about helping to deliver worthwhile community projects regardless of politics. All we have had is a sleazy attempt by the Leader of the Liberal Party to undermine these projects—which have not been politicised—throughout the State. In the member's own inimitable and poor fashion, he has tried to undermine the projects.

These projects are about giving unemployed people a new start in life. I will give members another quote from a person who does not live in a Labor area. The benefits of these projects were also highlighted by John Hoyes, President of the Biggenden Community Action Group project at Rollinson Park, Biggenden. This project received $48,000 in September 1999 to employ six people to improve the park and town entrances.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BRADDY: There goes the member for Clayfield again, in a mealy-mouthed attempt to undermine what is a fair and worthwhile project. Mr Hoyes was quoted in the Biggenden Weekly newspaper on 27 January as stating the following—

> "Without your funding, this project wouldn't have got off the ground.
>
> It is not very often I go past here that there isn't a vehicle pulled up here in the park using it and this is testimonial to the participants' work."

Emerald Mayor, Paul Bell, was quoted in the Morning Bulletin in May 1999 as saying that the $230,000 local community jobs plan would help keep young people in the region. The project employed 10 people to landscape parks in Emerald and Sapphire, to install irrigation systems and to construct paths. The Mayor said—

> "It's about giving them a chance to re-enter the work market before they get disgruntled and move away to other areas. It is also a project aimed at giving young people an opportunity to learn skills that lead to long-term employment."

Barry Geaney from the Gatton Shire Council's community services department was equally impressed with the Lake APEX Park development project. This project received $90,000 last month to employ eight people to enhance the recreational value of the park. Mr Geaney was reported as saying that the project was a crucial initiative for the Gatton Shire community and provided a great opportunity for young people to further develop their skills. Deputy Mayor Ray Ferdinand said that the council was—

> "... proud to be involved in the community jobs plan ... A greater initiative in a community such as Gatton you couldn't get."

Have we ever heard any words like that come out of the mouths of the Opposition? No. All they do is undermine, whinge and whine about worthwhile projects. This Government has been delighted with the positive response to its employment initiative, and it is continuing to work with local communities to break the unemployment cycle.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gold Coast Hospital

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.11 a.m.), by leave: The final version of the independent report commissioned by the Gold Coast Medical Association and the Gold Coast Council into the adequacy of funding for the Gold Coast Hospital was released last week. I am pleased to say, as with the first version, that it vindicates the moves taken by my Government to resource the Gold Coast Hospital appropriately.

Obviously Queensland Health will continue to monitor the future needs of the Gold Coast Hospital, which may change in the next five years. However, the independent arbiter, Hardes and Associates, has confirmed that the Beattie Government has met the current funding needs of the Gold Coast Hospital. Page 18 of the report states—

> "In just three years the Gold Coast Hospital has moved from being $10 million underfunded (by the Borbidge Government 1997/98) ... to $5 million over ... (by the Beattie Government) $5 million over the expected level of funding (1999/2000)."

It is all there in black and white, although I understand the media was not given page 18 of the report which vindicates this Government. Only the first few summary pages were provided to the media. That is why I now table the report in its entirety so honourable members and the Gold Coast public can make up their own minds.

Another gross, deliberate misinterpretation of the report related to the "use of public hospitals" figure "at about 30% below average". This does not mean that one third of Gold Coast residents are prevented from accessing the public hospital, as portrayed in and repeated by the media. This simply means that people are exercising their right of choice. As stated in the report, the use of private hospitals is 10% higher than average. Other factors of influence include the number of private hospitals and the health status, as listed in the report.

Page 3 of the report states that these figures need careful consideration. It is important to note—and this appears on page 30 of the report—that 90% of people who live in the most rapidly growing area, the corridor between the Gold Coast and Brisbane, are accessing the Logan and Brisbane hospitals, not the Gold Coast Hospital. Once Robina Hospital services come on line—services fully funded by the Beattie Government, not by taking funds out of the Gold Coast budget, as was intended by the previous Government—it will be another access choice for residents to make.

Similarly, access choice, as I have just explained, varies according to where people live. This puts paid to the claim that the Gold Coast has 16% of the population but only 8% of the funding. This independent report shows that Queensland Health's Statewide funding model is fair and that the underfunding of the Gold Coast Hospital, which I recognised and

brought to the public's attention in early 1998, has been addressed.

It also acknowledges the good work done by Dr Youngman and the senior staff at the Gold Coast Hospital to plan the direction for the expansion of services with the increased funding. Surely now it is time for the small group of people with vested interests to stop running down an excellent hospital and to support the Gold Coast Hospital and its staff instead. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Gold Coast Hospital for their support throughout this process.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (10.14 a.m.), by leave: In May last year the Government launched a $3m Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund, and through the fund awarded almost $1m in funding to round 1 applicants. The time has come to call for applicants for round 2 to submit projects from across the energy spectrum, particularly those geared towards promoting energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources. The emphasis on round 2 funding is towards private sector organisations, although public sector applications would be considered. Proposals to develop and commercialise innovative new products will be accorded the highest priority. It is anticipated that up to $1m will be shared by five to 10 projects.

The Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund aims to establish Queensland as a leader in developing sustainable energy technologies and practices by allowing the State to become a market leader in specific areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy or greenhouse gas reduction; by creating business opportunities and employment in sustainable energy industries; by addressing needs or opportunities relating to sustainable energy that are specific to Queensland; and by developing expertise and/or community acceptance of sustainable energy technologies or practices in Queensland.

Nineteen Queensland projects were awarded funding in round 1. These projects include the development of a solar pool chlorinator, a low-cost solar water heater, low-cost inverters, high efficiency lights and remote battery monitoring for remote area power systems, and technology to produce fuel methanol from landfill gas. Applications will be considered on a competitive basis, and judged on a range of criteria. The applicants must demonstrate that their proposal will specifically address Queensland needs, problems or opportunities relating to energy efficiency, renewable energy or cogeneration.

Project proposals will be assessed by a specialist technical review committee and funding decisions overseen by a board with members having expertise in commerce, industry and technology development. The successful applicants for funding will be expected to contribute a substantial share of project costs. Applicants will also be assisted in forming partnerships with other industry, research and funding bodies.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to submit an initial expression of interest and discuss their proposals with advisory officers from the Government's office of sustainable energy before submitting a full application. The deadline for receipt of full applications in the second funding round is 31 May 2000. I believe this fund is an important pillar for the Government's support of sustainable energy technologies and industries within this State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Vocational Education and Training in Schools

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.18 a.m.), by leave: I table the new joint policy statement for vocational education and training in schools. The statement outlines flexible and cooperative arrangements developed between Education Queensland and the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations for vocational education and training in schools.

The effect of the statement will be to remove the key barriers for young Queenslanders who want to engage in vocational education and training while still at school. This Government is committed to giving young Queenslanders the help they need to move through school into the workforce and into further education and training.

This initiative will increase the number of school students who gain vocational education and training qualifications. It will help students get a decent start in life by increasing the number of people who stay in school to complete their schooling. It will combat behaviour management problems in our schools by providing attractive study options to a wider range of students.

Queensland continues to be the leader across Australia in promoting vocational education and training in schools and in student achievement in this area. We have been successful because we have removed the barriers that still exist in other States. We have innovative industrial arrangements for school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Schools in Queensland can be registered as training organisations to deliver vocational education and training.

The Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has streamlined funding for off-the-job training arrangements for school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Much of this progress can be attributed to the cooperative work between the department of my colleague the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, and employers and unions.

We have promoted and achieved a high level of community involvement in vocational education and training in schools. This initiative has the support of employers, parents and local business, and extremely positive input from a wide range of community organisations. This policy will keep Queensland at the forefront of vocational education and training in schools.

By streamlining the administration of Commonwealth funding Education Queensland has been able to put $3.6m directly into State schools. Queensland State schools are already at the cutting edge of school to work transition, and this funding for specific programs—on top of $5.4m in senior schooling grants already allocated—will further enhance our commitment to this area. Under this policy, Queensland students will be provided with opportunities to study VET programs within the post-compulsory curriculum in any of three pathways.

The first pathway means that students can undertake VET educational experiences developed from industry endorsed National Training Packages with a view to attaining Australian Qualifications Framework certificates at Levels I, II, III or above. This maximises the freedom available to schools to be relevant to the needs of students, industry and the local community.

The second pathway means that students can, by taking up school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, get an opportunity to complete or partially complete a nationally recognised VET qualification while at the same time completing studies towards the Senior Certificate and engaging in paid and meaningful work.

The third pathway is for students undertaking board developed subjects with embedded VET. These include both board subjects and Study Area Specifications. From 2000, the majority of VET components will be aligned with National Training Packages. This will allow students to gain AQF qualifications. These three pathways will provide variety, depth and breadth of coverage for the diverse interests, goals and abilities of all Queensland students. They will give students in all parts of the State access to employment opportunities and further education.

The value to Queensland and the value to students of these reforms is clear. They will encourage more young people to remain in education and training while qualifying them for work and tertiary study. Students will not only develop employment skills that are attractive to employers; they will also find that successful transition from school to work is much easier. The vocational skills that they acquire in school will help build their confidence and will be crucial to their success in the labour market, their participation in the broader community and their capacity for lifelong learning. Queensland schools will now be more able to meet the challenge of creating an education and training system that focuses on quality, innovation and equipping young Queenslanders to support internationally competitive businesses and industries.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, the first hour of the day is allocated to a range of issues, including private members' statements. So far this morning six or seven Ministers have made ministerial statements. I appreciate that there were none yesterday. However, the Premier took 25 minutes to deliver his ministerial statement. Today, with more Ministers about to make speeches, there is no way that private members' statements will be heard. Traditionally, some time has been allowed for private members' statements. I can recall Ministers being sat down because of the need to ensure that private members' statements were able to be made.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Indooroopilly is contributing to the problem. Were it not for his point of order, we might have had some time for private members' statements. I will research the issue and get back to the honourable member. I call the Minister for Tourism and Racing.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the precedent set by Speaker Turner, who would

move on from ministerial statements at 10 minutes past the hour to allow other business to be dealt with. Ministers would then make their statements after question time so that the other business of the House could be dealt with in the limited time available.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! As I said to the member for Indooroopilly, I will research the issue and let the honourable member know how it goes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sale of Liquor

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing) (10.23 a.m.), by leave: On Monday Cabinet completed an extensive review of the Liquor Act required under National Competition Policy agreements. Provisions considered anti-competitive can be retained only if they are in the public interest or the objects of the Act cannot be achieved in any other way.

The review began in December 1998. An independent panel undertook a comprehensive program of consultation, including receiving written submissions and a program of public meetings throughout the State. It also commissioned independent research and included that in its report and recommendations to the Government last August. The report was released publicly. Parties were invited to make final submissions by 15 October and Cabinet established an interdepartmental working group to consider the further input and present all information to Cabinet.

A central issue in the review was takeaway liquor. Cabinet has accepted my recommendation that takeaway liquor should continue to be sold only by existing specialist providers—hoteliers and clubs. Those involved in the hotel and club industry have built up a significant body of expertise in the responsible sale of liquor over the years and the Government shared the review panel's concern about adverse social consequences should liquor be made available from supermarkets.

Hotels are major employers and, importantly, supply a vast range of other services, including entertainment, food and accommodation. The local hotel is still the hub of many small communities. The review committee considered that allowing supermarkets and convenience stores to sell takeaway liquor in Queensland would have a significant negative impact, particularly in regional and rural areas of the State, with a subsequent loss of jobs. We were not prepared to let that happen. The decision we took is in the overall interests of the public.

Research also indicated that Queenslanders are not worse off than their southern counterparts because of price or shopping convenience. Feedback from public submissions to the review was that there were ample retail liquor outlets available. The decision is not anti-competitive. Supermarket interests are not prohibited from entering the takeaway liquor market in Queensland. Coles Myer already owns several hotels and conducts business in bottle shops under the Liquorland banner. If supermarkets were allowed to sell liquor, arguments would then be advanced as to why it should not be extended to convenience or corner stores. Why not newsagents? The question as to where to draw the line was critically important.

A range of other recommendations have been endorsed by Cabinet. They include—

allowing more casual drinking without the requirement of having a meal in restaurants and allowing patrons to buy a bottle of wine for consumption off premises;

abolishing payment of premiums for a hotel and other special facility licences;

abolishing the 18-litre takeaway limit in clubs and easing the visitor restriction from 40 kilometres to 15 kilometres;

strengthening public interest provisions of the Act; and

easing existing hotel detached bottle shop restrictions to allow licensees to establish businesses within a 10 kilometre radius of their main premises.

The Government believes that the Liquor Act must strike an appropriate balance between the optimum development of the tourist, liquor and hospitality industries of the State, having regard to the welfare, needs and interests of the community and the economic implications of change. I believe we have achieved that balance.

CONSTITUTION (REQUESTS) BILL

Withdrawal

On the Order of the Day being discharged, the Bill was withdrawn.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Appointment of Hon. J. Fouras

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.27 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the Honourable Jim Fouras be appointed to the Standing Orders Committee."

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Report

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House, pursuant to section 4.7(4) of the Police Service Administration Act 1990, a certified copy of the register of reports and recommendations made by the Commissioner of the Police Service, Mr J. P. O'Sullivan, to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Honourable Tom Barton, MLA, under section 4.6(1)(a) of the said Act, detailing all ministerial directions given in writing to the Commissioner of Police for 1999 pursuant to section 4.6(2) of the Act, together with a letter dated 21 January 2000 from the Chairperson of the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr Brendan Butler, SC, in which Mr Butler reports that he has no comments to make in respect of the register.

OFFICE OF LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Report of Expenses

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 a.m.): I table the public report of expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period ended 31 December 1999.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Vegetation Management Legislation

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (10.28 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That this House recognises the concerns and growing protests of land-holders in relation to the Vegetation Management Bill and pledges this day to undertake the following—

(a) rescind the Bill known as the Vegetation Management Bill 1999

and

(b) enter into meaningful consultation with land-holders to achieve a Vegetation Management Bill which will achieve the aims of both Government and land-holders."

Teachers

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (10.29 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That this House calls on the Beattie Labor Government to negotiate meaningfully with the Queensland Teachers Union in relation to the current enterprise bargaining negotiations with a view to a just and equitable result."

Retractable Needles

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.29 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That, given the growing community concern about needle-stick injury from needles discarded by IV drug users in public places and possible fatal infection of innocent people, the Parliament calls on the State Government to introduce retractable needles into the State's needle exchange program."

QUESTION TIME; POINTS OF ORDER

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before commencing question time, I wish to remind members that frivolous points of order will reduce their time for questions. It will not, however, reduce the time for Ministers to give an answer. I am able to pause the three-minute clock on Minister's answers, allowing them more time. Members have fair warning that rising to a point of order which they know is not genuine will only penalise themselves.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Unemployment Target

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to his reconfirmation of the 5% unemployment target set by his leader during the 1998 State election campaign by way of an answer to a question in this place yesterday, and I ask: in view of the loss of 230 jobs at Evans Deakin Industries, the threat hanging over 500 jobs at Murgon, the probable loss of the likely siting of Brisbane as a major freight centre for Qantas, the closure of the Nanda pasta factory and a string of other factory closures across Queensland, does he stand by his statements of yesterday, or does he support the amended views of his leader expressed at a media conference yesterday that 5% unemployment is "probably unachievable"?

Mr BRADDY: We have always made clear that we are serious about reducing

unemployment and serious about seeking employment. We have always said that the target was 5%. It was an aim publicly proclaimed and it is an aim that is still publicly proclaimed. The reality, of course, is that we live in a world where changes occur. Some are good and enhance the target—

Opposition members: Oh!

Mr BRADDY: I am talking positively, unlike Opposition members, who always talk negatively. We heard them interrupt and interject before when I was talking about the glowing success of the CJP and the CEAP programs endorsed by National Party members and mayors.

Under our stewardship we have growth in the economy, and that in turn will serve to continue to create jobs and to create employment. In addition to that, we have created public sector employment in a way that no other Government in Australia has—deliberately putting on apprentices and trainees in local authorities, statutory authorities and Government departments and instituting our incentives for the private sector to take on trainees and apprentices, which has also been successful. The fact remains that under the Beattie Government unemployment in Queensland has fallen.

We are saying that we are prepared to have a target. We have to. We have to draw the community's attention to enormous obstacles such as the GST in our path. It is a fact. The Opposition can support the GST. It continues to support it. We do not, and we will continue to fight to create employment despite the GST, and we do not resile from what we are achieving and what we will continue to achieve. We could ask members opposite to support us in our claims and in our fight, but they never would. They always play party politics ahead of Queensland, as they have done with the GST and as they have done with the CJP have CEAP programs. This Opposition glories in bad news. This Government sets about creating good news and will continue to do so.

Minister for Police; Criminal Justice Commission

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Minister for Police to Labor Opposition questions in this place in March 1998, including a question by himself concerning a former Gold Coast businessman to whom I will refer as "Mr X" and previously described by Labor as a "star witness against the CJC" under the witness protection program. I also refer the Minister to a tape and transcript, which I will table, of a telephone conversation last year between this person and senior Government adviser, Mr Paul Lynch, and I ask: can the Minister inform the House what commitments he made to Mr X in Opposition and what has been done, if anything, to assist him since the change of Government; can the Minister confirm that when he was in Opposition the CJC illegally divulged confidential information to him regarding this person; and can the Minister confirm that the CJC officer to whom he spoke was Chief Complaints Officer, Mr Michael Barnes? I table the relevant information, including a tape, for the information of members.

Mr BARTON: It is interesting that this question should be asked. Very clearly, in Opposition I asked at least one question on the public record of my predecessor about a gentleman who had phoned me and indicated that he had information that would be useful and complained that he had been let down very badly by the then Government and by the then Police Minister. I raised the question about his involvement at that time. I can recall that the previous Minister did indicate to me that it was inappropriate for me to be raising questions about somebody who was in the witness protection program.

I presume we are talking about the same person, this Mr X. I see that, if we are talking about the same person, his name has been published in the paper today as Mr Russell. My recollection from all of the involvement that I had with him is that he was calling himself Mr Fooks. At that time I indicated to him that information that he claimed to have should be forwarded to me and we would look at it. Then, if it was appropriate, we would take the matter further.

I want to say that at no stage—other than a whole torrent of solicitors' letters making assertions against the previous Government, the police and the CJC—have I seen any of the hard information that Mr X had indicated to me verbally that he would provide. I have certainly made no approaches to the CJC seeking information on that matter. I know that an assertion has supposedly been made that I did. My spokesman made it very clear yesterday to the Courier-Mail that I did not make inappropriate approaches to the CJC seeking information that I was not entitled to. As a previous member of the PCJC, I am well aware of the law in that regard. I think that basically answers the question.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what I did about it. After I became Minister, the

gentleman approached me again. I consulted with the Police Service, who made it very clear to me that there was no substance in the gentleman's allegations. Certainly I have seen no information from that gentleman that would indicate that there is any substance to his allegations. The threats that he is now making he has also run in the southern media on a number of occasions in the past 18 months, including in television interviews. I understand that his solicitor made complaints on his behalf to the PCJC and that they investigated it and could not find any substance, either. I think that that is where the matter begins and ends.

Natural Heritage Trust Fund

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the recent progress report on the Commonwealth's Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and I ask: would the Premier detail the findings, particularly those with relevance to Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to do this because the report that the member refers to is a Commonwealth Government report on a Commonwealth Government program, and it is a very damning report. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund was set up by the Commonwealth some years ago to justify the sale of one third of Telstra—publicly owned Telstra. Some $1.5 billion from the sale was diverted to the fund and a Bush Care program was set up as the major component of the fund. The Commonwealth said that Bush Care's goal was—their words, not mine—to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover with the target of achieving no net loss by June 2001. What did the Commonwealth's own report find? It stated—

> "If there is no reform in Queensland and clearing is not tightened up in New South Wales on current trends, it will be virtually impossible for Bush Care to achieve its goal within the life of the Natural Heritage Trust."

In other words, we are basically throwing over $1 billion down the drain that could be effectively used in the bush—$1 billion that could be used to protect petrol prices in the bush, $1 billion that could be used to provide better mobile phone services in the bush, $1 billion that could be more effectively used to help farmers in voluntary management schemes in areas of concern.

A Government member: Aged care as well.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right, aged care in the bush as well. I met with the Prime Minister last week and we discussed two programs of funding in relation to vegetation management of areas of concern, which represent about 3.5 million hectares. I asked for money out of that scheme, and the best the Prime Minister could give me was not the money but a task force. These two programs cover the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and I have already referred to one of them. I was disappointed with the outcome of the meeting with the Prime Minister, but I have instructed my Government departments to work with the Commonwealth to try to get some money out of these funds so that we can work in these voluntary management schemes with farmers to manage that 3.5 million hectares I talked about for all sorts of outcomes for the community.

My Director-General and the Director-General of the Department of Natural Resources have been in contact with their Federal counterparts to set up a series of meetings. I notice that Senator Hill was quoted in yesterday's Courier-Mail as saying that the Prime Minister's task force—the one he promised me—would be established later this week. The article states—

> "He said the Federal Government also was finalising the framework for negotiation with Mr Beattie over Commonwealth compensation to assist efforts to stem tree clearing in Queensland."

Senator Hill went on to say that the compensation ball is now in the hands of the Federal Government.

The bottom line is this: I offered the Prime Minister cold, hard cash and he gave me a task force. I will make that task force work because I want money for Queensland farmers for a voluntary management scheme to manage this land.

Minister for Police; Criminal Justice Commission

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I refer the Minister to his previous answer and to a signed statement by Mr Stephen Warnock dated 2 August last year. I table a copy of Mr Warnock's statement for the benefit of the House. Mr Warnock is a former journalist with the Sun Herald newspaper in Sydney. Mr Warnock stated—

> "During my investigations I had telephone conversations with the then Queensland Shadow Police Minister, Mr Tom Barton, and his assistant Mr Paul

> Lynch. They not only verified Mr X's story but said they had spoken to a source in the Criminal Justice Commission who provided them with enough information to satisfy them that what Mr X was saying was true."

I ask the Minister: can the Minister confirm that he and Mr Lynch spoke with Mr Warnock about Mr X? Can the Minister confirm that he and Mr Lynch told Mr Warnock about their information from the CJC? Can the Minister advise the House whether he was being deceitful then or deceitful now?

Mr BARTON: I would refer to my previous answer to the previous question on this subject. A whole host of journalists have rung me over a period of time with regard to these allegations by Mr X. We will refer to him as Mr X. Even in recent months there have been some television stories run interstate about this gentleman's allegations. I repeat what I have already told the House. I have had no improper contact with the CJC on this matter. I cannot remember whether I spoke to Mr Warnock or not because there has literally been a plethora of journalists ring about this matter over a long period of time, and a plethora of solicitors, because this gentleman changes his solicitors as frequently as I change shirts. Each time he gets a new solicitor, the new solicitor makes some contact with me.

Unemployment

Mr PURCELL: I ask the Premier: what is the Government doing to create jobs for unemployed Queenslanders?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. Notwithstanding the severe impact on confidence from the goods and services tax and how difficult it is going to be with that goods and services tax for this Government to achieve its 5% target, we are determined to do everything we can to reach it. Let us look at some of the major investments. Virgin Airlines will create 750 jobs. The Millmerran Power Station will create 1,200 jobs in construction and 250 in operational jobs. AMH Dinmore will create 1,000 jobs for meatworkers. Boeing's expansion will create another 500 jobs. Austar Pay TV will create 1,000 new jobs for the Gold Coast. My Government is making large investments in new infrastructure, creating thousands of jobs throughout regional Queensland. There are 2,500 jobs in developing the 32 Heritage Trail projects across the State. There are 80 jobs in Maryborough to build a new diesel tilt train.

Unlike the coalition, my Government is taking positive initiatives to break the unemployment cycle. In 15 months—and I said some of this earlier—there were 12,373 jobs in programs targeted at the unemployed. That is already halfway towards the 24,500 jobs we promised from these programs. We have assisted 4,375 apprentices and 4,463 trainees into a job. On the other side in terms of the statistics, we have created 63,300 new jobs since June 1998. Unemployment has fallen from 8.8% to 8.2% and there were 6,200 fewer long-term unemployed.

In one of his questions, the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of Murgon. I met yesterday with a number of mayors from throughout the South Burnett. We discussed a conversation I had had with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen on Friday night. Sir Joh is keen to attract a buyer for the meatworks. I do not intend to go into the details of who that buyer is. I indicated to Sir Joh on Friday night, as I did to the mayors, that I, the Deputy Premier and his department would be keen to work with the administrator to try to facilitate any purchase. Sir Joh has gone out of his way to do this. I thanked him for his contribution. Clearly, Sir Joh is very committed to the South Burnett, an area which he represented for a long time. I was delighted to see his intervention. I made it very clear to Sir Joh, as I did to the mayors, that we will work with them to make sure there is a future for Murgon. We will do anything we can to facilitate that sale.

The second thing I am delighted to report out of the meeting with the mayors is that they are supporting us in the RFA. They want the jobs. They want the growth, and they know we are doing the right thing. In terms of the future for this region, I asked the mayors to set up a working group that would work with the Deputy Premier and his department to bring about outcomes for opportunities in this region. I congratulate Sir Joh on having the courage to intervene and to work with this Government to get a buyer for the Murgon meatworks. I hope it happens. Clearly, we will have to see what commercial opportunities come as a result of this buyer who will be visiting in the next couple of weeks, but we will work with him. If it can come about, it will be a great result.

Minister for Police; Criminal Justice Commission

Dr WATSON: I also have a question for the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I refer the Minister to a statutory declaration, which I table, incorporating a transcript of a

conversation between Mr X and Mr Paul Lynch, which states—

> "Mr X: I want you to be completely candid ... about Barton's broken undertakings concerning payment of my compensation and the fact that you and him illegally obtained information from the CJC. Remember our taped conversations at the beginning of all this where you named your source?
>
> Mr Lynch: Yeah, it was Mick Barnes. Barton was the one who got that information."

Can the Minister advise the House why we should take his word over that of a star witness under the witness protection program, over the word of a respected journalist from a major metropolitan newspaper and over the word of a senior Government adviser with first-hand knowledge of these events? Can the Minister further advise the House why he should not stand down pending the outcome of a full judicial inquiry into these serious allegations?

Mr BARTON: I think that says it all, because members opposite have acknowledged that this person was supposed to be a star witness at the Connolly/Ryan inquiry.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BARTON: They are the words that members opposite used here, not me. That is what they have described him as here. But I think that says it all, that this gentleman was to be a star witness at a discredited inquiry that was found to be corrupt—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr BARTON:—and shut down by the Supreme Court of Queensland for being a corrupt inquiry.

I have made my position very clear. There has been no improper contact between me and the CJC on this matter. I have expressed the position that this gentleman—and we will not name him because he seems to have a number of names—has made numerous contacts with a whole range of media organisations over the past 18 months, and no-one has ever proved that there is any substance to the allegations that he is making. This all started with allegations that he made against the previous Government, my predecessor, the CJC, the Queensland Police Service and everybody else. I suppose the wheel had to come full circle. Now he is claiming that I am corrupt because I would not meet his requests. All I can say is that there is absolutely no substance to these allegations. That is what I have said consistently through the entire period. When I talked to this gentleman at the beginning, I did no more than say, "Provide me with the information and we will have a look at it." The information never came.

Goods and Services Tax

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I ask the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he outline the effects on employment in the Queensland business sector of a goods and services tax?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question. Let the House be under no illusions about the negative impact of the GST on small business. This Government has consistently opposed the GST from day one. We have accepted the agreements with the Federal Government so that we get our fair share of tax, but we have always opposed the GST due to the impact that it will have on the business community, ordinary Queenslanders and small business.

Mrs Sheldon: What about the extra hundreds of millions? I suppose you won't take that either.

Mr ELDER: I remind the member for Caloundra that small businesses will become unpaid tax collectors of the GST. In nearly all cases, the GST will impact on their bottom line—on their bottom line they will be paying more.

Although there is no doubt that the GST is an unfair tax, the problem is that the Federal Government has abrogated every responsibility it has to help small-business operators. Apart from a couple of glossy TV ads, it has abrogated every responsibility it has to help small-business operators understand the compliance measures that go with the GST. We as a Government have had to step in. It is not our tax, but we have had to step in to help small-business operators. We are spending $2m of our money—and we are getting not a cracker from the Federal Government—to help business operators understand those compliance requirements. One method by which we have achieved that is the introduction of a workbook which small businesses can use to guide them through self-assessment to ascertain whether, at the end of the day, their business is GST compliant. That is a measure we are undertaking, yet this tax is being introduced by

the colleagues of those opposite. We are undertaking that measure without a cracker of support from the Federal Government.

Importantly for the electorates of several members opposite, we are running seminars across the State to help small-business operators. Unfortunately, I have to advise members opposite that those seminars are booked out. When we conducted them on the Gold Coast there was standing room only; some 300 small-business operators attended. At Ipswich there were 230 in attendance; at Gladstone there were 125 in attendance. Right from the start those seminars have been sold out, with standing room only, which should illustrate to members opposite the depth of feeling out there over their goods and services tax.

The fact of the matter is that more than any other sector this sector has had its confidence rocked by the introduction of the goods and services tax in terms of its growth and employment opportunities. All the business surveys and indexes quoted by members opposite identify one underpinning problem for small-business operators which they raise continually with all members: the introduction of the goods and services tax will cost them in terms of employment and in terms of compliance. Members opposite should not be glowing about the fact that, through their support of this Federal coalition tax, they will stall the Queensland and Australian economies. We are assisting small businesses in the electorates of Opposition members without a cracker of support from their Federal colleagues.

Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee

Mr PAFF: I direct a question to the Premier. As the Premier has constantly claimed to head an open and accountable Government, can he explain his hypocrisy in condoning an incident wherein the PCJC Chairman withheld information relevant to the deliberations of this Parliament—

Mr LUCAS: I rise to a point of order. The question asked by the member in which he said I withheld information is offensive and untrue. I table the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner. I table the report of the parliamentary committee. I table that material to expose him for the dishonest and disgraceful person that he is, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to answer the question. I got the gist of it.

Mr SPEAKER: Firstly we will get the member for Ipswich West to withdraw.

Mr PAFF: I have not asked the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I control the House, not the member.

Mr PAFF: I have not asked the question.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will withdraw those comments that the member finds offensive. That is required under the Standing Orders.

Mr PAFF: What was offensive?

Mr LUCAS: The member accused me of misleading the Parliament. I find that offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: And the member must withdraw. That is the requirement of the Standing Orders.

Mr LUCAS: I am happy to stack up my credibility against his any day of the week, and, for that matter, that of my committee.

Mr PAFF: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Now the member will ask the question.

Mr PAFF: As the Premier has constantly claimed to head an open and accountable Government, can he explain his hypocrisy in condoning an incident wherein information was withheld relevant to the deliberations of this Parliament, which resulted in a perversion of justice?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: When all members are ready; I have plenty of time.

A Government member: You're in no hurry, are you?

Mr BEATTIE: I am in absolutely no hurry at all.

I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not aware of the details of the matter the member has referred to. If I recall correctly, he referred to this matter yesterday. He is referring to a parliamentary committee. As the member would appreciate, I have always had the highest regard and respect for the parliamentary committee process, particularly with the history of this committee. When I was chair of this committee, I recall taking a very strong view that the Executive arm of Government should not at any time interfere with the deliberations of the PCJC. I recall that the Premier of the day did not share my view on that. The member for Ipswich West

cannot expect me to be a hypocrite. I will be consistent.

Mr Borbidge: Could be the first time.

Mr BEATTIE: If the Leader of the Opposition would not be so rude, I would like to answer.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Ipswich West needs to talk to his friend; he keeps interjecting when I am trying to answer his question. He is always rude; we know that, but he could at least give the member for Ipswich West some courtesy, as I am trying to do.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He does not have any manners; I realise that.

Seriously, the point I am trying to make to the member for Ipswich West is this: if he is talking about the behaviour of a parliamentary committee, a parliamentary committee is accountable to this House. It is not accountable to me; it is accountable to this House. The Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee in particular is accountable to this House. Under the Standing Orders, the chairman of that committee and other chairmen are able to answer the member's questions. If he wants to direct a question to any chairman, under the Standing Orders he has to put it on notice. If the member wants to, he can give notice today of a question he wants to ask the chairman tomorrow. When I was chairman of this committee—

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member will recall this; he was in Opposition at the time. I was asked a question by a member of this place. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition will recall having used that Standing Order. I am saying to the member for Ipswich West that if he wants to ask something of the chairman of the committee, he should put a question on notice today, and the chairman may be required to answer it tomorrow. The member will need to check with the Clerk; it may well be the next day of sitting. The parliamentary committees in this place are subject and accountable to this Parliament.

Mr Mackenroth: 28 days.

Mr BEATTIE: 28 days, is it? I apologise. There is a program. The member for Ipswich West will need to check the time. But the chairman is required to answer such a question. I stress to the honourable member again that parliamentary committees are accountable to this Parliament, to everyone here. They are not accountable to the Executive arm of Government; nor should they be. That was a principle I stood by when I was chairman of that committee, and now that I am in a different role, it is a principle that I still stand by.

Economy

Mr FENLON: I refer the Treasurer to the recent Yellow Pages Small Business Index, which indicates a slump in small business confidence, and I ask: how does such a finding sit with the fact that Queensland's economy continues to grow strongly?

Mr HAMILL: As I indicated yesterday, Treasury has recently revised its growth forecast for the Queensland economy up to 4%. Notwithstanding the strong growth that is being experienced in Queensland, there is a matter about which the Queensland Government has issued warnings. I refer to the real crisis of confidence that exists amongst small business operators. This crisis of confidence is apparent right around the country, not just in Queensland. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the recently released findings of the Yellow Pages Small Business Index.

The index makes very interesting reading indeed because, if one analyses it closely, one is struck by the enormity of the problem being faced by small business, particularly in Queensland. Some 1,200 small business operators were surveyed, 200 of whom were from Queensland. Approximately half of the small business operators surveyed in Queensland were from regional and rural areas of the State. The survey found that small business operators are overwhelmingly concerned about the impact of the GST. This view is even more strongly expressed by operators in regional and rural Queensland and regional and rural Australia. The problem is particularly serious in the service sector.

If one undertook a profile of business in Queensland, one would find that, overwhelmingly, business in Queensland could be categorised as small business. Small business in Queensland is overwhelmingly in the service sector. It is little wonder, therefore, that when the Government did its economic modelling of the impact of the GST it was found that it impacted on the service sector.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr HAMILL: That was the message that we presented to the Senate inquiry and to the Federal Government. The Federal Government was not going to listen because it was on an ideological crusade on this matter.

The Federal Government was aided and abetted by those sitting opposite who are now struck dumb. They were the ones who urged a GST. They were the ones who told us that there were no concerns for small business.

What is small business saying? The combination of small business having to comply with the GST whilst being hit by hikes in interest rates is sapping their confidence. 36% of small business owners believe that the national economy will worsen over the next 12 months. Nationally, some two-thirds of small business operators believe that the Federal Government has done a poor job in GST implementation.

A recent survey shows that only 400,000 of the 2.5 million businesses in Australia have actually obtained an ABN number. It is little wonder that small business is in crisis in Australia today.

Time expired.

Member for Woodridge, Photograph with Police Officer

Mr HORAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I refer to the direction given by an inspector at the Beenleigh Police Station to a junior officer to have his photograph taken with the Labor candidate, Mr Kaiser, in the Woodridge by-election. The photograph was used in the production of a political brochure. I ask the Minister: will he confirm to the Parliament that a direction was given to the inspector by a member of his ministerial staff to comply with the request by Mr Kaiser for the photo opportunity? Can other candidates from other parties at the forthcoming State election request photo opportunities with police officers by telephoning his ministerial office?

Mr BARTON: We seem to be having one of those days when assertions, half truths and full lies seem to be the order of the day. At the time when this incident occurred I was on annual leave and was not present. Because of the media coverage—

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. Wasn't that accusation of a lie unparliamentary? I would have thought the use of the word "lie" was unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member might recall that last night the member for Warrego used that term several times during his speech. He was not referring to a particular person; he was referring to the situation. That is a different thing from calling yourself, for instance, a liar. I accepted it last night from your side of the House; I accept it today from the Minister.

Mr BARTON: Let us get back to the facts of the matter. I repeat for the benefit of the shadow Minister that I was on leave at the time, but because of the allegations that were made in the media I checked this out when I came back to work. I think the allegations were actually made in the media after I returned to work. The taking of the photograph occurred whilst I was on annual leave.

My staff assure me that no member of my staff was involved in any way. My advice is that the then candidate for Woodridge, the now member for Woodridge, approached the police officer involved for a photograph. The police officer readily agreed. My understanding is that the police officer wanted to check with higher authorities to make sure that he would not be in any sort of trouble if he agreed to the taking of the photograph. My understanding is that he was given the okay by people further up the tree in the Queensland Police Service. He was not directed to have the photograph taken. I am advised that the officer readily signed an undertaking that the photograph could be used for political purposes.

I believe we are seeing, at best, misinformation being put forward. It was a proper set of circumstances. What occurred was no different from what happened when the Federal Liberal candidate, and later member for Forde, had a photograph taken with the then senior sergeant at the Beenleigh Police Station. That photograph was used in a glossy flyer which was distributed throughout the electorate of Forde.

Members on this side of the House showed no malice towards that gentleman. In fact, I pulled $20 out of my own pocket and went to his farewell party when he retired about a year ago. This is something that occurs occasionally. Individual police officers will respond to requests. That is what happened on this occasion at Woodridge. What occurred was no different from what has occurred on other occasions with Liberal and National Party candidates.

National Wage Claim

Mr WILSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission is currently hearing the ACTU 2000 National Wage Claim. Will the Minister outline to the House the position of the Queensland Government and what it is doing to support the interests of low-wage

workers, in particular regional and rural workers?

Mr BRADDY: This is a very important question, because today the Queensland Government is presenting its submissions in relation to the 2000 National Wage Claim. In this instance we have a united submission whereby the Queensland Government is leading all four Labor States. For the first time, all four of the eastern States—Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania—have joined together and are presenting a united submission.

The submission will, therefore, represent about 80% of the Australian workforce, given the population of those four States. The submission takes into account the good national economic performance experienced during 1999 and the current economic forecasts for the year 2000. These forecasts indicate that the system would—as it should—support a fair and decent wage rise for people on awards.

The claim by the ACTU for these people on awards—who are primarily the low-paid workers in this country and this State—is for $24 per week. The Queensland, New South Wales, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments support that submission. Compare that with the submission of the Federal coalition Government which says that it will only support a wage rise of $8 per week for people on wages up to $477.20 per week. That does not even match inflation and CPI increases. The ACCI wants the commission to defer the wage case indefinitely. We are talking about the low-paid people. This Government is saying that these people deserve a pay rise of this order. As all surveys show, there is an urgent need in this country to abolish the two-tiered wage structure. Low-paid workers are definitely in need of assistance.

Surveys show a startling picture of the impact of low wages on people's living standards and their communities. Rural areas are particularly affected. Many members opposite as well as members on the Government side represent areas in rural and regional Queensland. Yet Government members are the ones who are out there saying to these people—because in Queensland more than 50% of rural and regional workers are relying solely upon the award system—that they need the increase.

Virgin Airlines

Mr SLACK: I ask the Deputy Premier to respond to the comments made by the Lord Mayor of Brisbane in which he describes the decision by Virgin Airlines to locate its Australian operations in Queensland as the outcome of a "childish bidding war" and questions the value of the multimillion-dollar incentive package. I also ask the Minister: if, as the Premier claimed yesterday, the Virgin package, like the Boeing package that we negotiated and whose details are public knowledge, was modest and not the result of a bidding war as the Lord Mayor claims, why will he not release the details of the Virgin package?

Mr ELDER: I will take a little bit more time to answer this question, but, quite simply, I can answer it this way: for the same reasons that the former Government did not release Boeing's package, that is, because a number of those negotiations are commercial-in-confidence.

This is another good example of the Opposition knocking these types of projects in Queensland.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burnett will cease interjecting.

Mr ELDER: I ask: is the Opposition against Virgin setting up its operational headquarters in Queensland? Is the Opposition against Virgin bringing those 750 jobs to Queensland? If the Opposition does not have a problem with that, then why ask the question, if not to knock, if not to whinge and—the bottom line—if not to undermine the Queensland economy?

The package is not released because there are commercial-in-confidence arrangements within it. However, the Opposition also knows—and this shows the folly of the member's question—that the basic thrust behind any of these support packages is payroll tax concessions. As those companies grow their work force, those payroll tax concessions lock in. If they do not, then it costs the Government nothing.

I can only assume that this morning, when the members opposite met to discuss tactics, they had not raised this question with the Leader of the Opposition. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would be quite supportive of this Government's role in attracting an airline with an international status such as Virgin. I can understand that, from time to time, some people may have some concerns. However, from our point of view, Virgin has been a big coup for this State.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Burnett will cease interjecting. This is my final warning.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: My final warning, the member for Burnett!

Mr ELDER: It provides jobs, it provides infrastructure, it provides regional air routes for regional Queensland in the long term, and it provides a significant positive impact.

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Burnett will cease interjecting. That is my final warning.

Mr ELDER: I can only say to the member for Burnett and, more importantly, to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I warn the member for Burnett under Standing Order 123A.

Mr ELDER: If the member is going to ask questions in the House, he could at least ask questions—

Mr Slack interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I now ask the member for Burnett to leave the Chamber under Standing Order 123A(3). I have warned you four times. You will leave the Chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Burnett withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr ELDER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can only assume that, at the end of the day, the Leader of the Opposition was not aware of the question asked by the member for Burnett. In terms of Virgin, I do not believe that the Leader of the Opposition would be critical of a move that is so positive for the State. I say to the members opposite that they should not play games. I will put the package in context for them: we paid less for Virgin than they paid for Boeing.

Goodwill Games

Ms STRUTHERS: I ask the Premier: can he inform the House of any developments in Queensland's preparations for the 2001 Goodwill Games?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to answer this question. As honourable members would be aware, Queensland will host the Goodwill Games in 2001. It will be the biggest sporting event in the world that year and, in terms of world-class multisport events, second only to the Olympics. 1,300 of the world's best athletes will converge on Brisbane to compete in 14 sports over 12 days of high-profile, action-packed excellence.

Brisbane and Queensland will be put firmly under the international spotlight in a way never seen before. The Goodwill Games will add to Queensland's strong and growing reputation for staging events of such size and calibre. Last week during my trip to Canberra, I discussed the Goodwill Games with the Prime Minister. I am pleased to say that the Prime Minister agreed with me in terms of the importance of these games in positioning Queensland in the international market.

To that end, I am pleased to announce to the House today that the Federal Government will contribute $7m in kind towards staging the Goodwill Games. The funding will go towards providing services, including security, Customs assistance, multimedia and technology. The Prime Minister also accepted my invitation to attend some of the events over the course of the competition, although that depends on his availability. I certainly issued the invitation.

The Goodwill Games is a coup for Queensland. Events will be screened in at least 92 countries, giving us an unprecedented opportunity to market Queensland to the world. I am determined to make sure that Queensland gains every possible advantage from the Games in all areas—jobs, tourism and international exposure. I am delighted that the Federal Government will support the Goodwill Games in Queensland. In addition to that, I would have liked a financial contribution but, clearly, I am prepared to say publicly that I am appreciative of the $7m offer in kind. We had asked for more, but I appreciate that the Commonwealth was at least forthcoming in relation to that $7m in kind.

I make this point: tourism is our second biggest industry. It employs 125,000 Queenslanders. Queensland's promotion from the Goodwill Games through CNN and the Time Warner network is going to give us unprecedented exposure in the world market, in particular the US market. It will drive jobs and it will drive opportunities. Every tourism area in this State will benefit from the Goodwill Games. Even though the events are held in Brisbane, with the surf lifesaving event being held on the Gold Coast there will be all sorts of magazine stories, there will be all sorts of opportunities. It will be only a few weeks away from CHOGM for which, hopefully, there will be some retreat on the Sunshine Coast. This will be a great shot in the arm for tourism in this State.

Mary River

Mr STEPHAN: I ask the Minister for Natural Resources: what program is in place

that will enable the weir on the Mary River at Gympie to come to fruition?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question. There are a number of issues in relation to water in the Mary catchment. As the member may be aware, the water allocation management planning process for the Mary is due to commence in the next few months. That planning process will identify the potential for additional water resources to be extracted from the Mary. At present we are looking at the potential for additional allocations in the Mary from recent infrastructure in that area. I am meeting with one of the representatives from the irrigators council in the next couple of days to talk about how that allocation could be made.

In terms of additional infrastructure on the Mary—that will need to await the water allocation management planning process so that we can determine both what water is available and what is the best place to site any future infrastructure.

Education Queensland, Behaviour Management Statistics

Mrs LAVARCH: I ask the Minister for Education: can he advise why he has ordered an end to the keeping of behaviour management statistics in the head office of Education Queensland?

Mr WELLS: Some time ago I raised with my director-general serious concerns that I had about this particular database relating to the rights of the child, privacy and civil liberties. As a result of the director-general taking on board my concerns and exercising his own discretion, the department has since dismantled the central database. This database was set up by the previous Minister, the member for Merrimac. It cost many thousands of dollars that were taken away from programs of direct assistance to students. This database recorded the personal particulars of children and their families, along with details of their alleged misdemeanours.

Let me tell honourable members how this database worked. I have the form that had to be filled in. The headings include "disobedient behaviours", "antisocial behaviours", "verbal behaviours", "physical behaviours", "property behaviours", "substance use behaviours", "absence/truancy behaviours" and "other". These had to be filled in at the school level, and the instructions stated that there should be no deletions. Once filled in at the school level, the whole of that database was sucked into central office computers along with a great deal of detail related to next of kin, to the families and to the children.

It is obvious that such a database could be hacked into. It is obvious that that kind of information could be leaked. It is obvious that that kind of database could be abused. For example, in 10 years' time, a request from an employer to a school will allow a principal who had no knowledge of the circumstances to provide at the press of a button information which could destroy a young person's life and opportunities.

The information which was maintained through this database includes allegations of indictable offences made without any of the normal judicial checks and balances. For example, just recently a child was alleged to have committed an offence of substance abuse. This was entered into the database. The parents of the child had the child blood tested. The blood test proved negative, but the record would still show the incident. In the shadow world of the cybernetic database, that child would still be guilty.

I am not going to allow Education Queensland to act as Big Brother in this way. I am not going to have a database which attacks the rights of the child and the rights of the child's family. What is more, we need to make sure that the good reputation of our State school system is defended. The jeopardy in which our young people and their families are placed is uniquely suffered by students in the State school system. Private schools do not keep these kinds of records at a central level. As well as disbanding those files, we have assigned responsibility for monitoring the behaviour of students in schools—

Time expired.

Sir David Longland Correctional Centre

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. In his answer to my question without notice yesterday the Minister said that no underage prisoners were housed in Sir David Longland Correctional Centre. Is it not a fact that that centre has children under the age of 18 housed in K block? How many underage children have been in K block? What is the length of their housing in K block? What was the date of the most recent housing of a juvenile in K block?

Mr BARTON: Yesterday I acknowledged that we have people who are 17 years of age in Sir David Longland prison. They are sentenced there by courts, because in

Queensland according to the courts a juvenile is aged under 17. A person who is over 17 years of age but less than 18 is considered to be an adult and can be sentenced to an adult prison.

As at this morning, 21 people who are 17 years old are in Sir David Longland prison. I will go through the relevant legislation. Under section 5 of the Juvenile Justice Act, a child is a person who has not turned 17 years of age. Section 38 of the Corrective Services Act requires that—and I stress this—

> "Subject to any direction given by the Commission in a particular case, a prisoner who is under the age of 18 years shall at all times be kept apart from any prisoner who is, or above the age of, 18 years."

The number of 17-year-olds in the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre is currently 21. The honourable member referred to K block. I do not know whether it is K block, but it is referred to within the system as "the boys yard". These are people who have been sentenced to prison by the courts for very serious offences. They are in prison in accordance with our State laws. They are in prison in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act. There are currently two mentors in there. I have spent some time elsewhere today explaining what the mentors are for. That is covered under section 38 of the Corrective Services Act, which I have already spoken about.

I find it amazing that someone from the old One Nation Party—I am not sure what they are calling themselves these days—who wants to be tough on crime, who every time a youngster commits an offence wants to lock them up and throw away the key, would be complaining that we have such people in the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre. They are being housed in a special unit away from mainstream prisoners. I find it amazing that the member would ask that question. She cannot have it both ways.

I am also amazed that the honourable member has suddenly discovered an interest in prisons when she opposed having a prison in her electorate and opposed the expansion of the Woodford facility. Woodford is going into the electorate that she will be contesting at the next election.

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order. I did not oppose a prison in my electorate. That statement is untrue and offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister will withdraw.

Mr BARTON: I withdraw, but I will refer to the documents that I tabled in the debate on this matter late last year.

Electricity Dividends

Mr REEVES: In asking a question of the Minister for Mines and Energy, I refer to the Queensland Government Gazette of 21 January this year and a reference to dividends to be paid by the Queensland Electricity Corporation and the Stanwell Corporation. Can the Minister provide the House with any details of these dividends?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the honourable member for his question. As he rightfully stated, the Gazette did refer to dividends payable by those corporations. I think it is appropriate that I pass on a bit more information to the Parliament. Stanwell Corporation will pay a dividend of $104.8m for the 1998-99 financial year. This figure represents 95% of the reported profits after tax. The Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation will pay a dividend of $34.6m for the same year, which is also 95% of the reported profit after tax.

For the information of the Opposition, in particular, the Leader of the Opposition, I state that the Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation is probably better known by its trading name of Powerlink. The Leader of the Opposition put out a news release whingeing about these dividends, saying that they represented 214% of the profit of the Queensland Power Trading Corporation. The press release stated, "Beattie makes big raid on power industry profits." But he suddenly went quiet when we reminded him that he was getting the organisations mixed up. The Opposition and its Leader were using the dividend figures for Powerlink and the profit figure for the Queensland Power Trading Corporation, which have no relationship at all.

We had to try to discover how they made this mistake. The intelligence we received was that one of the Opposition's advisers thought of a number. The other adviser then doubled the number. Another one suggested that they multiply it by three, which they did. They then took away the first number they thought of. Another adviser suggested that they add $10m to the figure, and they called that 214%. Even by their standards, that is a bit rich.

Before I conclude, I have to remind Opposition members that although we are talking about a 95% after tax profit, they took 107% of the profits from the old South West Power and 115% of the profits from Energex.

Before the Leader of the Opposition rushes to print, he should make an effort to understand the difference between the different electricity corporations in our State.

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

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 29 February (see p. 81).

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (11.30 a.m.), in reply: In closing the debate and thanking honourable members for their contributions, I thank in particular the Opposition spokesman for his support for this legislation. As honourable members have noted, this legislation simply addresses a number of minor matters that need to be addressed, in particular the provisions of the Body Corporate and Community Management Act that require an amendment to validate a number of decisions arising from evidence from community titles inspectors. A recent decision in the District Court known as the Body Corporate of "Westlake Villas" v. R. A. Meek (and others) found that the evidence gathered by community titles inspectors was not validly relied upon by an adjudicator in making an order, because under the legislation the inspectors did not have an appropriate delegation to gather that evidence and conduct the investigation. That is rectified by these provisions.

The Opposition spokesperson raised the issue of amendments to the Land Act in relation to roads. All this amendment simply does is allow for people other than adjacent owners to apply for road closures. At the moment, the Act is limited in respect of the rights of third parties to apply for road closures, and this simply widens the range of eligible applicants who can make use of those provisions of the Land Act. The issue arose because the Ombudsman had expressed concern that the assessment criteria currently in the Act did not adequately allow for all the merits of an application to be considered, and so those provisions relating to the conditions relevant to determining whether a closure was appropriate are also amended. The amendment is contained in clause 7, and I refer honourable members in particular to subclause (4).

The other significant change that this legislation makes is that for the first time in Queensland there will be an opportunity to bring in a process whereby we can register covenants on title. This will allow covenants to be registered to protect, for example, a voluntary conservation agreement entered into by a land-holder. So if land-holders wish to protect part of their land for conservation purposes, and accept responsibility for the implications both in terms of value and the management of the protection of that part of their land, the land-holder can enter into that voluntary arrangement and seek to have a covenant containing the terms of the protection registered on the title. This will be particularly helpful to the work that many local governments are currently undertaking, particularly in south-east Queensland, under the Land for Wildlife Scheme, whereby land-holders can enter into voluntary agreements with local governments to set aside portions of their land as conservation areas and habitat for local endemic species.

Those are the main elements of the amendment Bill. They are relatively straightforward. I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate and the Opposition for its support.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 32, and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

DRUG REHABILITATION (COURT DIVERSION) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 November 1999 (see p. 5150).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.37 a.m.): At the outset, I indicate that the Opposition will be supporting the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill, because we think it is a very sensible piece of law reform for the State. However, at the outset of my contribution to this debate it is salient for me to point out that what we are dealing with today is largely predicated on the proposal put forward by the coalition in February of last year, namely, a well developed proposal for a drug court, for consideration by the

Government and the community. Interestingly, what we now have before the Parliament is not very different in many ways from the proposal that we put forward. Interestingly, at about the time that I first suggested this idea, the Government said that it was going to do it, anyway, and that it was contained in its prevention of crime discussion paper, which was floating around the State at that stage. It was; about two words in the last paragraph of the last page indicated that one item for consideration could be a drug court.

I first became aware of the notion of drug courts towards the latter stages of 1998, when somebody brought the idea to my attention and it caught my interest. It seemed to be a way to enforce a degree of rehabilitation and counselling in an effort to combat the cycle of crime, which is very much drug related. I researched some of the history of this initiative in the United States, and I will go into that in more detail later. I am sure that most honourable members with an interest in this area would have conducted similar research and would be aware of the operation of drug courts in the United States and other jurisdictions. They would also know which other Australian jurisdictions have them or are looking at establishing them.

I think each and every member of this Parliament would agree that drugs are an insidious thing; they are a dreadful thing. They destroy people's lives and they destroy their families. The social consequences of drugs are very, very difficult to overcome, particularly in the short to medium term. Fortunately and unfortunately, depending on where one stands in time, drugs are probably more of a 20th century phenomenon. I suppose before then there were other issues with which people had to deal. Alcohol has been a problem and continues to be a problem. There certainly has been a range of crimes that are associated with alcohol.

We are dealing with the types of drugs that are available and have been available since perhaps late last century. Whilst I am not absolutely sure of the proper name of the Act of Parliament, I note that there was a move towards regulating the distribution of opium in this State late last century in an Act that also dealt with the welfare of indigenous people. So there has been a problem with drugs for a long period.

I was watching television the other night. The program was demonstrating the impact of drugs, particularly on the Afro-American community and particularly on some of the early and very prominent sax players. It pointed out that in the thirties, forties and fifties white drug traffickers in those communities and ghettos in the United States were distributing drugs. I believe that the Vietnam War also had an impact on the access to some of the harder drugs that have come into this country. We have now got the problem of designer drugs, and some of those designer drugs are extremely serious; they may be more serious than cocaine and heroin in terms of their effect on the health and wellbeing of those who use them. There are probably many members on both sides of the Parliament who are much more aware of that than I am because they live in communities where those types of drugs tend to be somewhat more prevalent.

I am very concerned because, as I move around my electorate, hoteliers, people involved in school communities, teachers, parents and police tell me that we are seeing these harder drugs creeping out from the boundaries of the major metropolitan areas. They are very much in our regions now. We are seeing the designer drugs, particularly amphetamine and speed—those sorts of things—really starting to take a foothold in many of our regional communities and even our more rural and remote communities as well. There is a great degree of concern within school communities about that.

One thing that I have noticed which is of particular interest to me is that, whilst people are concerned about law and order, health and those sorts of issues, if members speak to young parents who have children of kindergarten, preschool, primary school or high school age, they will find that they are absolutely terrified about drugs. They do not know how to detect them and they do not know how they would be able to deal with that situation if they found out that their child was on drugs. I note the honourable members in this Parliament today who are parents, and I myself am a parent of four young children. The member for Lytton and the member for Woodridge, I understand, have four children themselves as well and they would be very, very concerned.

Mr Lucas: He has three and I have four.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Three.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: And the member for Chermside has piped up and said that he has five children.

I am saying that we are dealing here with basically school-age children and very young children. As a parent, I am very concerned about how we are going to deal with these

problems. I think the ways that we are actually able to deal with these problems are exercising the minds of parents and our communities more and more each day of the week. What we do need is to ensure a balanced approach.

One of the reasons why I wanted to investigate this particular proposal so much was that I learned what had happened in the United States and of the proposal of the Carr Government. I do not think that it is a matter of going soft on crime. How we could sell something like this without giving an indication to the community that this is a soft option was always my concern. This is not a soft option. The drug court proposal in many cases is a harder option than our current approach of incarceration and reoffence, incarceration, reoffence. Sometimes people come out of the prison with a worse problem than they had when they went into the prison. Also, while in there, in some cases they are subjected to, I suppose, a greater opportunity of contracting HIV and hepatitis B or C. It is how we deal with this in a sensible, balanced way that I have been most concerned about.

I think that we really need to differentiate between those involved in the drug problem. We really need to attack it in two different ways. We should look at those people who are unfortunately victims of drugs and are involved in non-violent, non-sexual crime—and I understand that an amendment will be moved in the Committee stage by the Attorney-General, which I will let him explain, in relation to a crime of a particular sexual nature. Basically when we are dealing with crimes of a non-violent nature, we will set those aside and we will admit that there is great benefit to be gained from a process of rehabilitation.

Then we will also try to sort out of the process those people who want to traffic in drugs. I think that those who traffic in drugs are no better than history's worst mass murderers. As I understand it, in this State in excess of 20 Queenslanders die each year from drug overdoses. Many hundreds, if not thousands, of people are admitted to our hospitals with drug overdoses and they require extensive medical treatment, which costs a lot, and then there is also the rehabilitation that follows from that. I also understand that something like 600 Australians die each year as a consequence of drug overdoses. That is completely intolerable and we need to move towards addressing that.

There is a great range of different views in our community, notwithstanding the two that I have advanced here: cracking down on the traffickers and also looking at the issue of enforcement of rehabilitation and counselling. Others have the belief that we should not only be liberalising our drug policy in this country and bringing in shooting galleries—and that is the debate that they have had in New South Wales and that is what is to be instituted down there—but also that we should be moving towards a process of decriminalisation for what are termed softer drugs, such as marijuana, and also looking at prescriptions for heroin.

I am not sure that that is something that we need. I think that when people move to those particular processes they are really throwing their hands up in the air and saying, "It is all too difficult. This is considered to be criminal; it is considered to be wrong; it has a disastrous and insidious effect on our community, but we cannot handle it. So we will reduce its impact on the crime statistics and decriminalise it." But we still have the enormous social consequences that go with that. I am not sure that our country is ready for that, and nor should it be. It may be an issue that will gain more public support at some time in the future, but from where I sit at the moment I cannot see that gathering too much support at all.

There are also some interesting statistics around about the impact of drugs on crime. The Premier himself indicates during radio interviews that perhaps three-quarters of crime in this State, if not more, is related to drugs. I would concur with that figure. I have been using the figure of at least two-thirds and I have seen figures of up to 85% to 90%. I suppose the jury, so to speak, will continue to be out on that. We will never know absolutely, because there are crimes that are directly drug related and there are crimes that are indirectly drug related. It is basically something on which we do not keep drug statistics. I suppose with the resourcing of the courts and our criminal justice system of policing we never go through a process of asking, "Are you a user of drugs? Have you used drugs? Was that a consideration?" It is not always possible to actually get back to that.

Certainly some of the statistics which are available around the nation and also around the world are worthy of consideration. The Queensland Parliamentary Library's Research Note No. 3 of March of last year states—

> "For example, a recent study of drug use amongst arrestees in England indicated that 61 percent of offenders had traces of an illegal drug in their urine at the time of their arrest. The New South Wales government claims that about 70 percent of prisoners in NSW are in jail because of drug-related crime."

I think that what we are seeing from that is a very clear indication that, regardless of where one goes around the world or around other jurisdictions in Australia, there very definitely is a very, very strong link between crime and drugs, and it is not only crime of a more minor nature.

We cannot necessarily describe property crime as that, but there are varying levels of crime, and property crime certainly is something which is of concern to a lot of people today. It is one of the reasons that a lot of our elderly people and women and children in our community—and a lot of men—basically bar themselves in their houses. Although we are dealing with non-violent property crime it is a situation where somebody violates the sanctity of a person's home and makes them feel insecure.

Say a person comes home in the middle of the night or in the middle of the day and their home has been broken into and all of their goods and the things that they hold most dear to them—in some cases things that have been handed down for generations—have been strewn around the floor or articles such as the television and video have been stolen and the security screen has been prised open. That has a very significant and traumatic impact on that person. A lot of the fear of crime is related to property crime and home invasion. It is interesting to note that there are a range of categories of crime in this State in relation to which the rates continue to go down, such as murder. However, in the case of property crimes, car theft and sexual crimes, there has been an increase. I believe that we need innovative ways of addressing those issues. The drug court pilot program is an innovative way to start addressing those issues.

I had the experience recently of travelling to New South Wales to sit through some drug court procedures in that State. I am not sure whether any members opposite have had that experience, but I found it to be a most fascinating and worthwhile experience. I had the opportunity to meet the judge who was in charge of the drug court program. There is one full-time judge, equivalent to a judge in the District Court jurisdiction, and a part-time judge who assists. I was aware when I first arrived that they were going through the process of team meetings. I will explain that concept a little later. I was then able to sit through the process where they decide upon the removal or addition of people to the drug court program. I then went to the afternoon session, which involved rewarding participants in the program.

This concept is a very interesting proposal. The team meeting is a fascinating thing in itself. I did not sit through that; obviously, that involves people's personal and private information. A judge or judges are associated with the drug court. There are registry staff and there are prosecution staff. When I was visiting the New South Wales drug court, somebody from Legal Aid was present to represent the defendant. The corrective services people and the health professionals were also involved in the actual assessment and monitoring of the participants. Those professionals attended a team meeting in the early part of the morning. They discussed with the judge the individual cases and how they were going. The judge—in this case Her Honour—was very familiar with the individual circumstances of each person on the program.

It was then interesting to sit through the actual placing or removal of people from the drug court program. At the time of my visit, there was one position available on the drug court program and two people to consider. It was a very interesting process. A magistrate would identify that such and such a person fits within a certain bracket and therefore they are eligible to be submitted to the drug court for consideration to go on the program. But there are a limited number of positions. In the case I witnessed, the two people came into the court. One of the individuals was brought out of custody to be considered for the program. I am not sure whether the other person was in custody. They then went through a balloting procedure. Their names were placed in a computer and one person was selected and the other person missed out. Members should have seen the look of disappointment on the face of the person who missed out.

Mrs Lavarch: It is like putting names in a hat and drawing one out.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes. There is going to be disappointment, but there is the need to be able to choose. As the honourable member for Kurwongbah says, it is very similar to putting names in a hat and drawing them out.

Mrs Lavarch: It would be interesting to see at the end when one has done the jail sentence and the other has done the rehabilitation program whether either of them re-offended.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The member for Kurwongbah raises a very good point. It would be interesting to do a case study at the end. I am not sure whether the person who went on the program or the other person who was sentenced have completed either the rehabilitation program in the drug court or the

usual rehabilitation program in the corrective services system. It would be interesting to see the comparisons, which will be done during the process of evaluation. But the look of relief on the face of the person who was able to participate in the program was something that made me feel as though something good was being achieved. It gave me a warm feeling.

We also had the opportunity to see two people taken off the program. Her Honour was very much aware of the individual circumstances of the cases. There was no doubt that one person was taking the system for an absolute and complete ride. She pledged to be interested in the program and wanted another chance and another chance. The unfortunate thing was that she was a young mother who had just had a baby three or four weeks before. She was put on the program and she continued shoplifting while she was on the program. She kept coming back before the court for sanctioning. Her Honour kept telling her that this was her last chance and that she would receive shock incarceration if she reoffended. However, she kept appearing before the court. She was taken off the program. Another young woman was taken off the program because she could not handle it. In her case, she had indicated that it was too tough and she wanted to be taken off the program. She was then sentenced and went back into one of the correctional facilities. There are some people who use and abuse the system, but there are others who are genuinely interested in the system and have the best of intentions.

I am not sure whether the Attorney-General has had a chance to sit through the process, but he would be very much aware of what goes on from reading about it.

Mr Foley: Yes, I have. I was very impressed by it.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The Attorney-General was very impressed. Sitting through the process of sanctioning and the reward session in the afternoon was an interesting case study in itself in relation to how courts can work in different and innovative ways. About 40 or 50 defendants went through the court in a couple of hours. Reports were given to the court as to whether morphine was found in their urine. Many of the defendants admitted that they had had morphine. I understand that in some cases it was associated with methadone that they had received in jail prior to going on the program and in other cases it was as a result of methadone treatment. Her Honour would sanction those people. In some cases, the periods of shock incarceration went from one day to a week or 10 days. Of course, Her Honour issued a warning along the way that this was their last chance before they were removed from the program.

There is also the process of rewarding. People were able to stand up before Her Honour, who questioned them about any difficulties they had experienced and how they were going with making restitution. The court would then applaud and clap. They would acknowledge their contribution and acknowledge the fact that they were making a sterling effort to try to keep away from drugs. I think it is fair to say that some of those people had had some difficulty in the initial stages. There may have been one or two breaches of the rules, but they were coming good.

Another interesting point about the system in New South Wales—and I will be pursuing this with the Attorney-General during my contribution in this debate and I would like him to provide information later when he sums up—is that it is broken up into three stages. The first stage relates to the first three months, during which there is intensive monitoring and intensive reporting back to the court. As I understand it, there are two to three mandatory urine tests a week in that stage. In the second stage, which is the second group of three, there are one or two urine tests a fortnight. In the third stage, which is the final six months of the one year period, urine testing is done either once or at random.

The key to the success of any drug court program is regular and well resourced testing and monitoring and reporting back to the court. I would like to hear from the Attorney-General during his summing up of this debate as to how he envisages the testing working. On my reading of the Bill, it seems that we are dealing with an order that may be handed down by a pilot drug court magistrate who may say that a person has to report one or two days a week, or maybe even for random testing. I believe that the testing needs to be mandatory. I believe that we should indicate quite clearly during this debate that urine testing should be carried out three times a week in the initial stage.

One thing that I found very interesting after observing the system in New South Wales is the fact that residue from heroin, which is basically morphine, is detectable in urine. Three or four days after the heroin has been injected, it is very difficult to detect. It has gone from the system after that time. We could have a random process of testing maybe once or twice a fortnight, yet we could have missed a person who has had two or

three shots of heroin in that time, depending upon the timing of that testing. There is an argument for mandatory testing. There is the issue of self-responsibility, but I think we need to implement mandatory testing rather than random testing. We must be able to monitor people on the program very, very closely. I ask the Attorney-General to consider that matter.

It is interesting to reflect upon the history of drug courts in the United States. A document from the Parliamentary Library states—

> "The first trial of a Drug Court in the United States was launched in Miami, Florida in 1994. In 1997, over 200 Drug Courts were in operation throughout the US. In addition, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (UK) introduced a Drug Treatment and Testing Order ... which is currently being trialled and operates similarly to the US Drug Court programs. New South Wales also recently launched a $12 million, two year trial Drug Court on 8 February 1999 to operate from the Parramatta Court House."

That is the location which I had a chance to visit and inspect.

As I understand it, in the United States different jurisdictions do it differently. Some jurisdictions are a lot more prescriptive than others. The period for which people must remain drug free to be eligible to graduate from the program is longer in some State jurisdictions than it is in others. The figures that I had seen up until the early part of last year indicated that about 100,000 people had been through the drug court program in the United States. I believe 70% of people had graduated from it, and at that stage 60% of those people had remained drug free. So almost 40,000 people in the United States had remained drug free as a consequence of successfully completing the drug court program. That is highly significant.

The other interesting feature is a comparison of the reoffending rate amongst drug court participants and those processed through the normal court program: 4.5% to 20% of those processed through the drug court program reoffend compared with about 45% to 50% of those processed through the normal criminal justice system. There are other reasons for that, of course. One of the features of a drug court program is that it deliberately sets out to identify and target those in the community who have a drug dependency which leads to a crime problem and ensures that they fit within that program. There is a socioeconomic factor as well. If a person comes from a ghetto or a low socioeconomic area in one of the major cities, they are more likely to be repeat offenders after being on the drug court program than a person who comes from an affluent middle-class or upper-class suburb. That is due to the different support structures available to those people and the influences to which they are subjected from time to time.

Basically, this legislation deals with eligibility criteria which seek to ensure that people who have not committed a sexual offence or a physical offence against another person can be considered for this program. The legislation does not apply to juvenile offenders, and I believe at some future time we may have to consider including that category of offender. That issue may not necessarily come under this Minister's portfolio, but I believe there is a case to support that argument. Certainly, other countries in the world have made it possible for drug courts to also process juveniles, that is, people under the age of 18.

As we are very much aware, the program operates in the following manner: once a particular offender is considered by the drug court magistrate, their sentence is immediately suspended. As I understand it, a person must have a conviction recorded to be eligible to participate in the program. If they remain drug free or within the bounds of the criteria and the assessment laid down by the drug court and they complete the drug court program or the intensive drug rehabilitation order, then they are not required to go to jail.

However, the important point to be made—and I have tried to say this to people all along—is that it is not a soft option; it is a harder option, because people have to commit themselves to undertaking compulsory rehabilitation and remaining drug free. Let us say that a person is six months into the program but they encounter some very significant problems and they keep putting themselves in a situation in which they take drugs. Once that is detected and they have been sanctioned, if they continue to do it, they will be sentenced to jail and they will stay in jail. So the length of time for which that person was required to be on the program and in jail may in fact have been longer than if they had been sentenced up front.

However, the very important feature of this program is that if someone successfully graduates from it, then hopefully we have deterred them from further using drugs, we have provided them with the support to get their financial affairs in order and to assist

them to gain employment, and hopefully that will prevent them committing crimes. As a result, we will reduce the concerns of elderly people and women in our community who are very worried about having their homes broken into and their handbags snatched. Such crimes are often drug related. I do not know the cost of such crimes in this State. They must cost hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Although we do not directly pay for them, indirectly we do. We pay for them indirectly through the resourcing of our courts, our Police Service, the health problems that go with them, and, very importantly, through our insurance premiums. Everyone with an insurance policy pays a premium which is calculated on the number of claims made against the type of policy held. Many crimes involve the stealing of property such as televisions, video recorders, stereos and cars, and they might be worth $2,000, $5,000 or $10,000. The impact of stealing is felt by everyone.

The United States drug courts were found to be beneficial in overcoming the social issue of babies being born with a drug dependency. As at early last year, it was estimated that the drug court program in the United States had saved 525 babies from being born with a drug dependency. I am not sure of the equivalent cost in Australia or Queensland, but it costs something like US$250,000 to US$300,000 to rehabilitate those babies from a drug dependency. So if we can overcome that problem, we have also addressed a significant social problem further down the track.

We have heard various comments on this subject in the press, but I ask the Attorney-General: when does he envisage that our first drug court will commence operation? I understand that at this stage there will be three pilot sites in south-east Queensland. There is probably a case for the establishment of one in the not-too-distant future to an area such as Cairns, because there may be some regional differences or some regional prerogatives that can be considered within the pilot drug court program. The Attorney-General may have considered that issue already. I ask him to give us a fairly clear indication of when he envisages that the three pilot courts about which I have read will commence.

Another important aspect to the success of any drug court program is the money provided by the State to rehabilitation services such as Mirikai and others around the State, whether they are run by the Government or largely privately conducted by the community. We must ensure that there is a significant commitment to funding such programs, otherwise they are not able to meet their full potential. Of course, the people involved in rehabilitation are aware that in many cases that involves methadone treatment and also intensive counselling.

Staffing of the court is a very important issue which needs to be considered. In New South Wales there are a couple of prosecutors associated with the court. It is a very tight-knit operation. There are the prosecutors, the defence lawyers, other professionals and the corrective services officers, and they all work together. We noted a prosecutor with a brief in his hand—the information to provide to the court relating to how a person is not going so well—and a urine bottle in the other hand. So he had the brief and he was also supervising the taking of a urine sample, ensuring that the appropriate level of privacy was afforded to the person on the program. So this prosecutor was collecting the sample but also presenting the case for the State in terms of the quantum of the sentence handed out to that particular person. We were told that it is necessary to have a sufficient number of people, such as nurses, associated with the program to undertake tests at the drug court. We were also told that tests could be undertaken at other sites.

I want to refer to the question of balloting for positions on the pilot program. I understand that about 300 people will be able to take part in the program each year. That means that 600 people will be involved during the period when the program is ongoing. We understand that a lot more people will be assessed as being eligible to be on the program. I am curious as to the way in which the ballot will be conducted. Will the names be simply drawn from a hat, will there be some professional recommendation, or will it be part of a computer program as we saw in New South Wales? I think it is necessary that that question is addressed.

How often will participants be required to report back to the court? I suppose this important condition will be laid down by the pilot court magistrate. I understand that in New South Wales during the first intensive stage of the program participants report back to the court once a week.

I am concerned with regard to the issue of jurisdiction. I am also concerned about drug-related offences which will be taken into consideration when deciding a person's eligibility to undertake the program. I would prefer that the drug court in Queensland be established within the jurisdiction of the District Court. No doubt the Attorney-General has

reasons—perhaps very sound reasons—for establishing the drug court at the level of the Magistrates Court. The view in New South Wales seemed to be that establishing the court at the District Court level gave the court a greater degree of credibility within the community. It also probably reduced opportunities for squabbling over jurisdiction and responsibility.

When we are dealing with crimes which can attract a significant jail term, it may be better to establish the drug court at the District Court level. Perhaps the Attorney-General could inform the Parliament whether the reason for establishing the drug court at the Magistrates Court level involved a question of resourcing or whether he felt that the necessary jurisdiction lay with the Magistrates Court. I would be interested to hear the Attorney-General's views on that matter.

Under this legislation, a drug court magistrate has the ability to put on this program a person who has committed a crime under the Drugs Misuse Act. The offence could carry a sentence of a period of imprisonment of up to 20 years. I believe that this matter raises some serious concerns. I do not have any problems with magistrates dealing with offences carrying terms of imprisonment under that Act of up to 15 years. However, when we are dealing with offences under the Drugs Misuse Act which carry a potential term of imprisonment of 20 years—and we are dealing here with such offences as drug trafficking—I have a problem with such people being eligible for the drug court program.

I do not have so much of a problem with the issue of supply, because in such cases we are dealing with people who have a drug problem. An offender may have one or two sachets of heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, speed, or whatever the case may be, in his pocket and he sells them to keep his habit going. I suppose one could argue that people who are involved in drug trafficking are doing the same thing.

Drug traffickers do not deserve consideration by this Parliament, because they deliberately set out to cause trauma, unbelievable social problems and unbelievable crime problems. Such actions can lead to death in cases where someone takes an overdose. As I said earlier, drug traffickers are really no better than history's worst mass murderers. I would prefer us to have a situation where magistrates do not have to consider cases where an offender could be sentenced to up to 20 years' imprisonment for trafficking in Schedule 2 drugs.

Whilst I admit that we are not dealing with heroin or cocaine, we are certainly dealing with amphetamines and other very serious drugs. I believe that, in many ways, amphetamines are a worse drug than heroin. Heroin is a terrible drug, but very serious and violent crimes are associated with amphetamines. Amphetamines send people out of their tree. If someone is on heroin, he is caught in that cycle, unfortunately, and he needs a hit to keep himself going. After a period of time he has a medical problem. On the other hand, amphetamines send people into absolute rages. A number of well-publicised court cases have illustrated the serious violence which has been inflicted upon people in cases where amphetamines have been involved.

Whilst I believe that 99% of this legislation is very good, I cannot support the inclusion of people who traffic in Schedule 2 drugs. I would like the Attorney-General to comment on that matter in his summing-up.

I want to refer to the growth of the drug problem in this State. Last week, the coalition suggested that we should be moving towards the introduction of retractable syringes in this State. There are very good public policy and health reasons for taking this action. The World Health Organisation has indicated that it would like to see the phasing out of non-retractable syringes over the next two or three years. I believe that the Queensland Government needs to move in this direction. The Health Minister supplied us with some very dodgy and unsubstantiated figures with regard to the cost of retractable syringes as compared with non-retractable syringes. I believe her figures were 14c as compared with $1.14 or $1.16.

The coalition's figures indicate that the cost of a conventional syringe—taking into consideration the needle, the packaging and the swab—is closer to 50c. A retractable syringe can be purchased for approximately 70c. This does not take into consideration the bulk buying power of the State Government.

When the Health Minister was responding to the coalition's proposition the other day she said that our proposal would cost the State something like $10.2m or $10.4m. She mentioned that during the past year the State issued 4.3 million syringes under the needle distribution or exchange program—whatever one wants to call it. In the year 2000-01 it is expected that the State will issue 7.2 million syringes. On the Minister's own figures, this represents a 72% increase. Does this mean

that the same number of drug-dependent people will be using those syringes, or will we see an increase in the number of people who are intravenous drug dependent? How is one expected to interpret those figures?

As I said, the Minister indicated that the figure would increase from 4.3 million to 7.2 million conventional syringes over two years under her program. For our program, the Minister says that the cost would be $10m. There seems to be an admission contained in those figures that there is a significant amount of re-use of syringes or sharing of syringes. Are we going to see an exponential growth in intravenous drug use in this State? I would like to hear an explanation of these matters. Is the Minister telling us that there will not be an increase in the number of people in this State who are drug dependent?

In conclusion, the Opposition genuinely believes that this is a good piece of legislation. However, we have some concerns with regard to the level of jurisdiction. We believe that it should be on the level of the District Court. The Opposition does not believe that people who traffic in Schedule 2 drugs should be included in this legislation.

I believe that people in our community who are involved in the rehabilitation and counselling of drug offenders are very much in the dark with regard to how this program will work in Queensland. These people are aware of how the various programs work in other States, but they have not received sufficient information from the Queensland Government on this subject.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.20 p.m.): In recent times, Governments have placed great emphasis on rehabilitation and diversionary programs. Certainly, the Federal Government has become involved by providing another $110m over four years for diversionary programs as part of a larger package of well over $500m provided to the States for drug programs. As the shadow Minister mentioned a few moments ago, the Opposition has been talking about drug courts for some time, and the Government has put forward this Bill.

Having said all of that, I think that it is fair to say that drug addiction is one of the great scourges of modern society. For whatever the reason people become addicted to drugs in the first place, once addicted, some people find it extremely difficult—almost impossible—to get off them. I agree with the shadow Minister, the member for Warwick, when he said that diversionary programs should not be seen as an easy sentencing option. It may be a most difficult and hard option indeed for some people who have a deep addiction to drugs and could involve them in much mental and physical anguish. Clearly, because of their addiction, some people will not be able to make it through the diversionary program: the effort will be simply just too great and they will fall by the wayside. We need to keep that in mind.

Although some people might abuse the system, those people who genuinely wish to take part in the program have to, firstly, go through the court process, be counselled, be assessed as to their suitability for the program and, once they are assessed as appropriate candidates for the program, go before a magistrate. Of course, the Opposition has already raised concerns about whether the Magistrates Court is the appropriate jurisdiction. However, once people have gone through that process and are accepted into the program, it is then a matter of whether or not their treatment is appropriate and can cater for their needs so that they benefit from it. Of course, the aim for those people is to get over their drug addiction.

This is a pilot, long-term program. As we know, one has already started in New South Wales. However, I do not think that we should expect immediate results, although it may be that a handful of people can achieve results overnight. Of course, there are thousands of people who are on drugs and who have committed no offences, but they will not be part of this pilot diversionary program. This program is for people who are somewhat hardened in their approach and have committed criminal offences. Nevertheless, I believe that the program will be worth while, provided long-term rehabilitation programs and treatment are put in place for these people.

I notice that the Bill and its attached document state that this program will be offered to people who have committed crimes of a non-violent and non-sexual nature or who have not committed a minor offence, such as common assault under section 340 of the Criminal Code. However, I have some difficulties with people who have committed drug-related offences but who also might qualify for this program. The legislation refers to prescribed drug offences and another offence prescribed under a regulation that is punishable by imprisonment for a term of not more than seven years. The shadow Minister in his speech indicated his concerns about the types of drug offences that those provisions may take into account, particularly the more serious drug offences such as trafficking, and I reiterate those concerns. After all, these days it

is not just heroin; unfortunately, ecstasy, speed—a whole range of drugs—appear to be growing in popularity within the community.

Although it is fine to include some drug-related offences in these provisions, clearly people who have been convicted of drug trafficking are into drugs in a major way. In that regard, I want some clarification from the Minister as to their qualification for this program because the Bill is a little vague. I think that the Government will need to make it perfectly clear to the community exactly which drug-related offences are covered under this legislation and which are not, because it certainly is not clear. I have done some study of the Bill and one or two issues still need clarification although, as I say, the provision stipulating a drug offence attracting a penalty of not more than seven years' imprisonment is quite clear.

I seek clarification also as to whether it is a State-funded or a Commonwealth-funded program. As I say, there is well over $500m in Commonwealth money, which will be added to in the coming months. The Prime Minister is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars of Federal funds into various drug treatment programs. I know members on this side of the Chamber have as their goal a drug-free society. We have to keep working towards that. It is cool to be clean. I say that because many young people seem to think that it is not. However, in language that they understand, I say that it is cool to be clean. I think that one of the great problems that we have today is that young people seem to think that it is the in thing to get on drugs. It certainly is not. It is soul destroying; it destroys people's mental and physical capacity in every way.

Mr Springborg: Family destroying.

Mr BEANLAND: I take that interjection from my colleague the member for Warwick: it certainly destroys families; it destroys individuals in every way. For example, addicted mothers give birth to drug-addicted babies. Drug addiction is soul destroying in every sense of the word. It is because drug addiction is so soul destroying and has such a major impact on society and that people experience such difficulty in rehabilitating themselves through treatment that the Federal Government is pouring in so much money. Drug addiction is a major issue for society throughout the nation. I notice that the Liberal/National Federal Government is pouring $110m into diversionary programs. I ask the Minister: is the program funded by the Federal Government or is the State putting in some funding for it? If there is Federal and State funding, how is it divvied up?

I say that because it is not just a simple drug court, with the magistrate and the machinery that goes with it. On the one hand is all the treatment, which is where all the costs are going to be incurred. Huge amounts of counselling and work need to be put into various programs. I think members and the public need to be assured that there is funding available for these pilot programs. Is the money that has been allocated for these particular programs State or Federal money? There is a lot of Federal money out there for a range of diversionary programs. I understand that some of it might be spent on these programs, but I would like that to be clarified by the Minister. As I asked in my previous question about trafficking: what offences are going to be covered by this legislation? I do not believe drug trafficking should be included. I am not quite sure from reading this legislation whether trafficking is in or out, although I understand the other sections in relation to the Criminal Code are.

I turn to the issue of sexual offences. I heard the shadow Minister indicate that the Minister intends to move an amendment related to prostitution. I was going to touch on that issue, so I am pleased to hear that there will be an amendment. Unfortunately, quite a number of people in the sex industry are involved in drugs: unfortunately, it quite often comes with the business. We need to have a program within this legislation that includes those people. I take it that is what the amendment will do. We need to include those people within this legislation, because in many instances prostitution is a criminal offence for which people can be brought before the courts and then put onto a diversionary program.

That is fine for people who do something outside the law. However, sole prostitution operations are still legal. The brothel legislation that will come into effect on 1 July will not change the situation. Nevertheless, I am pleased to hear that an amendment has been foreshadowed. It will not do anything for the minors involved in the prostitution industry, because they are covered under different legislation, that is, the juvenile justice laws. That is not included in this particular diversionary program of the drugs court that we are debating in this legislation. Those minors will still be excluded from this type of treatment under this legislation.

Although the cost of these programs is enormous—and we are talking only about the hundreds of millions of dollars that the Federal

Government is putting in; the cost of this pilot program will be several million dollars—the cost to the community not only of the people involved in drug addiction but also of the crimes that they commit is greater. It is fair to say that many of the burglaries and robberies that are committed are committed by people who are involved with drugs. That means an increased cost to the community generally, an increased cost to individuals who have to replace stolen items and an increase in the cost of insurance policies. If there is any violence involved, there is the cost of that as well. There is also the cost of treating these people. In some cases treatment is successful, but in many cases it is not, particularly for those who enter methadone programs. Those people become further addicted.

Mr Springborg: Twenty years; is that successful?

Mr BEANLAND: I do not think 20 years is successful. It may take 12 months to a couple of years to cure people of their drug addiction. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that the cost to the community of drugs is enormous. The community as a whole needs to take some action in that regard.

This legislation does not cover needle exchanges, so I will not speak about that. Although we have not seen them as yet, I presume that some guidelines will be released. I would like some clarification from the Minister that there will be sets of guidelines and that they will be made public. That must occur in order for this whole operation to work. In the courts, which are very public instruments, there are rules for how the various systems operate. For people to have confidence in this program, we need to have rules under which magistrates are going to operate and guidelines on the types of treatment programs to be used. The public need to have confidence in these programs, and to ensure that that occurs those issues need to be made public.

The third issue I raise is that those guidelines be made public so that we have a clear understanding of exactly how the program is going to function. When one reads through the Bill, one finds that, as with most legislation, it does not cover those types of issues. I think it is very important that that be made clear. I say that because I do not want to see another harm minimisation program. "Harm minimisation" should mean that we set a goal of a drug free society, but that is not the result. Harm minimisation simply lessens the number of people who may become infected with HIV through needle exchanges. It does not get people off drugs.

Unfortunately, many of the programs that we have seen to date are harm minimisation programs. They are fine for a short time, but we should be aiming to get people off drugs. To do that, we need to put in place better programs. Those programs are available. Whether the health professionals believe it or not, there are good programs available. I say that because I hear regularly about many health professionals who seem to think it is fine for people to participate in harm minimisation programs, but those programs do not work towards getting addicts off drugs. I think we have to be working vigorously towards that end, otherwise the scheme will fail. After all, it is not there to divert people out of the courts and to make it easy for them. I have already covered that point. I do not believe that there is an easy road. The program is not there for that; it is a move towards the goal of a drug free society. I believe the community at large wants to see that goal achieved.

It is quite clear—and I totally agree with many of the comments of the Prime Minister and others—that many of the programs to date have failed the community. More and more addicts are staying on drugs for longer. Many of the programs should be pursued more vigorously, but there is a lack of funds as more effort is being put into harm minimisation. As I have said, that is fine in the short term, but it should not be a long-term goal. In some people's minds, that is what should be the aim.

I notice that offenders who enter these programs will be required to sign binding contracts. I hope that we are going to see the guidelines in relation to those programs, such as the types of contracts that they are going to be required to sign. As I said earlier, the success or failure of these programs will depend on community confidence. The community lacks confidence in many of our current so-called rehabilitation and treatment programs. I look forward to seeing those guidelines so that the public can measure the success of them and have confidence in the results.

I have referred to the issue of trafficking and the other drug issues that are covered by the Bill. I look forward to the Minister's reply to the matters I have raised. I, and I am sure all other members of the House, look forward to the success of this program. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Every case is different. There is no one-size-fits-all program for any situation. Therefore, it is terribly important to

have a range of programs. This diversionary program fits into that range. It relates particularly to people who come within the criminal justice system. It is an option for those people.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (12.39 p.m.): I am keen to support the Attorney-General's Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill. I have been an advocate for drug courts for some time. In my former employment at the Queensland Council of Social Service, part of my job involved preparing a crime prevention policy and looking at initiatives such as drug courts. It is pleasing to see this initiative coming to fruition. I commend the Attorney-General for his vision and initiative in introducing this Bill.

Honourable members would be aware of the fear and anxiety experienced by a lot of residents who feel threatened by reports of home burglaries, property damage, graffiti and so on. Those types of crimes generate not only a high financial burden for the community but also, as I said earlier, fear. We have to be sensible in these sorts of debates. Law and order auctions serve only to generate fear, a lot of which is unjustified. The real risk of having one's home broken into or becoming a victim of crime in other ways is minimal compared with the perceived risk. It is important to have bipartisan spirit, such as we are witnessing today, in respect of these sorts of issues. The public wants us to be sensible and rational about this issue. The public does not appreciate law and order auctions. It is now the year 2000, and it is important that we move forward in a spirit of bipartisanship and do away with constant law and order auctions.

There is a growing awareness among the public that crime and the drug problem are interrelated. Other speakers have touched on this issue. This represents an important awakening on behalf of the public. If we continue to have law and order auctions and say, "These people need to be locked up" and do not look at the underlying causes, we will not get to the heart of the problem. I am pleased that our Government is determined both to tackle the causes of crime and to be tough on crime. In the future we will continue to deliver on that commitment.

A trial of drug courts in Queensland is essential if we are to achieve both goals. We must apprehend offenders and have good policing and criminal justice system responses to these problems and put people before the courts, but we must also tackle the causes of their offending behaviour. In relation to the drug problem, we have to get to the core of the problem of why people are taking heroin and abusing other drugs and committing crimes. We have to understand and deal with that. It is well documented that putting offenders who have a drug problem—and the majority of people in prison do have a drug problem—behind bars without providing drug rehabilitation, training and workplace-based programs and personal development programs leads to more offending. That is costing the community millions of dollars each year.

At the invitation of the Attorney-General, I had the opportunity to see the new drug court in Parramatta in Sydney in operation. That was a wonderful opportunity to take a first-hand look at what happens. I saw the offenders, their families and the other players in the system interacting. That was an eye-opening experience for me. I found it both inspiring and, at times, entertaining. At times, it seemed like I was on the set of Oprah; there was a lot of rapport and communication. That is the secret to the success of this program. Offenders were talking to the judge and other people in authority. They were able to communicate well with those people. They were talking to the corrective services officers, the police officers and others and were able to communicate some of the problems they were experiencing as well as some of the areas where they were failing with their programs.

Mr Springborg: There were some pretty good yarns spun.

Ms STRUTHERS: There were some good yarns. I might touch on a couple of those shortly.

The preliminary results from that program are very promising. A university team is working with the program and it is being evaluated as it goes along. The sound data from this program will help in the development of our Queensland-based programs. The 200 or so offenders participating in the program are required to keep free of drugs. They front up to the court weekly, have urine tests every few days and are given support to keep a roof over their headS. They are given emotional support and assistance in finding employment. All of that is part of the package.

As other honourable members have said, this is not a soft option; it is very tough. If these people breach any directions of the court, they go immediately back to jail or receive some other sanction. It is tough but fair. Having seen that system in practice, I was very impressed with the balance being struck. I was able to speak directly with the participants, their families, the judge and other people in

the system, such as the health workers and the corrective services staff. All of them told me and the other honourable members who attended the court that day about the amazing results being achieved. As expected, some of the people in the program were cranky about the severity of the punishments.

One young woman spoke out because she had been locked up for 48 hours at the watch-house for doing something she felt did not justify that level of punishment. She said that others did similar things but did not get the same level of punishment. Some feel that this program is being too tough on them. Another young fellow who presented with a positive urine sample could not explain why he had amphetamines or whatever in his urine. I think he used the excuse that there was half a serepax on the cell floor when he was there for a sanction the week before, but that did not convince any of us and there was a bit of chuckling going on at the back of the courtroom. The judge took that breach seriously. This person was working and had his life pretty well together. However, he immediately had to hand over his property and was accompanied to jail by a police officer. I think he was locked up for four days. That meant that he had to spend the rest of the week away from work. He would have to endure the stigma, the loss of income and the other things associated with that sort of penalty. It was great to see that tough but fair approach.

The practice of the court is to facilitate access to the support services but to penalise offending behaviour. One young woman appeared to have a history of family breakdown and related social problems. She was residing in a youth residential facility and attending court weekly. She was on a methadone program and was receiving support to overcome the social and emotional problems underlying her offending behaviour. Upon speaking to her about those issues, it was clear to me that, if we put a young woman such as her into a detention centre without giving her appropriate support, she would end up on the streets as a prostitute and would keep reoffending. She would not get her life together. However, she spoke confidently at the microphone. For the benefit of honourable members, I point out that each of the participants comes up to a microphone and speaks directly to the judge. She was a very confident young woman who was clearly making progress. Most of the participants were facing a 12-month or two-year suspended sentence. They know that, if they put a foot wrong, they will go straight back inside. With that sort of penalty looming, many of them are prepared to take this program seriously. She certainly seemed to be one of them.

I am convinced that locking up people without that sort of support is not the way to go. Certainly, given the sorts of resources provided and the way the departments will be working together in Queensland, we have a great opportunity to do something that is both creative and very effective in dealing with these problems. For the courts to work well in Queensland we will need good cooperation and communication across those departments—Health, Justice and Attorney-General, Corrective Services and the Police Service. All of those departments will need to work well together. That will be a key ingredient for the success of this program. The support services will have to be effective and resourced adequately. That will take a bit of time. These things do not just happen overnight.

It is important that we continue to make sure that, if a judge wishes to refer someone to a residential drug rehabilitation facility, there is a bed in a place close by for that person to go to; otherwise these sorts of programs will not work. That will be a challenge for our Government into the future. It will take time. I hope we have that time. I hope the Opposition gives us that time. To kick us for failures in this program will not be constructive if sufficient time is not devoted to overcoming any teething problems. I trust that we will have cooperation and bipartisanship beyond this Chamber on this issue and continue to make progress in working together on this problem.

I suggest also that we will need to further progress trials of drug rehabilitation methods such as Naltrexone. That is a little controversial. But as other honourable members have said, it is no good having a one-size-fits-all program for everyone. A maintenance based harm minimisation program—for instance, the methadone-based program—might work for some people but will not work for others. From my dealings with people in my area who have drug problems, I know that families are seeing positive results because of Naltrexone. I am guarded about advocating its use, but it certainly needs to go through the proper trials. We need to give priority to making sure that we progress those trials and look at the more widespread introduction of well-run Naltrexone programs.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I know the parents, teachers, police, small business owners and others in my community who are affected by crime and who care about the future of kids will be watching these sorts

of programs with great interest. They will want to see that they are working, and I am very confident that we will see some very positive results in Queensland once these programs have time to establish and make their mark. This Bill is based on sensible policy. It adopts a balanced and holistic approach to this area of crime. It is pleasing to see that at this stage the drug court concept, as I said, has bipartisan support, and I hope that that continues.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (12.50 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill 1999. Although both the CCA and I fully accept the concept espoused in the Bill, I have some questions that I will raise with the Attorney-General during my contribution. I note that other speakers have spoken about the causation and the problems associated with how people originally get into drug addiction. I would just like to refer momentarily to the Lindesmith Centre's report for the school drug education program. It states—

> "Drug use carries with it both personal and interpersonal meaning and an inherent set of values which are dependent upon both the perceived benefits and negative consequences associated with use. Drug use occurs in young people as a result of complex and interrelated factors. These include peer group pressure, advertising, imitation of parents, boredom, the need to experiment and the individual's self image; the expectation that using will be a beneficial experience which enhances socialisation; positive experiences associated with an altered state of consciousness; the excitement of risk taking; the experience of social, economic and cultural change; and the lack of support and guidance."

Until society as a whole starts addressing a lot of those issues, drug addiction will just continue. Sure, drug rehabilitation programs and court diversion will be a positive step towards a lot of that rehabilitation, but until we as a society accept that we are failing and start addressing some of those real concerns, it will continue.

I, possibly more than many others in this House, have seen first-hand and up close the scale of drug abuse and the detriment to life that it brings. It not only destroys the life of the addict, but rips asunder the fabric and the life of the drug user's family. As a serving police officer, I remember an occasion when a five-year-old child of a known drug addict and dealer rang the police station to say that she could not wake up her mummy. The ambulance and the police arrived at the scene and we discovered the child's mother with the needle still in her arm, the loosened strap, the remnants of the deal still in the foil, the burnt spoon, the cold candle and an even colder body beside all of that. It was like a scene from the movie but, no, this is the reality of the life of a user and someone who, through her dependency, thought nothing of the life of her child in her care—her own flesh and blood. She was someone who thought nothing of inflicting this lifestyle on someone else just to support her own cravings.

Yes, she had worked as a single worker prostitute. She had been relocated to this area from another area following her assisting police in a "dob in a dealer" action. Nothing was able to be done with her to rehabilitate her or her circumstances. The only thing that was done was to get her away from the contacts she already had in the other area by relocating her to the area in which we found her. It was too little too late; it was obviously not enough help for her. I had arrested her many times in relation to drug offences and it was not long before she was fully immersed in the drug scene and the culture evident where I was working in Caboolture. It was also not long before she was dealing to support her own habit to numb the single sex worker life that she began to be involved in again.

This was not a scene that was new to me; it was a scene that I came to expect to see from my life in the Queensland Police Service. Due to my tenacious approach to my work, during my career I was transferred to what were then considered in policing circles to be a lot of the rough areas of Brisbane. They included West End, Woolloongabba, Woodridge and Caboolture. In these areas I was also working in and out of plain clothes. However, in none of these places did the needless death through drug addiction change. Police were still, and are still, left to pick up the pieces of the ravaged lives that drug addiction causes. I agree with the Attorney-General's opening remarks in his second-reading speech when he said—

> "The drug scourge has afflicted so many Queenslanders from so many walks of life for so long and to such an extent that it has become almost cliche to mention it."

I can assure the Attorney-General that it is not a cliche to any police officer. The police themselves have had enough as well.

Property crime is spawned by drug addiction and drug-related criminal activity. One of the burgeoning business opportunities in this and other States is in the second-hand dealing and the pawnbroking industries. Unfortunately, we do not seem to be able to stop property crime, because people will still steal, break into houses and take whatever other action is necessary to get money to support their habit. While we cannot control the drugs and while we cannot control the addiction, we will not be able to control the property crime.

However, I still believe that there is a very simple and inexpensive way that we can actually stop property crime, especially in relation to a lot of the electrical items, and that is to put a value on the serial number that is attached to any electrical item from a toaster to a stereo television set. Just as a motor vehicle has a VIN and an engine number and to sell one or to buy one without them is an offence, so should dealing in property without serial numbers. Any piece of property without a serial number should be regarded as stolen or unlawfully obtained. This would seriously cut the number of property offences and reduce the trade in stolen property. If we put a value on it, they would not be able to trade; they would not be able to sell it at a second-hand dealer and they would not be able to trade it with a pawnbroker.

But how serious are our insurance companies and the Government? This is one avenue that this portion of the non-Government side of politics is seriously looking at in terms of drafting a private member's Bill. I believe that federally it really needs only the flick of a pen by the Treasurer for this to become a reality, that is, to put a value on a serial number for any item of property to be dealt with. But how serious are we? This Bill is again only a bandaid measure. Until the money or the ability to make money is taken out of the drug trade, more and more of our teenagers and young adults will succumb to this scourge.

As I said before, the most surprising thing about ringing related family members of deceased drug addicts is that it is a call that they have all, unfortunately, been expecting for a long time. Most times it comes, unfortunately, as a form of relief. I have seen older parents taken from riches to poverty in trying to keep drug-addicted children out of prison or away from a violent death because of money owed to dealers. I have seen drug addicts con, fraud and destroy the fabric of their own families to support their own addiction. I have seen them sell off their own children for sexual gratification to others just to get their next fix. If there is a substandard of human existence, then the pitiful entrapment into the culture of drug addiction has to be it.

I personally have no feelings of pity towards those who know what a life of drug addiction is and yet suck in, cajole and con other people—friends, workmates, relatives, brothers, sisters or family—into such a degrading human experience as drug dependency. These people—the dealers, the pushers and the vultures—who prey on the young and the innocent do not deserve our pity but only condemnation for the way that they ply their trade. There is no remorse or mercy in their hearts and, yet, we as citizens of this country and of this State are being asked to understand their plight and to show them mercy and to show them pity. It is something that they themselves are not showing.

Even now some States have gone to the extent of providing a police free zone, such as shooting galleries, where these wasted lives can inject their illegally obtained drugs in a clean environment and be watched over by caring, medically trained staff. Thus, we as a society are being asked to give tacit consent to illegal drug use and, again, we see bleeding heart blindness putting the thin end of the wedge into our conscious thought to take a step closer to allowing totally free trade in drugs.

Members should take a look around now at the freedom we have to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco and what this has done to our society. With tobacco and alcohol we are trying to put the genie back into the bottle. Our hospitals are filling up with people suffering all kinds of smoking-related illnesses. The morgues are full of people who have died from smoking-related causes. As a police officer, I do not need to digress into the ills of society spawned by alcohol. Now the Socialist Left Governments want to allow shooting galleries. I just say, "Please, this is not a productive step from a thinking Government." I cannot for the life of me consider why some of the churches want to allow human life to degrade itself in such a way, especially in the presence of God. I note with some applause that the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech noted that there is only so much we can do to help people and that they need to take some responsibility for themselves.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr FELDMAN: I continue what I was saying before lunch on the Drugs Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill. I noted with

some applaud that the Minister in his second-reading speech has noted that there is only so much we can do to help people, that they need to take on some responsibility for themselves. I also feel that it is incumbent on Government to provide every assistance for addicts and drug users to become drug free. It is also incumbent, as I stated before, to stop them committing criminal offences against society and home owners in order to support their illegal drug habit. It is good to note that the Minister has also registered that there is no dignity in drug addiction and drug use and that no addict can be considered to be a law-abiding citizen.

It is in this area that I raise my first question: at what price has the Minister progressed the point from only those offences under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 that attract a maximum penalty of 15 years' imprisonment that may be dealt with summarily in the Magistrates Court to include those offences that currently attract 20 years' imprisonment and could only be dealt with in the District Court or Supreme Court? I note that some of those offences include unlawful trafficking of a dangerous drug of the type specified in Schedule 2 section 6(1)(b) where the person supplies a dangerous drug to another, whether or not such a person knows that the drug is a thing specified in Schedule 1; the offence of aggravated supply, which relates to section 1(c) and section 6(1)(b) if the offender is an adult and the person to whom it is supplied is a minor or intellectually handicapped or within an educational or correctional institution or the person to whom the thing is supplied does not know that he or she is being supplied with the drug. They are 20-year offences and the last relates to the aggravated supply to minors or to the intellectually handicapped.

I have received a lot of correspondence in relation to an article that appeared in the Courier-Mail on Wednesday, 7 July 1999. It would be remiss of me if I did not mention this, especially as one constituent from Bribie Island was so affronted that he came to see me at my office. The article relates to a student jailed for trafficking and states—

> "Gaven ... Roshey, 23, of Runcorn, pleaded guilty to four drug charges, including trafficking heroin, possessing heroin and possessing a thing obtained by heroin between August 1997 and May 1998."

The court was told that Roshey sold heroin to an undercover police operative on the campus of Griffith University in Brisbane. When police raided the premises where Roshey was living, they found 10.6 grams of pure heroin, 11.7 grams of 40% pure heroin and some $23,000 in his bedroom.

What affronted Mr Logan from Bribie Island so much was the fact that Justice Des Derrington sentenced Roshey to seven years jail for the drugs charges but recommended parole after only one year. Mr Logan thought that, after supplying heroin in an educational institution, especially a place like Griffith University, Gaven Roshey should have received a far more severe penalty and that his non-parole period should have been far in excess of the one year that was given. I guess we have to look at the whole circumstances surrounding that case, but I feel that it was probably a little lenient in the circumstances, especially when the drugs were being dealt on an education campus.

The Minister indicated that the drug court is not an escape clause. I say to the Minister that we are dealing with cunning and conniving dealers and pushers, as well as addicts. If we do not think they will use the drug court as an escape clause to a more lenient sentence option, we could be kidding ourselves. We have to be very careful about what we provide them with.

I note that the Minister says in his second-reading speech that if they do not cooperate with the program and if they do not successfully complete the program, the matter will revert to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. I spoke at length with the Opposition spokesman, the member for Warwick, in relation to this issue. I know that he will bring some amendments when this Bill is debated in the Committee stage. I will be looking very favourably at those amendments that deal with those 20-year provisions.

The Minister says that if they fail the program—that is, they return positive urine tests or fail to show up for appointments, continue to deal in drugs and get caught by police again or if they commit other crimes or property crime associated with drugs—they will be whipped straight back into the Supreme Court and they will not avoid the harsher penalties. I hope that that is the scenario—that is, if they do get caught doing these things that they are taken back to the Supreme Court and that they do receive the harsher penalties.

I agree with the member for Warwick. I was listening to him when he spoke in this debate. I know that there is provision under the Corrective Services Act to take urine tests, but I feel it should go further than urine tests in that perhaps there should be provision for blood tests, especially with the way drug users

can hide some of the drugs and if the tests are not going to be done on a regular basis.

That is why I am contributing to this debate today. I wonder how many of these criminals facing what was a 20-year imprisonment penalty, knowing that they were going to face a severe lag in prison, will actually be denied acceptance to the program. I personally cannot believe that a drug dealing addict will not attempt to run with this program to stay out of prison. I do not know an addict that will not take the risk of getting caught again or at least have a jail term staved off for an inevitably short period. They certainly will take the gamble on what could only be random drug testing. We know that random drug testing is done over a two or three day period. Some of these drugs do not last that long in the system. These people will still take the gamble.

How numb will the courts be to further imprisonment when we have so many failing the program? How tough will the testing be when we have so many to be tested? If everyone is going to take the option, I wonder how many will be on the program and whether it will be blocked up to a point where it will not be workable. This is not a paying program, like breathalyser testing where law-abiding citizens are caught in a one-off offence and receive a severe cash penalty and pay up. I wonder where all the money will come from for the testing. I hasten to say that the only way to make it work successfully is to have constant and very regular drug testing.

My second question to the Minister also needs an answer. I cannot find anywhere in the legislation where an order can be made by a magistrate to actually force an addict or an offender on the program to submit to a drug test. Clause 24(1)(b) provides that an offender on the program can be forced to report to an authorised Corrective Services officer for drug testing, but I cannot see anywhere in that section where a drug test can be done forcibly. The offender must submit to medical treatment on the program, but medical treatment is certainly different from drug testing, just as breath testing is different from medical treatment. I suggest that the Minister may be relying on the Corrective Services Act for the authorised Corrective Services officer to conduct that test. However, I do not know whether they have the power to take a blood test, a medical procedure under the Act, which, I would suggest, would be required in some circumstances. I believe that this issue needs to be addressed, if only for the safety and the security of the prison officers. This needs to be spelt out a little more satisfactorily in this Bill.

The Minister and I know the bleeding heart story that will be put up by their barristers and QCs about how they have desperately tried to drag themselves out of their addiction and that desperation caused them to fail the program. The harsher penalties will not be there and the courts will not be concerned about the other children these criminals have turned into addicts. They will not be concerned for the other lives lost through their criminal actions. This will be just another soft option taken in the first instance.

These criminals deserve to pay back to society some of what they have taken out of it. I personally do not feel sorry for them. They deserve many of the additional requirements of an order to, in fact, be part of the order to satisfy the community that they are truly repentant for the crimes they have committed and that they do truly wish to rehabilitate. I really wish this program all the success that it should achieve. If only it receives the same amount of success that the Brooklyn treatment court has received, I believe society will be supportive.

We must be realistic, though, and not go soft on the 30% who will return to their drug dealing and using lifestyle after the program. We must not in any circumstances go soft on those who fail the program, especially those who return positive tests, and those who are throwing the efforts of the program back into the face of the society that is trying to reach out and help them. With the answers to the questions I have posed and perhaps an amendment in relation to the ability to take drug tests, the CCAQ will be supporting this Bill.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (2.40 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, before I address the substance of the Bill before us, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of Committees. I wish you well in that new role.

I am pleased to support this Bill and to place on the public record the positive and important role that my colleague the member for Warwick, the shadow Minister for Justice, has played in creating the political and policy climate to enable this progressive measure to be advanced.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I think he is better than the Attorney and the Minister for Justice.

Mr Foley: Are you the "shadow" shadow?

Mr SANTORO: I am no "shadow" shadow. I am just somebody who supports all of my colleagues, particularly when they are of the quality of the honourable member for Warwick and shadow Minister for Justice.

There is no doubt that drug dependency has resulted in the perpetration of many crimes, and the growing level of drug dependency is a critical factor in the growth of many crimes, particularly property-related ones. The Explanatory Notes circulated with this Bill point out that around 60% of all incoming prisoners in Queensland have a drug dependency. This is a very alarming statistic, and I certainly agree with the statement in the notes that it supports anecdotal evidence that many property and other offences are committed to feed drug habits.

The link between drug dependency and criminal activity has also been highlighted by other studies overseas. For example, the British Home Office in 1998 released statistics highlighting that 61% of British offenders had traces of an illegal drug in their urine at the time of their arrest. Just last year the New South Wales Government claimed that 70% of its prisoners were in jail because of the commission of drug-related crimes. The Explanatory Notes also point out that the rate of imprisonment for drug and property offences now exceeds the rate of population increase in this State.

Obviously we need a coordinated and proactive strategy to deal with the criminal and antisocial dimensions of drug addiction and dependency. It is not just a law and order problem but a social problem that goes to the very heart of our society. We cannot simply rely on incarceration as the sole response to dealing with drug addicts who break the law, often repeatedly. Already Queensland has an imprisonment rate which is 40% above the national rate, and the cost of building jails and guarding prisoners is extremely high. Recently I read that the price of constructing, maintaining and operating US prisons and jails increased from $7 billion in 1980 to $38 billion in 1996. A US Department of Justice study released recently suggested that at current incarceration rates, 1 out of every 20 Americans born in 1997 will spend time in prison, including 1 in 11 men.

I would like to read from a very good American article titled "Fighting Crime by Treating Substance Abuse" which was published in 1998. The following observations were made—

> "Drugs and alcohol are implicated in all types of crimes. From 1980 to 1995, the proportion of state prison population who were incarcerated for drug law violations nearly quadrupled, from 6% to 23%. In addition, about half of state inmates were under the influence of drugs or alcohol or both when they committed their crime, no matter what it was ...
>
> As for property crimes, the financial requirements needed to support addiction make many of them almost inevitable. Most drug abusers who enter the criminal justice system have limited resources. Unlike middle or upper middle class users, whose salaries allow them to purchase drugs, these inmates come from the lower socioeconomic strata of society. They typically are unemployed or underemployed and have no savings or investments. And all the common ways for indigent drug abusers to get drugs put them at high risk of arrest. They can sell drugs and then keep some for their own use or use their savings to buy other drugs. They can trade sex for drugs or earn money through prostitution.
>
> They can also commit property crimes to get the money to buy drugs. Of the 23% of state inmates who are incarcerated for property crimes, 80% committed their offense to get money for drugs, were under the influence of drugs at the time, and/or have a history of alcoholism, alcohol abuse, or regular drug use. Property offenders are more likely than other types of offenders to have committed their crime for drug money. Some 27% of them did so, compared with only 11% of violent offenders.
>
> Finally, data on recidivism make an especially compelling case for the connection between substance abuse and crime. The more prior convictions an individual has, the more likely it is that the individual is a drug abuser. In state prisons, 41% of first offenders are regular drug users, compared with 63% of inmates who have two prior convictions and 81% of those who have five or more convictions. Some 39% of regular drug users in state prisons have two or more prior incarcerations, compared with only 21% of state inmates who are not regular drug users. The pattern is the same whether the offences for which the inmates have been incarcerated are property crimes or violent crimes."

I am sure that all members would agree that those sorts of statistics are very compelling and attention-grabbing. The author of this

article concludes by making these comments—

> "We can no longer afford the economic and social costs of current incarceration policies toward substance-abusing offenders. Not only are these policies wreaking economic havoc on state budgets, they will inevitably result in increased crime rates as thousands of untreated inmates are released back into society."

I support this Bill not because it is a "soft" option for drug-addicted criminals. In fact, as the honourable shadow Minister for Justice has said, it is not a soft option at all. My support for this Bill is not motivated by budgetary considerations, although it would be very foolish for this or any other Government not to carefully contemplate the costs of maintaining the current approach to deal with drug-addicted criminals. I support this Bill first and foremost because I believe that drug courts have worked extremely satisfactorily in America, and they promise an effective and sustainable means of tackling drug-related crime.

There are two matters that should never be forgotten during a debate such as this. The first was very appropriately put by my colleague the member for Warwick when he addressed the Queensland Justices Association last year. He pointed out that drug use and abuse is a health issue with a criminal dimension. He also said that we need to look at ways of helping drug addicts rehabilitate themselves back into the mainstream. This is a critical point. The majority of addicts who commit non-violent crimes need help. Their criminal behaviour is motivated not by any inherent antisocial dimension to their personality, but by their sickness, their addiction. I am not making any excuses for these people, and I do not suggest that they should be given any special leniency. A crime is a crime is a crime. Yet it would be myopic, counterproductive and very foolish not to recognise that these people are sick, that they do need help and that if proper help is not given, then the cycle of lawlessness will not be broken.

The second issue is that this initiative is essential for the great majority of Queenslanders who are not drug addicts and who are law abiding. They deserve this Parliament to give mature reflection to this initiative and others targeting drug-related crime, because it is these Queenslanders who are the victims of this criminal activity. Unless we try new approaches to dealing with drug-related crimes, many innocent Queenslanders will continue to be the victims of criminal activity by drug-addicted offenders. So I approach this debate with the clear understanding that drug addiction is a major social problem, that crimes committed by drug addicts are a serious law and order problem and that the current criminal justice response to addicts committing crimes must be improved.

Before I discuss the background to this Bill, I point out that this initiative specifically excludes persons who have committed an offence of a sexual nature or an offence involving violence against another person. These offences are termed "disqualifying" offences. Obviously, if a person commits a crime of violence against another, no matter what the reason, the law must apply. Any suggestion that a drug addict, for example, who rapes somebody should be given any special treatment would be rejected out of hand by any reasonable person. This initiative is limited to those persons who have committed property offences and, as I read the Bill, the only substantial exception to that is a crime of common assault.

I would suggest to the Minister that, should the drug courts turn out to be as successful as I hope and expect it will be, there will never be any expectation that this approach will be expanded to cover drug-addicted prisoners who have committed violent crimes. While the community is keen to ensure that non-violent drug addicts are given structured help to reintegrate them into society, no leeway or leniency should ever be given to violent thugs who harm others. Drug addicted or not, they are a menace to society and must remain under lock and key.

One of the reasons why I am so supportive of this initiative is that it has a tried and true track record in a number of jurisdictions. The first drug treatment courts were established in Florida in 1989. Over the next decade other States followed and there are now well over 275 State and local drug courts in 48 States and a further 155 in the planning stages.

By 1994, the Clinton administration recognised the worth of drug courts and Congress passed legislation that authorised the Federal Department of Justice to make Federal grants for the establishment of drug courts. I point out in passing that one of the criteria for receiving Federal money is that the courts must not accept violent offenders.

The Federal grants are focused on those drug courts that monitor drug offenders

through a supervision and treatment program. These programs involve frequent drug testing, judicial and probation supervision, drug counselling, treatment and educational opportunities as well as sanctions and incentives. This approach is reflected in the provisions of this Bill.

The first Canadian drug treatment court commenced operation in January 1999. New South Wales passed legislation in 1998 establishing drug courts and Western Australia is in the process of developing legislation. Victoria and South Australia are also implementing strategies designed to achieve the same objectives, but they are using a different approach.

On 8 February last year, the New South Wales drug court issued a press release, and I will read into Hansard some of the comments made—

> "For the next 2 years, the Drug Court will operate as a pilot project, accepting a total of 300 drug dependent offenders from greater western Sydney. The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research will monitor the project, and will study the health and social functioning of Drug Court participants.
>
> Drug Court participants will have gaol sentences suspended while they undertake rigorous, individualised programs designed to overcome their drug dependence.
>
> A program may include in-patient treatment, methadone treatment, or the use of Naltrexone, a drug which blocks the craving for heroin. Each participant will be closely supervised by the Probation and Parole Service. During the 12 month period of his or her program, each Drug Court participant may be required to attend literacy and life skills courses, undergo counselling and find employment. Participants must report to the Drug Court regularly (initially, once a week) and submit to frequent urine analysis (initially, twice weekly). The court may sanction participants who do not comply, for example, by a monetary penalty or imprisonment for up to 14 days. It may reward participants who make good progress."

Obviously, there will be failures. Not every drug-addicted prisoner who is admitted to the program will be able to meet the requirements expected.

By 16 April last year, the New South Wales drug court had placed 46 offenders onto a program and later terminated the programs of six of the participants. The six offenders returned to prison.

The point is not so much that there will be failures but that the program has been far more effective than traditional means of ensuring that drug-addicted, non-violent offenders are rehabilitated. In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald of 25 July 1998 headed "Drug Courts: Coming clean" the following appeared—

> "'Drug courts cut crime.' Clinton (referring to the President) said last month in announcing funding for the expansion of the system. 'More importantly, drug courts save lives. They help people rid themselves of addictions that kill.'
>
> An assessment by the American University's Drug Court Clearinghouse last year found that drug court programs cost an average of $US2,500 ($4,000) per participant per year, while incarceration for that same period costs $20,000 to $50,000 a year, on top of the capital cost of $80,000 to build a jail cell.
>
> Brooklyn's is the biggest drug court in the country, operating eight hours a day, five days a week, seeing upwards of 60 offenders each day. About 45% of the 600 'clients' of the court are in residential care, either because of the acute nature of their dependency or because they have nowhere else to go but back to the streets. The rest are treated in drug clinics as outpatients."

Over 90,000 people have been enrolled in the American drug court programs and around 70% have stuck with their rehabilitation programs. Only 15% have returned positive urine samples while in the system and 75% of those who have completed a drug court program have gone on to get employment.

I note that clause 3 of the Bill sets out four objectives of the trial program in Queensland which deserve bipartisan support, namely, to identify drug-dependent persons who are suitable to receive intensive drug rehabilitation; to improve their ability to function as law-abiding citizens; to improve their employability; and to improve their health.

As I said at the outset, drug addiction is a major social problem and urgent action is required to tackle this problem in all of its dimensions. Unfortunately, although this Bill is a positive development, there have been other moves by this Government which have set the fight against drug addiction backwards. In particular, I was shocked and appalled by the

Beattie Government's refusal to renew a $1.8m three-year funding contract for Life Education's internationally acclaimed anti-drug education program.

Surely one of the most effective ways of dealing with drugs is educating our kids. As important as this and other initiatives are in dealing with addicts, it is critical that we get the anti-drugs message to young Queenslanders so that they do not become addicts in the first place. Life Education had planned to expand its program to 170,000 students in 750 schools this year, and I would suggest to this House that this planned activity is absolutely essential, and the failure of this Government to fund this program is a tragedy and undermines the worth of other anti-drug initiatives. Likewise, I was surprised and gravely disappointed with the Health Minister's outright rejection of the coalition's support for the use of retractable syringes for needle exchange programs. Cost was the reason put forward.

This Government has to get real and start targeting the problems of drug abuse in our society. Penny pinching in this area is stupid and shows a remarkable lack of sensitivity to the priorities that the voters want this Government—indeed, any Government—to start developing. If it was good enough to hand out money left, right and centre to Virgin Airlines to set up its headquarters in Brisbane, it is good enough to spend a little bit of money in protecting Queenslanders from the scourge of drugs. My major concern about this initiative is whether it will be properly funded. I understand that the New South Wales initiative has worked well, in part because proper funding has been provided and it is headed by a District Court judge. This Bill will work only if there is sufficient structural and human resource backup to allow it to operate as intended.

In conclusion, I support the establishment of a trial drug court for Queensland and particular thanks should be given to the member for Warwick. Again and again he has raised this issue, including moving a motion early last year seeking to have a drug court trial in Brisbane by the end of 1999. The Attorney-General said at the time he would consider Mr Springborg's initiative. It is pleasing to see that the Government has adopted coalition policy in this instance. It is also pleasing that there is considerable bipartisan support for initiatives of this type because drug-related crime is a major problem in our society, and it is essential that all people of goodwill continue to work together to develop strategies to minimise crime and ensure that addicts can be rehabilitated and again become productive and healthy members of the community.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (2.58 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairman of Committees.

I support the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill. It is a system I have long advocated and I am pleased that it has finally come before the Parliament today. Drug Use Monitoring in Australia—DUMA—preliminary results from Southport Watch-house on the Gold Coast in 1999 showed that around two-thirds of all persons arrested test positive to a drug at the time of arrest. This confirms what the Australian Institute of Criminology has been saying for some time—that most people arrested have illicit drugs in their systems.

Over 60% of all crimes in Queensland are either drug or alcohol related. We need to develop new initiatives to tackle the drug problem, which is one of the base causes of crime in our community. The trial of a drug court aims to rehabilitate criminals and reduce the chance of their becoming repeat offenders. This proposal has received support from a cross-section of organisations, including the Victims of Crime Association and various drug support groups.

A drug court can provide non-serious, first-time offenders with an opportunity to undertake a strict rehabilitation program instead of serving a prison sentence. It is estimated that over 40% of all criminals with a drug problem become repeat offenders. The drug court program gives offenders the opportunity of becoming drug free and reduces the chances and the costs to society of that person becoming a repeat offender.

Offenders are given an opportunity of getting rid of their drug habit. However, if they fail the program, they will then be required to serve out their sentences in jail. Participants in the program will be required to undergo frequent and random drug testing. I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of frequent urinalysis. Participants will be required to present themselves to a drug court for regular monitoring. Only first-time, less serious offenders will be eligible to partake in the drug court program. Serious violent or sexual offenders will not qualify for admission to the program, nor will repeat offenders or persons charged with supplying drugs. It costs something like $40,000 a year to keep a prisoner in jail and about $10,000 a year for rehabilitation. So the cost of drug crimes to the State will be reduced greatly.

Drug courts first commenced operations in the United States. They were then trialled in the United Kingdom and are now also operating successfully in New South Wales. However, in this country so far we are not winning the war against drugs. Harm minimisation of illicit drugs has proved to be an absolute fallacy. Harm minimisation of illicit drugs is simply not working, despite being the preferred policy of some Governments and despite increasing drug use and drug deaths. On the other hand, Sweden and the United States, which have adopted policies of zero tolerance, have achieved substantial decreases in drug use and drug deaths.

Harm minimisation is nonsense. It simply means persuading young people that alcohol and tobacco are more harmful than the use of cannabis, heroin, speed or whatever other drug is currently fashionable. Young people are persuaded that their parents' use of alcohol or tobacco is more harmful than their own use of illicit drugs. Harm minimisation does not seek to stop or reduce the use of illicit drugs; it means assisting their continued use. For instance, the number of drug addicts on the methadone program has increased greatly; so has the number of deaths of heroin users on methadone. Death rates of heroin users on methadone have been found to be higher than the death rate of street heroin users. The provision of free methadone transfers one addiction for another, giving greater access to drugs and those on the methadone program are frequently continuing with their heroin habit at the same time.

Free needle exchanges were introduced to allegedly combat HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C among drug users. However, the incidence of HIV/AIDS remains low, but the incidence of hepatitis C has increased massively among participants of needle exchange programs as intravenous drug users continue to share needles as well as receive free needles. Of course, needles are not exchanged; they are given away. The service does nothing to prevent the use of illegal drugs but encourages drug users to persist in their habit.

The next innovation was the provision of injecting rooms to encourage injecting drug users into regular attendance. No doubt, injecting room users will soon be encouraged by the ready availability of medical care to raise their dosage to levels that they would not risk under other circumstances. It is interesting to note that the International Narcotics Control Board has renewed its attack on Australia's planned trials of heroin safe injecting rooms, warning that participating Governments would be aiding in the commission of crimes and facilitating illicit drug trafficking. The United Nations drug body says that support of the so-called shooting galleries by the New South Wales, Victorian and ACT Governments would be seen as a step in the direction of drug legalisation. The international report says that, by permitting drug injection rooms, a Government could be considered to be in contravention of international drug control treaties by facilitating in, aiding and/or abetting the commission of crimes involving illegal drug possession and use as well as other offences, including drug trafficking.

Last year, I was shocked to see a report that three of Australia's leading Directors of Public Prosecutions from New South Wales, South Australia and ACT were advocating prescribing free heroin to addicts not only on the streets but also to those serving prison terms. Sweden is a country that experimented with a liberalised drug policy. It was a dismal failure and was rejected overwhelmingly by the Swedish public. Swiss heroin trials also failed, to the embarrassment and humiliation of trial leaders in that country. There is no doubt that easier access to drugs leads to more drug-related deaths.

The legislation that we are debating today is very pleasing. I note that Southport is one of the centres at which the new drug court will be trialled. However, I am extremely concerned about the availability of funding for properly accredited centres to take on the many offenders who will be referred by the courts. For the drug court to be successful, detoxification facilities will need to be available. At the present time, facilities on the Gold Coast are quite inadequate to deal with the voluntary drug counselling treatment and rehabilitation services that are required.

There are four major agencies on the Gold Coast that operate in this field. The Gold Coast Drug Council's Mirikai at West Burleigh Road, Burleigh Heads is the oldest of these agencies. It is operated by a handful of dedicated staff and supported by dozens of highly qualified volunteers who provide most of their professional and counselling services as their personal contribution to this very important community service. Mirikai holds national accreditation for the supply of residential and outreach—substance free—programs for people who want to kick the drug habit, who want to turn around their lives from drug dependency and its attendant health, social and ultimately criminal problems. It is the only centre available for drug rehabilitation and detoxification for users under the age of 18 years. It is also the only centre to offer assistance to those with the dual diagnosis of

physical problems associated with drug abuse as well as serious mental problems. Other agencies regard dual diagnosis as all too hard and walk away. Mirikai has conducted programs for community corrections clients and is very familiar with persons who have been charged with criminal offences. It has an 80% success rate but, with only 30 beds available, there is a permanent waiting list and every day applicants are turned away.

The other three agencies are Goldbridge, the Salvation Army and the Gold Coast Aids Association and Injectors Newsline—GAAIN. Goldbridge offers residential programs at Southport and the Salvation Army operates Fairhaven at Parklands and has taken over the Gold Coast Hospital's detoxification beds on behalf of Queensland Health. GAAIN runs a needle exchange and other programs at Nobby Beach. I have frequently expressed my opposition to needle exchange programs, whether they are run by Queensland Health or non-Government agencies like GAAIN. The residents of Nobby Beach, supported by Neighbourhood Watch and other community groups, are desperately anxious for this facility to be moved out of their quiet suburban area.

Mirikai has devised an early intervention program that could be operated from Southport Courthouse that is aimed at identifying and referring young drug addicts to counselling and rehabilitation as a condition of bail. It would target young people at the beginning of their drug addiction and aim at stopping that addiction in its tracks. I have been a hardworking patron of Mirikai for a number of years, and I have expended considerable effort into attracting funds to that establishment from a succession of State Governments. Mirikai has the expertise, ability and track record to provide valuable services to the proposed drug court at Southport. I hope that its facilities will be included in the rehabilitation options as they will apply to Southport Magistrates Court.

Mirikai was the first centre in south-east Queensland to commence these programs, and often it is disappointing to have to struggle for funding in order to be able to continue this valuable work. On 2 February, I wrote to the Attorney-General seeking advice as to how the new drug court initiative will work; an outline of the program, including additional beds for in-patient placements; what operating establishments have been consulted and will be involved in the program; when it will commence; and how funding will be allocated. On 8 February, my letter was acknowledged, but I have not yet received a more detailed response. Perhaps the Minister might respond to that letter in his reply.

I have been involved with drug rehabilitation services for a very long time and I am aware that this is a whole-of-community issue. I will be taking a keen interest in the drug court initiative. I support the Bill before the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.09 p.m.): I recently had the opportunity to go to Sydney to see first-hand the drug courts operating. I must say that I was most impressed. I am very pleased that I took that opportunity. We took the opportunity to speak to the judge who was in charge of the court in Parramatta. We were also given the opportunity to talk to the clients of the court before the court proceedings started. I was fortunate to know a couple of people there who had worked in the building industry here in Queensland. As the court proceedings commenced, I was able to spend a bit of time talking to them while we watched the court operate.

What impressed me about the court and the way in which it operated was the judge. She knew every offender who came before her. I know she would have had a file, but I very rarely saw her look at any files. She knew the persons who were appearing before her from previous appearances. In the first stage, they appear before the court on a weekly basis. Then they graduate into the second phase. Then there is a third phase and then they graduate back into the community, hopefully never to take drugs again.

The judge knew the people who were appearing before her. She had a no-nonsense approach. I like no-nonsense people. She was pretty straightforward. If people tested positive for drugs the week before they appeared in court, they would cop a penalty. I think about four people were jailed in the period I was there, which was two or three days. I could see how disappointed those people were in themselves when they were taken to their cell and how disappointed the people in that court were that they had fallen off the log. It is not easy.

I knew a bloke there who was a tiler. He told me he had been using drugs for 20 years. He believed he was very fortunate to have got himself onto this program. He said that he had been clean for about four months and that he would never go back to drugs. The reason he put down to his being clean was that people cared. He had a case manager who played a very important part in the process. The case manager was available to him 24 hours a day,

seven days a week. Obviously case managers become very close to the clients that they handle. Whenever he came under stress or got the urge to resume using, he would ring his case manager and she was always there.

He is now back working in the building industry and he employs five people, which I think is marvellous. He has become an employer again. He was convinced that he was not going back onto drugs, and he was looking forward to graduating in about six weeks' time. He told me that even after he had graduated he would be doing everything he possibly could to support the court. He would not be going back to court for drug offences. He said that employment was very important to drug users. To stay clean, people need to work. They need to hear a jingle in their pocket. They need some friends who care about them. But the big thing is employment. He said that he would be doing his bit to employ people who needed to be employed as they go through the program.

The court had been operating only for a fairly short period, and I found that its approach is not one of "come one, come all". People can put up their hand to enter the program but, because of the enormous number of people before our courts with drug problems, a computer selects the clients or the drug users who are going to be dealt with by the court. I found a random selection by a computer to be fairly harsh. If a person was not selected, he or she would go to jail and be given no help.

I am pleased to see that the Minister is looking at setting up centres in three different locations—Beenleigh, Southport and Ipswich. That will be very good for Queensland because it will give more people the opportunity to be selected and to enter the program. I think this program will play a very important role in beating what has become a part of our society these days, that is, a drug problem.

There is an enormous amount of pressure placed on people today to find employment and to succeed. As we heard today, Queensland has the highest participation rate of any State in the nation with regard to employment, and we still have 7% to 8% unemployed. There is a lot of competition out there for jobs, and that puts people under pressure. When people do not have jobs, they might take a shortcut to relieve some stress. There is a lot more stress and pressure on people today than there ever was.

The New South Wales court is for adults, and at this stage it has not set up a court for juveniles. The chief magistrate for juveniles in New South Wales, Stephen Scarlett, wrote to me as a result of a request for information. He had been to America to see how the juvenile courts in America operate. I urge the Minister to look seriously at juvenile courts being set up in conjunction with adult courts. It would be great to get these kids off drugs before they become serious users so they do not have to spend 20 years of their life on drugs, like the bloke I knew who was a tiler. His life was a misery for years and so was his family's. In the end he lost his family.

There was also a painter there whom I knew. He said that he had fallen off the log a few times. He is a bit younger. He had started using again. He had been in Stage 3 but was back before the court in Stage 1. He told me that he only had a couple of lives left and that if he took drugs again he would go to jail and he did not want that to happen.

Anybody who thinks jail is a pleasant place ought to talk to the people who have been there. When someone on drugs goes to prison, they are at everybody's mercy. It is said that people will do anything to get drugs. A lot of things happen in prison that society does not want to know about. If we can stop that happening to these people and get them back their lives, that will go a long way towards assisting people so that they do not need to go out and take what is not theirs. Drug users need to have a fairly steady stream of money. They cannot keep a job because of their habit, so they steal.

I urge the Minister to provide an appropriate level of funding. The program aims to reduce the level of drug dependency in the community, the level of criminal activity and the health risks to the community associated with drug dependency and the pressure on the resources of the courts and the prison system.

The case managers are very important in this process. Although I do not have details of how many clients a case manager would have, I do know that the case managers are very close to these people. They are dependent on their case managers, who are very compassionate. I did not see too many young case managers, and most of them were females. I think only three of the 18 case managers were males. They were all aged 30 or over. The selection process for the case managers is very important. Although I do not think age should be stipulated in the selection criteria, the case managers need to be experienced people who have lived life a bit and who would, therefore, have some compassion for these people and an

understanding of what they are going through. The case managers are there to support these people. If this program is to be successful, it comes down not only to the judge and the system but also to the case managers.

In relation to how these people are selected for the program, I note that in New South Wales they are selected using computer records. I am not sure how they will be selected in Queensland. General eligibility for entry into the program will be restricted to offenders who are adults—as I said, I think we also need to have juniors in this program—and those who are dependent on dangerous drugs. The program does not include someone who has an alcohol problem or someone who has an occasional smoke. The program addresses those people with long-term drug addictions, such as the tiler and the painter I mentioned earlier who had had addictions for up to 20 years. There were some young people in the program, but a lot of them were older and had had addictions for a long time.

Eligibility for entry into the program is open to those charged with offences in the Magistrates Court jurisdiction that are not of a sexual nature and which do not involve physical violence against any person. We probably should have a closer look at the criterion in respect of physical violence. For example, if someone picked up on drug charges becomes violent at the time of arrest, the issue of whether they were under the influence of drugs at the time should be taken into account. They should not necessarily be excluded because they became violent. Eligibility is open to people only if they plead guilty. They have to want to go on the program and be prepared to cop all of the charges. That will save an enormous amount of court time. It will also mean that they can enter into a drug rehabilitation program much more quickly. They also have to be facing a sentence of imprisonment and be willing to participate in the program.

The number of people with drug addictions is a problem. If people were not facing a court sentence but they wanted help to cure a drug addiction, it would be a shame if they were turned away. Once the program is up and running in Queensland, it should be monitored very carefully and there should be sufficient case managers to handle the number of people coming before the courts. We should try not to turn away anybody who wants help to cure a drug addiction. The money that the community will spend on this program will be repaid 100 times over.

There are a lot of older constituents in my electorate who lock themselves in their houses as soon as it becomes dark. They have no life at all, because they are concerned about being robbed. They do not unlock their doors and windows until the morning. That is a shame. In the suburbs that I represent we are trying to restore a village atmosphere to the community such that people know and care about their neighbours. For example, if they do not see a neighbour for a couple of days, they should find out what the problem is. It is a shame that people feel they have to lock themselves away. Older people in particular should have the opportunity to live their lives in relative safety and comfort.

We have to turn the drug epidemic around and stop people using drugs. The policing of those people selling drugs in the community and bringing drugs into this country is an entirely different matter. It is more a Federal issue than a State one. However, the pushers are everybody's concern. If we take away their clients, drugs will cease to be a major problem.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (3.25 p.m.): At the outset, I make the point that I support the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Bill and will be voting for it. Any action taken to combat the drug problem is positive. Any action we can take to try to rectify the problems that we have in our society because of drugs is good. I will be supporting the Bill, but I wish to put on the record some of my concerns and those raised with me by my constituents.

Many honourable members have said that this is not a soft option. That is not the message being sent to me. I do not know whether that is due to a lack of public awareness of the Bill or a lack of knowledge of the issues behind it. When people have come to my office to raise concerns about the problem of drugs and when I have mentioned that this Bill proposes the establishment of drug courts, they have said, "Isn't that going soft?" I have found it hard to argue that it is not, especially given my personal experiences in this area.

For example, I finished school in 1990. One of the high schools that I attended was the Kingston State High School in the southern suburbs of Brisbane. In 1989, when I was at that school, it was a particularly rough school and there was a drug problem amongst its students. Being the son of a police officer who worked in the local area, I was very aware of the high usage of drugs among that population.

Many people in my electorate—and I suppose this is where different ideological points of view clash—believe that it comes down to personal choice as to whether or not we will take drugs, similar to the way in which we decide whether or not to consume alcohol or make other choices. If one chooses to be a habitual drug user, many people in my electorate and I believe that the courts are so incredibly soft—and not just in relation to drug offences—that the punishment one receives will not befit the crime. Many points can be used to illustrate how weak and insipid the judiciary has been in respect of these cases. Recently, in New South Wales a man was charged with manslaughter. He shot a woman in a hospital bed six times. He received only three years' imprisonment.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nelson, adjourned.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 1 December 1999 (see p. 5784).

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (3.30 p.m.), continuing: As honourable members will recall, I was two-thirds of the way through my speech on 1 December 1999. I managed to get through three very important points in that speech. I will continue with the fourth issue, which is the forfeiture of animals or property.

The Bill proposes the alteration of provisions in the current 1925 Act which allow the Minister to order the forfeiture to the Crown of animals or things which have been seized under the Act. The effect of this alteration would be that, unless the animal is voluntarily forfeited or is given back to the owner by the RSPCA before any court case, then the animal must be held until the court case is heard and then forfeited only if the court so directs following a conviction. In practice, this alteration will impact adversely on the RSPCA. The forfeiture provision is used only when the RSPCA has seized animals that have been abandoned by their owners. Because the owners cannot be located, the RSPCA incurs the costs of caring for the animals. The forfeiture provision allows the RSPCA to legally make alternative arrangements for the care of the animals and so avoid incurring excessive costs.

The Government is aware that the current Animals Protection Act 1925 has major deficiencies and is outdated. There has been widespread consultation with key animal user groups, animal welfare organisations and other Government departments about the best way to address these deficiencies. It has been agreed that amending the current Act is not a viable option and that a completely new and comprehensive piece of legislation is required. Cabinet has endorsed the policy principles to underpin this new legislation. The Government's proposed new legislation will address all of the deficiencies of the current Act, whereas this Bill addresses only a few of the deficiencies in the current Act. I would urge all honourable members on both sides of the House not to support the Bill.

A number of negative consequences will flow should this Bill be passed. First, circumstances will arise in which animals will experience acute pain and suffering and will die. This will result from delays in response to urgent incidents because of the Bill's proposal that RSPCA officers require a warrant to enter a place in all circumstances, including where there is an immediate risk of injury or death or a need to alleviate suffering. Second, the RSPCA might withdraw its inspectorial role in enforcing animal welfare organisation. That will leave no immediate available specialised and experienced inspectors to enforce this legislation. This could result from the PMB proposal that RSPCA inspectors require a warrant to enter places in all circumstances, except a public place or with the consent of the occupiers. The RSPCA could argue that this would make it impossible for it to carry out its role of protecting animals and preventing cruelty.

Third, there would probably be inequity in the standards of training and competency between RSPCA inspectors and the Department of Primary Industries inspectors. This would result from the Bill's proposal to allow the RSPCA to determine its own standards of qualification for inspectors. The Government Bill proposes that all inspectors must attain standards set by the department. Fourth, there will be no mechanism to deal quickly and humanely with abandoned animals which have been seized under the Act. This will occur under the Bill's proposal to remove the Minister's authority to forfeit such animals to the Crown. The provision in the current Act which the Bill proposes to delete allows the RSPCA in a timely way to rehome healthy animals which have been abandoned.

Let me say that the Government's new Bill will remedy defects in the current Act. This Bill will not do so and, in fact, may make the situation worse. I urge honourable members to oppose this Bill.

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—CCAQ) (3.34 p.m.): In March this year we introduced the Animals Protection Amendment Bill to amend the Animals Protection Act of 1925. The RSPCA plays an integral role in the community and is a leading authority on animal welfare. However, there have been cases reported in the past where the conduct of RSPCA inspectors has been under question.

The amendments proposed in this Bill are designed to make RSPCA inspectors more accountable in their area of service. The primary objective of the Bill is to regulate the qualifications and powers of the RSPCA inspectors. Firstly, a new provision will require RSPCA inspectors to have appropriate qualifications or animal husbandry experience. It has been found that some RSPCA inspectors have acted upon complaints of alleged animal mistreatment without having adequate industry or animal husbandry knowledge.

Let me refer members of the House back to the case of a Mr and Mrs Schloss of the South Burnett. On Wednesday, 26 February 1997, an RSPCA inspector visited the 150-cow dairy farm on the basis of an alleged complaint. Mr and Mrs Schloss asked the inspector for information and advice regarding the alleged complaint, offering their cooperation to correct any problems. The inspector gave the family no information except to inform them that they were to leave things as they were. The family made contact with the RSPCA twice during that week for advice only to be given no information about the alleged complaint.

On the Tuesday of the following week, six days after the initial visit, RSPCA officers made an unannounced raid on the property and were accompanied by a television news crew. The inspectors moved onto the property and even into the family home, seizing 18 dairy heifers, four chickens, two chihuahua breeding bitches, six chihuahua pups and five cats. The family still was not informed by the RSPCA inspectors of the offences they had supposedly committed before the animals were removed and taken to the RSPCA headquarters.

The Schloss family notified the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation of the raid at their property. For three weeks the Schloss family's legal advisers and the QDO attempted to contact the RSPCA to ascertain the allegations against the family so as to resolve the case as speedily as possible. The QDO also arranged for representatives of the Department of Primary Industries, fellow dairy farmers and an experienced dairy veterinarian to check the practices used on the Schloss farm and the condition and welfare of their animals. Without fail, all commented that animal welfare was not a problem on the farm and that the family was putting standard industry and Government advice into practice. The Schloss farm was just four years old and, as per many developing farms, the facilities were not sophisticated but adequate based on accepted husbandry practice.

On 27 March, 29 days after the initial visit, the family solicitor received a letter from the RSPCA solicitor stating that the animals were removed from the property as a result of the disgraceful state in which the animals were kept. That is quite ironic when one considers this to be in direct contradiction to the advice that the family had received from qualified and experienced persons in animal husbandry. Had there been a perception, no matter how misplaced it was, that the animals were being inadequately cared for, one must ask why the RSPCA inspectors left them there for six days before acting to remove them. It is somewhat obvious that the RSPCA inspectors in this incident had little or no knowledge of animal husbandry practices or industry standards and it is clearly evident that, had these inspectors had the appropriate qualifications, the matter would never have proceeded to the confiscation of animals or the 10-month ordeal that followed.

It is envisaged that, by ensuring RSPCA inspectors hold relevant qualifications and experience, innocent people such as the Schloss family would not have their businesses and reputations jeopardised by incompetent claims, especially when one considers that in this case no conviction was ever recorded against that particular family. Secondly, the Bill seeks to address the situation of forced entry or raids by RSPCA inspectors. The new provisions proposed for the RSPCA inspectors are comparable to those contained in other Queensland legislation applying to inspectors/officers, such as the Retirement Villages Act 1999 for retirement village inspectors.

To elaborate, RSPCA inspectors may only enter and inspect a premises if the occupier consents to the entry or if the entry is authorised by a warrant. Alternatively, if the premises is a public place, entry is authorised if made within a time that the premises is open to the general public. In extraordinary or urgent circumstances, special warrants can be obtained via phone, fax, radio or other alternative methods of communication. When

one looks at the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, one sees that in most cases police officers cannot enter a premises without a warrant and can do so only in extremely urgent cases such as a suspicion of drugs, or children are under threat. In these extreme circumstances, police must inform occupiers of the reasons for the entry. Police officers cannot simply enter a premises, go about their business and then leave. It does not seem justifiable for RSPCA officers to have higher powers than the police, as currently seems to be the case. The amendments for the RSPCA inspectors are reasonable and relevant to protect the rights and liberties of individuals.

The Animals Protection Act 1925 was described in its introduction as being an Act for the more effective prevention of cruelty to animals. Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation president, Mr Pat Rowley, has commented that the powers given to RSPCA officers under the Act are very wide. The amendments proposed in this Bill are considered appropriate to regulate the powers of RSPCA inspectors in line with that of other Queensland legislation relating to inspectors and officers.

This Bill does not seek to allow cruelty to animals. It does not seek to allow mistreatment of animals in any form. What it does seek to do is ensure that animal owners, be they primary producers or pet owners, are not subjected to persecution by inadequately qualified or over-empowered inspectors, particularly in the case of primary producers going about their business in a professional manner and observing husbandry standards appropriate to their industry. It is vitally important that their livelihood is not jeopardised by overzealous and under-qualified inspectors with inadequate practical experience. I am pleased to support the Bill. I urge all members to do the same.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.42 p.m.): In rising to speak on the Animals Protection Amendment Bill, there are a couple of issues that I want to raise initially. This Bill has been around for some time. I think something like four Labor Ministers were involved in looking at this issue during the Goss Government's era. They spent well over $1m on drawing up legislation, yet we did not see anything actually happen. That is disappointing. During our two and a half years in Government, we looked at it very closely.

Mr Palaszczuk: Nothing happened.

Mr ROWELL: You had six years and four Ministers, and you did nothing!

Mr Palaszczuk: You looked in the mirror.

Mr ROWELL: We looked at it, and now you are looking at what we looked at.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Hinchinbrook will speak through the Chair.

Mr ROWELL: It is important that I acknowledge what the Minister has had to say. In 18 months he has done absolutely nothing. It is only now that this private member's Bill has been brought on for debate that he is raising his concerns. In the time that I have been the member for Hinchinbrook, I have become well aware of the good work that the RSPCA does. When I was the responsible Minister, I went out and looked at their facilities. They do quite a lot of work. There is little question about that. The RSPCA is an organisation that is run by and large by volunteers who work very hard. The member for Logan might laugh at their facilities, but—

Mr Mickel: I'm laughing at you.

Mr ROWELL: I know you think it is quite funny. You have no respect whatsoever——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves)**:** Order! The member for Logan will cease interjecting from his incorrect place. This is the second time that I have had to mention to the member for Hinchinbrook that he should speak through the Chair.

Mr ROWELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is important that I raise the concerns that the Opposition has in regard to some aspects of the Bill. We are not totally opposed to some of the proposals in the Bill. I will go through some of those issues shortly. Many people in Queensland purchase properties that might be called small acreages. They then go out and buy a few animals, because they have children and children take a great liking to animals such as horses. As the children grow up, the interest that they had in those animals seems to wane to some degree, and, unfortunately, those animals do not get the level of attention that they justly deserve. It is of some concern that at times such animals are very poorly looked after. Small blocks do not have sufficient feed on them to maintain animals. As a consequence, people have to purchase feed and, as time progresses and the children go to school and there are bigger demands on the family budget, they cannot afford to buy that feed. What happens in a lot of cases—I am not saying in every case—is that the animal suffers quite severely, be it a horse, a dog, a cat, or whatever.

The issues being raised in this debate are quite important. My former secretary, Helen Fuller—who served something like 24 years as a secretary to a member of Parliament—spent a lot of time at animal refuges. In fact, every Sunday she was at an animal refuge assisting animals that had been dispensed with or poorly treated and required some assistance. I want to acknowledge the work that she did. Her effort was tireless. She put in a lot of work. If it were not for people such as Helen, those poorly treated animals would not have received the attention that they deserved. Animals that have been poorly treated may require immunisation and special diets to overcome a range of problems. I acknowledge the work done by Helen—and her husband, who helped by mowing lawns—over many years in looking after animals that were in sad need of special attention.

I turn to the Bill itself. As I understand it, the Bill came about as a result of the overzealous nature of a person within the RSPCA. It is disappointing that there are people who go beyond what is required in order to prove a point. Even in an organisation that has done so much good work, things can come undone. That is the case in this instance. The Bill was introduced by the member for Lockyer, Peter Prenzler, in response to a case in 1997 in which the RSPCA and the media raided the Schloss family dairy farm in the South Burnett and some animals were seized. A member of the family pleaded guilty to one charge of cruelty but no conviction was recorded. With the backing of the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation, the family secured an out of court settlement with the RSPCA. The incident left them on the brink of bankruptcy, and I think that is very disappointing.

There has been considerable concern within the livestock industries, and particularly the dairy industry, with respect to the RSPCA's actions in this case. The Animals Protection Act 1925 awards RSPCA inspectors significant powers to enter property and seize animals. These powers are greater than those supplied to police in most circumstances. On this basis, the Act is out of step with fundamental legislative principles as provided for in the Legislative Standards Act 1992. The member for Lockyer's Bill is aimed at amending the Act to make RSPCA inspectors more accountable by imposing a range of requirements upon them, including that they must carry and show authorised identification, that they must be suitably qualified and that they must hold a warrant to enter property.

When the former coalition Government took office, we inherited a review of the Animals Protection Act 1925 that had been going on for five years of the Goss Government's term. There had been 43 drafts of the Bill completed at a cost of over $1m, but it was still no closer to fruition. We threw out Labor's mess and developed a new Bill based on coalition policy. By the time we left office, two and a half years later, we had developed the detailed policy underpinning the Bill and the drafting instructions for it. Our policy had the support of animal industries and welfare organisations.

In the 18 months since the Beattie Government took office, the new Bill has still not appeared, despite being regularly announced every few months by the Minister. So what I am saying is not wrong. It is important that the Minister deal with this matter. He has had the opportunity. He has had the benefit of a lot of background information that was supplied prior to Labor coming to Government. I believe it is important that we proceed to implement many important animal protection measures. The Minister has indicated that he is not happy with this Bill. There are some warts and bumps on it, but I believe it has been brought forward in the best spirit of animal protection, and that is the important feature. As I have said, Dr Prenzler's Bill is far from perfect, but it attempts to address an issue which the Minister has acknowledged will be addressed in the Government's proposed animal welfare Bill.

The Bill raises a number of issues, which I will now proceed to outline and put forward some arguments for and against. The first is the qualifications of RSPCA inspectors. There are currently no formal qualifications regarding animal and/or their welfare, etc., required of an RSPCA inspector. The Schloss case exposed the lack of experience of inspectors and even RSPCA vets. The Bill proposes that RSPCA inspectors must hold relevant qualifications and that current inspectors have two years in which to obtain them. We support the requirement that RSPCA inspectors undergo training and hold appropriate qualifications, and our policy contained provision for that. However, this Bill is deficient in that it does not set out what are deemed to be relevant qualifications and, by virtue of that fact, leaves it to the RSPCA to continue to set its own standards of qualification.

The Bill requires inspectors to carry identity cards issued by the RSPCA. The Minister claims that the Government's legislation will require cards, but they will be

authorised by the chief executive of the DPI, and I believe that sounds quite reasonable.

As to warrants, this Bill requires RSPCA inspectors to obtain a warrant before entering private property. Current arrangements are in conflict with fundamental legislative standards under the Legislative Standards Act 1992. In fact, RSPCA inspectors have greater entry powers than do the police. The Bill attempts to provide for warrants to be issued urgently—for example, by a magistrate over the phone—but there would still be no instance in which inspectors could enter a property without a warrant, even in an emergency, the only exception being if an owner gives consent or if it is a public place. We support the restriction of the RSPCA's powers of entry so as not to infringe on an individual's rights and in accordance with the Legislative Standards Act 1992. However, there should still be provision for inspectors to enter property in an emergency situation, for example, where a cockfight is in progress. Removing this provision would likely prompt a strong reaction from the RSPCA and the community.

As to the Minister's powers of forfeiture, this legislation also proposes to scrap the existing provision under the Animals Protection Act which provides the Minister for Primary Industries with the power to order the forfeiture of any animal or any thing, regardless of whether a person is convicted or not. No explanation is given for this proposal, so it is hard to determine the reasoning for it. To my knowledge this is not a power that has been abused, and its removal would need very cautious consideration.

In summary, this legislation is motivated by the best intentions, but in some cases it goes too far and in other cases it does not go far enough to address certain issues and problems. However, given that the Government's Bill still has not appeared, this Bill will be supported at the second-reading stage on the basis that amendments will be moved to it. We certainly hold concerns over some aspects of this Bill, but by and large I believe it will prompt the Minister for Primary Industries to examine the legislation that he has in hand. He certainly has given indications that that legislation should be available to be presented to the Parliament. It has not happened to this point. I do not know why he is procrastinating, but it is quite evident that this Government has followed on from a lot of the work that we did during our period in Government. I do not know whether the Bill will mirror much of what we did. However, the important point is that, if there are matters to be resolved in terms of animal protection, we should be addressing those issues rather than waiting for events to occur which trigger the necessity for legislation to be enacted.

There is little question that animal protection is a serious issue. The abuse of animals is not a desirable situation in our modern society. There are mechanisms we can put in place to protect animals, whether they are kept in commercial areas, in private areas or on small blocks around the countryside. Some people do not think enough about the animal involved and are doing an injustice to it. They should give more consideration to their actions. In many cases, when people acquire an animal as a pet, they are not fully aware of all that is required to ensure that the best health and nutrition is afforded to it. As a result, for a range of reasons, an animal is abused. I believe that people should be made aware of their responsibility to animals.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (4 p.m.): I want to make a few comments with regard to the Animals Protection Amendment Bill. As I see it, this private member's Bill is a piecemeal approach to addressing acknowledged concerns, of which we are all aware, regarding the lack of accountability provisions for RSPCA inspectors in the existing legislation. The approach of the Bill is inadequate for dealing with these concerns and is inconsistent with the Government's intention to completely replace the grossly antiquated and deficient 1925 legislation.

This Bill is generally adversarial in the manner in which it confronts the RSPCA. The Government could be, quite rightly, publicly criticised if it supported the approach outlined by this Bill. As the member for Hinchinbrook quite correctly said in his contribution, the Bill appears to have been prompted by discontent within the dairy industry with regard to the RSPCA's actions in pursuing a cruelty case against Wondai dairy farmers Ken and Ruth Schloss. Mr Schloss pleaded guilty to one charge of cruelty involving dairy calves. However, no conviction was recorded.

This Bill proposes to alter the provisions in the current Act which allow the Minister to order the forfeiture to the Crown of animals or things which have been seized under the Act. The effect of this alteration would be that, unless the animal is voluntarily forfeited or is returned to the owner by the RSPCA before any court case is heard, the animal must be held until the case is heard and then forfeited only if, following a conviction, the court so directs.

In practice, this alteration will impact adversely on the RSPCA. The forfeiture provision is used only when the RSPCA has seized animals that have been abandoned by their owners. Because the owners cannot be located, the RSPCA incurs the costs of caring for the animals. The forfeiture provision allows the RSPCA to legally make alternative arrangements for the care of the animals and so avoid incurring excessive costs. I believe that is a commonsense way of approaching the matter.

I am aware that other members on this side of the House wish to comment on this legislation. However, as I see it, not much thought has been given to the preparation of the Bill. The provisions of the Act will have wide-ranging impacts and cannot, and should not, be supported.

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—CCAQ) (4.02 p.m.): The Animals Protection Amendment Bill is a Bill that restores some balance to the animal welfare system so that instances of animal cruelty are prevented whilst, at the same time, citizens' rights are protected and respected. Some incorrect arguments have been raised since this Bill was introduced. For the record, I point out that this Bill is not a Bill directed to making life harder for RSPCA officers or for condoning cruelty to animals; it is a Bill which will make a positive contribution to the way in which RSPCA searches are conducted. It is also directed to the level of qualifications required of RSPCA officers.

The RSPCA does a wonderful job in our society in protecting animals against abuse or neglect. We record our appreciation of the services that the RSPCA provides. However, there are situations, which are avoidable, where RSPCA officers have overstepped the mark and, in so doing, have created considerable and unnecessary inconvenience which have resulted in high costs for rural businesses. In rural areas, especially, the cost of RSPCA interruption is high and there are many instances where very damaging and totally unnecessary actions taken by the RSPCA have occurred.

When considering the RSPCA, many people think of domestic pets, people living in the cities with 50 dogs in their homes, or neglect or ill-treatment of the family pet. In this type of situation, it is not difficult to determine what is adequate care and what is neglect or abuse of an animal. In a rural sense, however, the difficulty in making such determinations is increased. A person with little animal husbandry knowledge, primary industry knowledge or practical experience would have difficulty in determining what is cruelty to an animal, what is recognised farming practice, or what is the acceptable industry standard. Ensuring that RSPCA officers are qualified is an important and positive contribution to the protection of animals in Queensland.

Different examples have been mentioned throughout this debate to highlight the unacceptable use of power by RSPCA officers. Mr and Mrs Schloss, whose names have been previously mentioned, were observing industry standards, but RSPCA officers raided the premises and confiscated animals under allegations of cruelty. The Schloss family endured a legal battle, expended thousands and thousands of dollars in costs, and no conviction was recorded. Approximately 10 months later, the animals were returned. The family was not only caring for its animals according to accepted industry guidelines, but it had had professional advice from animal husbandry experts.

It is apparent that the RSPCA officers did not have the practical knowledge required to determine what constituted cruelty to animals in that situation. The situation was cleared up and the animals were returned, but I am sure that that did not make the Schloss family feel any better. That process would have had the same effect on other families who suffered this same type of unfair treatment.

In Australia, the level of training given to RSPCA officers, the level of their qualifications and their necessary experience are matters which are left to administrative arrangements. For instance, in Victoria all departmental animal welfare inspectors are either veterinarians or stock inspectors. Stock inspectors are required to have some form of diploma in agriculture. It is assured that through the job selection process RSPCA officers also have similar qualifications.

The Australian Capital Territory has some tertiary qualified inspectors but also has many who function after completing only an investigative procedures course. New South Wales has a system wherein all departmental inspectors are tertiary qualified, but RSPCA or Animal Welfare League inspectors receive limited internal training—training which again focuses on their authority and powers.

The situation is similar in South Australia. A spokesman for the RSPCA in South Australia commented that the service was more concerned that its officers knew the law relating to animal welfare rather than possessing qualifications which related only to the physiology of the animal. Western

Australia is in a similar position, but in that State a review is being conducted. Several proposals have been made with regard to training for animal welfare officers. The Northern Territory relies upon police officers and inspectors to enforce the Act but is currently developing draft animal welfare legislation. It is little wonder that difficulties are being experienced in this area. There is little legislation in any Australian State which deals with RSPCA staff or animal welfare inspectors requiring tertiary qualifications, qualifications in basic animal physiology or practical experience of animal-based industries.

In almost all jurisdictions, however, officers are instructed on the law and the powers which are available to them. How is an officer supposed to adequately make an inspection and give an opinion about the welfare and health of an animal, especially in a rural situation, if he or she has no knowledge of the physical requirements of that animal in relation to the purpose it plays on that property?

Victoria is obviously miles ahead of the other States in this regard. However, with the passage of this Bill, together with the amendments, Queensland could find itself in the same situation as Victoria. This Bill is flexible. It does not dictate to the RSPCA what qualifications are required. It does not force the RSPCA to employ only inspectors who have tertiary qualifications or animal husbandry experience. This Bill gives the RSPCA the freedom to determine what qualifications it considers an officer requires. However, the Bill inserts the necessity for officers to have veterinary or animal husbandry experience.

The inclusion of these matters will shift the focus towards more animal-based knowledge, experience and training, and put less emphasis on training based solely on the rights and powers of officers. The Bill's stipulation that an inspector must have relevant qualifications—and the inclusion in the relevant qualifications of animal husbandry experience—should be adequate to ensure that we achieve this shift of focus.

It is clear that there are two major aspects of this Bill that would contribute to the improvement of animal welfare practices in Queensland. This improvement will be achieved through enhanced qualifications of RSPCA officers and through the provision of a fairer balance between the rights of property owners/occupiers and the protection of animals.

The City Country Alliance's Animals Protection Amendment Bill is a Bill that will aid in the protection of animals whilst ensuring that situations such as the Schloss family incident do not recur. This Bill protects responsible animal owners in that, before an inspector can pass judgment on the owner's animal husbandry practices, he must have the relevant practical experience to be able to do so and he must follow simple and reasonable procedures which recognise the basic rights of the landowner. This Bill is a positive Bill for Queensland and I commend it to the House.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (4.09 p.m.): I, too, thank the honourable member for Lockyer for introducing the Animals Protection Amendment Bill, as it addresses issues that have needed to be addressed for some time. In 1925 when the Animals Protection Act was enacted, we still used horses and draughthorses, and bullocks and bullock teams were part of the mainstream of work. Back then, working animals had to be cared for and the police and others involved in animal protection had to have strong legislative powers to be able to react to instances of cruelty. Back then, not very many places had telephones and magistrates were not readily available. As a matter of fact, solicitors and barristers were not readily available. However, that is not the case in the year 2000. We do not need such a strong legislative power to react as quickly and without forethought or foresight in the year 2000. Back in 1925, I doubt whether dogs dying of heat prostration in locked cars with windows fully wound up parked in bitumen car parks outside casinos where the heat exceeds 60 degrees while their owners gambled away their wages would have been a central part of the debate on animals protection legislation.

I have worked side by side with RSPCA officers and have found the majority of them to be very responsible. I acknowledge that there are very responsible officers within the RSPCA. Some have been concerned with animals and cruelty to animals for some time. Some have animal husbandry experience. However, most do not. As a police officer I have been on raids on properties. I have been around when RSPCA officers have raided greyhound facilities where there was a suspicion that the people involved were using live baits such as hares, chickens, rabbits and possums to blood their dogs. I have also been to properties where there was alleged overcrowding in pig runs and chook runs. I have been to properties where the owners have had something like 300 cats and dogs roaming around. However, we did not have to react in the manner that was prescribed; we had time to do things.

Back when I was stationed at Woodridge, I attended the Harrisfield State School in

relation to five youths who had broken into the school and performed acts of cruelty. They poured white spirit over some of the pigeons and left them burning and they had broken the legs of a couple of calves and sheep and let them drown in a trough. They cut the throat of the rabbit that was the pet for the Harrisfield State School preschool. They were certainly dealt with for their cruelty to those animals.

However, this is the year 2000. I was stationed at Caboolture when we started getting calls from people at Woodford in relation to a new housing development that was located right next to a farm. People in the new housing development were ringing us about the cruelty of the owner of the farm next door when he was killing his own meat. Those people talked about how the farmer was killing pigs and cattle. They even rang up when his wife chopped the heads off a couple of chooks and strung them up on the clothes line and commenced to pluck them. People must realise that these days not everything comes in styrofoam boxes covered it plastic and that all the things that we eat were certainly alive at some stage. Meat does not grow in styrofoam boxes and the little chicken pieces that we eat were not found that way.

Animal welfare is one of the most emotive, divisive and difficult issues Governments must face. It is an issue that affects more people than perhaps almost any other issue. In recent years, it is an issue that has come to prominence and, in many cases, its new-found notoriety is a result of agitation by extremists. Most of the population see animal welfare as being relatively straightforward. However, it is a very complex issue and is often confused because of people's lack of knowledge and understanding of animals' needs. The definition of animal welfare is in itself complex. However, it is accepted that the term embraces both the physical and the mental wellbeing of animals.

In Australia, the RSPCA is the organisation most commonly associated with the issue of animal welfare. CCAQ welcomes the role that the RSPCA plays in preventing cruelty or harm to animals. The RSPCA is governed by the Animals Protection Act 1925. Enforcing the provisions of this Act requires running an inspectorate of officers appointed for the purpose of investigating cases of alleged mistreatment of animals that are reported to the royal society. Investigations may involve video, photography and even night scope. I have been present when RSPCA officers have used night scopes, for example, in the early dawn when we were there looking for cruelty in respect of greyhound blooding. Investigations could also involve aerial surveillance, inspecting animals, issuing cautions or just researching. Some of these RSPCA officers sit for days in paddocks just watching what goes on at some properties. Investigations could also involve rescuing animals, coordinating activities, liaising with the police and following through with prosecutions when and if necessary. There is no doubt that many of these activities involve working in unpleasant or difficult situations.

Generally speaking, the majority of animal owners love and care greatly for their animals. Certainly, the minority of animal owners abuse or mistreat their animals. The City Country Alliance supports the view that this minority needs to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. We mean exactly that: to the full extent that the law provides. However, our concern and the reasons for the introduction of this Bill is to protect the rights and the liberties of the animal owners who do not fall into the category of the irresponsible minority.

As highlighted by my fellow City Country Alliance Queensland members, there have been several incidents in which innocent owners have become victims of the RSPCA due to the way in which some RSPCA inspectors go about their business. We have heard highlighted here the Schloss case. However, that is not the only family that has experienced hardship as a result of the actions of the RSPCA. The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation highlighted several cases of questionable conduct by RSPCA inspectors, and I thank it for its input.

It is apparent that farmers are frequently targeted by the RSPCA. Most farmers are very caring and compassionate about their livestock. They are rarely in the business for the money alone. Many procedures are practised to reduce animal stress while increasing productivity and the profitability of the producers. After all, we are talking about men who actually make money out of their farms and do not operate them in a manner that can be considered cruel in any way, shape or form. Supplementary feeding in times of nutritional stress is just one example of how farmers go out of their way to protect and support their animals that are, in fact, their livelihood.

Most animal industry bodies, particularly in Queensland, are aware of and accept these common practices of rural producers. However, at the same time many traditionally accepted animal husbandry techniques continue to attract criticism by animal rights groups. Some

of these groups go to extremes to highlight the bad cases that are, as I said before, in the minority. Due to the farmers' vulnerability to market forces, there are instances where, if the farmer suffers, the land and the animals also suffer. Drought and the decreasing values of livestock have contributed to the link between the welfare of both the farmers and the animals. But that does not in any way confirm that farmers deliberately abuse their animals, as opined by the RSPCA in some of its articles.

To reiterate my point, I will refer honourable members briefly to just one more case of questionable conduct that was highlighted when a raid was conducted by the RSPCA. Some two years ago, the owner of a small hobby farm was targeted by the RSPCA as a result of a complaint by a neighbour. RSPCA inspectors began an investigation, accessing the property by cutting a padlock fitted to the front gate. The owner's only knowledge of someone entering the property was via the broken padlock. No notice was left by the RSPCA officers stating that they had entered that property. No phone calls had been made. There was no way that the owner knew that it was, in fact, RSPCA officers who had actually entered his property. That occurred on three separate occasions and not once was the owner notified that it was, in fact, the RSPCA and that it was, in fact, investigating the habitation and welfare of the animals on that hobby farm.

On the fourth occasion that the RSPCA entered and raided the hobby farm, the owner was away on business for the day. On returning, he found that the padlock had been cut yet again, his house and property had been raided and all his animals had been taken. No notice or receipt for the confiscated animals was left by the RSPCA. It was only some days later that a notice was given specifying that the owner was to contact the RSPCA in this instance.

In an interview with the RSPCA, the owner was advised that all charges against him would be dropped if he surrendered his animals to the RSPCA. He was told that if he refused he would be liable for costs for the housing of the confiscated animals. He was also advised that he would have to pay $10 per day per animal, which at that particular time was considered excessive as the local feedlot in that area was charging only $3 a day for the same service.

Due to financial hardship, the owner did surrender his animals to the RSPCA. However, he was still required to pay close to $1,000 in fees and charges. No conviction was recorded on the condition that he not talk to anyone about the incident. One of my researchers recently contacted this person and still now, almost two years later, he is reluctant to talk about the incident purely because the RSPCA instructed him not to do so. No person should be intimidated to the point at which they are afraid to discuss a matter that is within the public interest. This is totally unacceptable behaviour by the RSPCA. No volunteer organisation should have this level of power. Even police officers are not afforded this level of power or authority.

The amendments sought in this Bill will stop this kind of behaviour. The amendments are an improvement on the Animals Protection Act, ensuring that animals continue to be protected as per the RSPCA's authority while respecting the rights and the liberties of animal owners. The City Country Alliance is aware that the Minister for Primary Industries is currently working on a Government Bill to replace the existing Animals Protection Act 1925, something most members would agree—as has been said by previous speakers—is long overdue. Most members agree that the amendments mooted in this private member's Bill have been needed for a long time.

The Minister admitted that the majority of the current Act is deficient and fails to address contemporary animal welfare standards and issues. He also admitted that entry without a warrant is inconsistent with the powers of entry for inspectors under other legislation and clearly does not have regard to the fundamental legislative principles as set out in the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

The City Country Alliance Queensland accepts that the Animals Protection Amendment Bill does not address all of the problems associated with the Animals Protection Act. The purpose of this Bill is to address one of the most contentious faults of the existing legislation, one that has caused significant public outcry as a result of the increasing number of people falling victim to the excesses of the overzealous and sometimes power-drunk RSPCA inspectors. I say "victims" because, as I have pointed out, there are several documented cases where the RSPCA has abused its authority in the extreme.

The debate on the welfare of animals is a very contentious one. Animal welfare is always a matter of opinion, one on which everyone is keen to have a say. Emotion, practicality, genuine concern and politics often complicate this issue. An imperative action is to work towards managing the situation to the

satisfaction of all sections of society. The concerns of primary producers, conservationists, the community and even animal welfare groups must be allowed to be expressed, with common goals recognised, acknowledged and achieved. Perhaps the Minister's new Animals Protection Bill will reflect innovative and acceptable standards, in particular industry standards that apply to the farmers in the bush.

Increasing the levels of knowledge and understanding of animal husbandry practices, in particular the accepted industry standards of farmers, is an important priority for the RSPCA inspectors. The City Country Alliance considers that this legislation is fundamental in continuing to protect animals against cruelty while protecting the rights and the liberties of owners.

We must acknowledge, as I said before, that this is the year 2000. It is not 1925. There is no longer a need for the huge range of powers that is contained in the Animals Protection Act 1925. We are living in a different society. We have far greater access to phones and computers—things that were not available to workers out in the bush in years past. They do not need to react as quickly and with such haste as they did in the past. Some react very slowly in a lot of circumstances, but some react with a lot more haste and vigour than they should.

I commend the member for Lockyer for introducing these amendments to the Animals Protection Act. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (4.26 p.m.): I am pleased to speak briefly to the Animals Protection Amendment Bill. As caring, thinking human beings, no doubt all members of this House support legislation which protects animals from abuse. In a perfect world, there would be no need for legislative measures, but we all know that some people lack basic empathy for domestic and non-domestic animals. Animal cruelty cannot be tolerated in a civilised society, and effective measures to bring to account the perpetrators must be enshrined in law.

Unlike humankind, animals are not able to speak up for themselves. I sometimes wonder what they would say if they could. The Beattie Government recognises the need to have laws which are both practical and appropriate. That is why the Government intends to completely replace the existing legislation passed by this House some 75 years ago. We need modern legislation capable of meeting contemporary issues. As the previous speaker said, even animal husbandry practices have moved on in those 75 years. What was appropriate then is not necessarily appropriate now.

That said, it is also important that we empower officials charged with enforcement duties with appropriate powers that are commensurate with the circumstances surrounding any alleged offence. The Bill before the House appears designed to bring redress to a limited number of issues. While the Bill is of generally sound intent, in my view it is less than comprehensive. It is important that the whole range of issues relating to animal cruelty be placed under the microscope. The Government intends to do just that.

The Bill that we are debating today falls short of the complete rewrite of the Act that I believe is necessary. Today I intend to concentrate on those sections of the Bill that refer to the need for warrants to enter properties. Under the existing Act, RSPCA officers may enter any place without a warrant. As has been said before, this is inconsistent with the powers of entry for inspectors under other legislation and clearly does not have regard to the fundamental legislative principles as set out in the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

RSPCA officers should have only those powers necessary for the effective discharge of their duties. The Bill before the House today proposes that a warrant be required to enter a place in all circumstances except where the occupier consents to the entry, or it is a public place and the entry is made when it is open to the public. Clearly, that does not go far enough.

On the other hand, the Government Bill proposes two additional circumstances under which entry without a warrant may be executed. These are, firstly, where an inspector reasonably believes that there is an imminent risk of injury to or death of an animal—for example, when an animal is being beaten or tortured in a dog fight or some other activity, it is important that the inspector intervene when appropriate—and, secondly, where an inspector reasonably believes that any delay in entering a place will result in the destruction or the concealing of evidence of the commission of that offence. Failure to do so within a reasonable time can lead to the inability to prosecute, and the perpetrator can continue his activities.

It is acknowledged that fundamental legislative principles as outlined in the Legislative Standards Act 1992 must be considered, as the above powers raise

concerns about the infringement of an individual's rights. However, the need for an inspector to be able to act immediately to save the life of or to prevent injury to an animal is a critical part of animal protection legislation, and powers enabling this are present in the legislation of most Australian States and Territories. The Bill's proposed removal of the ability of inspectors to enter places without a warrant in situations of immediate risk to animals has a high potential, in my view, to attract severe criticism—and justifiably—from both the public and the RSPCA. Unfortunately, the private member's Bill has the effect of protecting the perpetrator of cruelty in so far as it does not go far enough. For this reason, I believe that it must be voted down.

The Government Bill proposes that, where an inspector entered a place without a warrant on the basis that evidence was likely to be concealed or destroyed, there may be an external review of this power. This provision would be similar to that provided in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997. That Act provides that, as soon as reasonably practical after exercising the power, the police officer must apply to a magistrate for an order approving the search. I am sure that this will be discussed further with Parliamentary Counsel during the drafting of the Government's Bill. In conclusion, I cannot support the Bill. In my view, it is far too fragmented to be a worthwhile tool in the battle to maintain acceptable standards of human behaviour in respect of animal welfare.

Mr DALGLEISH (Hervey Bay—CCAQ) (4.30 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Animals Protection Amendment Bill, which is aimed more at rural animal welfare. Protecting domestic pets in the cities and suburbs is very different from protecting animals on rural properties. The removal of a pet from its home for a period does not hold up business or cost nearly as much as the removal of 10 cows from a rural property or the removal of 10 horses from a stud farm. Many pet owners and hobby farmers have very good practical animal skills. However, there are some who have no practical experience at all. These are often the ones in respect of whom problems arise.

Primary producers nearly always have practical knowledge and are much less likely to mistreat their stock. After all, their stock is their livelihood. The protection of animals is needed, and the RSPCA does an excellent job of that. This does not mean that it should be given a free rein to go to whatever lengths it chooses. This Bill makes sure that the officers at the RSPCA will be held accountable for their actions and decisions. As a form of credibility, it also ensures that the investigating officer will have a working knowledge of farming practices. The rights of animal owners also need to be considered.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee examined the Bill but found no need to report on it; the legislation is fine. This Bill balances those rights so that animals can be protected according to an accountable system. This Bill balances those rights so that animals can be protected by people with the necessary knowledge or experience.

The Minister has commented on the Bill that will be put before the Chamber. I am sure that the Minister would never admit that the CCAQ's Animals Protection Amendment Bill has triggered him to do such a thing. After all, it has been discussed in this House for some time. Regardless of whether our Bill gets up, I believe that, as long as we have triggered some movement towards getting this serious issue dealt with, we will have all done our bit. All speakers have made good comments. It is obvious that there are some aspects of our Bill with which honourable members are not happy. However, if we sit back and do nothing, as has been done in the past, we will never make any progress. As a result of this Bill, we will see positive legislation and ideas coming forward and all honourable members working together to resolve an ongoing problem. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (4.34 p.m.): I have listened to the comments of previous speakers in the debate on the Animals Protection Amendment Bill. Given the comments of the Minister, I am looking forward to the circulation of his amendments in clarification of the issues about which he is concerned. When I looked at the changes that this Bill proposes, one of the things I appreciated was the fact that it clarifies the type of person who will be allowed to be an inspector. Before I get into that issue, at the outset let me say that I respect greatly the work of the RSPCA. It comprises a group of people who are often asked to intervene in situations that have the potential to be very emotive. They are people with a great love of animals. They are often brought into sad or stressful situations. It is not a job that many people would feel confident about fulfilling.

Two groups of people work in the RSPCA. A number of those people who look after the animal shelters would prefer never to go on an inspection. They either feel ill-equipped or that it is an area of work in which they do not wish to become involved. They happily remain involved in the shelter work and caring for the

animals on a day-to-day basis. Any of us who has been to an RSPCA shelter could walk away with glowing reports about the compassion and care shown by those RSPCA officers.

Someone can correct me if I am wrong, but my interpretation of the amendments is that they will remove the possibility of administrative staff—for example, a secretary—who may not be experienced in animal welfare going on an inspection. For example, they may not know what an animal looks like after it has calved or whelped. Sometimes their condition deteriorates markedly not from neglect but from the process they have been through. Suckling young can cause an animal's appearance to deteriorate. It does not necessarily mean that the animal is not being looked after. It is just that the drain on their system causes that to occur. Some administrative staff may not have any idea of what to look for in an animal or about the questions that need to be asked to determine whether there has been any neglect.

It is my understanding that this amendment will mean that people who assume the role of inspector must at least have some understanding of the physiological make-up of animals. I would not have been able to support the Bill if all of the inspectors had to be vets, because that would have meant that the RSPCA would have had to withdraw from the role of inspecting alleged at-risk places and animals. Most RSPCAs would not be able to afford to pay for a fully qualified vet. However, some discretion is afforded the RSPCA in respect of ensuring that its inspectors know what they are looking for and talking about. I believe there is discretion in respect of the qualifications inspectors will be required to hold. As I said, they may not necessarily be vets, but they must have some understanding of animal husbandry. The Minister's criticism of that latitude is something I am yet to understand. Perhaps he or somebody yet to speak may be able to clarify it.

It has been said that new legislation is needed. Based on the comments made up to now, I must agree. But when that will occur is unknown. In the interim, this amendment Bill will go some way towards addressing the concerns of the community in relation to RSPCA inspections. I do not believe that it puts the onus of entry any higher than any other entry provision. It requires that, unless there are emergent reasons, appropriate contact with the owners must be made. That is not only good manners but also good management.

The other comment that has been made to date is that this Bill falls short of a rewrite. One can only agree with that comment. But I say again that in the interim this Bill goes some way towards addressing the concerns that have been expressed to date.

The only other area of the Bill that I want to comment on is the fact that under the current Act animals that are confiscated are forfeited. Section 11(4A) states—

> "However, the Minister may at any time, in the Minister's absolute discretion, order that any animal or things"—

which can be a vehicle or anything else—

> "lawfully detained under this section"—

which is the confiscation section—

> "shall be forfeited to Her Majesty in right of this State notwithstanding that no person is proceeded against for or is convicted of an offence against this Act ..."

In other words, a person may have an animal—quite a valuable animal—or anything else of any value confiscated and the current legislation allows for its forfeiture even though the person who owns that thing or article is not guilty of any offence; they are not charged, and if they are charged, the charge does not hold. The amending Bill indicates that the forfeiture can occur only if it is ordered by the court if the person is found guilty of an offence. I think that is eminently just. I do not think that any of us would like to see an article, an animal or anything else that we own taken from us when we have not been found guilty of any offence. It is a punishment when there has been no crime. I think that this amendment that says punishment—by forfeiture—can only occur when there has been a crime established is consistent with the laws and justice that we in this place uphold.

I am not going to prolong the debate other than to say that, in common with other speakers, I think that this amendment Bill is not perfect. I do not think there is much that we do in here that is perfect. The Bill is subject, however, to subsequent amendment either by the Minister or by other members of this House. I believe it is a step forward and a positive one, and I support it on that basis.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (4.44 p.m.): I wish to take the opportunity this afternoon to speak briefly to this Bill. Of course, the objectives of the Bill as spelt out by the member for Lockyer are to amend the

Animals Protection Act of 1925 to ensure that RSPCA officials have appropriate qualifications or animal husbandry experience; and, secondly, to ensure the accountability of actions of the RSPCA. A specific case has been dealt with in a fair bit of detail here this afternoon. I am not personally aware of the circumstances of the particular case, but they were certainly detailed by a couple of speakers here this afternoon and also in the second-reading speech of the member for Lockyer.

I think the sense of outrage felt by the member for Lockyer and described by a few members here in the Parliament was brought about because of the lapse of time between when the people in question were involved in discussions with relevant authorities seeking advice and when the RSPCA officials turned up—and they arrived with a TV crew! I think that causes people to form ideas about the issues. In acknowledging that in his contribution, the member for Caboolture said—and I hope I am not misquoting him—that the RSPCA "targets farmers". I think it is important to understand that the RSPCA visits properties only after a complaint has been received. The reality of this situation is that what happened in this instance must have occurred on the basis of a complaint.

Secondly, in going into some detail, he then said that the issue of animal welfare was a matter of opinion. I am not sure that that is true, even though we are looking at an Act that was passed in 1925 because, when it comes to a matter of opinion, when it goes to court—and I am not a lawyer—in the end the decision as to whether a person is guilty or not is made on the basis of what a reasonable person would think is cruel. That, I think, takes account of changes in attitude that might occur over the passage of time.

Whatever we think about the individual case—and I understand the moral outrage of seeing the RSPCA turn up with a TV camera and that sort of thing—the people involved pleaded guilty when it came to the court appearance. So there you go. As I said, I am not actually right across exactly what was the specific issue of cruelty or whatever was involved. Nevertheless, if we follow it through as a pattern, we see that in the end the people involved in that case pleaded guilty.

When we talk about an Act that was passed in 1925 and is still on the statute book in the year 2000, we have to acknowledge that over 75 years time has moved on and views regarding animals have changed in all sorts of ways. I think they have generally matured and in the year 2000 people are much more sensitive about the treatment of animals. That issue is a very emotive one. I am reminded that just recently one of the television channels—I think it might have been Channel 9, but I am not sure—covering the Winton floods broadcast a picture of a kangaroo wedged against a barbed wire fence to demonstrate the conditions there. Apparently great concern about that was voiced in the world of talkback radio. People were concerned, firstly, as to why someone would bother to sit there and film an animal under stress. I have spoken to the member for Lockyer about this specific incident and he may talk about it in his reply. I never heard of what the specific issue was but, as I understand it, the reporters involved had to go on various talkback programs and explain the circumstances under which the actual footage was taken.

There is a lot of emotion out there and a lot of issues are raised when we talk about animals, animal welfare and cruelty to animals. It is obvious that the majority of people have a great fondness for their pets. Of course, when people have a fondness for the pets they may have around their home, that fondness certainly extends to other animals in general.

Mr Fenlon: Companion animals.

Mr HAYWARD: Companion animals, as the member for Greenslopes has said.

In the medical world there is a push for older people in our community to have a pet. In Queensland I think we still have an official Pet Week when children can bring their pets to school. There is an enormous focus on having people look after their animals and develop a relationship with their animals. We have seen examples of this. We all know of people who have gone to enormous expense or effort when their pet has been injured or gets sick in order to make it well again. If we read what was said on the introduction of the 1925 legislation, we would realise how much things have changed. I am certain that currently in our society there are very strong views on this issue. People can be quite rational on most things that go on in our society but, nevertheless, when it comes to the issue of mistreating animals, people have specific views about what should happen to the perpetrators of cruelty to animals. So there is a lot of emotion involved in the issue of animal welfare.

The Bill before the House introduced by the member for Lockyer proposes that currently appointed RSPCA inspectors should cease to be inspectors after two years unless they attain what he says is a relevant

qualification. The requirements for inspectors to have undertaken appropriate training or to have relevant experience before being appointed is consistent with the requirements for inspectors under other legislation. However, the Bill proposed by the member for Lockyer says that the qualifications and experience can be those which the RSPCA itself considers to be appropriate. In other words, the member for Lockyer is saying that he will allow the RSPCA to continue to set its own standards of qualifications for inspectors.

As I have said before, the original legislation was introduced and passed by Parliament in 1925. I know that the Minister is focusing extremely hard on ensuring that an updated and modern Bill is introduced to this Parliament. I understand why the member for Lockyer has brought this piecemeal Bill into this place for debate. In summing up the debate, the member will probably say why that has happened, the economics of it all and everything else. I understand that. I am certain that the proposed Government Bill will achieve a better and more consistent standard of qualification in animal protection inspectors by requiring all inspectors, including those from the RSPCA, to undergo training conducted by the Department of Primary Industries to achieve a proper level of competence and attain standards that are not just set by the RSPCA but set by an independent body, the Department of Primary Industries.

The department will also consider each individual inspector's level of training in determining their role within whatever organisation they work for and hence, through that level of confidence, the specific powers they will be authorised to use under the Bill. Their level of confidence will depend on what role a person can play and what they can do within the scope of the Bill proposed by the Minister.

In conclusion, everybody in this Parliament can understand the motivation of the member for Lockyer in presenting this private member's Bill. It has the effect of very much focusing and sharpening the view towards the issues involved, many of which we accept as part of everyday life, but until debate occurs on them we do not specifically focus on them. I am certain that the member for Lockyer is looking forward to the Minister introducing an all encompassing Bill into this Parliament later this year. I look forward to his support for that all encompassing Bill.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (4.52 p.m.): So much of the debate on the Animals Protection Amendment Bill has quite correctly focused on the fact that the principal legislation has not been altered since 1925. A number of speakers have said that events and circumstances have changed, and that is probably fair enough. But one thing that no speaker in favour of the Bill put forward by the member for Lockyer has said is that the RSPCA has changed. Yet, demonstrably it has, even since this incident took place.

Mr Musgrove interjected.

Mr MICKEL: For example, the RSPCA has a new CEO—a person well known to the member for Springwood and me as being a very competent person, someone capable of administering the organisation. I would be very interested to hear whether the honourable gentleman from Lockyer has met with the new CEO in light of the fact that he had put this legislation on the agenda and that it was due for debate this week. I would be very interested to know whether the member has had the chance to familiarise the new CEO with the legislation being put up and whether the member has spoken with him about it. My understanding is that the member has not. If that is wrong, then I know that in his summing-up the member will bring that to my attention.

However, I am advised of one group the member certainly has not spoken with—that is, the animal welfare unit within the Department of Primary Industries. I would have thought that that was a fairly fundamental unit the member should have spoken with when bringing about a change to an Act that has been around since 1925. This unit is out there consulting the whole time. I would be interested to hear whether the member has met with that group.

The member for Whitsunday seemed to be saying that the RSPCA was okay and made up of well meaning people who are okay except when they are not okay. He said that there were many instances of them overstepping the mark. He just left that comment hang there. If there are many instances, then I would call upon him, through the member for Lockyer, to indicate what those many instances are. Other than that, the member has simply blackguarded an organisation without providing examples. Given the fact that the RSPCA has a new CEO, it is entitled to know where it has been wrong in the past. I enjoin the member to bring those examples to the attention of the House.

Another issue was raised by the shadow Minister. The burden of his complaint was basically this: that the Bill introduced by the member for Lockyer goes too far on the one

hand but it does not go far enough on the other.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr MICKEL: There is a voice from the dead. A Minister for God knows how long, he came in here this afternoon, and anyone listening to the debate would have thought he was championing some policy alternative. Yet what did he come up with? He said, "Oh, the Bill goes too far, but it does not go far enough." What a confusion of thought from an abject failure as a Minister for Primary Industries. The fact of the matter is that he could not put up one policy alternative. I congratulate the member for Lockyer on this point. Again, what we see is One Nation pushing National Party policy, not the other way around. That is what One Nation has been doing in this House for the last 18 months—pushing the National Party to come up with policies. At least that is one good thing that has come from today's debate.

I might also correct something said by the member for Hervey Bay that was incorrect. He said that the Bill of the member for Lockyer triggered the DPI Minister into action. In fact, the policy principles for this Bill were endorsed by Cabinet in early February 1999, well before the honourable gentleman proposed his Bill. However, it does beg this question: how come it has taken this long to get a draft Bill into this House? It is not remarkable at all when we consider the competing factors that have to be considered in drafting up a Bill of this size. Above all, what any Government has to do is make sure that the Bill does not interfere with the proper responsibilities and functioning of industry. That is quite a complex matter to get around. I believe that is the overriding consideration in this debate.

I do not doubt for a moment the sincerity of the member in bringing this issue up. The only problem I have with it is that it is a piecemeal approach. However, what I am proposing to the member is that the matter is far more complex. I would encourage the member to at least have a yarn with the new CEO of the RSPCA and run suggestions past him in preparation for when the whole Bill—not just this piecemeal approach Bill—is introduced into this House. I understand that the member introduced this Bill because of an incident involving the Schloss family. The point I want to make is this: that family, as I understand it, pleaded guilty to a charge of providing inadequate food, water and shelter for calves. In other words, the RSPCA, according to the actions of the Schloss family on that occasion, behaved appropriately. It is no good to bring in one bit of change in the hope that it will correct something that was not an anomaly in the first place. In actual fact, the family pleaded guilty to the charge.

The honourable member for Barambah has a different point of view. It is still not too late for her to inform the House about that, but those are the facts as I understand them. I do not think that the member for Barambah has made any contribution to this debate. If she has, I stand corrected. But the fact of the matter is that she is blackguarding the RSPCA when it has had this change of leadership. The member owes it to that organisation to have a yarn with them about the Bill.

For the reasons I have outlined, I believe that the Bill of the member for Lockyer should be opposed because it does not address the entire problem with the industry, and I call upon the House to do so.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (5 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to and participation in the debate on the second reading of this amendment Bill. The Animal Protection Amendment Bill was introduced with the express purpose of allowing animal owners, and especially bona fide primary producers, to go about their business and to care for their animals, as they do so well, safe in the knowledge that they will not be obstructed and persecuted by an overzealous RSPCA officer who, in one case in particular, has had no practical knowledge or experience in primary industry or animal husbandry.

I reiterate, as my colleagues have done this afternoon, that we strongly support the RSPCA in its functioning and the work that it has to do. It is highly important that some structure exists to prevent cruelty to animals and to enforce punishments upon those who act cruelly to animals. Certainly, in my experience as a veterinary surgeon over many years, I have seen, experienced, witnessed and tried to correct many kinds of cruelty to animals. There is no doubt that some of that cruelty was deliberate. A lot of it was cruelty through ignorance. There is no doubt that with the emerging type of dwelling existence on semirural-type small blocks, the incidence of ignorant cruelty is rising.

It is not our intention to see this worthy organisation disbanded at all, and it is certainly not our intention to place the welfare of animals at risk. But we must ensure that in the process of preventing cruelty to animals, the rights and liberties of individuals are not impinged. I will make a few comments on

some of those impingements during this reply speech.

The issue that seems to upset the majority of the community is the intrusion of television crews and reporters into people's homes and lives. I believe—and I think many people would agree—that this is not the way in which a noble organisation such as the RSPCA should be conducting its business and going about its job.

We have touched on some of the travesties of justice which have resulted from the actions of officers with a lack of experience and what could only be described as an obsession with power. I do not propose to go over those tragic cases, but I believe that all members would agree that such devastating outcomes cannot be tolerated. We owe families such as the Schlosses more. Their rights were not protected. They suffered, physically and mentally, what could be described as their own torture. I point out to members opposite that the Schloss family pleaded guilty to only one of those charges so that an expedient result could be achieved in their case. They knew they had to have an out-of-court settlement. In their case, the RSPCA ensured that the Schlosses pleaded guilty to something so that it could be justified in its actions. The case cost the Schlosses an awful lot of money. Over a period of 12 months or more, it almost drove that family to bankruptcy. It certainly resulted in a number of their animals not being returned to them, and those animals were not even supposed to have been subjected to cruelty.

We agree that there must be adequate legislation to protect animals against abuse by the very small percentage of animal owners who do the wrong thing. Most animal owners, particularly farmers—or, as they are more commonly known, "animal lovers"—really do care for their animals. Almost all who are involved in the livestock industries are in those industries largely because of their love for animals and because of their deep pride in earning an existence from those animals. Of course, there certainly are exceptions, and those people should receive the full force of the law and be brought to task for their actions. Cruel, sadistic people should not be tolerated in our society today.

Our Animals Protection Amendment Bill set out to achieve three aims. The Explanatory Notes to the Bill state that the objective of the legislation is to amend the Animals Protection Act of 1925 to require a number of things; firstly, that RSPCA inspectors have appropriate qualifications or animal husbandry experience and carry photographic identification. Those qualifications must include a minimum standard to be set on animal husbandry, etc. The problem with trying to achieve a minimum standard of qualifications is that there is no example throughout this country to follow. To date, no qualifications have been set for any RSPCA inspectors throughout the country, but it is very achievable to have a minimum standard of animal husbandry experience, animal welfare experience and other matters, particularly related to the farming of livestock.

The second aim of the legislation was that RSPCA inspectors obtain a warrant before entering a property. I noticed that the Minister commented on this matter. I will quote briefly from his speech last year. He said that the proposed Government Bill will provide for some circumstances under which inspectors can enter properties without a warrant, and he believes that these are—

> "... where an inspector reasonably believes there is imminent risk of injury to or death of an animal, for example, where an animal is being beaten or tortured or a dogfight is in progress, and where an inspector reasonably believes that any delay in entering a place will result in the destruction or concealing of evidence of the commission of an offence."

I understand where the Minister is coming from with those comments, and I agree with him. I will be interested to see some of the amendments to be moved by the member for Hinchinbrook in that regard. He foreshadowed that he would be moving such amendments.

The third aim of the Bill was that no forfeiture of any animal or property shall occur without a conviction. This is an area of contention raised during this debate. I agree with the Minister's concerns regarding the costs incurred by the RSPCA in keeping forfeited animals, but we are not talking here about abandoned animals; we are talking about animals taken from homes and farms, etc. The amendment Bill states that animals can be forfeited to the Crown only after a conviction. That is fair enough, and we will stick with that principle.

The first of these objectives is achieved through the amendment of section 3, "Interpretation". A definition for "identity card" is introduced so that all RSPCA inspectors will have a document containing a recent photograph of the inspector, the signature of the inspector and the identification of the inspector as an officer under this Act. An inspector is an employee of the RSPCA with a relevant qualification and is appointed by the

RSPCA to be an inspector for this Act. The definitions for "occupier", "place", "premises" and "public place" are relatively straightforward and facilitate the later amendments to the Act. "Relevant qualification" is added to mean a qualification or veterinary or animal husbandry experience which the RSPCA considers is appropriate to exercise the powers of an officer. All RSPCA inspectors must have relevant qualifications under the definition of "inspector". The insertion of these definitions not only facilitates the Bill but also achieves the first of the stated objectives, ensuring that identification documents are issued and that all inspectors have appropriate qualifications or animal husbandry experience to carry out the functions and duties of their job.

It is absolutely illogical for an officer who has had absolutely no practical knowledge in animal husbandry to be thrust into a situation in which he or she must make judgments. Some of those judgments are certainly beyond his or her ability and experience and are matters which could well threaten the ongoing viability of a farming business and the future of farming families, as has occurred in a number of cases.

In the past, under the Act a carpet layer or a mechanic could have become a welfare officer. These people could have been expected to make serious judgments with regard to the welfare of animals and the husbandry practices of the farming operation. That is not fair to the farmer, it is not fair to the inspector and it is certainly not fair to the standing of the RSPCA. I can assure honourable members that inspectors, who have had little or no knowledge of animal behaviour or animal husbandry, particularly with regard to current farming practices, have been employed by such organisations as the RSPCA.

The requirement for an officer to have photographic identification is, in these uncertain times, important. An owner or a resident has the undeniable right to be assured of the identity of anyone seeking access to his or her property. I do not believe that this provision will impose any hardship on the RSPCA or on the inspector. However, it gives a measure of security to the animal owners.

The remaining provisions of the Bill amend the procedures with regard to entry to a property by an RSPCA officer. This ensures that the rights of the property owner are respected. These amendments provide that the occupier must consent to entry, that the entry is authorised by a warrant, or, if it is a public place, that entry occurs when it is open to the public. The only exception to these restrictions concerns entry onto a property in order to contact the occupier.

The section of the Bill also provides for the RSPCA inspectors to identify themselves, inform the occupier of the purpose of entry and the occupier's right to refuse such entry. If entry is permitted, a signed acknowledgment is required in case of later legal conflict.

The Bill redefines the powers of entry and seizure of RSPCA officers. In this way, entry onto premises is made more restrictive. I reiterate that this Bill is not designed or intended to hinder the RSPCA or its officers. It is not designed to hinder the process of protecting animals against cruelty in any form. It does, however, protect the rights of citizens while also protecting the rights of animals.

This Bill provides for the issue of a warrant by a magistrate if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that an animal, thing or activity may provide evidence of an offence against the Act, and that the evidence is at the place, or may be at the place within the next seven days. The Bill also provides for the issue of a warrant by phone, fax, radio or other form of communication if the officer considers it necessary under urgent circumstances, or such special circumstances as the officer being in a remote location. Investigations have proved that it is easy to obtain such warrants very quickly by telephone or other means of communication.

An officer carrying a warrant must be identified and he must tell the occupier that the warrant allows him to enter the property. The owner or occupier of the property must be given an opportunity to allow the officer immediate entry without the use of force. Clause 9E(4) allows an officer to sidestep this procedure if he believes on reasonable grounds that immediate entry is required to ensure the effective execution of the warrant.

This Bill does nothing to hinder fair and reasonable access by a duly authorised and qualified officer. The RSPCA and its officers still retain some discretion and these provisions do not inhibit their ability to do their job because of red tape. The processes I just mentioned are fair to both sides. They allow the RSPCA to carry out its role in an effective manner and they give the owner the respect he deserves on his own premises. It seems that, over time, the rights of individuals on their own properties are being slowly eroded.

Let me assure the House that I believe that the wellbeing of animals is a serious matter. However, that consideration should

not, and must not, negate the rights of property owners and occupiers. All statutory bodies, Government organisations and private companies should afford property owners or occupiers the respect to which they are entitled by virtue of their legal title to their property and their possessions.

Rarely is there a situation where anyone without proper qualifications, other than a police officer, has the power to enter and seize a person's property without a warrant. The RSPCA seems to have an amazing amount of discretionary power. Its officers have limited qualifications but are allowed to make determinations with regard to the quality of care of an animal—especially animals which are not domestic pets.

The main section of this Bill achieves the second stated objective. The third stated objective is achieved by the amendments to section 11 of the Act. Section 11 of the Act refers to the power to seize animals. It also refers to the rights and powers of officers to take animals, or other necessary things, and for them to be retained until proceedings are completed. The section permits the owner to be charged for the cost of detaining and caring for the animals. If a conviction occurs, the section provides for the forfeiture of the animals to the State if the court so orders.

Section 11(4A) of the Act states—

> "The Minister may at any time, in the Minister's absolute discretion, order that any animal or things lawfully detained under this section shall be forfeited to Her Majesty in right of this State notwithstanding that no person is proceeded against or is convicted of an offence against this Act in relation thereto, and thereupon such forfeiture shall take effect."

We believe that before any forfeiture takes place a person's guilt must be proved.

This Bill omits this section from the Act and removes the Minister's ability to forfeit a person's property to the State, regardless of continued proceedings against a person, and regardless of a failure to convict the person of an offence. Hence, under this legislation, no forfeiture of any animal or property shall occur without a court conviction.

City Country Alliance's Animals Protection Amendment Bill achieves its stated aims for the legislation. It has received a clean bill of health from the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and it "will return a degree of transparency and accountability to the operation of the RSPCA in this State." Once again, I reiterate our continued support of the RSPCA and the work it does in regard to the protection of animals. I also reiterate our desire to see this done in a manner which gives landowners and occupiers the rights and respect to which they are entitled.

I wish to turn to a few comments which have been made by members who have contributed to the debate. The member for Hinchinbrook aptly pointed out the background to this Bill. He correctly pointed out that the actions of the RSPCA in February 1997 almost ruined the dairy farming family at Wondai. He also pointed out that this action alone highlights many of the RSPCA's shortcomings. It also highlighted many of the shortcomings of the Animal Protection Act in regard to the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

The member for Fitzroy mentioned the lack of accountability of the RSPCA, and he was quite correct in his observations. This must be corrected. He referred to the guilty verdict that was delivered in the case of the Schloss family. I reiterate that the family pleaded guilty because they wanted the whole thing settled and out of the way. They wanted their animals returned to them. The family took this action in response to pressure in order to gain an out-of-court settlement.

Many members raised concerns with regard to the forfeiture provisions. I look forward to seeing the amendments to this legislation which are to be moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. As far as the City Country Alliance is concerned, forfeiture should occur only after a verdict of guilty has been entered.

The member for Mulgrave referred to the question of warrants. The City Country Alliance will look closely at the amendments which are proposed by the member for Hinchinbrook in relation to warrants. We believe that the RSPCA, with today's modern communication systems, can obtain warrants quickly. I will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say when he brings his legislation before the House. However, the City Country Alliance will stand by what we have said.

The member for Gladstone correctly raised the problems caused by the inexperience of many inspectors. Once again, this emphasises that the educational qualifications of an inspector are paramount, and it is an issue that must be corrected. The member also correctly identified the problems in relation to forfeiture, about which I have just spoken.

The member for Kallangur raised the concerns of many regarding the use of

television crews. I agree with him: I believe that the RSPCA can do its work and gain exposure for its cause without the intrusion of television crews and without any prior arrangement with those crews. I believe that if a person is guilty of cruelty to an animal, the RSPCA does not need a television crew to prove that. The member also referred to the use of TV cameras at Winton. I am pleased that he brought that up. That issue was discussed very widely on the radio. Some of the carers around the Winton area raised concerns that some of the TV camera footage was done for effect and that some of these animals were actually standing on the ground and just resting on the wire. Of the ones that were tangled in the fences, the people who rowed around them in boats expressed concerns that, as they are wild animals, just trying to free them could result in danger to them. I can speak from experience with kangaroos and cattle and whatever else that has been caught in fences. Once an animal is spooked and is very frightened, it can become very dangerous not only to itself but also to any person who tries to free it.

Unfortunately, sometimes TV footage can be used to show something spectacular just to gain an emotional advantage. So people should be very careful when they watch some of this sort of coverage—not that I am trying to take anything away from some of the cruelty that has been filmed by the RSPCA. Some of the cruelty, particularly what happened to those deer that were flown south from Brisbane, is absolutely disgusting. That incident should not have happened.

The member for Kallangur also correctly identified that all people in our society need to be educated in the care of animals. I think that education on the care for domestic pets—companion-type animals—is very important and should be considered as part of our education system. Certainly, events such as Pet Week highlight the needs of animals and the need to care for them.

I will conclude by referring to the contribution made by the member for Logan. It would have been nice if he had debated the substance of the Bill. However, again—as usual—all we were rewarded with was a nonsensical diatribe. I will say no more. I realise that in the upcoming vote on the second reading of this Bill it is more than likely that the Government members will vote against it. However, if this debate has in its own little way spurred the Government into rectifying these problems by introducing its own animal welfare legislation, then I believe that I have achieved a little to correct deficiencies in what is really an antiquated Act. I look forward to the debate on the Minister's Bill when he introduces it. I know that this Parliament will surely come up with the best result for all concerned in this matter, because we all care very deeply about the welfare of animals. I look forward to that debate. With that, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 40—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Briskey, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

FINES BILL

Withdrawal

On the Order of the Day being discharged, the Bill was withdrawn.

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM (QUEENSLAND) REPEAL BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 15 April (see p. 1146).

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (5.30 p.m.): I rise to oppose this repeal Bill on behalf of the Government—a State Government that has, in fact, led the nation in the charge to humanise National Competition Policy in this country and return the control of competition policy to the hands of the elected representatives, the people of the States and of the Commonwealth. I might say that, in relation to this matter, last year this Parliament had a significant debate in relation to National Competition Policy when the House resolved unanimously to call for the dissolution of the National Competition Council and to hand the responsibility for the oversight of sensible competition reforms to the Council of Australian Governments.

We have consistently advocated the views of the Queensland Parliament in national forums to that effect. This Bill,

however, is not and would not be an effective piece of legislation. In the time allocated to me this evening, I intend to demonstrate what a sham this Bill really is. If the Parliament were to pass this ill-conceived piece of legislation, it would not bring Queenslanders one iota of relief from the excesses of economic rationalism as administered through the National Competition Council aided and abetted by the Federal Howard Government. Not only would this flawed legislation throw away hundreds of millions of dollars in competition payments; this Bill would go further. This Bill would cost this State our capacity to prevent harsh competition reform being meted out to the people of Queensland.

The Beattie Government's emphasis on a balanced approach to competition reform has not won us many friends in the Melbourne/Sydney/Canberra triangle. Certainly our very responsible and very reasonable approach to competition reform has not brought us accolades from the various conservative institutions in Australia or the Federal Government or at times some of their friends in the media. We have been accused of trying to adopt bully-boy tactics in relation to our dealings with the National Competition Council.

Let me make this point: the Queensland Government will not resile from our fundamental responsibilities with respect to the Queensland economy and the Queensland people. We will continue to fearlessly advocate on behalf of Queensland and Queenslanders against the Federal Government, against the National Competition Council, against anybody trying to promulgate slash and burn economics in Queensland.

We have had to fight the good fight with the National Competition Council over issues in relation to water reform. Unfortunately, we frequently find ourselves dealing with an ideologically driven National Competition Council that seems to believe the template for all reform should be that which was followed by the now disgraced, the now defeated former Kennett Government in Victoria.

To those who support every injunction, every pronouncement, every policy adventure of the National Competition Council, I say, "Think again." The people of Victoria told the Kennett Government what they thought of rabid economic rationalism. They got rid of the Kennett Government. What we say is simply this—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr HAMILL: The member for Toowoomba South is interjecting. I remind the member for Toowoomba South that the very piece of legislation which the movers of this private member's Bill are seeking to repeal is legislation introduced by his Government in 1996. It is the competition legislation of 1996, the Borbidge/Sheldon Government legislation, which is being sought to be repealed. I do not believe they are right. I recall how the honourable member voted on this piece of legislation back in 1996. He does not believe they are right in seeking to repeal this legislation for the very reasons which I will further enumerate.

Mr Horan: You voted for it.

Mr HAMILL: I voted for the legislation they are seeking to repeal? Of course I did, as did the member for Toowoomba South, who continues to interject, and the then Premier whose Government's legislation this was. The legislation was introduced for very good reasons. It provides some protections for Queensland which otherwise would not be available were this legislation not on the statute books. If the member for Caboolture really wants to see that protection for Queensland stripped away, then he should proceed with this very misconceived measure which is currently being debated in the House.

This Government has been seeking to reform the application of competition policy in Australia. We have done a great deal towards that objective. I have already mentioned that we have sought to press the views of the Parliament, the views of all members of this Parliament, with respect to reform of the National Competition Council. We have actively sought the abolition of the National Competition Council. We have actively sought the transfer of the supervision of National Competition Policy measures back to the Council of Australian Governments—a council made up of the elected representatives of the Australian people. Therefore, it will bring these issues back into the arena of direct responsibility of democratically elected Governments rather than a non-elected body appointed by the Federal Government to advise the Federal Government.

We have demanded the right to provide community services to the community. We reject the proposition that we could be denied the right to provide community services by an unelected body. We believe elected Governments have the right to make decisions as to how the communities that they serve will be serviced. We do not believe in a non-elected National Competition Council telling us how to do our business.

We also believe in the removal of the financial penalties which are part of the regime currently being run by the Federal Government in conjunction with the National Competition Council. After all, democratically elected Governments are responsible for delivering policy that is in the public interest. What better way of gauging the public interest than testing the mandate of a Government to govern? What better way is there to test the public interest, to give the public a direct say?

Mr Knuth: You should be a philosopher.

Mr HAMILL: I am glad I am able to address such a persuasive argument in the honourable member's direction. I hope he will take on board these points.

Mr Knuth: I am trying to.

Mr HAMILL: The honourable member is very trying indeed.

In the past 20 months or so that we have been in Government, we have sought to reform the application of National Competition Policy in Queensland. Indeed, we were pursuing this agenda before this Government came to office. The member for Caloundra will well recall that in the companion legislation to the piece of legislation which the honourable member for Caboolture would seek to repeal I moved a series of amendments to ensure that the public benefit test which was to be applied with respect to National Competition Policy in Queensland was strengthened; that it gave full force to the range of matters listed in the Competition Principles Agreement which had been agreed to by Governments at the Council of Australian Governments. In our view, it was not good enough that the legislation presented in this Parliament in 1997 seemed to place such emphasis on efficient allocation of resources and pay no reference whatsoever to the other important factors that need to be recognised and adhered to in the determination of a proper public benefit test—issues such as impacts on regional areas, employment, occupational health and safety, the environment and so on.

All of those measures are proper, legitimate, important and vital to the consideration of a public benefit test, not simply the formula for the slash and burn economists, that is, efficient allocation of resources. If we took efficient allocation of resources to its most illogical conclusion, there would not be regional communities in this nation. We would be flat out having a separate regional economy in this part of the nation. I think those who simply adhere to the principle of allocative efficiency believe that the frontiers of this nation end at the financial markets in Sydney. Let me remind them that that is certainly not the view of the Queensland Government.

We have made a number of important changes to the administration of National Competition Policy in Queensland. Apart from ensuring that those elements of the principles agreement were clearly inserted in the legislation, we supported the Borbidge Government in the establishment of the Queensland Competition Authority because, in common with the former Borbidge Government, we did not have confidence in a National Competition Policy that was simply going to be administered through the actions of a National Competition Council—unelected—and an ACCC which would not take into account the various factors that are relevant to a State which has such a significant population in its regions. That is why we supported legislation to establish a Queensland Competition Authority. That is why we supported this piece of legislation which honourable members opposite—whatever they call themselves this week—are seeking to repeal. It contains certain protections for Queensland by virtue of the powers given to the Queensland Government under the legislation.

We have reformed the public benefit test guidelines. We have made them available to the public for the first time. We have required review committees to undertake employment impact and social impact assessments. We have provided explicit procedures for such assessments to ensure that they are comprehensive. We have assiduously advocated on behalf of Queensland in relation to National Competition Policy. Slowly but surely our message is getting across. I may yet be able to permeate the cranium of the member for Burdekin this evening, but I have already been successful in convincing the Deputy Prime Minister of the wisdom of Queensland's position. In September last year, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anderson, recognised the need for National Competition Council reform. He said there was a need for a more sensitive handling of issues. He reportedly told meetings in Queensland that "Governments should not abrogate their responsibility to make decisions by handing them out to statutory authorities". I could not agree with Mr Anderson more. The Queensland Government and this Parliament support that view. I just hope that the Deputy Prime Minister can get other Cabinet Ministers in the Howard Government to support that view.

The interim report of the Senate Select Committee on the Socioeconomic Consequences of the National Competition Policy called for a rethink of the role of the National Competition Council. That Senate committee, to which we made submissions, found that the public interest test had been defined too narrowly by the Federal Government in particular and that it should be widened to take into account the social consequences of reform, particularly in rural areas. It advocated a separation of the duality which has been the National Competition Council. It argued that the National Competition Council should not be responsible for both assessing the progress of reform as well as advising which States should be eligible for competition payments. I could not agree with them more. The Productivity Commission also—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr HAMILL: I am glad the Leader of the Opposition is enjoying the speech. I note his support for the sentiments.

Mr Borbidge: One of your better speeches.

Mr HAMILL: I make a lot of them.

The Productivity Commission also expressed concern at the National Competition Council's potential conflict of interest when it released its report in October last year. The Productivity Commission found that further reforms need to take a greater account of the impact on the wider Australian community. It also echoed the criticism made by the Senate inquiry and this Queensland Government when it stated that it does leave the National Competition Council "open to criticism that it is both interpreting and making the rules". As someone who has had to negotiate with the National Competition Council, I can tell honourable members that the Productivity Commission report was spot-on. At times, we might think that the National Competition Council is remaking the rules during the negotiations. That is no way to instil confidence in a set of principles which are fundamentally important for Australia and the Australian economy.

Mr Borbidge: Australia's version of the House of Lords.

Mr HAMILL: I trust that, as the House of Lords has been reformed recently, so shall we see the National Competition Council reformed. The last thing I wish to see is the National Competition Council going on ad nauseam like those hereditary belted earls, dukes and barons who have vegetated in the Upper House of the Westminster Parliament for generations.

As I said, we have advocated on behalf of reform. I trust that in the forthcoming review of the competition principles, in which all States and Territories and the Commonwealth are engaged, we will see the Commonwealth accept the force of these arguments. They are not just our arguments, they are the arguments of a variety of jurisdictions and bodies that have produced bipartisan and tripartisan reports.

I have mentioned that we have strengthened the application of the public benefit test and its guidelines. That was in fulfilment of an election commitment. However, we have done other things to ensure that there is a proper balance in the consideration of competition issues both in Queensland and nationally. One of the decisions made by the Premier and me was to appoint a Queensland academic from the James Cook University to the Queensland Competition Authority. Professor John Quiggin gives a valuable perspective to the Queensland Competition Authority in relation to the application of competition policy in Queensland. Professor Quiggin, an appointment of this Government, is internationally recognised as a strong critic of economic rationalism and he brings a great deal of knowledge about the social impacts of micro-economic reform to his responsibility as a member of the Queensland Competition Authority. I believe that Professor Quiggin has been asking the pertinent question: what are the real costs to our community of the proposed reforms? Let us understand the real balance sheet—the social balance sheet as well as the economic balance sheet. That has been his argument and that has been the task that we have entrusted to him on the Queensland Competition Authority.

Our actions speak for themselves in relation to National Competition Policy. We have gone further than any other Government in the Commonwealth to restore sanity to what after all ought to be a fundamental quest for Australian Governments through their economic policies. After all, who can deny the importance to Australia as a nation—and Queensland in particular as a region—which relies upon our ability to export into a world global economy, of our producers and our exporters being competitive, efficient, able to compete and able to find and establish a market for our production overseas? It is undeniable that that is important.

However, it is also the case that some of the zealots who have been driving the

excesses in National Competition Policy have lost sight of that worthy objective. I have to ask: how does the review into body piercing actually advance the cause of our international competitiveness? I am still bewildered in relation to that question. Even as a philosopher, if I might use the description offered me by the member for Burdekin, I still find that that is a question beyond my ken and is far beyond an answer which philosophy may well provide.

How does the reform of newsagencies enhance our international competitiveness? That is a question which I asked in this House. Does it make an iota of difference whether the newspaper lands on the driveway or in the garden, or whether it lands one end first or the other, or whether the dog collects the newspaper before a person collects it? It is bunkum; it is nonsense. It is not advancing the cause of our international competitiveness. However, to simply try to say that we should not reform our economy is also a nonsense; it is also destructive.

What I say and what the Queensland Government says is that the cause of reform is an important one, but we are negligent if we overlook the social consequences. We must be cognisant of the social consequences. We must understand that there is a cost to change, as there is a cost of not changing. As a responsible Government, we must be sensitive to the needs of the community and seek to address the hurt, the disappointment, the downside to reform. After all, those who benefit from reform will quickly take the money and run. They are the happy ones. We do not hear from them. But those who have paid the price must be compensated. They must enjoy their fair share of the wealth that the reform has generated, and responsible Governments must redistribute that wealth to ensure that those who have paid the price do not miss out, and that is the philosophy of this Government. As a Government, we believe in equity and fairness. That is what we must do: in building an efficient economy, we must recognise that we have a social responsibility as well.

Mr Feldman interjected.

Mr HAMILL: I know that the member for Caboolture thinks that this Bill is the flashiest Bill he has ever produced. There are two clauses to it. The first one is the short title and the second one says "repeal". I urge every member not to be beguiled by the apparent simplicity of the measure that has been proffered by the member for Caboolture. This Bill is more about media headlines and grandstanding than about effective reform because there are, in fact, three fundamental problems with this Bill.

Mr Feldman: Tell it to the farmers.

Mr HAMILL: I will tell it to the farmers because the farmers would be very interested indeed to understand what the Bill, introduced by the member for Caboolture, would do for them. I am going to explain that in detail for the member here this evening so that they can understand the folly of his ways.

The first problem with this repeal Bill is that it would absolutely fail to achieve its objective, that is, the abolition of National Competition Policy in Queensland—absolutely fail. Contrary to the views of the member for Caboolture and what he would like to suggest, this Bill would not provide Queenslanders with any relief from National Competition Policy or of its major elements. The elements are these: review of regulatory legislation, provision of third-party access to infrastructure and the competitive neutrality of Government business enterprises. It would not absolve the Queensland Government from any of its obligations under National Competition Policy provided for in the competition agreements which were signed back in 1995. This Bill actually ignores the fact that those elements are contained in the COAG agreements, not the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Act, which requires State Governments to address National Competition Policy. That is why my Government has been seeking the cooperation of other State Governments and the Commonwealth for a review of those very competition agreements. It is the principles agreement which has been subject to the review of the Commonwealth and the other States.

Mr Borbidge: Under the regional agreement it has to be reviewed this year, anyway.

Mr HAMILL: That review is due by April this year. That is the very reason why we have been so forthright in our advocacy of reform in relation to the principles agreement.

One of the key issues that we have been advocating is to reverse what we believe is the wrong onus of proof that currently exists within the way in which competition policy has been administered. The way the current arrangements sit is that there is a presumption in relation to any regulations that they should not be there and that the public benefit test should be used to justify a regulation. We would argue that the status quo should be accepted unless a public benefit test demonstrates that it should be altered. That is an important change—a very significant

change—to what has gone on to date, but a change that I believe is absolutely consistent with the aspirations of the people of Queensland and, I believe, people elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

That is why we have been advocating a change out there in the national agenda, an agenda which includes, as I said before, the abolition of the National Competition Council. If we are trying to fix National Competition Policy, we can only do it by going to the real cause of the problem, and that is the national agreements. We are not going to be able to pretend to do it by simply ignoring the problem, by doing a sort of feel good, "pass a repeal Bill through the Parliament on a Wednesday evening" type of thing. It just is not going to work.

The second major flaw in the repeal Bill introduced by the member for Caboolture is that rather than actually providing relief to Queensland from National Competition Policy it would actually make its effects worse. This repeal Bill if carried by the Parliament will actually deliver the worst excesses of National Competition Policy and visit that upon the people of Queensland. Earlier, the member for Caboolture said, "Tell it to the farmers." Let me assure him that, if the farmers want deregulation overnight, then honourable members should clamour for the passage of this Bill.

I am conscious of the time, so I will move that the debate be now adjourned. I will further educate the members of whatever they call themselves later this evening.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hamill, adjourned.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (6 p.m.): I move—

> "That this House recognises the concerns and growing protests of land-holders in relation to the Vegetation Management Bill and pledges this day to undertake the following—
>
> (a) rescind the Bill known as the Vegetation Management Bill 1999
>
> and
>
> (b) enter into meaningful consultation with land-holders to achieve a Vegetation Management Bill which will achieve the aims of both Government and land-holders."

I rise tonight to ask the members of this Government to be big enough to admit that they have made the error of making too much haste in promoting, tabling and forcing the Vegetation Management Bill through Parliament without proper and due consultation with the very people on whom this legislation will have the ultimate and perhaps the most devastating of consequences. There is no-one who does not believe that the issue concerning vegetation management should not be addressed. There would also be no-one who would not encourage the conservation and management of one of our most precious resources. There is not a farmer, a grazier or a miller who does not understand the necessity of conservation.

Let us walk briefly down memory lane. It will be a brief trip as there is little time for the whole scenario to be played out. On a Sunday Mr Beattie flew to Charters Towers to attend a Community Cabinet meeting. On the way, he noticed the smoke of many lit fires. With that observation came the flippant statement from Mr Beattie that the State was on fire from one end to the other. There are many reasons as to why there would have been fires lit at that time of year. Due to the late arrival of spring, many areas did not burn off until later in the year, as happened around Barambah. Burning off in Australia is an annual event to protect areas and forests from the ravages of bushfires. We are all very familiar with the effects of wildfires. There are many other reasons to burn off as well, but it is not necessary to go into them all.

Mr Beattie was quoted as saying, "We don't need what is clearly panic clearing going on." Mr Beattie is also reported as having said at the time that we would have a resolution to the land-clearing issue before Christmas. Mr Beattie's flights were on Sunday and Monday. By Wednesday there was legislation on the table of the House and by Friday it was forced through the Parliament with very little debate. What on earth happened to consultation? Mr Beattie says that tree-clearing rates are increasing. A very interesting statistic and one that the Premier uses regularly to justify this legislation is that there was a significant change in the satellite data concerning tree clearing. Clearing on freehold land rose from 44% of the total in 1991-95 to 57% of the total in 1995-97. Why did this occur? The answer is simple.

Interim guidelines were established for leasehold land in 1995 and the Goss Government then started rattling the sabres in that year on controls on freehold. So there it is: increased clearing began from the time the Goss Government first mooted action on freehold land. The Goss Government was the

stimulus back then, and the Beattie Government has been the stimulus this time. What we have is a Government-induced outbreak of panic clearing. That is not the fault of industry; it is the fault of Government. This legislation did exactly what Mr Beattie's Government was hoping to prevent, that is, it caused people to panic. With a little consideration and consultation and less knee-jerk reaction, this Government would have all the land-holders willing and eager to assist them in coming to a reasonable and responsible long-term solution to a problem which needs resolving in the best interests of all parties, including the parties whose livelihood and future relies so much on the preservation of the very vegetation that this Government seeks to protect. Both sides are trying to achieve the same result.

Let us be realistic: in all industries there are what are commonly called a few cowboys. To describe all graziers and farmers as environmentally irresponsible is insulting. These people may not have a degree and they may not be able to write a book about conservation and vegetation management, but they do know what it is and they actively pursue it. Everyone admits that the practices of our forefathers were detrimental to the environment. The majority of land-holders are now actively pursuing conservation techniques.

Because this legislation has been put together by people who theorise about rural Queensland but do not live, work and breathe it, the mistrust of rural Queenslanders for those in Government and their advisers is almost tangible at this time. The land we are talking about is freehold land. I will talk a little about freehold land, or fee simple land. In the judgment of Justice Isaacs, at page 42, he quotes from page 218 of Challis's Real Property, 3rd Edition. That textbook states—

> "... a fee simple is the most extensive in quantum, and the most absolute in respect to the rights which it confers, of all the estates known to law. It confers, and since the beginning of legal history it always has conferred, the lawful right to exercise over, upon and in respect to the land every act of ownership which can enter into the imagination."

This vegetation legislation aims to take away many of the freedoms stated in that book. I have to ask myself: why were these land-holders not consulted in depth? Why did they not get the chance to work with this Government to arrive at a reasonable outcome, an outcome that all the landowners who have called me from all corners of the State have said they are prepared to work towards, even to the point of coming up with plans to aid in achieving the goal of this Government?

Mr Beattie has endeavoured to obtain some compensation from the Federal Government, stating that land-holders would not get proper compensation if Mr Howard did not come through with $100m. It was stated that the State Government could not fund it by itself. But it can waste $280m of taxpayers' money, much of which would have come from land-holders, to build a superstadium in Brisbane. Surely if the Minister and the Premier believe that it is essential to pass this vegetation management legislation with such urgency and with no real consultation, then it would seem reasonable to take that $280m from a non-essential use and put it to an essential one. Instead, what is proposed is that we accept bits and pieces of legislation that was rammed through this House. There are some good provisions in this Bill, and many people have stated the same to me. That good can be easily incorporated in the drafting of a new Bill to address this problem.

The Federal Government has asked that this vegetation legislation be revisited. Agforce spokesman Mr Larry Acton has asked that this legislation be revisited. The land-holders have asked that this legislation be revisited. Many members of this House have constantly asked that it be revisited. The only party involved in this process that has not demonstrated a willingness to revisit this legislation is this Beattie Government. This Government, which so desperately wants the legislation to work, is the only party that will not even consider it. We are asking the Government tonight to please do so. I can understand Mr Beattie thinking that this is just another stunt, just another ploy for political gain. I say this to the Premier: do not judge us all by the standards adopted by many seasoned members of this House, some of whom would be masters after so long. I moved this motion tonight because I see what is happening. I hear what the land-holders are saying. They need the Government to understand that there is more to this than political mileage. It is about people and livelihoods.

I ask this of the Premier, the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources and the Labor Government: in the pursuit of fair and equitable government for all Queenslanders, will the Government rescind the current vegetation Bill and undertake to have discussions and consultation with all the various parties to come to a realistic and workable agreement?

Mr Beattie stands before us daily in this House and states that this Government is out there listening to the people of Queensland. How is it, then, that the statement I constantly hear is that members of this Government are out there, but that if they are listening they had better clean the wax out of their ears because they are not hearing, and they had better open their minds because they are not understanding. Will the Premier pledge to Queensland land-holders that the Government will meet them halfway in working to resolve an issue that is vital to all Queenslanders? I ask the Premier and this Government to be what they promised to be when Mr Beattie became Premier, that is, in the Premier's own words, "a Government for all Queenslanders".

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (6.08 p.m.): I rise to second this motion. In preparing some notes for the debate, I was going to comment that I hoped that the debate this evening would not degenerate to the level that the debate did last evening. I did not need to worry. With only one coalition member here, 11 or perhaps 12 ALP members, CCAQ members and Independents, I doubt that it will deteriorate at all. It is amazing how 24 hours makes a difference to people's attitudes.

Mr Welford: I'm still here.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Yes, the Minister is still here.

The Vegetation Management Act is a very emotive issue in my electorate. I guess most of my perception of the attitudes of people across the State has been garnered from the media, but it has been an emotive issue right across the State. I have received a great number of letters, faxes and emails criticising the Act as it was passed. Almost without exception, the reason for the criticism has stemmed from a sense of insecurity, from the threat and some stronger feelings that this Act has created because of its intrusiveness. People do not feel that they were consulted. They do not feel that the Act genuinely addresses the diversity of this State.

This motion seeks to rescind what is perceived by many as a flawed document and to begin meaningful consultation. The motion recognises the value of management of our natural environment. It does not say "Rescind the Act and do nothing"; it says "Rescind the Act and let us create a document that more appropriately fits within our diverse environmental climate." The management must recognise the diversity of our State, from brigalow to rainforest to dry littoral forest—indeed, the broadest range of vegetation types. We need to deal with each of those types appropriately. We need to ensure that landowners are included, and not dictated to, in the form that the legislation takes.

I genuinely believe that if they were shown that their private freehold land contained threatened, endangered or of-concern vegetation, 95%—if not 99%—of Queenslanders would work closely with the Minister of any relevant department to ensure the protection of that vegetation. That is not the sense that people have from this legislation. The sense that they have is that it will be dictated to them, that they will not be brought along with the legislation, that they will not be cooperated with in terms of its application, that they will be told. The Minister said, "It is not my fault." If that is what the Act genuinely entails, then the message has not gotten out, because people genuinely do feel threatened by it.

The people of my electorate—and they are no different in make-up from others across the State—would look to cooperate with Government to protect unique vegetation. The success of the Landcare groups across Queensland indicates the willing spirit of people, particularly in rural areas, to work holistically with the properties. Landcare groups were formed when it was recognised that there were aspects of land care that could be improved. A vehicle needed to be instituted to enable that improvement to occur. The support for the Landcare groups of which I am aware has increased. In fact, those who support land care become very strong advocates for the Landcare program. I think that indicates that, in the great majority of cases, individuals are wanting to do the best with their properties. One area where that may be more difficult to achieve is the case of developers who are looking at cutting their properties into small parcels and selling for a profit. But in the larger acreage areas, people want to do what is right.

I support this motion, simply because it is taking the concerns of the community as they stand now and is looking for a positive result in the long term so that our environment can be protected not just today but in the long-term future.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (6.12 p.m.): I move—

> "That all the words after 'Vegetation Management Bill' be deleted and replaced with:

'and commends the State Government's plan to proclaim those sections of the Vegetation Management Act that protect areas containing endangered vegetation types on freehold land, and welcomes the Government's strategy to use regional vegetation management plans to oversee the protection of areas containing "of concern" vegetation types on freehold land'."

This Government has listened and this Government has responded. This Government has responded by now looking only at those endangered vegetation types on freehold land and—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ELDER: It is interesting that the honourable member has walked into the Chamber now, 15 minutes—

Mr Seeney: You're going to claim credit for it.

Mr ELDER: It is interesting that the member walked in 15 minutes into this debate, a debate last night that the National Party had so much concern about, yet we have one member of One Nation—sorry, one member of the National Party in this Chamber. I realise that the former One Nation Party is now called the City Country Alliance, Queensland. I always see those members as the sons and daughters of One Nation, so they will have to forgive me.

The fact of the matter is that we have one member of the National Party present for a debate which last night it saw as so important to the people of Queensland. This illustrates quite clearly what I was saying last night. We get the same old cliches from the Opposition, the same old downright lies that it has used on this subject. The big lie being used here by the Opposition is that the bush is burning. Let us start getting some facts on the table. First fact: the Opposition itself has not told the people of the bush that the Queensland legislation covers only 0.5 of a per cent of this State, and only half of that—0.25%—is freehold. That is because the legislation covers only vegetation types which are close to extinction, and the support—

Mr Seeney: You're talking about a million acres.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Callide will cease interjecting.

Mr ELDER: I will take his interjection, because the support for saving those areas goes right across-the-board. Right across-the-board we get that support and agreement—

Mr Welford: Except for him.

Mr ELDER: Except for him, the National Party agrees that it should be protected. When in Government, the National Party agreed that it should be protected. The Farmers Federation, Agforce—everyone believes it should be protected. Members opposite can run but they cannot hide on this issue. They can run away from it as fast as they like, but they will never hide from it. They signed an agreement in 1997 with the Federal Government that promised that effective measures would be put in place to retain and manage vegetation, including controls on clearing.

Mr Musgrove interjected.

Mr ELDER: The member for Springwood is right. So members opposite are saying to people out in the bush, "Look, we promised we would put them in, but we were only contemplating them. We are not quite sure that you want to hear what we were contemplating, so we will go back and we will talk to the Feds, and after the election we will come back and we will talk to you about the types of controls on clearing that we are planning." So members opposite took it away and put it in that little drawer at National Party headquarters—

Mr Sullivan: In the too-hard basket.

Mr ELDER: They put it in the too-hard drawer because they did not want to confront the issue in the lead-up to an election. The reason for that is simple, and they are sitting in the back of this Chamber. The reason for that was the bush and the bush's response to the National Party. I would really like to know from members opposite what they intended to enact in terms of those controls on clearing.

The fact of the matter is that this Government has acted responsibly in dealing with this issue. This Government has gone out and listened to the community on this issue. In fact, no more than a fortnight ago I had a meeting on this very issue with a raft of farmers from north-west Queensland. The changes we have made are in response to that meeting and in response to the position in which we are being placed by the Federal Government.

I say to all members opposite, and particularly all the members at the back of the Chamber: go and read the Courier-Mail. Go and check the biodiversity Bill, which is Senator Hill's legislation. Do some research to find out just where Hill is going on this issue. The members at the back of the Chamber support

the conservatives 99% of the time in this House.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr ELDER: I will take 98% if the member wants to interject and say "98%".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier's time has expired.

Mr ELDER: The members at the back of the Chamber should go and read what conservatives are doing in this State. It might just help them in understanding this issue and where this Government is responding in terms of the—

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.18 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier. I simply say to the members who moved and seconded this motion that I acknowledge the comment by the mover, the member for Barambah, that there is some good in the Act that has been passed. That is absolutely right. What is good in it is the principles that underpin what needs to be protected, based on extensive consultation with industry groups of all stakeholders throughout last year. The basis of the approach that I took was a consultative approach. That approach was to work with the industry groups throughout last year to identify the basic principles and then go into a regional process to address the regional issues and give local people an opportunity to express their views. That was always part of the process. Agforce, the QFF, Canegrowers and all the others knew that was part of the process.

I see the member for Barambah shaking her head, and I can understand why she shakes her head because after 12 months of consulting with those groups I, too, have learnt that those groups do not represent the vast majority of people in rural areas. Those groups have been an ineffective method of communicating the issues to people in rural areas. I should mention that some of the representatives of some of those groups have gone out of their way, since we introduced the Bill and passed it in this House, to misrepresent the Bill, its contents and the consultative approach that was planned through the whole process.

Mr Seeney: Who are you talking about?

Mr WELFORD: I am talking about the member who interjects, for a start. The honourable members of the National Party have been an absolute disgrace—

Mr Seeney: You've done more damage than everybody else put together.

Mr WELFORD: The members of the National Party, and the member for Callide in particular, have been an absolute disgrace in this exercise. They have been the ones who have done the most to misrepresent the Bill, to scare the people and to inflame the concerns of people in rural communities even before those people had the opportunity to understand the principles and the process which would allow them to be involved. Let me just explain—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting! That is my final warning.

Mr WELFORD: Mr Speaker, I am not going to be able to respond to the mover of the motion if that person continues to intervene in that way.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I can assure the Minister he will not be.

Mr WELFORD: The fact is that we do not need to revisit this legislation. We have already revisited it. As the Deputy Premier mentioned, we have already taken account of the concerns of land-holders. We said from the start that we would not advocate the protection of endangered and of-concern communities without a financial package to go with it. We said that right from the start.

If the Federal Government did not come up with the financial package we were not going to proceed with the full protection of endangered and of-concern communities. When the package was not forthcoming from the Federal Government we were honest with regard to that commitment. We are now seeking to preserve only the endangered communities. That is the only minimum protection that is mandatory under the proposals with which we are proceeding. That is the only thing the Bill requires. The member for Barambah is correct; the Bill is reasonable and it does not need to be revisited.

The only reason why land-holders are saying that the Bill needs to be revisited is that certain politicians and certain agri-politicians have been misrepresenting the Bill. I cannot understand why the member for Barambah thinks the Bill needs to be revisited if the basic principles of the Bill are correct. All that needs to happen is that the regional process needs to continue so that people in rural communities understand how they can have a say and how they can manage their properties in accordance with the legitimate principles that the Bill incorporates.

Canegrowers support the legislation in its original form. The regional process will allow regional communities to have input. In every Bill that passes in this Parliament it is not possible to consult every individual. That is a ridiculous proposition. What I have done is this: I have consulted the industry groups and provided for a process for regional consultation, which has already started and which will continue in the coming months. We will ensure that consultation—

Mrs Pratt: If it's so good, why are so many people against it?

Mr WELFORD: I am trying to explain that the reason is that it has been misrepresented. It has been grossly misrepresented.

Time expired.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—IND) (6.24 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Barambah that the current vegetation legislation should be rewritten. Initially, I want to comment on some of the statements made yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition said that such legislation will be ineffective unless it has the support of the players in the industry. History has shown that top down regulation of industries, particularly in communist countries, quickly transforms those countries from net exporters into net importers. Another point made yesterday was that farmers see this legislation as a dilution of the rights of freehold land held in fee simple. Certainly that feeling is strong in my electorate.

Other valid points include the point that many of the blocks released under past Government schemes for closer settlement were too small to be viable and sustainable. Many of the development leases contained clearing milestones which had to be achieved. My family took up a special development lease and we had to clear and pasture the property to the satisfaction of the Minister.

Many graziers in my electorate rely heavily on the sustainable harvest of sawlogs, poles and bridge girders from their grazing land. They find this legislation insulting. Further, they believe that the silvicultural techniques they have evolved over years of experience are site specific, and that their site-specific technology is more productive than that of the Forestry Department. In fact, these silvipastoralists out-produce the forestry reserve country, which is separated from them by a fence, by a factor of three.

I would like to tell the House about the achievements of one family whose property I know well. Firstly, I draw the House's attention to a report by the Australian National University which stated that the majority of current land degradation in Australia was set in motion during the first 30 years of European settlement when European farming methods were applied to the much more fragile soils of Australia.

The grazing property I wish to talk about was taken up in 1900. It has supported three generations and now supports three families as more acquisitions of land have taken place. Those families earn 30% of their yearly gross income from timber sales. These sustainable timber sales have funded capital improvements—especially lump sum expenditures. In other words, their nurtured timber has been a banking facility and has helped them to avoid bank debts.

They purchased a neighbouring block in 1950. This block had been severely ringbarked, contained very few trees, was subject to gully erosion and the creek water was saline. During the past 50 years these people have selectively controlled regrowth in order to encourage commercial trees such as spotted gum, grey ironbark and grey box. Those species indicate a poorer soil type. They now selectively log this block on a regular basis. The number of millable stems continues to increase. The saline soakages have gone. These people consider that they have developed, by experience and responsible activity, a sustainable silvipastoral system without assistance from Government advisers.

What does this family ask of this Government? It asks for trust—that they are responsible land-holders. It asks for incentives to maintain and improve the family's current activities. The family asks for respect for farmer-generated technology and for genuine communication and consultation.

How does this family feel about this legislation? The family agrees with the underlying spirit of the legislation. They are very distrustful of political processes and they fear that an uninformed political ideology will get rolling out of control and that their livelihood will be swept away. They want freedom from disincentives. They believe that this dictatorial Government does not know the methodology which will facilitate a productive partnership between the Government and their industry.

In summary, they do not support this current legislation, despite the fact that they are successful and responsible land-holders who have proven sustainability and have a record of improving their land. I have to say to members of this House that this is a very sad

state of affairs. This legislation needs serious reconsideration. It cannot achieve the support of very responsible land-holders, so what hope does it have?

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (6.29 p.m.): The honourable member for Maryborough mentioned a family which is undergoing difficulty in relation to this legislation. Is this a private forest that the honourable member was referring to?

Dr Kingston: No.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the member. I rise to speak in support of the amendment to the motion. I listened very carefully to the contributions by the honourable member for Barambah and the honourable member for Gladstone. I was heartened to hear that the honourable member for Barambah found some good points in the legislation. I also took on board the issues that the honourable member for Gladstone referred to in relation to consultation.

Together with the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources I, too, believed when I first became a Minister that consultation really meant consultation with the agri-political groups. I quickly found out that that is not the case. We had to consult with two tiers of people within the industry. We had to consult with the agri-political groups and we also had to consult with the grassroots. I found that out fairly quickly.

Honourable members opposite would know that with the passage of the Sugar Bill—which took about seven days to get through the Parliament—I was consulting with the actual people in the field even as the Bill was going through in order that they could get their message across to me. This enabled me to amend the legislation at the last minute to ensure that we had consensus.

However, I must say that the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources is committed to consultation. Of course, that is also reflected in our commitment to Community Cabinet meetings and regional ministerial forums. In speaking with the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources, I understand also that a number of further meetings regarding new vegetation management guidelines have been scheduled by him. Already in the past fortnight to three weeks, forums have been held in Winton, Gympie, Bundaberg, Mackay, Atherton, Charters Towers, Beaudesert, Emerald and Rockhampton. I understand that there have been very good attendances at the vegetation management forums that have been held so far. Vegetation management forums are due also to be held in Augathella, Inglewood, Roma and Miles over the next week or so. I believe that the fact that the Minister has attended so many forums is very positive for the Government. I commend the Minister for meeting with producers and discussing the issues face to face.

Tonight, I also welcome the opportunity to update honourable members on a project that the Department of Primary Industries is progressing with Landcare groups in the Burdekin catchment. As all honourable members would recall, last night I outlined work on the Burdekin rangelands/reef initiative covering a catchment of some 13 million hectares. Last month, following deputations from the Dalrymple Landcare groups, I was pleased to announce that the department would contribute seed funding for this initiative. Tonight, I can also announce to honourable members that the draft Burdekin rangelands strategy will be launched in Charters Towers next week. The draft Burdekin rangelands strategy is being released for public comment. It is intended to help the rangelands community and other stakeholders to sustainably manage natural resources issues in their regions. This week, the DPI Burdekin rangelands strategy project officer, Arwen Rikert, said—

> "The Burdekin Rangelands Strategy is a blueprint for action over four fronts—land management for sustainable production and biodiversity, water resource management and social and economic factors."

I return now to the issue of consultation. Next week the Minister for Local Government and I will be travelling to Gayndah to convene the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Rural Ministerial Advisory Council. The council was established late last year by the State Government. Its role is to advise the Government on issues impacting on rural Queensland and to further strengthen linkages between the State Government and rural communities. The council will be asked to provide the Government with advice on issues and challenges related to rural and remote Queensland and advice on the priorities for Government services, programs and facilities.

The council builds on the Government's commitment to effective communication and consultation with all Queenslanders. Also, under this commitment, the State Government established its regional communities forums and Community Cabinet process. The council's members are drawn from across Queensland and across the community. I am looking

forward to the discussions with the council. Indeed, the first meeting of the Queensland Rural Ministerial Advisory Council will coincide with the Premier's rural forum to be held at the RNA in Brisbane on the same day. With those few words, I support the amendment moved by the Deputy Premier and supported by the Minister for Natural Resources.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (6.33 p.m.): I support the motion moved by the member for Barambah. I also support the words of the Deputy Premier tonight, as I have had members of the National Party come to my electorate and shout loudly and clearly about how much they hate the Vegetation Management Bill. Yet here we are actually talking about trying to rescind the Bill, and there is only a handful of National Party members in the Chamber. I acknowledge that the member for Callide is here. He is one of the few members of the National Party for whom I have any respect. However, the simple fact is that the member for Keppel is not in the Chamber. He has run around my electorate spouting off to the very, very few National Party people left in the electorate telling them how much he is going to do about the Bill. Where is he? He is not in the House. That is a simple statement. I will make sure that this speech that I am making tonight is circulated to the people in my electorate whom he basically misled to let them know exactly what is going on in this House.

The simple fact is that, no matter what any member on either side of the House thinks of it, this Bill has failed completely to achieve what it set out to achieve, which is to protect the environments that are in danger. From the start, it has been misguided, misrepresented and totally and utterly flogged to death in all arenas. In my electorate, all I did was to hand photocopies of the Bill to people and say, "Here, read this." One of those people took a copy of the Bill and addressed the Minister when he was in Atherton. I am told that the Minister was asked quite a few very detailed questions that he could not answer. I have it on good authority that in one of his statements—and I have this on good authority; I do not have to be at a meeting on the tablelands to know what is being said there—the Minister said that, given his time again, he would do things differently; he would not have done this. When one of the farmers put it to him—and let us face it: people on the tablelands say what they feel—"All right then, pull the Bill and let's start from scratch and we will help you write a good one", he said, "No, we can't do that." The simple reason why the Minister cannot do that is that that would be an admission of defeat. It would be a political slap in the face for the Minister.

If the Minister were honest and if he were a man who wanted to do the right thing by the environment, on behalf of the environment he would admit defeat and say, "All right, we will start again from scratch." I assure the Minister that the farmers and other people in my electorate who have properties that are affected by this legislation would work with him. At the meeting, they said that they would work with the Minister to try to get something done the right way.

I could talk about so many points that are contained in this Bill. I do not know if the Minister has actually been to Lake Eacham, and he is not in the Chamber to say whether he has, which is in my electorate. It is a beautiful little crater lake, completely surrounded by rainforest, in a magnificent part of the world. That rainforest is regrowth. I have photos of Lake Eacham surrounded by houses with not a single tree around it. So we are talking about what is now World Heritage rainforest, or completely protected rainforest, that is regrowth. Under the terms of the Bill, because it is regrowth, that rainforest could be bulldozed.

The simple fact is that no thought and planning went into this Bill. It was written by what I call environmental vandals—the people who want to save and lock up everything instead of actually looking at how to manage it properly—who have not gone through all the points that can be debated in relation to the whole concept. The point that has really been hammered home to me in my electorate by people who are in the know—and a lot of the tablelands properties are freehold—is that the basic fundamental of this Bill attacks freehold property rights. That is a right that people pay for. Very, very few property owners would actually go about destroying the vegetation on their property just for the sake of it. Like conservatives bashing unions, all that is farmer bashing by the members opposite. They know that that will not cost them one vote. It is trendy voodoo magic to play with the people in Brisbane, because the people in Brisbane do not have trees in their backyards; they have concrete. So the members opposite can say, "All of these trees are being bulldozed by farmers. We will put in this Bill and stop the farmers from bulldozing the trees." Farmers do not bulldoze trees. Very, very few clear-felling operations have been in progress on the tablelands for at least 30 or 40 years.

The simple fact is that, on the tablelands—and this is a point that is not being

addressed in this Bill, either—we are actually reclaiming rainforest by replanting. Because of large-scale regrowth, parts of the tablelands have rainforest in them that never had rainforest before. Recently, a person from Brisbane came to the tablelands and could not believe the amount of regrowth. This is an issue that has been played up by some environmental vandals in the department who have tried to get their own way, failed miserably and instead angered the people of Queensland—and rightfully so.

I say to the Minister: rescind the Bill, do the right thing, start from scratch, and the people will work with you. This is not the way to govern the State. Government members have seen that this legislation will not work. They have seen the anger and the backlash that it has caused. Let us try to do something right and rescind the Bill.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.38 p.m.): In supporting the amendment moved by the Deputy Premier, I will start by saying that many people in and around my electorate are farmers who are hardworking, honest people who have been on the land for generations. The vast majority of them are already smart operators who know how to get the best out of their land. They have nothing to fear from these new guidelines that were introduced by this Government.

The reality is that these new arrangements will actually have little impact on the majority of Queensland's primary producers. Ever since this Government came to office, it has been open and honest about its intentions. That is a lot more than I can say about members opposite, who have made no attempt to provide constructive information to our primary producers.

Last Friday, the Minister for Natural Resources held a vegetation management forum in Rockhampton. Many of those who attended were from my electorate. It might disappoint members opposite, but I say that this was a useful and constructive meeting that was conducted in a calm and courteous atmosphere. Producers attended because they wanted accurate information, not some of the rhetoric, half-truths and misinformation that is being peddled by those who care only about their political future.

The realities of life are that we have many decent, hard-working farmers who are focused on the future and who want to maintain financially viable properties, along with other farmers in the area. To these people, vegetation management is part of a total living system. Nature is part of the property and is of significant value to the long-term prosperity of the region.

Being nature conscious means less salt and weed invasion, better quality of water for on-farm storage and our river systems, and a greater shade resource so that large numbers of livestock are not forced to congregate around limited shade. Tree lines provide shade and shelter from wind, control of fire, corridors for wildlife and buffer zones against salinity and erosion.

The National Party and some of the people who are out there causing confusion by deliberately muddying the waters on this issue need to look further than the next tree line that they wish to destroy. They should look through the trees and picture what it should be like for our children's grandchildren and beyond. They need to make commonsense decisions and remember that the decisions we make today will have consequences which future generations will have to manage. I refer to the Darling River system.

I saw a comment in a recent newspaper article which was fair dinkum, down to earth and a credit to the man making the comment. On farming practices, this man said—

> "Live your life as if you're going to die tomorrow, but farm your land as though you're going to live forever."

I have had some very strong views about what has happened in this State since the passage of the legislation prior to Christmas. As I see it, the National Party in Queensland and the Federal Government under the leadership of John Howard are guilty of the most treacherous act of collusion in the history of Australian politics—collusion with the intent to deliberately frustrate, delay and embarrass a can-do Labor Government.

The National Party is guilty of conspiring to allow the continuation of land clearing, despite ticking off the same type of legislation prior to the election when it was kicked out. The Queensland National Party has used its political relationship with the Federal Government to influence it not to contribute to the compensation package necessary for the successful implementation of the vegetation management legislation. The Nationals have played the same game here as the blatant act of false representation when John Howard refused to contribute Federal funds to the regional forest agreement because the backbench six-pack asked him not to do so.

Members of the National Party cannot handle the realities of life. It hurts them to be found wanting and unable to find workable

solutions to rural issues. I know; I am out there talking to them. The National Party does not like it. The Labor Party is out there talking to rural producers. The National Party is so desperate that it has gone begging to its Federal mates to deny Queenslanders taxpayer dollars that will help maintain jobs and create jobs in the timber industry. It has turned its back on Queensland's future by effectively withdrawing funds that would have compensated landowners for loss of production due to the need to make sound land management decisions in the interests of properties, local areas, the regions, and, most importantly, the future of rural Queensland.

The Federal Government has a moral obligation to the Australian people and, more importantly, to the people of Queensland to work hand in hand with this Government and pay a fair share of the cost of implementing sensible land management legislation.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (6.45 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the motion of the member for Barambah which was seconded by the member for Gladstone. I take note of what the member for Everton said. He hit the nail right on the head when he said that the peak industry groups were not representative of their grassroots members' interests in this particular issue.

The extent of the concern about this issue, especially in the areas of the City Country Alliance Queensland members and the Independents, should be noted. This issue is not just about tree clearing. It is not just about the disruption to farming operations and the destruction of the viability of thousands of family farms. It is not just about the destruction of the livelihoods of thousands of battling Queenslanders and the trampling of all their hopes and aspirations built up over several generations. This issue goes deeper than that. This is about the removal of one of our most basic rights, an inalienable right that was bestowed by freehold title, which has forever been the cornerstone of our society. It has been every Australian's dream to own his or her own little corner of this great country, whether it be a quarter acre block in suburbia or the family farm. Generations of Australians have drawn great comfort from the security afforded to them by their freehold title over their own little corner of Australia or, in this case, Queensland.

This assumption of the absolute right bestowed by freehold title is not just a figment of land-holders' imaginations. It has been codified by the courts of our nation. In the August 1923 case of The Commonwealth v. The State of New South Wales, the High Court of Australia clarified these rights in what is now known as the Royal Metals case as being—and it has already been quoted, but I will quote it again, because we have to get it through someone's head—

> "... the most extensive in quantum, and the most absolute in respect to the rights which it confers, of all estates known to the law. It confers, and since the beginning of legal history it always has conferred, the lawful right to exercise over, upon, and in respect to, the land, every act of ownership which can enter the imagination."

Mr Seeney: It's called freehold land.

Mr FELDMAN: That is called freehold land; that is correct. This judgment was referred to by the High Court in the case of Mabo v. Queensland (No. 2) 1992 and most recently in Fejo v. Northern Territory 1998. At paragraph 93 of that judgment, Justice Kirby quotes directly the passage quoted by Justice Isaacs in The Commonwealth v. The State of New South Wales of 1923.

The evidence is crystal clear. What this Government has done is thumb its nose at the rulings of the High Court of Australia, reinforced at least twice by that same authority and as recently as 1998. It does not have that right. This Government does not have the right to ride roughshod over the rights of the citizens of this State. It demonstrated that cavalier and dictatorial attitude when it used its numbers to gag the debate and railroad this legislation through the Parliament. But to attempt to take away a basic right of Queensland landowners is an even more serious breach of the powers mandated to the Government by the voters who expected it to use those powers more responsibly.

This is the most gross attack on private property rights that I have ever seen; it is even more offensive than the resumption of the land at South Bank last year. This is a knee-jerk reaction by a Government which does not understand the nature of farming in this State and blatantly does not care. It is driven and controlled by the loony Left environmentalists and cannot come to grips with the fact that the vast majority of the supposed tree clearing is regrowth control—a phenomenon which is not as prevalent and necessary in other States as it is in Queensland. The Government cannot accept the fact that the vast majority of landowners are extremely concerned about and involved in the sustainability of their farming operations. Many are involved in land

care groups and take a proactive approach to sustainable property management.

If the Government were to take an encouraging rather than bludgeoning approach to conservation, the outcome would be a much more satisfactory one. The Federal Government has realised the inadequacies of this legislation and has refused to fund it. To seek to gazette part of this Act would be a travesty of parliamentary procedure. This Act must be repealed in its entirety, and the Government's next attempt to come up with replacement legislation must be debated fully in this House.

Time expired.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): I rise to support the Government's amendment to this Bill. I do so in some amazement at the illogical, semi-religious fervour of the previous speaker on the issue of the meaning of freehold title. I cannot think why he would speak with such religious fervour and without intelligence, other than for two possible reasons. One is perhaps because he believes his constituents—

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. I take exception to the statement by the member, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Ms BOYLE: Which statement, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: You find the words offensive and you are asking that they be withdrawn; is that correct?

Mr Feldman: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Ms BOYLE: I withdraw. There could be two reasons for the illogical tirade from the other side of the House. Firstly, there could perhaps be a lack of intelligence and understanding. Secondly, the member could believe wrongly—as I predict the ballot box will show in about 15 months' time—that his constituents will approve the nonsense that he has put before the House tonight.

I own several blocks of freehold land and I am sure that other honourable members also are pleased to say that they, too, own their little pieces of Australia. On one of my blocks of land is my home, and I am not entitled to do on that block of land anything that I choose. There are various local government, State Government and Federal Government restrictions on what I can do on my residential block. I own another piece of land on which I conduct business and, again, there are restrictions even though that is freehold land. I must behave in the community's interests and within the laws, whichever level of Government may set those laws for orderly activity. That is all this Bill is about. That is all we are asking.

We agree with members opposite that the majority of farmers are responsible. They believe in sustainable farming and looking after the fragile ecosystems that may be formed on part of their land. But that is only the majority. As in any industry sector, there is a minority who will not be dictated to by Government, and yet they must be. That is when we need the full force of the law, particularly where we have ecosystems that are seriously at risk and vegetation types that are close to extinction. Even the Queensland Farmers Federation acknowledges the need to protect these endangered ecosystems. In total, in Queensland that represents 925,000 hectares, or 0.5% of the State. Of this, only 440,000 hectares is freehold. Therefore, surely it makes good sense not only to constituents in our electorates but also to all honourable members that these precious areas must be protected. If farmers will not do so voluntarily, we should provide them with the necessary information, and, in the end, a measure that compels them to do so.

We have spoken about consultation this evening, and I note that recently the Minister for Natural Resources was in north Queensland holding a vegetation management forum for land-holders at Atherton. In spite of what members opposite might have hoped, that meeting was calm, constructive and a valuable opportunity for producers to get accurate information. I agree with the member for Tablelands that we have a great number of fine farmers on the Atherton Tableland. They take excellent care of the land and have taken steps to remediate the mistakes of the past through replanting.

The environment groups also have a strong influence. As a result of the dialogue in recent months, I am pleased to note that there will be flexibility in the implementation of the Bill to take into account local and regional circumstances. Local communities, farmers, community members, environmental groups and industry players will all have a say in developing regional vegetation management plans for that purpose. That local knowledge and the interpretation and implementation of the Bill in a local way will make it far more effective. This commonsense Bill provides a balanced framework for sustainable land management. It will go a long way towards protecting our State's unique biodiversity.

Time expired.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Briskey, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

The numbers being equal, Mr Speaker cast his vote with the Ayes.

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Question—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Briskey, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

The numbers being equal, Mr Speaker cast his vote with the Ayes.

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 7.02 p.m. till 8.30 p.m.

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM (QUEENSLAND) REPEAL BILL

Second Reading

Resumed (see p. 171).

Mr HAMILL (8.30 p.m.), continuing: Before the House adjourned this debate and proceeded to conduct a debate on a matter of significance, I was discussing the basic flaws which are quite apparent with respect to the Bill which is being put forward by the honourable member for Caboolture. I made the point that the Bill misses the mark altogether, that if the member for Caboolture really believes that this measure, designed to repeal the Borbidge Government legislation of 1996, will somehow remove competition policy from Queensland, then the honourable member is horribly mistaken. Anyone whom he has convinced that this Bill would remove competition reforms will be horribly disappointed because they will have been cynically deceived.

I had made the point before the debate was adjourned that this measure deals with the repeal of the legislation enacted by this Parliament in 1996. In no way does it touch the competition principles agreement and in no way does it touch the agreements reached at the Council of Australian Governments, the very agreements that this Government has been pursuing to reform in the current round of review—reforms which we are pressing now with the Commonwealth and with other jurisdictions as a part of the April 2000 review of the competition principles agreement. This is the time frame. This review is imminent and this House spoke clearly on the matter of the National Competition Council and the administration of competition policy when it resolved unanimously that we should see the abolition of the National Competition Council and the restoration of the control of competition reforms to the hands of the democratically elected representatives, that is, the Governments of the States, the Territories and the Commonwealth. So we cannot continue with this charade that this repeal Bill is going to achieve the objective of turning back the clock on competition reforms, because it simply will not do so.

The second major flaw in this Bill that has been put forward by the member for Caboolture is that, rather than providing any sort of relief from competition reform, in fact, if this Bill were to be enacted it would open up the full force of economic rationalism upon the Queensland economy. In fact, it would devastate certain of our industries overnight. There would be nothing that we could do to forestall the most wide-ranging change that could have ever been conjured up by those at times malevolent spirits who simply believe in the marketplace and that the marketplace will solve all ills.

I had heard by way of interjection that some honourable member up there on the grassy knoll was suggesting that we should be trying to explain this to the farmers. But it is principally quite a number of areas of primary production which have benefited under this piece of legislation. Do members of the City Country Alliance believe that the Government should not seek to protect industries in the public interest? Do they realise that it is only through this Act—the Act that they wish to repeal—that the Queensland Parliament can

enact laws or in turn produce subordinate legislation which can exempt anti-competitive behaviour?

I hope that the honourable member for Caboolture has actually brought forth this private member's Bill in blissful ignorance of that fact, because if he understood what the Act that he wishes to repeal can do, then I suggest that his actions today in seeking the repeal of this legislation is one of the most cynical and unprincipled acts that any politician has ever sought to perpetrate in Queensland. For a group of people who claim not to be politicians, I think this is even more cynical indeed.

Were this Act to be repealed, as the members of the City Country Alliance would have us undertake, then Queensland would cease to be a participating jurisdiction under the Conduct Code Agreement and, therefore, would lose any capacity to enact legislation or to gazette regulations which would exempt certain industries in Queensland from the operations of the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act. I ask the member for Caboolture: would that not be a very clever outcome? He would have really achieved something! He could be really proud that he would have managed in one fell swoop to tear down large sections of the protection which this Act provides to significant sections of rural industry in Queensland. What a cunning plan! What a very clever little plot he has hatched on this one! In his endeavour to try to grasp a headline, to try to set out to be some sort of hero, he effectively managed to throw out the baby with the bathwater. But maybe he did not understand that by repealing this legislation he removes the power of the Queensland Government to protect vital rural industries in particular from the absolutely dispassionate operation of the free market—the level playing field. If it is really—

Mr Feldman: Where is that protection evident now?

Mr HAMILL: It is in the Act. This is the only bulwark that we have against the total operation of measures under the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act. Maybe the member for Caboolture has not quite grasped the fact that we the Queensland Parliament do not have the power to amend the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act. Maybe he has not quite grasped that fact yet. Let me assure him that what he is seeking to do by repealing this legislation is to say that he is quite happy to let the Commonwealth's legislation run unfettered across industry in Queensland. That is what he is doing. I will tell him that I have no hesitation in going out there and telling the community—telling all of those interests who have legitimate concerns about unbridled competition—that the member for Caboolture and his minions want to unleash the full force of competition regardless of the social consequences—regardless of the economic consequences upon their industry. Yes, he would have made a significant contribution in his short time in the Queensland Parliament. He would have made his mark all right, and people would not have forgotten what he, in fact, had done through his own stupidity, his own lack of understanding in relation to this legislation.

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras) Order! I ask the Treasurer to withdraw the remark.

Mr HAMILL: I am not quite sure what remark the honourable member would find offensive. If the honourable member found the remark offensive I withdraw it, but I would hope that the member for Caboolture never intended the dire consequences of his actions, that he had operated in blissful ignorance of the import of his actions in seeking to repeal this legislation. If it is otherwise, then pity the member for Caboolture and his colleagues.

I wonder whether the member for Caboolture and his colleagues are prepared to consult local timberworkers about their intention to remove regulatory protection in relation to the forestry industry and resource allocation. Resource allocation exists in Queensland because of an exemption under this Act, and only under this Act can we provide that exemption. Of course, if the member for Caboolture wants to remove timber allocations, then let him say so. Let him not posture in the way he has in respect of RFAs. Let him not posture that he is out there trying to protect the jobs of timberworkers when in fact what he is trying to do in the Parliament tonight is remove the power of the Queensland Parliament to provide timber allocations in relation to timber harvesting. I am sure that is a message he would be very proud to tell his constituents in Caboolture, a message which some of his colleagues might like to explain to those millers and timberworkers who are currently incredibly disillusioned because of the political posturing of honourable members opposite with respect to the RFA.

Maybe the member for Whitsunday, the member for Burdekin—who is reclining over

there, but I hope this causes him to emerge from his torpor—and the member for Hervey Bay might like to explain to the sugar industry in their electorates that, by removing this legislation, as they want to do tonight, they would dismantle the regulation which protects the sugar industry. That is a cutting one, isn't it? Maybe they have not quite worked this one out. What they are on about tonight would strip away the regulatory protection which the Queensland Government has afforded the State's sugar industry. What a clever outcome! I am sure those honourable members would be proud to explain to the sugar producers, who are suffering such a tough time already because of the vicissitudes of the climate and the difficulties in the international market, that their clever little stratagem has resulted in stripping away the protection of Queensland's sugar industry.

Maybe they would like to explain to the chicken meat industry how the repeal of this legislation would help them after our review of the chicken meat industry in this State recommended regulation on the basis of a public benefit test. But no! They want to repeal the Bill which gives us the power to protect the industry. Aren't they a clever little coterie of ideologues in the back corner?

Mr Braddy: The grassy knoll.

Mr HAMILL: The Honourable Minister refers to the grassy knoll. This is one of the plots which was ill-conceived right from the outset. The only plot in this is a plot to try to get a headline, but what a headline they will get in the areas of sugar production, timber harvesting, the poultry industry and a whole range of other industries which have sought and achieved protection as a result of this legislation, legislation that they want to wipe away. Clearly, honourable members at the back of the Chamber simply do not understand the provisions of the Act which they wish to repeal. In fact, I have the awful feeling that in his search for a headline the member for Caboolture has been simply beguiled by the fact that a headline which says "Trying to abolish competition policy" will somehow reap enormous electoral rewards when in fact what it will reap is the devastation of a whole range of rural industries in Queensland which rely upon the very legislation that they wish to repeal.

I have seen some incompetent acts in this House over a number of years, but this one takes the cake. They cannot even work out the import of what they are doing. They have not researched the import of the measure that they have brought before the House. They would cause the ruination of significant sections of rural industry in the State for their own grubby political ends. Shame on them! How dare they insult the intelligence of this House with such an ill-conceived and grotty little measure as the one they have brought before the House this evening! However, there is a final problem. If we do not think that the enormity of what they will do is sufficient to condemn their Bill absolutely, there is the fact that what they would seek to do by this Bill is to have the Queensland Government turn its face against almost $700m of competition payments which would be payable to the State.

Mr Knuth: This is what it is all about.

Mr HAMILL: The member for Burdekin, who does not mind dismantling the regulation which protects the sugar industry in the Burdekin, says that this is what it is all about. I refer the member for Burdekin to what I said before the House adjourned. Competition and competition reforms are important for the economy, but any responsible Government would recognise that we should redistribute gains made by those sectors of the economy moving forward in order to help those sectors of the community that suffer the consequences, the losers in the process. If we increase the size of the cake, then we can do better by those sections of the community to ensure that everyone gets a fairer share of the cake.

What sort of community representatives are they if they believe that we should wilfully determine to slash $700m from services to the people of Queensland? What sort of people would argue that we should slash our provision in social services by $700m? Obviously the same sort of people who think it is okay to devastate the timber industry, despoil the forestry industry and absolutely ruin the sugar industry, to mention but a few. Not satisfied with the economic ruination of substantial parts of regional Queensland, they say, "Oh, no! That's not enough! We'll also slash social services. We will slash social services in Queensland to the tune of $700m."

Mrs Lavarch: To make it better, they believe in fortress Australia.

Mr HAMILL: I do not know about fortress Australia. I think they have been swallowing fortune cookies and choking on them in the process. This is the depth of the irresponsibility. This is not just incompetence; this is total irresponsibility.

I go back to what I said at the outset. This Government has not been prepared to simply sit by idly and cop some of the rubbish that

has come from the National Competition Council. We have taken them head on and we will continue to take them head on. At the same time we are not going to make the people of Queensland suffer a loss of services simply to try to win some silly point which, at the end of the day, would prove to be a Pyrrhic victory. What is the point of seeing significant parts of rural industry in Queensland decimated and social services in this State slashed simply to make us all feel good? It will not make my constituents feel good. I suggest that it will not make constituents in Caboolture, Ipswich West, Hervey Bay, Lockyer, Whitsunday and Burdekin—if the member for Burdekin has joined the pack again; I am not quite sure where he is at—feel very good either.

There is no denying that sensible economic reforms, if properly managed, have the potential to bring significant benefits to the community. As I said, ours is a State that relies upon export. We need to be competitive. We need to have sensible reforms. This Government has stated it repeatedly and I will state it again: we do not believe in reform for the sake of reform. We do not believe in change for the sake of change. We believe in sensible reform that delivers real community benefit. That is the test. If it does not deliver real community benefit, then it is not worth doing. I instance, for example, the work that we have done in relation to the liquor industry. I have no doubt whatsoever that the National Competition Council will say to us, "Oh, but unless you open the doors of the supermarkets to takeaway liquor sales you don't have a proper competitive market." What a load of rubbish!

There is a competitive market out there in Queensland; our public benefit test has proven that. There is real price competition when it comes to sales of liquor. There is ample access to the market. There is nothing to stop the supermarket chains purchasing liquor licences, as many of them have done. The public benefit test and the compassionate and responsible way in which it has been administered in Queensland is wholly consistent with national competition principles. It produces an outcome of which we can be proud, an outcome which is defensible, appropriate, socially responsible and which also provides some substantial benefits to particular sectors of the market. And isn't that the way it should be: sensible reform that delivers real benefit to the community, sensible reform that maintains employment—that grows employment—and sensible reform that is also socially responsible. That is the position of the Queensland Government, that is our position with respect to competition policy, and that is the way that we will proceed in relation to the sensible implementation of responsible reforms.

This Bill demonstrates just how dangerous, half-cocked and ill-conceived Bills in this House can be, how dangerous it can be when those in search of a cheap political point will put personal political interest ahead of the real interest of the community, the real interest of Queensland industry. It does not do any credit at all to the member for Caboolture to have brought such a measure before the House, a measure that is so ill conceived, so poorly researched and so irresponsible in terms of its economic and social outcomes, and that is why this Bill deserves to go down in a screaming heap.

Our Government has sought to reform the national model for competition reform with sensible, rational measures. I suggest to the member for Caboolture and those who believe this Bill is the panacea to cure all ills: if they believe that Mr Howard and Treasurer Costello will take a more compassionate approach to Queensland industry, then they should go ahead and press this measure, put their faith in the ACCC and put their faith in Mr Samuel and the National Competition Council, but do not count us in. We have experienced the excesses of these bodies. We know the problems. We have stood our ground; we will hold our ground. We will hold our ground in the interests of Queensland. We will not go along with members opposite in their reckless course to undermine the position of a substantial amount of Queensland industry.

Members opposite purport to help average Queenslanders. All they do is throw them out of work and cause misery in a range of industries, misery in their own electorates, and shame on them accordingly.

Mr Sullivan: Does the seconder of the motion realise what she's doing, too?

Mr HAMILL: This Bill is irresponsible. This Bill is a mark of the amateurish behaviour of the honourable members who sit in the far corner.

I urge all members to reject the legislation. This legislation, as I remind members, would repeal—

A Government member interjected.

Mr HAMILL: I get interjected upon, so I cannot help the challenge.

The legislation which is sought to be repealed is legislation which was enacted under the former coalition Government with

the support of the Government when it was in Opposition. It was legislation which enjoyed the unanimous support of the Parliament. It enjoyed the support of the Government, the Opposition and also the Independent member for Gladstone. Why was that the case? It was because we recognised that, unless this legislation was enacted, Queensland would still be at the mercy of all of those elements that I have canvassed and we would still have no opportunity whatsoever to be the masters of our own destiny. If members opposite want to abdicate responsibility, they can go ahead. The Government will not. The Government will oppose this Bill, and continue the fight for economically responsible and socially responsible economic reforms in this nation.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (8.54 p.m.): Before the dinner recess, I congratulated the Treasurer on what I thought was one of his finest speeches. I think that in the last few minutes, with respect, he did lose the plot. It is unfortunate that when there is a coming together of the Parliament in respect of the issues and problems arising out of the implementation of National Competition Policy, rather than perhaps trying to move forward in a way that all members of this House could accept, the Treasurer has tried to score a few political points, and I will therefore be responding in due course.

I must take note of one thing that the Treasurer said, which was that when there are victims there is a responsibility on the beneficiaries to look after the victims. I would be interested to see whether the Treasurer intends to follow through on that particular philosophy by making sure that the $98m in national competition payments that result from the deregulation of the dairy industry follow through to the victims of dairy industry deregulation in Queensland, following on the precedent of the previous coalition Government, which passed on to local government in this State the NCP payments in respect of local government reform.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. I would not want to see the Leader of the Opposition mislead the House, but while the National Competition Council threatened to penalise Queensland by $98m, there is no reward under the National Competition Policy for deregulation.

Mr BORBIDGE: What is the Treasurer's point of order? He is dingoing out again. He hops up in this place—

Mr HAMILL: I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition was not seeking to mislead the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: He is dingoing out again. The fact is that he will receive $98m in national competition payments in respect of the deregulation of the dairy industry, and he has just admitted that he will not follow through on the precedent set by the coalition Government when we handed over our NCP payments to local government as a result of deregulation proposals arising out of NCP.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Treasurer has just spoken for an hour. He should let me speak for a few minutes.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. I find the honourable member's remarks offensive. We have honoured commitments to local government. We make funds available to local government.

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

Mr HAMILL: The honourable member has been misleading the House.

Mr BORBIDGE: I did not say that the Government did not do that. The Treasurer is not listening; he never listens. That is why he gave an Internet gaming licence to some of his mates; he never listens.

It is a great shame that when in this place tonight there is so much general agreement on the problems of National Competition Policy, the Treasurer, instead of embracing that mood and being positive and moving forward, decides to denigrate those others who, out of reasons of genuine commitment, have an alternative point of view.

I believe that there is an appropriate way forward, and I therefore foreshadow the following procedural motion: that this House establish an all-party select committee to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland, the select committee to comprise four members nominated by the Government, three nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and one nominated by and from among the Independents, and the select committee report to the House by 1 September 2000.

I am proposing this motion because I wish to harness the genuine commitment that I believe members of the Labor Party, members of the Opposition, Independent members and

others have to changing the National Competition Policy. I also see no harm at all in Graham Samuel and some of the other bureaucrats who run the National Competition Council having to appear before a select committee of this House and account for themselves. We hear a lot of rhetoric from the Treasurer and the Government, but if they are fair dinkum, they should embrace this proposal.

NCP was signed off by Prime Minister Keating and Premier Goss in 1995, as the Treasurer accurately stated early in his speech to this place. The fact is that under that agreement, once we reach the five-year period—and that is this year—the NCP has to be reviewed, and it should be reviewed not by the bureaucrats but by the signatories to the original agreement, namely, the State and Territory leaders, the Prime Minister and the Council of Australian Governments after full, frank and proper debate in all the Parliaments of the various jurisdictions of the Commonwealth of Australia.

I share the view of the Treasurer—and I suspect the view of the member for Caboolture—that the National Competition Council has exceeded its charter. It has become a dictatorship; it has become a collection of unelected bureaucrats who dictate to Premiers, democratically elected Governments and Australians as to what can and cannot be done. That is wrong. I believe that those unelected bureaucrats should have to front a select committee of this place and be brought to account and be questioned by members of the Labor Party, members of the Opposition, members who represent other groupings in this Parliament and the Independents.

We have just seen a Productivity Commission review of the impact of National Competition Policy. I do not think we should underestimate the importance of that review. I welcome the fact that the Federal Government appointed the former member for Dawson in the House of Representatives, Ray Braithwaite, to be one of the Productivity Commissioners. I made a submission to that review. The Queensland Government did not. The Treasurer did not. The Premier did not.

Interestingly, that Productivity Commission review, which probably comprised two hard-core economic rationalists and one person with experience of the real world, made some very pertinent observations. In summary, the Productivity Commission report stated that the benefits of the National Competition Policy have been more evident in the cities than in regional and rural Australia. That is probably an understatement.

The Productivity Commission went on to state, in effect, that the benefits have essentially gone to the big end of town and the people who have basically been paying in respect of the implementation of the National Competition Policy have been the people in country Australia. I think it is fair to say that in certain areas—and I guess we can look at gas, third-party access and electricity—there have been some benefits, but at the same time there has been an enormous amount of hardship. There has also been a loss of the sovereign rights of the State and Territory Parliaments of Australia to an unelected, unaccountable bureaucracy which has gone out of its way to dictate to Governments.

The situation in Queensland is different from the situation in Victoria. Victoria is a developed State; Queensland is a developing State. We still want to build dams. They have built all the dams they want to build in Victoria. The priorities in Queensland are different. This idea that one size fits all, and whatever comes out of Graham Samuel's computer in Sydney is relevant to Quilpie or Cairns or Longreach, is simply wrong and needs to be addressed.

As we go through the review process this year I think it is absolutely essential—and I agree with the Treasurer—that the role of the National Competition Council be addressed. If we are to have a National Competition Policy, the people who control it and the people who steer it have to be the democratically elected Governments of Australia. If the people do not like the consequences of those decisions, they have an opportunity every three years to un-elect the Government.

The problem is that no-one elected Mr Samuel; no-one elected the National Competition Council. I know that in my three Premiers Conferences and COAGs I cannot recall one report from Mr Samuel or the National Competition Council to the Council of Australian Governments or to the Premiers Conferences in respect of their administration of the National Competition Policy. I do not believe that is good enough.

This problem is easily fixed. The politicians—the elected representatives of the people—and the elected Governments of Australia have to take their hands from wherever they are and put them back on the levers and take control of the issue. They must take control of the direction.

I believe that there is much that is worthy of consideration in the Productivity Commission's review. I think it is a shame that

on an issue which probably should be uniting us on both sides of the House we are apparently going to be divided. That is why I intend to move this motion. I will be doing that in an apolitical, constructive way because I believe that we would all be in a better position to make an informed judgment on how to fix it, or whether we walk away from it, if a select committee of this House could have access to the information that the Treasurer has in his department and to the work of the Queensland Competition Authority and after, I would suggest, fairly vigorous questioning of Mr Samuel and his colleagues from the National Competition Council.

I want to speak about the National Party position in regard to the National Competition Policy. I moved an urgency motion at the last central council meeting of the National Party that a task force be established to report to the State Conference in July on the impact of NCP in Queensland and whether a future National Party-led Government in Queensland should remain in the National Competition Agreement or whether we should review our participation in that agreement, subject to certain outcomes and certain negotiations. That task force report will be presented to the National Party central council meeting in Longreach in about three weeks' time in draft form, and it will go to the State conference on the Gold Coast in July.

There is much that is wrong with this. I know that the Treasurer says, "Oh yes, but if we walk away from the National Competition Policy we will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue as a result of the deal that was signed by Paul Keating and Wayne Goss." I make this observation—and I made it to Treasury when I was Premier—"Yes, but if we kept our rail freight royalties, which we have to lose come the year 2000-2001, we would be better off."

I believe that a lot of work and thought has to go into this issue. It may well be that with the broad rejection of hard-line economic rationalism which we are seeing on both sides of the political divide there are very substantial changes to the administration of National Competition Policy this year. That may happen. It may not happen. I will be moving this motion in order to give the Federal Government, the State Governments and the Council of Australian Governments a very clear message at to what is the mood of the Parliament of Queensland.

I can remember the last time that the National Competition Policy was debated. It was one of those rare times in this place when everyone agreed. It was a great feeling, because everyone accepted that this had gone off the rails. Everyone accepted that there had to be changes. There was massive concern then about the role of Mr Samuel and the National Competition Council, as there is tonight. With respect, I think that is the point that the Treasurer has missed. Tonight, the Government has a great opportunity. It can go to the Commonwealth, COAG, and the forthcoming reviews of National Competition Policy armed with the unanimous position of all 89 members of the Queensland Parliament, or it can play politics, take a few cheap shots and go home and say, "Aren't we clever?" and indulge in a bit of self-centred Government arrogance.

I happen to think that, in this great country of ours, more often than not those things that unite us are greater than those things that divide us. We have all experienced the excesses of National Competition Policy. I can remember that, when I was Premier not long before the 1998 State election, Mr Samuel wrote me a letter. At that time, the previous coalition Government had embarked on a major water infrastructure program across the State. Basically, he said, "Mr Premier, how dare the Government of Queensland be going out building all of these dams unless the people who are going to be the beneficiaries, as determined by the National Competition Council, contribute to the up-front capital cost." We are about to spend—or waste—$350m on a super stadium in Brisbane. I do not notice the National Competition Council saying to all the people who may be patrons of the new Lang Park super stadium that they have to contribute to the up-front capital cost. However, if we want to build one damned dam in Queensland, apparently that is the gospel according to Mr Samuel. I do not think that is good enough. I do not think that is in the State's interest. I do not think that that is in the national interest. I am sure that the Treasurer agrees with me and I am sure that the member for Caboolture agrees with me.

I am simply saying to the Treasurer: seize the moment. I know that he has his time frames in respect of the review process that is currently under way with the Commonwealth. However, on an issue that is of such importance to the State of Queensland, the Treasurer needs to be well armed. If the Treasurer can be armed with the added support of the Opposition, of the non-aligned members, of the Independent members in this place, and if we can have a sensible, objective review so that we can determine once and for all what is wrong and what is right and, in the case of the National Competition Council, who

has to go and why, then what is wrong? For heaven's sake, what is wrong with that particular course of action? I move this motion with sincerity—

Mr Hamill: Amendment.

Mr BORBIDGE:—yes, an amendment—in a constructive way so that, hopefully, we can get some commonsense back into the debate.

I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Bill' and insert—

'be referred to an all-party select committee to consider and report on the conduct, impact and future of National Competition Policy in Queensland.

- The select committee to comprise four members nominated by the Government, three nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and one nominated by and from among the Independents.
- And to report to the House by 1 September 2000.'."

I make this point: if the Government runs away from this, if the Government is not prepared to support this decent proposal, then it is not fair dinkum and what the Treasurer has said tonight about wanting sensible reforms will be seen as nothing more than shallow, empty rhetoric to try to cover up the deal that his former Premier, Wayne Goss, signed off on with the former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, in 1995.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Is there a seconder?

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (9.14 p.m.): In entering this debate on the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill, I formally second the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I do so because I believe that it is important that we have a review of the NCP and its impact, both positive and negative. I think that is a far smarter way of addressing this issue than adopting the proposal that is before this place of simply negating the current legislation.

In common with the Treasurer, I spoke to the Competition Policy Reform Bill when it was introduced in 1997. As the Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer have said already, this Bill came about because of the previous Federal Labor Government and the previous State Labor Government agreeing to look at National Competition Policy. The Commonwealth introduced its legislation and the State Labor Government under Premier Goss introduced its legislation into this House. However, before that legislation was debated, the Parliament was prorogued, there was an election and the coalition Government then introduced that Bill to meet its obligations that had been signed by the previous Government. That Bill was precisely the same Bill that was introduced by the previous Labor Government except, of course, the dates were changed to reflect the fact that there had been an election.

The objective of the Competition Policy Reform Bill was to apply seamlessly the Trade Practices Act on a national basis. A little while ago, the Treasurer examined that in some detail. The objective was to apply the Trade Practices Act in a seamless way because the Commonwealth legislation could apply only to incorporated bodies and it is up to the States to apply legislation on unincorporated bodies and persons. The objective of the policy is about Australia and about Queensland: to make Australia competitive internally. It is not about anything else; it is about making us competitive, it is about making Queensland competitive. I think that it is worth understanding some of the myths that surround the National Competition Policy.

Mr Hamill: Are you supporting it or condemning it?

Dr WATSON: No, I am supporting it. National Competition Policy is not about competition for competition's sake.

Mr Hamill: That's what I said.

Dr WATSON: I am supporting what the Treasurer said. It is not a policy that compels privatisation. Often I hear that argument being run. It is not a policy that compels privatisation, it is not a policy that forces or even encourages Governments to abandon or reduce their community service obligations; National Competition Policy is about best management practice. It is about the way in which we manage Government business enterprises, it is about delivering for the taxpayer—for the consumer—the best value for money. We have to understand that the National Competition Policy underpins a competitive economy and that a competitive economy is a prerequisite to sustainable growth. We all want sustainable growth. We all want the jobs that are associated with that. We cannot have sustainable growth, we cannot have rising standards of living, and we will not have jobs and we will not have investment unless we are competitive. I will come back to that.

National Competition Policy is about the facilitation of higher productivity and

investment. It is about ensuring there is no difference between the competitiveness of the Queensland economy, the Australian economy and the world economy. National Competition Policy was developed in such a way as to recognise other policy objectives in the State. Governments can deliver welfare services. They can deliver community service obligations. They can take into account consumer interests. They can take into account environmental factors. None of these things is excluded by National Competition Policy.

I get mad when I hear people blame National Competition Policy for Governments abrogating their responsibilities. National Competition Policy is not about Governments abrogating their responsibilities; it is about Governments accepting their responsibilities. Neither the ACCC nor the National Competition Council can be blamed. The authority for this legislation lies in this place. If there is a problem, it is because this Parliament or the Government does not operate in a particular way.

Mr Elder: Blame John Howard, shall we?

Dr WATSON: It is not about blaming John Howard, as much as the honourable member would like to do so. It is a question of whether or not this place has the ability to take charge of affairs. In a political fashion, that is what the Treasurer said, although I think he said it in a way which does not behove him.

Mr Hamill: Are you supporting the repeal of the Act?

Dr WATSON: Listen to what I am saying.

Mr Hamill: You haven't got the guts to tell us, have you?

Dr WATSON: I have already said that I support the competition Bill.

Mr Hamill: No, you are opposing the Bill.

Dr WATSON: We have moved an amendment.

Mr Hamill: Say it: I oppose the Bill.

Dr WATSON: I am not going to be in a position to vote against the Bill that we introduced into the Parliament. I am not going to talk about this. I want to talk about competition.

Mr Sullivan: You are saying that you don't oppose the competition Bill, but you oppose the Bill before the House.

Dr WATSON: The member for Chermside is crazy. Let us examine what competition is about. Competition is about providing consumers with choice. Competition is about providing lower prices to consumers. It is about consumer sovereignty.

Mr Hamill: Why do you do this to yourself?

Dr WATSON: I am not doing anything to myself. The Treasurer has had too much red wine.

Mr Hamill: This is why the Liberal Party is such a shambles. You cannot determine which side you are on. This is sad.

Dr WATSON: The Treasurer is very sad. I am afraid he is letting things talk for him other than his head.

The reason we are debating these issues is that all honourable members support a competitive market, a competitive economy. Why do Western societies in particular have such a high standard of living? Why do Queensland and Australia enjoy such high living standards?

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr Elder: I know where I stand on it.

Dr WATSON: I know where I stand, too. There is no question about that.

Mr Hamill: You are supporting him, aren't you?

Dr WATSON: I am supporting the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and I support the original competition Bill. That is what I said. There is no question about that. The Leader of the Opposition has said that we support a review. I have said that I support a review, because I think both the positive and negative impacts need to be examined. There is no question about that. Anyway, let me get on with it.

If this repeal Bill were passed by this Parliament, it would have significant negative consequences on the State Budget—$2.33 billion of Commonwealth funding over a 10-year period. It would jeopardise the fact that for a five-year period Queensland has been exempted from the coal freight regime. It has been exempted from the Commonwealth access regime, which is worth a billion dollars over a five-year period. Most importantly, Queensland retains control over the granting of legislative authorisation on anti-competitive behaviour, which is basically the public benefit test.

As Minister for Public Works and Housing, I went through a public benefit test with respect to the Residential Tenancies Authority. We conducted a rigorous public benefit test, and it came down on the side of keeping a monopoly because it was determined that it was for the public benefit. There is nothing in

the National Competition Policy which says we have to give up those sorts of monopoly positions. What one has to do is subject them to a significant public benefit test.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the costs associated with the National Competition Policy have been unevenly distributed across the country. For example, there is no doubt that in the telecommunications area—which has been so beneficial to south-east Queensland and to south-east Australia, whether it be in Victoria, New South Wales or Brisbane—the benefits of deregulation, the benefits of the National Competition Policy, have centred on the major population areas.

There is no doubt that those sorts of things have to be addressed, because we cannot leave the rest of the country behind us. But that is not solved simply by throwing out the National Competition Policy, that is solved by doing a lot of other things. There are things that we can do. I suspect it will be solved quite readily over the next couple of years by increased services being provided to country areas right throughout Australia by Austar. This year it is starting to provide Internet access and telecommunications right across rural Australia to 2.9 million homes. It will deliver the sorts of services we get in the city, perhaps even better, by using the analog spectrum which was relinquished by other companies. Austar will take that over and start to deliver those services to rural Queensland, New South Wales and everywhere else.

Mr Paff: How is that going to create jobs?

Dr WATSON: Because that will allow them to compete in the same way as businesses and consumers compete in south-east Queensland and south-east Australia. We have to ensure that not only south-east Queensland or New South Wales or Victoria benefit from these sorts of activities but the remainder of Queensland and Australia. That is not done by stopping that kind of development. We have to figure out how we are going to develop that sort of development right across this country.

It does not matter what this Parliament does in some respects. This Parliament can reject the Bill or it can accept it. It will not make any difference. The thing which is driving the change does not reside in this Parliament. It does not reside in the Commonwealth Parliament. The things that are pressuring the change are external to this Parliament and mostly to this country. I refer to the technological changes taking place, and in particular the changes in telecommunications and transportation, which are outside the control of any of us. Technology is driving the changes. We will not stop that by doing something about the National Competition Policy.

Mr Paff: Is that what you're trying to do here tonight?

Dr WATSON: No, the honourable member is the one who wants to stop change. That is the last thing we can do. We have to find a way to allow people to adapt to change and help them through it. Those are the sorts of things about which Governments should be worried. We cannot stop change. If we try to do so, we will consign our constituents to a future of poverty and joblessness.

Undoubtedly, the changes have impacted unevenly across the community. There is no doubt that the changes seem to have impacted hardest on the rural community. That is one of the reasons we have a rural drift. Some of our best people are leaving their properties and the country towns and going to the cities. Some of that is due to the technological changes over the past 100 years, which have produced better machinery, plant varieties, fertilisers and so on. All of the factors that are increasing productivity on the land are also resulting in fewer jobs and opportunities in the traditional industries. Therefore, people are moving. That will not stop. If anything, that sort of change will accelerate. It is not good enough to say that we will try to stop it. None of us can do that. We have an obligation to help the people most affected by that change through this process. We have to come up with mechanisms for ameliorating the negative effects on them. That is part of the role of Government.

Mr Hamill: What would you make of the whole rail freight issue that the Leader of the Opposition was on about?

Dr WATSON: I indicated that we would lose a billion dollars over five years if we did not have the National Competition Policy. If the honourable member had been listening rather than running around outside, he would have heard me say that.

Mr Hamill: I haven't been outside. I have been right here.

Dr WATSON: The honourable member should have been listening.

Mr Reynolds: Is this about the trickle-down effect?

Dr WATSON: The honourable member would feel safer under the old Moscow regime. I understand his position, but I do not see him

living it. I see him enjoying the benefits of a competitive economy in Australia. If the honourable member is really interested in that type of thing, he should go elsewhere.

The Government has three roles. Firstly, we have a responsibility to make sure that the wealth that we develop in our country is distributed equitably. We do that, firstly, by making sure that we remove impediments from our economy through the technological changes that are taking place. I believe that has a net benefit to society. We have to make sure that the wealth is spread across the country. We have to make sure that we do not undermine this. Therefore, we have to make sure that the incentives to adapt to that change are in place and that we do not put road blocks in the way of firms and individuals adapting to that change. We have a responsibility to ensure that the deleterious effects of that change do not impact more heavily on certain areas of our society.

Mr Reynolds: Is this free market philosophy or laissez-faire? I'm not too sure exactly where you are on this.

Dr WATSON: Laissez-faire is an old ideological argument. No-one subscribes to pure laissez-faire. It has never existed. There has always been a role for Government.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before anybody else speaks on this, I am going to make a ruling on this matter. I have just come into the House. I have conferred with the Clerk and I have also brought my own decisions into this. I rule now that this motion is out of order.

A Government member: The amendment.

Mr SPEAKER: The amendment is out of order. We will continue with the second-reading debate.

Dr WATSON: Why is it out of order?

Mr SPEAKER: I will give the honourable member the reasons afterwards, if he wishes. I have conferred, and I believe this amendment is out of order.

Dr WATSON: With all due respect, Mr Speaker, we took advice on this and we believed that it was in order. No-one advised us that it was not in order, and I think the Deputy Speaker, when he was in the chair, accepted the motion.

Mr Hamill: It has been moved.

Mr SPEAKER: It has been moved; it has not been accepted. There has been no vote on this amendment and I am now ruling it out of order.

Dr WATSON: I would like to know the reasons. At the moment, I cannot respond without knowing the reasons why it is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I will give the honourable member one reason. Standing Order 248 states—

> "A Bill, having been read the Second time, shall be ordered to be committed to a Committee of the Whole House, either then or at a future time, or it may first be referred to a Select Committee."

There is no select committee to which the member has referred it. No select committee has been appointed. How can it be referred to a body which does not exist?

Dr WATSON: That was part of the motion; it established that.

Mr Sullivan: But you can't refer it to a non-entity.

Mr SPEAKER: It cannot be referred to a non-entity. That is why I am ruling it out of order. There is no entity to refer it to. First, establish a committee. Then it can be referred. The honourable member could possibly refer it to LCARC, but there is no committee in place to refer it to. That is why I am ruling it out of order.

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—CCAQ) (9.37 p.m.): I rise to support the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland Repeal) Bill 1999. I intend to address the main impacts of competition policy on the social fabric of this State. The true extent of the social cost of competition policy will probably not be known for many years, if ever. How will we ever know just how many suicides were brought on by the socially disruptive effects of this policy? How will we ever know how many families have broken up that would otherwise have survived if not for this policy? How will we ever know how many small businesses, particularly in rural areas of this State, have closed their doors forever because of the destructive nature of this policy? How will we ever know how many council workers lost their jobs because of the forced adoption of National Competition Policy guidelines? We will probably never know the true extent of these and many other costs.

The apologists for this policy have been at great pains all along to structure the implementation of this policy so as to make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for researchers to accurately quantify its negative economic and social costs. If we look at the situation of the typical medium sized coastal shire, we can obtain some insight into the

harsh reality of National Competition Policy. Unemployment is still rising in most rural communities. The economic rationalists reassure us that this is mostly short-term pain for long-term gain. What they conveniently forget to mention is that the pain is felt in the bush and the gain is felt in the central business districts of Sydney, Melbourne and to a lesser degree in Brisbane. Unfortunately, the pain in the bush is not short term, it is forever. The pain caused by this policy will go away in the bush only when the bush ceases to exist. One council has reduced its outside road construction and maintenance work force by 15 people, or 13.6%, over three years. This is a direct consequence of the State Government's adoption of National Competition Policy in relation to the tendering policies of the Department of Main Roads.

Councils must now tender for almost all Main Roads work on a competitive basis, often against large transnational companies. What happens if the council loses a tender? The result is that local employees no longer have permanent jobs. Workers' ability to pay the bills is diminished. Their ability to plan their financial and domestic affairs is diminished. Their self-esteem is shot to pieces because in many cases they feel that they have failed their family by no longer having a reliable income.

This lack of self-esteem, coupled with the drastic reduction in household income, almost invariably leads to increased levels of tension and disharmony. What follows on from tension and disharmony in a marriage? As surely as day follows night, increased substance abuse, increased incidences of problem gambling, increased levels of domestic violence and eventually family breakdown! Next comes a visit to the Family Court. This is where a couple of lawyers and a judge pull a couple's personal life apart and apportion bits to each side—usually more to one side than the other and almost always much more for themselves than for each side. This is where they take their kids away from them because they are not fit to look after them. Why are the couple not fit to look after their children? Because some brainless idiot hidden away in a bureaucratic cubbyhole somewhere decided to carry out a high school level economics experiment on their country which resulted in the man losing his job. Around about now the man could be excused for having some suicidal feelings.

So what is the social cost to the community in which he lives as a consequence of this Government decision? For a start, the community has lost a job, which most communities can ill afford. Then in many cases it has lost an upstanding member of the community who has been replaced by the emotionally gutted shell of a man. Then it loses what was probably an average, reasonably stable family unit. This family unit is replaced by a woman struggling to raise her children—the children who have been given to her by the Family Court as some sort of consolation prize for a failed marriage. Why is she struggling? Because her ex-husband does not have a job and cannot therefore pay for the upkeep of his children. This means that she is on a supporting mother's benefit if she is lucky, or perhaps she finds a job. This then means that she is probably not at home when the kids need supervision. So the kids look after themselves. Next thing, they are in trouble.

To cut a long, painful story short, I point out that the social cost to the community is the complete disintegration of a family unit with all the emotional and financial costs such an event imposes on a community. Due to the uncertainty of winning tenders in the competitive marketplace, the security of employment for the remaining outside work staff is diminished. The direct result of this loss of job security is a loss in the level of one's confidence to make living decisions. This leads to a drop-off in desire to construct new homes or to undertake extensions or renovations to existing homes, which means the taking out of fewer bank mortgages. This reluctance is very evident in today's market, despite the lowest interest rates for many years. As a result, the community suffers a flow-on effect from the reluctance of a worker to commit to projects requiring ongoing expenditure. Local builders experience a slow-down in demand. They in turn have to lay off staff, either temporarily or permanently. Their subcontracted painters, brickies, plasterers and plumbers are also adversely affected. For every job lost to outsiders from a small community, several other jobs are jeopardised or downsized.

In the past subcontractors for the supply of local materials such as sand, gravels, ready mixed concrete and so on were employed by the local council from whom payments were virtually guaranteed. Now these same contractors are at the mercy of large out-of-town head contractors who do not guarantee payment. This was evidenced when the head contractor on a Bruce Highway contract job went into liquidation owing many thousands of dollars to local subcontractors.

How do outside contractors win road contracts often many hundreds of kilometres away from their home base? By cutting costs to the bone, of course! This means paying

their workers the absolute minimum. Honourable members should spare a thought for those workers. They are forced to lead a nomadic existence, traipsing around the country following the work from one place to another. What of their families? Their families are forced to live and grow up with an absent father. Nobody is happy about this, but living under the jaundiced gaze of National Competition Policy gives them no choice. It is either that or go on the dole. The outside contractors also use the absolute cheapest materials they can get away with and reduce construction costs by carrying out the bare minimum of preparation work. This tactic is aided and abetted by contract principals who spend the minimum amount possible on supervising these works.

The only time that the local work force and council get a look in is when the contractor either goes into liquidation, in which case the council is expected to step meekly into the breach and sort out the long list of problems which inevitably exist in such situations, or the contractor completes the works without any local pride in the job and moves quickly back to Brisbane or another State. The road then starts to break up and, surprise, surprise, the local council and its work force are expected, once again, to fix the mess.

By using subcontractors for the supply and delivery of local materials and extending the terms of payment, the big contractors effectively trade on the overdrafts of small local subbies. These are the same people who, as unsecured creditors, miss out when some of these shonky companies go belly up. These are the mainly honest and honourable small businesspeople who are shamed in their own community when, as a consequence of the predatory trading practices of others, they are unable to pay their bills on time, if at all. A decline in local truck and plant sales is an inevitable result of the above issues. This causes a flow-on effect, impacting upon fuel suppliers, tyre suppliers, maintenance mechanics and spare parts suppliers.

Councils are also concerned about the effect of deregulation of fuel supplies, which was touted as the means to reduce fuel costs. To date the only effect has been for local fuel suppliers to no longer deliver direct to farm and industrial users, bulk purchasers who used to receive discounts. Purchase of these fuel supplies via retail outlets has resulted in inconvenience, and the opportunity is then taken to purchase fuel at out-of-town highway discounters to the detriment of the local economy.

Electricity reforms in recent years have seen SEQEB/Energex staff numbers fall dramatically in some towns due to centralisation of depots and the commercialisation of many parts of the operations. Most councils believe that within large urban areas some commercial competition is able to be accomplished, but smaller rural and regional centres need local cash to stay and to circulate around the local economy for these centres to survive. They do not believe that National Competition Policy either encourages or ensures this. In fact, in regional areas it is becoming all too obvious that the reverse is true.

Many councils firmly believe that National Competition Policy is counterproductive to the economic and social wellbeing of regional Australia. These factors all further affect the spirit of the community in general. There is ample evidence of dozens of regional and rural communities presently suffering through the economic pressures of reduced income, reduced capacity to produce, reduced ability to compete, and loss of morale and motivation. There is something soul destroying about a community in decline. As a result, communities lose faith in their Government and confidence in themselves, further compounding the problem.

We are even witnessing the lunacy of competition policy tests being applied to every facet of local government operations. Countless hours are being wasted in assessing local laws under competition policy guidelines. We see the ludicrous situation of a council bureaucrat analysing a proposed parking regulation to ensure it complies in all respects with competition policy. Competition policy is supposed to be all about increased efficiency. How efficient is that? This time would be much better spent in performing work that would improve the level of service to the community.

Government should be about providing a safe and healthy environment for Queenslanders. It should be about giving all people the opportunity and the incentive to better themselves and to be rewarded for their efforts. The fact that this is clearly not happening is an indictment of Government economic policy. What is the point of having the most efficient system on earth if all it does is to concentrate the wealth of our great nation in the hands of a few while whole communities are collapsing and Queensland families live in despair and fear for their future?

We need Government policies and initiatives to encourage people to live and work in rural and regional Queensland. That is

where the real wealth of this State is generated, not in the artificial world of share speculation and futures trading in Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne. Unless we populate our regional areas, we will see a continuing decline in productivity coupled with an environmental catastrophe through neglect. That degeneration is happening right now. It is largely due to economic rationalism and to the blind and overzealous implementation of National Competition Policy. That is why it is imperative that this Parliament must act responsibly and in the interests of all Queenslanders. That is why this Parliament must pass this Bill. I commend this Bill to the House.

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—CCAQ) (9.50 p.m.): I rise to support our Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill. I intend to address the relationship between globalisation and economic rationalism and their illegitimate child, National Competition Policy. There are still some people out there who persist with the facile argument that there is no connection between globalisation, economic rationalism and National Competition Policy. To me, they are all different names for a similar, destructive philosophy that is being pushed upon the Australian people at every turn.

People who believe there is no connection and who would argue with my point of view seem to be the people who either have a vested interest in the maintaining of the death grip these policies have on rural and regional Australia or those who still have their heads buried in the proverbial sand. Perhaps they do not choose to see. Perhaps they are afraid that if they look around they may have to recognise the parlous state to which we have been consigned. Worse still, they may actually feel the need to take some action to reverse the effects of these mad ideologies. Imagine the mental confusion that could cause them.

We have heard argument after argument in relation to National Competition Policy. Time and time again discontent is raised. Yet time and time again all arguments are pushed aside and all manner of other explanations or excuses are placed in the limelight while the real issue continues to fester under the rug. There seems to be a blind, mad persistence to force National Competition Policy and its globalistic counterparts upon the Australian people and the Australian economy at all costs. In the face of all evidence to the contrary and the countless voices of many Australians, it seems as though they will continue to keep pushing. It is like watching a persistent child trying to fit a square block in a round hole. It is never going to fit, yet they keep trying and trying and trying. National Competition Policy fits just as well in this real world as does the square block in the round hole. Only in utopia would National Competition Policy work, and yet in utopia it would not be needed.

Fancy the leaders of any country happily allowing their nation to be used as the guinea pig of the world and in so doing removing piece by piece the solid foundation on which their nation was built. "Ludicrous" we would all cry. But when it is our country, we just get fed with excuses and promises that we will all be better off in the future. We believe it and keep struggling along. There is a reluctance in the community to state the obvious: NCP is destroying our nation. This is an opportunity for Queensland to lead the way by demonstrating to Canberra that rural and regional communities are not prepared to accept their inevitable decline to peasant status. It is simply not good enough. If the political leaders of this country are as intelligent and perceptive as we are led to believe, how can they have been induced to deliver this pestilence upon us?

To answer this question, we must first understand the degree of power and influence the faceless international power brokers wield. Australian Prime Ministers, past and present, have felt the pressure. If they do not cooperate, the penalties include such things as downgrading of our international credit rating and the use of their financial clout to manipulate the Australian dollar or threat of sanctions or trade wars. In fact, anyone who opposes the global push seems to be sanctioned or threatened. Austria is a current example. The notable exceptions, of course, are the likes of America, Japan and the EU. The media moguls then play their part in pushing the cause through their anti-competitive, monopolistic media organisations because they, too, benefit from some push.

The next step in their intimidation process is to organise some of the more compliant and ambitious members of the Government to start questioning the wisdom of the Prime Minister's decisions. Before they can blink, they have been successfully undermined and find themselves out of a job, and all the while the public are kept busy in other areas or are carefully manipulated into believing that everything is okay. The bottom line is that an Australian Prime Minister can either do as the international masters tell them or find themselves another job. No wonder we habitually end up with Yes Prime Ministers.

We have now established the motivation behind the attitude of virtually every Federal Government in the last 30 years. The astute members of this Parliament, regardless of political persuasion, know exactly what I am talking about and exactly who is really in charge of this nation. It is not good enough to go along with things as long as the public are ignorant of the truth. Our jobs are to represent the people of our electorates, of our State and of our nation. Nowhere in that equation comes the protection of the rest of the world to our own detriment or the allowance of foreign control over our laws. To put the wellbeing of others above the wellbeing of Australians undermines every one of our institutions, systems and freedoms.

Acting alone, a Federal Government is limited by our endangered Constitution in what direct actions it can take. Therefore, the Federal Government had to find a way of coercing various State Governments into imposing the will of the international community upon our people. Traditionally, State Governments have been reluctant to cooperate with Federal Governments in anything that may infringe on States' rights. However, Australia's taxation system gave the Federal Government and its international masters the biggest weapon of all—control of taxation moneys.

So it came to pass that every single State Government in this country of both persuasions rolled over. They submitted their people to the scourge of National Competition Policy and added to the erosion of State control over State affairs. Governments, both Federal and State, will in the years to come seek to justify themselves by claiming that they were forced into the adoption of this destructive course of action. But no matter what excuses or justification these jurisdictions attempt to hide behind, both the Australian public and our history books will damn these successive Governments for their actions. While it is perfectly obvious to me that our Governments have failed miserably in their duty to protect us from such attacks, the responsibility that each and every one of us of voting age must carry is inescapable. The people are waking up. They are taking a greater interest in their destiny, and Governments are being forced to show greater respect for their wishes.

Economics should never be treated as a leader in our society. We should never see the day when we start replacing engineers with accountants, or when the Governments of the nation start replacing the voice of the people with the voices of economists and academics, with big business and bankers and the never-ending quest for money and power. Yet that day is here. These things have happened and are happening.

The most economical way of doing things is not necessarily the best. Economics makes assumptions based on other assumptions based on other assumptions. It rationalises the best option by alternating unknowns to determine specific outcomes. It talks in terms of numbers, in terms of costs, in terms of ideal outcomes. It does not talk of people, of families, of standards of living, of real outcomes. Assumptions of full employment based on figures worked out by multi-degreed academics are what is used to determine economic outcomes. Employment economics refers to workers as numbers, just figures on a page or curves on a graph. John Citizen, closing the doors to the family business and turning to the dole to feed his young family, is not factored into economic equations. Regional communities becoming ghost towns, small businesses going broke, Australian manufacturing grinding to a halt—these realities are not factored in to economic outcomes.

At this very moment, we have the catastrophic loss of jobs at Evans Deakin playing havoc with the Premier's pipedream of 5% unemployment. National Competition Policy can now be added to the GST as an excuse for failing to curb the appalling level of unemployment in this State. The Government is supposed to govern for the good of the people, not for the good of the almighty dollar or the most efficient global plan. This madness must be stopped before Australians find themselves dependent upon the rest of the world for all our basic essentials. We are already headed in that direction, and National Competition Policy will ensure it.

It is a fact that the sales of the largest 200 transnational companies on this planet are responsible for 28.3% of the world's gross domestic product, and yet those same 200 companies employ a mere 0.75% of the world's work force. I must admit that when I first heard those figures, I assumed that someone had got the decimal point in the wrong place. But the figures are correct, and I repeat: 28.3% of the world's GDP comes from only 0.75% of the work force. So much production in the hands of people who provide so few jobs! What is the point of huge production if it does not provide wages to people to allow them to consume, not to mention the number of smaller organisations whose employees are driven from employment to the dole in the name of competition. By its

own definition the economic rationalist model fails.

Even the theory on which National Competition Policy is based fails by its own definition. It is supposed to be aimed at increasing efficiency, leading to reduction in prices to consumers. What in fact occurs is that larger organisations either take over smaller organisations, which are unable to compete with the purchasing and marketing power of large companies, or small businesses simply close; and it must be remembered that Australian business must also compete with international organisations that have access to extremely cheap labour and lower-quality standards.

At first, greater competition may reduce prices to the consumer in the short term. But what actually happens in the long term is that the market becomes dominated by large organisations and establishes a false market. Such markets are, by nature, price setters and inefficient. Economic rationalism sheds no tears for those who are forced out of the market. The rationale is that they were obviously inefficient, and hence it is best that they are no longer in business.

The end result, of course, is an anti-competitive market of large operators and higher prices for consumers—and I wish that the member for Moggill was here to hear that—the majority of whom by now are dependent upon welfare payments; further erosion of society; a trade deficit almost impossible to turn around; a continual rise in national debt; and a nation entirely dependent upon the rest of the world but which offers great holidays.

I am sure that many of those who preach National Competition Policy, who preach economic rationalism, are convinced within themselves that this will work, that an international free market with no trade borders, no cultural borders, just one big happy world market, is actually possible and will work. I say it will not work; it will never work. This blind pursuit of economic rationalism will achieve only one thing: the rich will get richer, the poor will get poorer and our nation will spiral downwards to become a Third World country with a standard of living and a society equivalent to those of peasant nations. I suggest honourable members of this House should open their ears and their minds. I heard the Leader of the Opposition speak tonight, and I was impressed with his contribution. Listen to the real people, the people who are bearing the brunt of this attack on Australian society.

Australia needs Governments which are interested in acting on the will of the people. Queensland needs a Government with the fortitude to represent Queenslanders. We are supposed to live in a federation of independent States. The Commonwealth Government should not run this State; Queenslanders are supposed to run this State.

I ask each and every member of this Parliament who intends to vote against this Bill to consider: how will they explain to their children and their grandchildren that they had this opportunity to halt the cruel and relentless march of National Competition Policy and chose to do nothing? I call on this Parliament to stand up and be counted, to act in the interests of all Queenslanders and eliminate National Competition Policy before it eliminates our children's future.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (10.07 p.m.): As the Leader of the Opposition said, I remember the last time we debated this issue, and it was a time when everyone in this House was in agreement. I listened to the speech by the Treasurer. With my limited intellect, I managed to cut through some of it. I can understand where he is coming from in terms of the money it would cost this State to completely abolish NCP. I can certainly see where he is coming from in that respect. I agree that to clear-fell the legislation would probably not be the most intelligent and well-thought-out way to go about it. But in saying that, it is my strong and firm belief that we must do anything we can—anything at all—and we must spare no punches in fighting what I and many other people consider to be completely anti-competition policy.

The actions that have been taken in the name of NCP up to date have, as far as I am concerned, been of very little or no gain to any part of Queensland—not just rural Queensland, not just the area that I represent, but to any part of Queensland. Today in the paper I read in particular about how milk is going to go up another 9c a litre.

Mr Feldman: It already went up 6c.

Mr NELSON: Yes, so it is going up and up and up and up and up.

To be able to pay dairy farmers compensation for destroying what was, up until now, a viable industry which provided milk for a State and for a country at a relatively reasonable price we will have to hike another 11c onto the milk price. This will be necessary to accommodate the compensation package that will flow from the Commonwealth.

What we are seeing is the direct opposite of what was meant to be achieved. We had been led to believe that economic rationalism would lead us into world markets. I am not an expert on this subject. As I said, I thought we were in agreement on the last occasion when we debated this subject. I am yet to hear of anything wonderful that has come from the National Competition Policy except for the payment of compensation for taking it up.

No-one wants compensation for their business, whether they are a farmer, a businessman or anyone else. These people simply want to retain their businesses. Dairy farmers are not dairy farmers because it pays well. Usually people are dairy farmers because it is a generational thing. The farm is handed on by grandparents and it is a family business. As honourable members will notice, I am concentrating on one industry at this stage which is affected by the National Competition Policy. People are involved in dairy farming because it is the way of life which they pursue.

I live in a country town because I love living in a country town. I dislike Brisbane intensely. I was born in Brisbane, but I could not live in Brisbane. Many people who had chosen the lifestyle I prefer have been forced out of the country areas because jobs are disappearing. In his speech, the member for Whitsunday articulated some of the reasons why the National Competition Policy is destroying areas where jobs were provided in the community. I do not think the problems related to the National Competition Policy are endemic to rural communities; they affect the whole of Queensland and the whole of Australia. Some of the reasons articulated by the member for Whitsunday are quite true and have horrific consequences for rural communities.

I have said in this Parliament previously that it is unfortunate when young people are forced to leave rural communities to look for work. I have another 22 days of being a youth. It is unfortunate that young people are being driven away from country towns because there are no jobs.

Mr Mickel: What date is that?

Mr NELSON: 22 March.

Mr Mickel: That's your birthday?

Mr NELSON: Yes. I will be 27. It is finally starting to hit me.

Mr Mickel: You are holding out for it?

Mr NELSON: Yes. Most of my friends have moved to the city to pursue incomes and a way of life that they thought would be better. My friends moved to the city because many of them could not find work in rural towns. That is not the fault of the Labor Party or the National Party; it is something that has been going on for many years.

At night-time I often read through Hansard in the library and I have seen where the same debates were occurring in the late 1800s. This problem is occurring in many countries around the world. I might be a dumb hick, or a farmer's boy, and I might not have the intelligence of a Rhodes Scholar, but no-one has articulated the benefits of the National Competition Policy. We have heard about compensation payouts, and that is about all.

My electorate does not have a high proportion of university graduates. We do not have thousands of people in the MDIA who have a doctorate in economics. People continually ask me, "What benefits can we derive from the National Competition Policy? Why is it pursued in Government?" When I returned home on the last occasion when we debated this matter I was able to say that we had consensus in the Queensland Parliament and we were going to stand up and announce, as one, that we do not support the National Competition Policy because it has gone too far and the National Competition Council is out of control and has to be reined in.

I felt that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition tonight had merit but for some reason it has been ruled out of order. I believe that is most unfortunate because, as a Queenslander, nothing would make me prouder—and I am certain that I speak for a lot of people in my electorate—than the thought that the Parliament of Queensland, all 89 members, stood up to the Federal Parliament. Let us face it, the Federal Parliament is not our boss. The Federal Parliament is equal with us as far as being a Parliament is concerned. The Queensland Parliament is a separate entity.

It would do this State a great deal of good, and it would do the farmers in my electorate a great deal of good, if the members of the Queensland Parliament stood together and said, "We are going to fight the NCP." That would be a huge shot in the arm to rural communities. I would be able to go home and say to the people in my electorate, "Something is being done. It is not being done by the member for Surfers Paradise, it is not being done by the member for Brisbane Central—it is being done by all of us."

As I said, I believed that we had consensus in this Parliament. I have spoken to some members of the ALP and I know that they feel that the NCP—

Mr Davidson interjected.

Mr NELSON: I couldn't name one, but I know that they feel that way. They understand the problems that are being caused by the NCP where farmers have to walk off their properties.

I realise that there may be valid reasons why the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition was ruled out of order. As the member for Southport said, there may not be valid reasons for that. However, I do not want to weigh into that debate. Any attempt to rein in the NCP and the NCC and give them a bit of a touch-up on behalf of the people of Queensland would be welcomed by my electorate.

I will go into more detail about the way in which the dairy industry is suffering in my electorate. Recently, a decision was made by a tribunal which upheld the right of 22 appellants to a further entitlement of milk. That decision has fragmented the farming community on the Tablelands to the extent that we have 160 dairy farmers against 22 dairy farmers. I will probably be hanged when I return home for saying this, but those 22 dairy farmers were pursuing what they believed to be their fundamental right in trying to get the milk quota back. This has fragmented a community which, up until a few years ago, was completely and utterly cohesive.

The figures fluctuate, but we have some 196 dairy farmers in the Malanda area. If we lose even 10 or 15 of those farmers it will be a major blow to the town in which I live. I do not know how many honourable members have been to Malanda, but it is a pretty little town in a nice part of the world. A lot of very good people live there. There are many towns which are similar to Malanda throughout Australia. It would be a tragedy—

Mr Davidson: Home of Malanda milk.

Mr NELSON: Home of Malanda milk—Dairy Farmers, some of the greatest milk ever made. The point is that it would be a massive tragedy to lose towns like Malanda, and we have been losing towns like Malanda since before I was born.

Mr Mickel: How long is that? 25 years?

Mr NELSON: 26 years. For 26 years, towns like Malanda have been slowly dying. Again, I am not trying to lay the blame at anyone's feet; I am just trying to articulate how I feel about the current policies that are directing this State and this nation. Those policies are not coming from the ALP, those policies are not coming from the National Party, those policies are not coming from the Liberal Party; those policies are coming from a group of people who were not elected by anyone from where I come. I certainly cannot remember putting forward any ballot papers with their names on them. This National Competition Council seems to be directing the downfall of places like the town from where I come, Malanda. The loss of Malanda and the loss of people who come from towns such as Malanda will be a major blow to our society in general. It is people such as the people with whom I live that we refer to when we make our motherhood statements or when we make our aspiration statements about Australia and what it is to be Australian. When we lose that heart and soul from those areas, we are really just giving away a part of ourselves. We are giving away a part of ourselves for no reason—through no direction or policy—but through a tired belief that economic rationalism will keep us in a world market.

Many people believe that isolationism might not work. I do not hold myself out to be an expert on history, but isolationism certainly worked for America in the 1920s. It also certainly worked for other countries. It certainly has given some benefit to many countries in the world up until today, because most countries in the world still maintain tariff protection and have what would not be classed as a National Competition Policy. Recently, I talked to a man from Alabama—what I consider to be one of the most wonderful parts of the world—and I can certainly empathise with a lot of what he said. He said to me that he found it hard to believe that, in Australia, we ate imported beef or imported products that we grow domestically. That man said quite emphatically that he knows no-one in Alabama who would buy imported food products that were grown domestically in Alabama. This issue is not just a problem with Parliament; it is a problem with people in general. At numerous public meetings in my electorate I have said to the people who live in my electorate, "You cry about Woolworths, you deride Coles, yet you still shop there. You still do not buy locally. You still do not shop and get things from your local stores." At the moment, the feeling within the community is that all is lost, that we cannot fight—"Why bother? Why should we even try? Why don't we just roll over and give in. I'm going to be like everyone else."

Mr Davidson: It costs money.

Mr NELSON: The member for Noosa is quite right. It usually costs more, so it is—

Mr Hamill: David Watson doesn't think so.

Mr NELSON: No. As I said, at one stage in my misguided youth I was a member of the Liberal Party, but I am no longer.

Mr Hamill: Did you breathe a sigh of relief?

Mr NELSON: I think they breathed a sigh of relief when I left.

I honestly believe that for so long—for a great many more years than I have been around—this country has suffered from a lack of true leadership. I am not talking about leadership in the form of one great, magnanimous leader whom we would all follow blindly into battle, but true leadership on all levels of Government, and from people in communities who have the ability to speak out and say, "This is the direction we should be taking", or, "This is the path that we should be taking." It is usually the hardest job of a leader to actually lead, instead of standing back, listening to the masses and saying, "I am going to do whatever makes this group happy", or, "I am going to do whatever makes that group happy." As a leader, one of the hardest things to do is to take on board what the people are saying and say, "Right, we can do it this way."

Unfortunately in this country, politicians and politics seem to dictate to the people what they want but they never ever actually take into consideration what the people are saying they want. Perfect examples of that are the NCP, the GST, the sale of Telstra—all of these wonderful things that are happening to us as a nation. Whenever I say, "We didn't want to sell Telstra. Telstra belongs to the people. We didn't want to sell it", I am told, "Yes, but we had a mandate to sell it." Then I ask, "Where did you get that mandate from?" I am told, "Just from being elected."

It is quite unfortunate, because many, many members of this Chamber are moving on in years. Personally, I have nothing against old people, but in 20 years' time when I am looking to settle down and make a life for myself and, as my mother keeps saying, get a real job, I would like to have a country to settle down in, and I would like to have a place that I can call home.

Mr Schwarten: Are you still exporting mangoes from your part of the world to Japan?

Mr NELSON: Yes, we are exporting mangoes. If the Minister was listening he would know that, at the very start of my speech, I said that I understood the whole argument about—

Mr Schwarten: No, I am just saying: do you think they will still be exporting mangoes to Japan?

Mr NELSON: I hope so—to China and Japan. I truly hope so. I truly hope that there is a place for this country, but right now—

Mr Mickel: You lost us when you were talking to us about age.

Mr NELSON: The member for Logan would not come into that category.

All I ask—and this is a simple request from a simple person from what I am proud to say is a simple part of the world—

Mr Schwarten: They are not simple out there at all.

Mr NELSON: They are simple, honest, decent folk. They are not pretentious and most of them do not have anything more than the best interests of their community at heart. There are some bad people, but there are mostly good people.

Mr Schwarten: They are not simple there at all.

Mr NELSON: From my point of view, I believe that I am a simple person and proud to be so. I do not hold myself out to be a complicated mess.

Tonight, all I ask from every member of this Parliament, regardless of party politics and regardless of their personal opinion on this matter, is that the 89 of us as individual people—as patriotic Queenslanders and as people who believe, as we did in the last debate, that National Competition Policy has gone awry—look at the motion put forward by the member for Surfers Paradise in a bipartisan manner. Maybe we have to come back and address it properly in the future because certain things are not right. We try to stand up to the Federal Government and we try to stand up to their whole attitude. Like the Government members are asking the Opposition to do with GST, let us do that with the NCP. Let us work together and beat this dog, because it is really ripping out our hearts. It is destroying what I call home. Eventually, it will also destroy what other members call home. That is all I ask. I do not think that it is that much to ask, considering the previous debate that we had in the Chamber.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. I give notice that I shall move dissent from Mr Speaker's ruling that the amendment to the second-reading of the Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill moved by Mr Borbidge is out of order.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10.27 p.m.): Having listened and enjoyed the contribution of the member for Tablelands, I can understand exactly where he is coming from. The confusion that the member for Tablelands had is understandable. He said that he was against the National Competition Council. I go along with him on that. However, his confusion was that all the problems were caused by National Competition Policy. He said that the problems had been going on long before he was born. In fact, when he pulled out the Hansard, he noticed the same sort of debates happening decades ago. That is absolutely right. For example, the dairy industry, which the member mentioned, was always dependent upon global competition, I might say, with the UK, as it then was said, buying our dairy products for a pound a pound.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Gregory shall not interject from other than his correct seat.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Callide.

Mr MICKEL: I notice that the National Party does not understand that the dairy industry was dependent upon the UK. That is self-evident tonight. The other thing that was going on which the National Party has never understood and never accepted is this: in the mid-eighties the export of dairy products was about $200m. This year it is down a bit, and I recognise that. It is down to $2.2 billion. Where are those jobs being created? Happily enough, they are being created in electorates just like mine through the National Foods factory that is going into Crestmead.

Mr Johnson: And who were the winners out of that?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory.

Mr MICKEL: The member for Gregory is confused. He does not think that $2.2 billion worth of exports is worth anything to this country. How out of touch is he?

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The words that just fell from the member for Logan that I do not support $2 billion worth of exports I find offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: I think the member for Gregory is completely and utterly offensive in taking issue with the figure, because it creates jobs, my friend, jobs right from the primary industry sector—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Gregory that the Speaker today warned him about interjecting. That warning still applies. He should cease interjecting.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I asked the honourable member for Logan to withdraw the comments that I found objectionable. That has not been done. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that you exercise your authority.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I was under the understanding that the member for Logan did withdraw.

Mr MICKEL: No, I did not withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Logan has been asked to withdraw.

Mr MICKEL: I will withdraw. I simply make the point that the member for Gregory took issue with the fact that we got $2.2 billion worth of dairy exports this year.

The only other point I make is this: in the area of the electorate of Tablelands a number of milk exports are taking place to Hong Kong daily by aircraft travelling from the Malanda area—in other words, it is globalisation going back the other way benefiting the regional economy. When the honourable gentleman from the tablelands also said that things are dying up there, he should have pointed out that the sugar industry is replacing a number of other industries to the point where there is a new sugar mill on the tablelands creating local jobs.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I do not wish to interrupt, but I think the honourable member for Logan has mistaken some of the things I said. I did not say that things were dying; I said that things were not in a steady form of growth and that they were under threat. I find that offensive and ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw the fact that they have a sugar mill up there. The other point I want to make is that the member for Ipswich West was saying that he did not benefit from globalisation at all. That shows how much he visits his electorate. In terms of globalisation, he has the Boeing corporation moving in creating jobs in his electorate. Boeing is there as a direct result of our policies.

The point I want to make is this: initially there was a concern that the National Competition Council was telling elected Governments what to do. It was more than

time that elected Governments ran their own agenda. My own view is that the competition policy should be directed at industries which are nationally competitive and export oriented.

There are businesses which have a domestic focus and a domestic focus only. For instance, the Beattie Government this week ignored the plea of large supermarkets to sell liquor in their outlets. Rather, it will free up competition for hotels and clubs. We took the same view with pharmacies. In the late eighties, pharmacies were restructured and the numbers were reduced. But it is not fair competition to simply hand over their responsibilities to supermarkets. The effects on country towns, for example, would be devastating. Healthy competition is needed, but because of the discounts in rents given to the large supermarket chains they have a competitive advantage over smaller stores such as pharmacies.

It is the same with newsagencies. I am pleased that the Government gave notice to newsagents that they would be protected from the National Competition Policy—and so they should be. The same cannot be said for the newspapers sold in metropolitan areas where there is only one newspaper. What protects us as consumers is the cross-media ownership rules, which prevent one proprietor operating the newspapers as well as the television and radio outlets. Whilst it is desirable to have wider ownership, it is not an issue for national competition.

I agree with an assessment provided by Mr Todd Ritchie, the director of economic policy at the National Farmers Federation in the autumn edition of 1999. Of the National Competition Policy he said—

> "It is critical that there is adequate public education and consultation about the reforms and their progress. Such public education arrangements should have been put in place earlier by all agencies involved in implementing the reforms. The role of the National Competition Policy is increasingly viewed as poorly defined with benefits that are notional rather than tangible."

When one looks at the documents released by the National Competition Council, they are turgid. They do not set out examples showing how the reforms have benefited people.

There has been a revolution since competition was introduced into the monster that was once Telecom. The opening of telecommunications has given consumers wider choice and cheaper international calls and has significantly reduced the cost of domestic calls. For example, the cost of STD calls declined by 25% between 1991-92 and 1996-97 and by 30% for retail call prices over the same period.

The most dramatic declines have been in the cost of electricity. For instance, between 1991-92 and 1996-97 in New South Wales there has been a decline of 23% and in South Australia, 17%. In gas it has been more dramatic among the six major distributors, with a decline of 43% between 1992 and 1997 and a decline of 22% in Australian gas prices for industrial and residential consumers between 1991 and 1998.

Rail freights have also declined dramatically. Between 1991-92 and 1996-97, rail freight rates on the Melbourne to Perth rail routes declined by 40%, while national rail freight prices declined by 16%. Port authority charges in the same time have declined by 23%. So there have been improvements—much needed improvements—for consumers, improvements that were vital for businesses that are exporting and were being held back by uncompetitive national prices.

There is a view sincerely but wrongly held—and we have heard it here tonight—that National Competition Policy means the end of subsidies. National Competition Policy does not prohibit the provision of subsidised services for country or metropolitan communities. It seeks to have them identified, costed and provided in a transparent manner. National Competition Policy does not require asset sales and privatisation, nor does it require compulsory competitive tendering out.

National Competition Policy does not provide financial market deregulation or industrial relations reforms. Nor does it say that we have to cut the size of the public sector. Nor does it say that we have to have local government amalgamations. Nor does it say that we have to have reductions in welfare or social services. Nor does it say that we have to remove community service obligations. National Competition Policy is the outcome of an agreement between the Federal, State and Territory Governments. It was a means to advance a range of reforms considered capable of delivering public benefits.

However, the aims and mechanisms have not been well communicated to the public, and I recognise that. That has helped to fuel concerns about reform measures throughout Australia. But the reforms have coincided with long-term factors, including declining

commodity prices, technological advances and changes in consumer tastes. Agricultural and mining production continues to expand but represents a smaller proportion of national output than was the case 40 years ago. The share of rural products declined from around 70% in the 1950s to 39% in 1974-75. By 1996-97 that share had fallen further to around 23%. As the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics found, rural and mining commodities still account for nearly 60% of Australia's total exports. The combined value of exports increased in absolute terms by about $49 billion between 1981-82 and 1996-97.

People are changing their spending habits, which is why the service sector is expanding. This forces structural changes which visually impact, I recognise, on some country towns. Australia is not alone in this. In industrialised economies, service sector activities account for a higher proportion of GDP than in developing countries. This does not mean that primary industries are declining. Simply, they are growing less rapidly than other sectors of the economy. Australia's agricultural output and mining production have increased in absolute terms. However, their shares of GDP have declined. The significance of agriculture is lower in Australia and OECD countries than it is in Asian countries. The decline of agriculture as a share of GDP since the 1970s has not been as pronounced in the industrialised economies as in the less industrialised economies. A decline in the contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP is also evident in developed countries. Output of the service sector has become more important in OECD and Asian countries.

Consistent with these changes, the proportion of workers employed in agriculture and manufacturing has declined in Australia, but the service sector now accounts for more than 80% of the total labour force. The share of the mining sector is around 1%—the same as it was 30 years ago. Service sector activities were responsible for overall employment growth in both city and, importantly, country regions between 1981 and 1996. This growth more than offset job losses in other sectors, including agriculture in country areas, where employment had declined. Overall, despite different rates of growth in these broad sectors, total employment increased at much the same rate in city and country regions between 1981 and 1996.

People have responded to these structural changes in several ways. Farms have become fewer but larger as the need for higher productivity has increased. The regional pattern of population and economic activity has changed in response to improved transport links and reduced transport costs. The agricultural sector has adopted new technologies and better production methods, such as improved land and farm management techniques. New technologies and better production methods have helped farmers to achieve economies of scale and contributed to higher productivity. Productivity growth has averaged 2% a year between 1974-75 and 1995-96.

As a Productivity Commission report noted in its key messages statement, National Competition Policy has become a scapegoat for the effects of these broader influences. It was summed up beautifully by Mr David Trebeck, the Managing Director of ACIL Consulting, who referred to a great temporary enigma—the apparent divergence in community attitudes towards competition in the economy and competition in sport. He said, "Isn't it odd? The community spends Monday to Friday worrying about competition policy and all weekend cheering itself hoarse in support of it."

Fundamentally, we need to bring the community along with us. The achievements need to be better communicated. Government has a responsibility to look after those being left out, to offer a safety net and to help with structural adjustment. The Bill should be opposed. It ignores the reality that much of the change they fear is external to Government. In fact, most of the speakers tonight have referred to forces that began and were in place long before anybody ever signed any National Competition Policy document. Honourable members should look at the Burnett district. The decline in dairying production in that area preceded any signing of a National Competition Policy document.

The attempts by the Opposition Leader to distance himself are understandable, but this ignores the Fitzgerald Commission of Audit that he commissioned, which pushed reform faster and further. The Fitzgerald Commission of Audit was something that the Leader of the Opposition, the then Premier, Mr Borbidge, dreamed up all by himself, and he did not need my advice to do it. The further he got away from my advice, the worse he did. To make up for their budgetary incompetence, what they were leading up to—and they have never told the One Nation members this—is privatisation of electricity. That is the only way they could fund the incompetence of the previous Minister for Health, who brought ruin

upon the Health Department. It had to be bailed out by privatising electricity. I have seen the books. I know what they were up to. We saved the people of Queensland from them. Given half a chance, they would do the same thing in the Police portfolio. Earlier, the honourable member for Toowoomba South spoke about dairying. He would know all about getting out of dairying. He made such a great hash of it when he went into the dairy industry. The Toowoomba Showgrounds Society had to find him a job. We pulled him out of there just in time. I have seen the showground. It has never looked back since he got out. The fact is that the Borbidge Government set up the Fitzgerald Commission of Audit. They signed it.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr MICKEL: The honourable member was a Minister; he knows all about it. He sat in the Cabinet and signed it the same as everybody else did. Yet he had the breathtaking hypocrisy to come in here tonight and say that he opposed National Competition Policy. His hands were all over it. The honourable member is smiling; he knows what he did and what a mess he left for us. He has been sitting there thinking, "Thank God I'm not responsible for having to clean up the mess." I know all about the honourable member and the mess that he left us. I know how relieved he is. He looks years younger since we took that responsibility off him, and I do not blame him one bit.

Time expired.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (10.48 p.m.): Up until the last few minutes of the previous speech, I thought that the member for Moggill had found a great friend. I remind the member for Logan that I did not have my fingers all over it, and I am glad about that.

Tonight I rise to support the City Country Alliance's Competition Policy Reform (Queensland) Repeal Bill. I will begin by saying that the National Competition Policy is considered by the CCAQ and its supporters to be without a doubt one of the most socially destructive pieces of legislation ever passed by any Parliament in Australia.

It may be argued that the National Competition Policy has provided some benefits to some parts of Australian society. It certainly has caused a lot of trouble in other parts. The member for Whitsunday discussed some of the effects it has on local councils and the member for Ipswich West has discussed the tie between National Competition Policy, economic rationalism and globalisation policies. The trouble is that these very few benefits have been concentrated almost entirely in the central business districts of Sydney and Melbourne as well as some isolated pockets based on resource developments in the northern part of the country.

The State of the Region's 1999 report by National Economics, prepared for the Australian Local Government Association, highlighted the failure of both the Howard and Beattie Governments' policies for regional Australia. These Governments' policies fail to provide the resources and support for the implementation of projects and activities that are crucial to economic and social wellbeing. They have marginalised local communities. The report states—

> "... that while there is evidence of employment growth in some regions, the benefits of recovery remain narrowly based and many regions remain stuck in low growth, low income and low skill paths. The increasing employment and income disparities between regions documented in State of the Regions 1998 have intensified."

According to this report, the high income globally competitive centres of Sydney and Melbourne are pulling away from the rest of Australia. National Economics forecasts that over the next five years average household incomes will increase in the well-endowed core metropolitan and resource regions by between $4,000 and $5,000 but up to $8,000 for the affluent inner city segments of Sydney and Melbourne. By contrast, most regions outside these already wealthy areas will struggle to achieve income gains of less than $1,000 over the same period.

A further clear indicator of the inequality between regions is the estimate of the short-term unemployment rate as well as those who are defined as "structurally unemployable". The affluent regions have a rate of unemployment as low as 5.5% while some regions have in excess of 20%. Honourable members should bear in mind that these are fudged official rates. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that real unemployment in the bush is somewhere around the 50% mark and even higher when one takes into account the few young people who have not yet headed for the big cities.

Our Australian society is proudly based on the principle of egalitarianism which, according to the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary, means "advocating the principle of equal rights and opportunities for all" or, to put it in plain language, a fair go for all. But who is being

given a fair go under this damaging and deceitful legislation? Certainly not regional and rural Australia! These poor battlers are being crushed under the jackboot of globalisation and free trade, and certainly not those prosperous inner city areas of Sydney and Melbourne. Of course, Sydney and Melbourne probably think that they are being treated fairly, but they are not. The truth is that they are being treated favourably. They receive an unfair advantage over regional and rural Australia. Fairness relates to that troubling concept seldom found in business or politics of equality and even-handedness. The people of inner city Sydney and Melbourne are not being treated equally. They are the beneficiaries of this Government policy slanted blatantly in favour of big business and centralisation.

I challenge the member for Logan. In a year's time I would like him to tell us in this House—and I agree with him in one way that it is good to see a new business being based in the electorate of Logan. There are jobs for people there—probably 60 or 70 jobs—as a result of National Foods coming into the area. I challenge the member for Logan to tell us in a year's time how many dairy farmers and their families will lose their jobs and possibly lose their farms as a result of deregulation and of these major companies from down south coming into Queensland. I also challenge him to tell us how many people in the rural towns will lose their jobs due to the multiplier effect of the loss of these dairy farmers. That is the important thing about this: the member for Logan may gain 60 or 70 jobs in his electorate, but it is going to be at a cost to regional and rural Australia.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Dr PRENZLER: I agree with the member that it is a growing industry and there probably would be quite a lot. It is one of the largest producers of young olive trees in Australia.

Mr Mickel: The largest.

Dr PRENZLER: I realise that.

Mr Mickel: There are about 80 jobs there straight up—80 jobs that weren't there a few years ago.

Dr PRENZLER: Okay, but I am telling the member that the loss of 400, 500 or 600 dairy farmers throughout Queensland is going to cost us a lot more than 80 or 90 jobs.

But back to the speech. The policy is based on a fanciful premise that unregulated free enterprise, global free trade and privatisation of publicly owned facilities will somehow lead to a utopia where everyone shares equally in the benefits and lives happily ever after. This reminds me of a cartoon depicting a couple of lambs in a small paddock surrounded by several ravenous bulls. Their only protection is a stout fence around the paddock. One lamb is reading from a book about free trade. He points to the protective fence and says to his mate, "Theoretically removing this barrier will benefit everybody." It just goes to show that sheep are not all that smart. But, then again, neither are the members of this House who have fallen for the nonsensical claptrap being masqueraded under the guise of National Competition Policy. It is a very simplistic theory which delivers the direct opposite of its theoretical outcome. The level playing field will never be level under the influence of this hypothetical free trade policy.

Of course, it may be that all—perhaps not—Labor, Liberal and National Party politicians share the cranial deficiencies of the sheep when they sign off on this agreement—hopefully not all the members here.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Dr PRENZLER: That is why I corrected myself by saying "not all". The member for Southport is a dairy farmer of some note and I must admit that he realises what can happen.

Perhaps they have had the wool pulled over their eyes by the economic intelligentsia called economic rationalists. Those highly educated dills who get hold of a flawed and fractured theory clutch it to their breasts and rush out to experiment on a defenceless world, in this case Australia. It is apparent that these economic rationalist bureaucrats and some politicians now owe more allegiance to global big business, the IMF and the United Nations than they do to Australia.

Mr Veivers: People who live in places like Bega down in New South Wales will disappear.

Dr PRENZLER: I agree. I would not like to see Bega cheeses go because I am quite fond of it. It would be a shame if that dairying area does collapse.

Perhaps all of our politicians should have to swear to relinquish all our allegiances to foreign powers, both economic and sovereign. At the end of the day there can be only two alternatives. Either they were too naive and gullible to see through the obvious flaws of this policy or they saw the flaws and chose to proceed, anyway. Either way, they have proven themselves undeserving of the high honour that the people of this State have bestowed upon them.

In the process they have been instrumental in the destruction of the way of

life of whole communities, especially in the rural areas. They have intentionally or blindly sat back in their comfortable leather chairs and watched while people who have worked their entire lives to build a business go under because of decisions made by bureaucrats and, in some cases, politicians. They should not be allowed to hide away behind the weak excuse that they are required to follow the party line. Every single one of them was elected as an individual to represent the best interests of the people of their electorates.

Debate, on motion of Dr Prenzler, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (10.59 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Criminal Justice Commission

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (10.59 p.m.): Yesterday we saw where the Beattie Government's supposed openness and transparency has failed—it withheld information resulting in a duly elected member of this Parliament being suspended from Parliament for 21 days. So not only does the Labor Government in this State shred evidence, the heads of committees decide what information should or should not come to this House and at what speed that information should arrive within the precincts of this House. Perhaps Queensland should be run by a committee, not by the elected representatives of this Parliament.

Here we have an honest, open and fearless report given by the Parliamentary Commissioner into an inquiry of leaking information from the CJC that was withheld for a time and, I suspect, for a purpose. Hypocrisy and the very height of it is evidenced in the Criminal Justice Commission. We see them at this very moment posturing in the media and the press in order to try to raise their presence and standing in the community by demanding answers from the police and attempting to justify their very own existence as they probe and inquire into police misuse of computer database information and crying foul to all and sundry about how bad it is.

But let us go back a few months when the CJC themselves were subjected to very similar scrutiny by the Parliamentary Commissioner, Ms Julie Dick, where they leaked information not to a single person but to the Courier-Mail in that details of interviews and statements still to be verified were leaked. Even in today's Courier-Mail we see evidence of previous breaches and a photo of Mr Barnes. What was the answer to the Parliamentary Commissioner about the leaked information? The answer was that it could have come from scuttlebutt in the hallways. Are these the sort of loose lipped investigators who are now being employed by the Criminal Justice Commission? Is this the sort of integrity we expect from officers in the CJC—to take sensitive information and discuss it loudly over coffee and doughnuts in the cafeteria or over the water cooler?

The people of Queensland think not. Perhaps that is the sort of answer the police officers should have given the CJC investigators in the current inquiry. Because the CJC was discredited and embarrassed because their own inadequacies were found out, the CJC is now seeking redress for their embarrassment. What is the price they are asking from the Beattie Labor Government? Julie Dick's job. The position of Parliamentary Commissioner must go. Why? So nobody is looking over the shoulder of the Criminal Justice Commission and the PCJC. The CJC does not want to answer to anyone. The CJC wants to remain the ultimate power and authority in this State. What have we seen as a result of a decade of the CJC? Something like over $500m spent, a failed Trident inquiry and no arrests of major drug traffickers. All we have to show for it is a couple of minor charges for misdeeds of a few low ranking police officers.

In reality, all we have is a couple of parking tickets and nothing else for our money. If proper scrutiny was given, it is the CJC and not the Parliamentary Commissioner who should go. She found that there is a foul smell in Coronation Drive, and that is the CJC. If one was cynical, one would say that the CJC has just taken over the reins of what the Labor Party used to describe as Joh Bjelke-Petersen's Special Branch. The only difference we have now is a rampant CJC with the Labor Party in charge.

Yesterday morning in this very Parliament the Premier, by his very cunning use of diatribe, failed to answer the question raised by the member for Ipswich West. But we can read between the lines that the job of the Parliamentary Commissioner is on the line. Who is the Premier really working for? The people of Queensland? I think not. The Courier-Mail? Maybe. It was their suggestion in their editorial on Saturday, 26 February. Or do the friendships of old when the Premier himself was Chairman of the PCJC remain? Do the ties with the old Labor Lawyers run so deep

that he must protect them and their well-paid jobs at all costs? The question yesterday morning from the member for Ipswich West may well have been the scalpel that lanced the festering boil of discontent in the CJC and that which Labor is showing for the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Having seen first-hand the impartiality of the Parliamentary Commissioner, I am here to tell to the Premier and Queensland that I will certainly be thwarting any attempt to destroy the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner as an independent arm of Government. The office of the Parliamentary Commissioner is sacrosanct and there should be no attempt to take it away when the commissioner is doing such an ardent job for Queensland and Queenslanders in ensuring that the CJC does not continue as the rampant body that it is.

Mr R. White

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.04 p.m.): I put on record tonight the story and contribution of an extraordinary member of my electorate, supporter of the Labor Party and a strong advocate for social justice within the education system. I regret to inform the House, Robert Edward Peter (Bob) White passed away on 26 December 1999. Bob was an active member of the Queensland Teachers Union for 46 years and held many positions in the union. Bob was also a member of the QTU executive, a trustee of the union and an Australian Education Union conference delegate at the time of his death. He made an outstanding contribution to public education not just in Queensland but throughout Australia and our Pacific neighbours. He was also a deeply religious man. Mourners at Bob's funeral at the Twelve Apostles Catholic Church at Jindalee heard of Bob's significant contribution to society.

Bob's contribution to public education was enormous. He fought long and hard for over 40 years to improve education for children attending State schools and to improve the salary and working conditions of teachers in those schools. As a member of State council from 1972 and a member of the State executive from 1972 to 1979 and 1989 to 1999, Bob was regarded by colleagues and administrators as one of the leading rank-and-file activists in the union throughout that period. He was admired for his tenacious pursuit of issues and his unending loyalty to his fellow teachers through the Queensland Teachers Union. He was a person who was widely known and respected for his work with and support of the public school system, particularly with regard to salaries, the special needs of children, teachers' accommodation, working conditions and curriculum development.

As a dedicated teacher, Bob was the English head of department at Glenala State High School and before that at Richlands State High School and Inala State High School, at the highest levels in the QTU and nationally through the Australian Education Union and the Australian Labor Party through his long-time grassroots support and hard work in his home area of Jindalee. Bob's commitment to his profession, so like his commitment to the Labor Party, was something out of the ordinary. So often Bob would tell me about the conditions which needed to improve in education right across Queensland. He knew the feelings and sufferings of teachers and of the children he taught. Somehow I knew Bob would never retire. He had so much enthusiasm, compassion and energy for the real things that matter—people and living. The welfare of others was his number one priority and he would always be there when he was needed, despite the many demands on his time.

There was no pretence with Bob. He treated everyone the same. That was his philosophy on life and the basis of all he did was social justice and equity. Bob's involvement behind the scenes during the Mount Ommaney campaign was intense. He knew the area, how people thought about different issues, the agenda of community groups that he was involved in and especially the needs of children he taught. Bob White was a loyal supporter and member of the Labor Party. Inspired by Gough Whitlam, whom he held in high esteem, Bob joined the ALP in 1975. He assisted on numerous campaigns. Bob doorknocked the area with a younger Peter Beattie when Peter contested the Federal seat of Ryan many years ago. Bob's electoral campaign experience and local knowledge were invaluable. If there was a problem during the campaign which needed to be overcome, the lateral thinker was let loose. He transformed his ideas into action and was a genius when it came to strategy.

Bob always took charge of the Jindalee State School booth on election days. This was the largest booth in the area. Despite Bob's determination for the ALP to win this booth, Labor had never won it. However, during the council campaign in 1997, Jim Soorley won the mayoral vote at Jindalee. Bob was overjoyed. As booth captain, Bob would set up the Labor Party bunting early to gain the best position before the opposition woke up. He

would spend most of the day there chatting to people while his wife Jean enthusiastically distributed how-to-vote cards. After the polls closed, Bob would be there scrutineering ballot papers to ensure there were no slip-ups.

During the last State election, Bob was telephoning through the booth results on election night. He believed that we could win it this time and told me that I should get a 5% swing. But as the votes were being counted it became obvious that 70% of One Nation preferences were going to the Opposition. He began to lose hope. He thought we had lost the election but was overjoyed when we won by 850 votes overall. The impact he made on his Labor Party colleagues and the electorate of Mount Ommaney can never be understated and will long be remembered. Bob White will be sadly missed by his friends, colleagues and his family. I offer his family our condolences and wish them all the best for the future.

Floods

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (11.09 p.m.): I rise tonight to pay tribute to many people in central western Queensland for their efforts during last week's devastating floods. I place on record tonight the sympathies of all members for the victims of the floods that devastated part of Winton and part of Longreach and also isolated communities such as Aramac and Muttaburra. We also have to spare a thought for many of the land-holders in those areas who have lost stock and fencing through the torrential rains that fell virtually in a 24-hour period.

In hindsight we can all be critical of some of these disasters. I am aware that the residents of north Queensland are currently feeling the force of Cyclone Steve. Such communities have to deal not so much with the flooding but its aftermath. I appeal to every member to spare a thought for the people in those areas. We must help them cope with their emotions in the aftermath of disasters such as these. The clean-ups in Longreach and Winton are currently under way. Through watching TV footage, I can relate to what is happening in north Queensland at this very moment. I know that the people in that part of the world are accustomed to it, but for many other people it is totally uncharacteristic.

I want to pay a special tribute to all of the State Emergency Service personnel who operated in both Longreach and Winton during the recent flooding. I do not want to name anyone because I believe that all of those people played a very important and integral role, and they committed themselves unselfishly to the cause. As the Premier said when he visited Longreach and Winton at that time, such operations make one feel proud to be Australian.

I pay tribute to Inspector Gary Jamieson of the Longreach Police District for his overseeing of the whole operation, both in Longreach and Winton, and to his officers in those two centres. I pay tribute to the council employees, both in Longreach and Winton, and also to the many volunteers who gave their time to help people shift furniture and valuables from homes and did so without being asked. As Inspector Gary Jamieson said, and as Assistant Commissioner Bob Cassidy of the Rockhampton Central District told me over a couple of beers in the Commercial Hotel last Friday evening, it is one of the smoothest disaster relief operations either of them has seen in their time in policing. I think that speaks volumes for the people who played a part in it.

As a result of these events, people will be distressed and in need of assistance. Whether it be the people of Longreach or Winton or the northern part of Queensland, I believe it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to attempt to restore their lives to some sort of normality as quickly as possible and with as little trauma as possible after that which has already been inflicted on them. We see on TV the dramas and the problems confronting people in East Timor and the floods in Mozambique, but charity has to start at home. On this occasion we have to look after our own.

The many people whose properties have been flooded and ruined probably never contemplated that this would happen to them. The western country cannot tolerate torrential rain in the volumes of 28 or 30 inches over a matter of a couple of days. In the Wet Tropics areas, that sort of rainfall can be handled.

I want to place on record tonight the great work done by the police, the council workers, the SES and all the volunteers in both of those centres who gave unselfishly of their time out of their commitment to and love and care of their fellow citizens. Although we have to pay particular attention to the people of north Queensland at this time, I hope that we can all work together in a bipartisan approach to assist everyone affected by flooding to return to the lifestyle to which they and we as Queenslanders are accustomed.

Women's Sport

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): As Vaughan Johnson knows, I

used to live in Longreach, and I have great sympathy for those people at this time. I remember the floods experienced in that region. There would be a double dose: the river in Longreach would flood, and then the floodwaters from the river in Winton would hit. One of the things that I remember vividly about Longreach is the sandflies that came with the floods—twice.

Tonight I rise to speak about women in sport, but in particular I would like to address the issue of increasing the numbers of women playing sport at competitive levels and national levels in north Queensland, particularly in Townsville. Frequently women have to move interstate or overseas to pursue and further develop their sporting careers. In promoting the achievements and public profiles of women in sport we face an uphill battle. Sponsors are not interested in women, and as we have witnessed recently, women have to get their gear off to be noticed, let alone be promoted.

It is imperative that we develop female role models in the sporting arena, and we need to develop skills in media relations, marketing and sponsorship for women and girls. We already have elite female athletes but little support in addressing gender equity and, indeed, in gaining national or State recognition for their tremendous sporting achievements. The State—and sometimes even Parliament, dare I say—comes to a complete standstill when the State of Origin is on. Where does this same honour, recognition and acceptance occur for women athletes, whose skills are no less admirable? I can go so far as to say that men dominate all levels of national sport, with very limited national profiles for women.

Let us look at the Women's National Basketball League as an example. The WNBL was formed in 1981, being the first women's sport to be set up nationally in Australia, and is now rated in the top three women's leagues in the world. There are currently eight teams in the WNBL, with representative teams from all States except Queensland. The WNBL has national air support on pay TV, and it out-rates the NBL on ABC during the regular season. The WNBL is regarded as a leading sporting group, providing professional advice to other sports.

We need to establish a Women's National Basketball League team, and I think in fact we must have a Queensland team. Attempts to relaunch in Brisbane have failed. Why should the State suffer by not being represented in this strong competitive league?

The opportunity has arisen for Townsville to host a Queensland WNBL team. The enthusiasm that this has generated among the sports fraternity in Townsville is catching. Townsville has a strong basketball fraternity, and a Townsville WNBL team will raise Townsville's profile both regionally and nationally. Being the only WNBL team in Queensland, Townsville will be the Queensland representative in the league.

The WNBL team will provide positive role models for north Queensland girls and will provide a career path for north Queensland's female athletes. The formation of a WNBL team will create jobs and increase employment in the region, with flow-on benefits to the local economy. Visitation to Townsville will increase, with 12 teams and their supporters coming to Townsville each season.

However, there are obvious challenges ahead. Sponsorship and community support is essential to the success of a Townsville WNBL team, and sponsorship needs to be secured. The existing Murray Basketball Stadium needs to be upgraded and airconditioned, and the season starts in November 2000. However, let us look at a plan to widen the network of women's sporting organisations in north Queensland.

I support the need to re-educate all Australians in supporting and promoting sports, predominantly played by men, to support and promote our elite female athletes. There is a huge basketball following in Townsville. We can sell our games even if our teams are not doing so well. So I will be supporting the personal and social benefits for women in the endeavours to put women's sport on an equal footing to that of their male counterparts. I will be urging business, the community and all levels of Government to seriously consider the proposal for a north Queensland WNBL team.

Police Staffing, Albert Electorate

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.18 p.m.): Last week Mrs Cheryl Cockin presented me with a petition requesting that the Police Minister urgently take action to ensure that Coomera Police Station is manned 24 hours a day and that planning be put in place to provide a new full-time police station in the Helensvale area. This petition, addressed to the Police Minister, Mr Barton, has been signed by more than 2,900 people, most of whom reside in and around Helensvale.

The need for an increased police presence in the southern Albert region has never been more urgent. Mrs Cockin organised this petition when she discovered, to her dismay, that the region does not have adequate police coverage. Indeed, the local police station at Coomera is closed in the evenings and on weekends, resulting in the unsatisfactory situation of residents being forced to rely on police at Broadbeach—some 24 kilometres away—to respond to their local needs.

Mrs Cockin took it upon herself to canvass the community and gain support for this petition and was overwhelmed by the response from her fellow citizens. As this petition is not in the correct form to be presented to the House, I seek leave to table it along with various supporting newspaper clippings which Mrs Cockin has provided.

Leave granted.

Mr BAUMANN: These relate to escalating crime and loutish behaviour in the area and include the following items: car hoons speeding through the streets on the night before rubbish collection, grabbing bins and sending rubbish flying all over the streets; hoons and youth gangs terrorising residents at Ormeau with police apparently stating that there were not enough officers available to attend; and the Deputy Mayor advising that hooliganism, vandalism and antisocial behaviour are major concerns in the area.

The Minister may recall that I appealed to him 12 months ago for a school-based police presence at Helensvale State High School. It is fairly obvious that that would be a good move if it could be organised. Just last week, two residents who were too frightened to give their names for fear of retribution, made a citizens' arrest when an arsonist set fire to a playground shade structure in one of Helensvale's parks where the skate bowl is situated. I understand that the police took something like 40 minutes to attend because they had to come from Broadbeach.

I seek leave to incorporate Mrs Cockin's letter in my address.

Leave granted.

13th February 2000

To: The Honourable, The Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland

CC. The Hon. Mr Tom Barton

Presented to Parliament by: Mr W F Baumann

I would like to draw to your attention the worsening crime problem that has been escalating rapidly in the Northern Gold Coast area for a number of years. It is the lack of police facilities in one of Australia's largest rapidly expanding areas.

The area in question is from Pimpama (N), Gaven Way (S), Hope Island (E) and Mt Tamborine (W). This is a huge area and the population is growing fast. These are some of the facts—

Coomera police station is the only police station in the area and operates between the hours of 8am till 4pm, Monday to Friday.

There is one police car that services this huge area after 4pm and is shared fortnightly with Runaway Bay.

The annual growth rate is around 14% per annum (1998 figures) for the Coomera division.

The number of proposed residential and commercial developments is increasing.

All this development along with the already existing spread of population means that the police resources are stretched even further. A call out to hoons speeding down streets in Pimpama at the same time as an assault in Helensvale results in one of these incidents having an unacceptable response time. If the patrol car is busy it may be hours before assistance arrives, by then it is over and the perpetrators are long gone.

This is a scenario repeated to me time and time again by the residents and police officers I have spoken to over the past 4 weeks whilst compiling the enclosed petition. The police are frustrated, the residents are frustrated and the business owners and operators are frustrated.

This unfortunately, is not something that will go away.

Thankfully, there is now a 24hr fire station at Helensvale and approval for a 24hr ambulance station at Oxenford to service this growing part of the world. Unfortunately, the police service, despite their efforts have had no success in getting funding for extra services.

Broadbeach is the only police station covering the whole Gold Coast after 4pm and if you are lucky enough to be able to get through by telephone an apathetic but sympathetic response is all you can expect. The police have not got the manpower to handle all the enquiries. Broadbeach police station is approximately 24kms away from Coomera, so any incidents that occur where your presence is required, means having to travel to Broadbeach.

A re-occurring theme in conversation with businesses and residents is 'there is no point in ringing the police because nothing will be done'. This is a sad state of affairs, as the population should not have to feel this way.

All the petition asks for is a 24hr, manned police station at Coomera, offering assistance to local residents and businesses when it's needed. It

> will allow the police to speed up their response times and maybe stamp out the loutish and criminal behaviour we are increasingly living with.
>
> The residents and businesses have noticed the lack of coverage after hours and so have the criminals.
>
> I could have spent months, collecting thousands upon thousands of signatures but the situation needs your urgent attention. The 2900+ signatures collected were done in only 3 weeks but any delay would only make our plight even worse.
>
> I sincerely hope you take notice of my letter and petition and look into some extra funding for our region. I am not a politician or a councillor or affiliated with any protest groups. I am a concerned resident and mother of two children that feels strongly about being able to live in a trouble free and safe environment. If this cannot be, then all I ask is to have a local police presence that can respond to any problem quickly.
>
> Yours faithfully
>
> Cheryl Cockin

Mr BAUMANN: Residents have reached the point of not even bothering to call police because, in many cases, they believe that nothing will be done. This is no reflection on the Queensland Police Service.

There is a real concern, though, about morale in the service, given the undoubted frustration of dedicated officers trying to deliver assistance to meet community expectations. At the same time, community members are trying to assist through groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, community consultative committees and safe houses. I am sure that the Minister is well aware of those organisations. One cannot blame the people for feeling that their efforts are wasted when police resources are insufficient to provide the essential back-up.

The 2,900-plus local people who signed this petition wonder why it is that politicians and bureaucrats seem to ignore the fact that theirs is the fastest-growing area in Queensland, with around 14% growth last year. They cannot understand why they are neglected when, with sensible infrastructure planning and adequate and timely provision of services and resources, their security and safety problems could largely be prevented.

The Minister might argue that manning levels are adequate, but I can assure him that they are not. When one takes into account annual leave, sick leave, secondments, work-related injuries, workplace training, special leave and the demands of the many major events on the Gold Coast—Indy, Schoolies, surf-lifesaving titles and myriad national and international sporting events—it is not difficult to understand the impossible task facing senior staff responsible for rostering enough police to meet demand.

I would also like to bring to the Minister's attention the value of motorcycle patrols as a very efficient method of increasing police effectiveness, particularly in known trouble spots. These low-cost, high-profile machines certainly raise the perceived level of police presence in any community or region, and their manoeuvrability and flexibility make them a far more efficient machine than the more expensive cars and four-wheel drive vehicles in a wide cross-section of demand usage. I urge the Minister to support the calls for more of these machines on the streets, and particularly in the streets in my electorate. I ask the Minister to seriously consider the depth of feeling in my community about this issue.

Time expired.

Mackay North State High School

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (11.24 p.m.): I rise to speak about the pride we should all have in a group of senior students from Mackay North State High School who travelled recently to Gallipoli, France and Belgium on a tour known as the Lest We Forget World War I Commemorative Tour. I hope that honourable members were fortunate enough—as I was—to see the ABC's Australian Story on 4 November entitled "Carve Their Names With Pride" which featured the students and their amazing story.

In late 1998, the senior history students asked their history teacher, Mike Goodwin, if they could go on an excursion in 1999. When Mr Goodwin asked his students where they would like to go, he was amazed to hear them say that they would like to travel to Gallipoli on Anzac Day. Unfortunately, Gallipoli on Anzac Day proved to be impossible, but after some research it seemed that a trip to Gallipoli later in the year would be possible. So began fundraising and the incredible amount of organising that had to be done to bring the dream to reality.

The tour was undertaken by 13 senior history students and five adult supervisors and historians from 15 September to 6 October with the aim of commemorating and further publicising the sacrifices made by Australians in World War I and to make meaningful and respectful tributes to the 60,000 Australians who died during the war.

Initially, the students had the idea of finding the graves of their own relatives but, as people began to learn of the project, more and more requests were made for them to find the graves of other people's relatives. As part of the research and community service component of the project, a commitment was made by the group to find, commemorate and photograph 98 names of those ancestors of local people who were killed in the war. The project received national recognition and requests for photographs came from as far away as Adelaide. Through detailed investigations and study the students were able to trace the burial details of these men.

The group spent five solid days travelling to each cemetery and memorial in France and Belgium and two full days at cemeteries and memorials at Gallipoli where they located the graves and commemorated each soldier by laying a wreath, reciting the ode and observing a minute's silence. A photograph of the grave was taken and this photograph was framed and presented to the family at a special presentation evening in Mackay in November.

Many of the students found the graves of their own ancestors and the tributes paid were very moving indeed, as honourable members would no doubt have seen if they watched Australian Story. As well as individual commemorations, the group undertook five special commemorative services at significant memorials to Australian sacrifices. These took place at the Lone Pine Memorial, the Australian National Memorial, the Menin Gate Memorial, VC Corner Memorial and the cemetery in Peronne.

A great honour was paid to the group at the Menin Gate Memorial when they were invited to lay their wreath as part of the Last Post service which is held every night at 8 p.m. The students, teachers and supervisors were given a wonderful welcome by the people of Villers Bretonneux where they were billeted for three nights. A touching comment was made by the principal of College Jacques Brel who said, when thanked for the wonderful hospitality shown, "You need not thank us. It is because you are who you are, Australians."

The students who participated in the commemorative tour are: Amy Wilson, Jessica Disteldorf, Mark Avery, Sara Chenery, Jane Allen, Georgia Pollock, Amena Heathwood, Rachael Browning, Amanda O'Brien, Corrine Clifton, Leonie Burrows, Paul Luck and Katrina Tunnah. The students were accompanied by senior history teacher Mike Goodwin and his wife Roz, teacher Bob Shaw, and Diane and Bruce Lees.

An educational video entitled "Living the Legend" is currently being produced and will be donated to schools throughout Queensland for use in history classes. In addition, a web site is currently under construction. Both are aimed at the younger generation and are designed to share the students' experiences and to ensure that the ideals of commemoration are passed on and not forgotten.

The tour provided the students with a unique opportunity to study and commemorate this important era in Australian history first-hand. Their contribution to the remembrance of our fallen soldiers and how their wonderful achievement has touched the hearts of so many Australians is highlighted by the hundreds of emails, faxes and letters they have received. My personal congratulations go to each and every student and all those involved in the Lest We Forget Tour. Well done!

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.29 p.m.