

THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2000

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

PRIVILEGE

Member for Maroochydore

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.30 a.m.): I rise on a point of privilege. On 4BC Radio this morning the member for Maroochydore called me dishonest in relation to ICU beds and funding for intensive care at the PA Hospital. She has done this on a regular basis. I have not told untruths. In fact, I believe the member for Maroochydore should lift her game and concentrate on the issues for a change.

The issue in this case, as I have explained previously in the House and several times in the media, is a nursing shortage that is causing problems for Queensland, all other Australian health systems and indeed hospitals around the world. Under the Beattie Labor Government, the ICU bed capacity in Queensland has increased and will increase further with the completion of redevelopment projects at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and the PA Hospital. Also under the Beattie Government there have been record Health budgets, and the recent EB is fully funded and not reliant on staff cuts to pay for it, as was the case under the previous Government. It is not a funding problem. It is not a bed shortage problem. It is a specialist nursing shortage, which we have been addressing with more success than the other States and, I should add, since I became Health Minister.

Rather than reducing bed numbers, this week the PA Hospital has opened two additional ICU beds but has had to ask nurses to work overtime to staff the unit. It has the funding and the beds. It simply does not have the specialist staff. It is unsafe for patients for staff to be asked to work extended overtime on a permanent basis just to keep the member for Maroochydore happy. To emphasise the point that this problem is not unique in Queensland, I quote from the 30 August 2000 Nursing Labour Force report published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. It states—

"Findings include national shortages in December 1999 in several specialist fields of nursing practice—operating theatre, critical and intensive care, accident and emergency, aged care, mental health and midwifery."

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister will come to the matter of privilege.

Mrs EDMOND: I understand that the nursing shortage in Victoria is so severe that hospitals were forced to cancel all elective surgery for several weeks. That is something that I would be very reluctant to undertake, although I am aware of the disappointment for patients who have been affected by these shortages. A recent edition of A Current Affair on the nursing shortage highlighted Victoria's tactics of poaching nurses from Queensland, but Queensland was highlighted as the leading State in implementing long-term initiatives to address the shortage. The comments by the member opposite on radio this morning were inappropriate. Her behaviour is unbecoming of a member of Parliament. I would hope that she has the sense to apologise to the people of Queensland.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Beaudesert Shire Council

From **Mr Lingard** (51 petitioners) requesting the House to have Beaudesert Shire Council remove the unfair and unjust separate rate charge for roads in the assessment of property rates as it is causing financial difficulties for many senior citizens and families.

Electro Group Training

From **Miss Struthers** (39 petitioners) requesting the House allow the awarding of user choice contracts to Electro Group Training, the preferred industry choice of apprentice training.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The Clerk informed the House of the tabling of the following documents—

MINISTERIAL RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The following responses to petitions were tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport (Mr Mackenroth) to a petition presented by Mr Mackenroth from 112 petitioners, regarding the Burnett Shire Council—

11 OCT 2000

Mr R Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly of Queensland
CENTRAL DOCUMENT EXCHANGE M29

Dear Mr Doyle

I am in receipt of a number of petitions addressed to the Parliament from the Elliott Heads & District Ratepayers & Residents Association (Inc.), concerning issues relating to the Burnett Shire Council.

As the petitions appear to be the original copies, I have enclosed them for your records together with my response to the principal petitioner.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

TERRY MACKENROTH

11 OCT 2000

Mrs M J Phillips
Secretary
Elliott Heads & District Ratepayers & Residents Association (Inc.)
27 Bathurst Street
ELLIOTT HEADS Q 4670

Dear Mrs Phillips

I refer to your letter of 25 September 2000 attaching a copy of a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland raising objections to the allocation of Council funds for legal expenses relating to the eligibility of an elected Councillor of Burnett Shire Council.

The Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) provides local governments with a high level of autonomy and makes them directly accountable to their communities for the decisions they take. The powers of the Local Government Minister to intervene in local government decision-making are quite limited. In broad terms, the Act contains reserve powers for the Governor in Council to revoke or suspend a resolution of Council or to dissolve a local government on the recommendation of the Local Government Minister, where a local government has acted outside its powers or where it is unable to exercise its jurisdiction.

The issue raised by the petition concerning expenditure on legal expenses over and above the election budget has been examined by my Department. In this regard, I would draw your attention to Section 519(3) of the Act which provides that a local government may, by resolution, amend its budget at any time before the year ends. Decisions on these matters are ones for the local government concerned.

Whilst Section 164(1)(b) of the Act provides for the dissolution of a local government for the reasons set out in the petition, the Department is of the opinion there has been no evidence presented which would support a case that the Burnett Shire Council cannot properly exercise its jurisdiction of local government. I therefore do not propose to take any action under the abovementioned provisions of the Act.

It must be stressed the dismissal of a democratically elected Council is a serious action which would only be taken under the gravest circumstances.

I regret I am unable to be of assistance on this occasion.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

TERRY MACKENROTH

Response from the Minister for Health (Mrs Edmond) to a petition presented by Mr Turner from 30 petitioners, regarding voluntary euthanasia—

7 OCT 2000

Mr R D Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly Offices
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

Thank you for forwarding a copy of the petition lodged by the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland concerning voluntary euthanasia.

A copy of the response to the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland on this matter is attached.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Wendy Edmond MLA
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

24 OCT 2000

Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland Incorporated
115 Clough Street
MT GRAVATT Q 4122

Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for your petition laid upon the table of the House on 5 October 2000 regarding euthanasia.

The Queensland Government does not support euthanasia and does not intend to change the legislation with regard to euthanasia at this time.

Recently enacted legislation enables Queenslanders to advise on future health care. The Powers of Attorney Act 1999

make provisions for an adult to make an Advance Health Directive. This allows an adult to give instructions about future health care which comes into effect if the adult is unable to make their own decision. However, an Advance Health Directive does not allow euthanasia, but does allow a person to give directions about treatments they do not want if they are suffering from an incurable or terminal illness. More information regarding Advance Health Directives can be obtained from The Adult Guardian by telephoning (07) 3234 0870.

The Government has also expanded and improved palliative care options for Queenslanders with an annual increase in funding of up to \$5.1 million for non-government organisations.

Palliative care is the provision of coordinated nursing, medical, and allied services for people who are facing terminal illness and which enables people to die with dignity. Efforts are made to provide palliative care in the environment of the patient's choice, often with support from family and friends.

This year a total of \$26.3 million is allocated for palliative care services including community education and training. The recently announced Centre for Research and Education in Palliative Care will have a major role in advancing the experience and skills in palliative care. The Centre will also include a 24 hour telephone support line for carers and patients.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Wendy Edmond MLA

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The Clerk tabled the following ministerial paper—

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading (Ms Spence)—

Report under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

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

Annual Reports for 1999-2000—

Queensland Museum

Queensland Art Gallery.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Job Creation

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: Unlike the State coalition Government, which abandoned all pretence of governing while the Carruthers inquiry was under way, my Government is continuing to deliver for Queensland. I promised we would be a Government that focused on jobs, and that is exactly what we are delivering. This week alone we have announced three major jobs projects. On Monday, the Deputy Premier and I announced that Budget Direct Insurance would establish a call centre on the Sunshine Coast, employing more than 160 people, and its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Brisbane, which would employ a further 33 people. We also announced that computer software giant Microsoft would establish a centre of excellence in Queensland to help generate jobs in the Smart State. Together with the Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and the vice-president of Microsoft, we signed an agreement to that effect. On Tuesday, I announced that my Government had attracted another 130 airline jobs to Queensland with a decision by Qantas to locate a state-of-the-art meals preparation service in Logan.

Government members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I can hear that local members are delighted, because it means jobs in their regions. This decision by Qantas to locate its Snap Fresh Pty Ltd meals preparation service at the Queensland Government's Marsden Industrial Estate is another result of the State Government's policy of establishing Brisbane as an aviation centre. We are building on the fact that we have Boeing's Asia-Pacific headquarters and Virgin Blue's headquarters in Brisbane. Jobs with this industry are likely to be long term, so it makes sense to attract aviation companies to Queensland. This is our third major jobs announcement this week, following Microsoft and Budget Direct. This Government is a can-do Government that is delivering.

Snap Fresh will produce about 20 million meals a year and could employ up to 230 people by 2005. Qantas chose Logan as the ideal site after also looking at sites in New South Wales and Victoria. Both of those States were beaten by Queensland. Once again, Queensland came out on top when it came to a major company examining issues such as quality of life, work force abilities, economic forecasts and of course a supportive State Government. Construction of the plant is

due to start by the end of the year, with production due to start next year.

The State is vigorously marketing its suitability as an aviation centre. The three largest tertiary institutions in Brisbane—Griffith University, the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland—offer bachelor degrees such as Bachelor of Mechanical and Space Engineering, Bachelor of Engineering (Aerospace Avionics) and Bachelor of Aviation, which is sponsored by British Aerospace. Brisbane Airport has Australia's most modern terminals, with the international terminal currently servicing 23 international airlines. The airport has developed the first fully integrated export precinct to be established at an airport in Australia.

DHL International has established a global logistics centre and its shared service centre in Brisbane. Jet Care signed a contract worth millions of dollars to do Virgin Blue's maintenance. Mincom won a contract for maintenance-tracking software. Seven more local Queensland IT companies have contracts with Virgin Blue that would not have existed if the Government had not intervened and convinced Virgin that Queensland is a can-do State and the place to locate. Queensland's climate is conducive to maintenance work and there is a base of engineering skills as a result of local air force bases and a pool of ex-air force personnel residing in the State. Queensland is also in a favourable geographic location in the Asia-Pacific to serve as a base for aircraft maintenance.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Naturelink Gold Coast Cableway; Asia Pacific Masters Games

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday on behalf of the Government I announced that the Queensland Government had rejected the Naturelink Gold Coast cableway proposal. The cableway was the subject of many months of consultation and negotiation involving proponents, local residents, the Gold Coast City Council and other interested groups and organisations. The main reason the project was rejected was that it failed to meet my Government's environmental protection requirements. Criticisms were levelled against the development on the basis of waste management, visual pollution, catchment protection, water quality and fire safety, to mention just a few.

It was also being scrutinised by the Federal Government under its Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The information provided to me when I was in Canberra last week for the COAG meeting was that the Federal Government also would have had serious reservations about its going ahead and that Senator Hill would have been opposing it.

My Government said all along that the environmental bar would be set high for this project, and so it should. Our No. 1 priority was to ensure the protection of natural resources in the area. The proponents said that their preferred route, which would have seen the cableway running from Mudgeeraba to Springbrook, was essential for a feasible and sustainable ecotourism project. However, from our point of view the route was simply not acceptable because of the threat it posed to sensitive ecosystems contained in World Heritage listed national parklands. My Government did all it could to assist Naturelink Pty Ltd, including asking the company to look at alternative routes. The company rejected consideration of alternative routes. This occurred in early 1999, and the company decided that only its chosen route would be put forward for assessment.

Negotiation over the proposal went on for well over a year, but in the end agreement could not be reached. It was time to call an end to the negotiations in the interests of all parties concerned. In the end, we had no choice. Approval for a chosen route would have required amendments to the Nature Conservation Act, and the Government was not prepared to do that. The cableway was an environmental risk my Government could not afford to take. The coordinator-general recommended against its approval.

We are serious about our responsibility to protect natural areas. We gave the people of Queensland a clear commitment prior to the last State election that we would not allow commercial developments in national parks. We have honoured that commitment. Unlike those opposite, we do not support commercial developments in national parks.

Stopping this sort of development in our national parks is about protecting the values that will ensure the future prosperity and wellbeing of our prime natural landscapes. It is also about protecting the Queensland environment for our children and future generations. We will not allow the future to be compromised. This is not to say that future proposals for projects such as Naturelink in natural areas away from our national parks will

not gain support. That is an opportunity that is available to this company. If they meet the necessary environmental conditions, they may well be supported. That is the consideration.

While I am talking about the Gold Coast, I will refer to some other matters. It was my pleasure to be part of the Sand 'n' Surf Fun Run at Broadbeach on Sunday, in aid of Surf Life Saving Queensland. The Minister for Tourism was there as well. The fun run—or "fun walk" if you prefer a slower pace, like I did—was a great opportunity for people of all ages to be part of the Asia Pacific Masters Games. The first Asia Pacific Masters Games in 1998 was a great success, with 9,500 competitors in 33 sports from 41 countries. This year's games were even bigger and better. Over 11,000 athletes from 45 countries competed over 10 days on the Gold Coast.

The Gold Coast turned on its charm for the exciting event, offering not only a great competition but also a great tourist setting. At the closing ceremony on Sunday night, handled by the Minister for Tourism, games chief executive Stan Perkins did a Juan Antonio Samaranch, declaring it the best games ever. A lot of good things happen under this Government, now that I think about it. Indeed, all good things do. Stan and his team, the sponsors and the volunteers should be commended for ensuring that this year's games were in fact the best.

The masters competition is about fun and fitness. It is about competition and camaraderie. It is about giving athletes of all ages and all skill levels the chance to compete in a major event. Along with the recent Honda Indy, the games have cemented the Gold Coast's reputation as a fantastic sporting venue. It has also generated economic activity, created jobs and boosted tourism, injecting around \$15m into the Queensland economy. My Government looks forward to welcoming athletes to the next Asia Pacific Masters Games, to be held on the Gold Coast in 2002.

The games are another Queensland Events success story. For every \$1 invested in events, Queensland Events returns a staggering \$24 to the State economy. It creates business and jobs for Queenslanders. In 2000, more than 104,000 interstate and international visitors will come to our beautiful State to attend an event secured or supported by Queensland Events. Queensland Events has achieved remarkable results, capitalising on the vast potential of sporting and other major events, with Queenslanders reaping the benefits. At next year's Goodwill Games surf-

lifesaving will be a major event on the Gold Coast. That will provide an opportunity to take those images from the Gold Coast to 450 million homes around the world. The Gold Coast will have unprecedented exposure to the world, which will mean tourism and jobs for the Gold Coast.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ecotourism Lodge, Mareeba Wetlands

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I rise to inform the House that last week this Government handed over a lease of 72 hectares of the Mareeba wetland reserve, north of Mareeba, for what will be an ecotourism operation for the future. Professor David Bellamy, international environmental activist and chairman of the governors for the Wetland Foundation, flew from Britain to Cairns to accept the lease. This is an exciting development, not only for Mareeba, the tablelands and the Cairns district but also for Australians generally.

From next year the Mareeba wetlands reserve will be the home of a new ecotourism lodge which will enable people from around Australia and overseas to visit this most beautiful part of the world. The money tourists spend to visit the lodge will be used to manage the area. In other words, it will be an ecotourism lodge that will fund the maintenance and the upgrading of the wetlands. This is a perfect example of how green groups and the Government can work hand in hand—how the goals of development and protection of the environment can both be achieved.

This decision has taken seven months of hard work but, importantly, it has required a Government that is about a long-term commitment to the future—the future for all Queenslanders—and we have ensured just that with this project. The potential for conservation tourism is widely recognised around the world. This decision will put Queensland well and truly on the map for quality ecotourism ventures.

The 2,000 hectare reserve was established in 1996 and is one of the great biodiversified regions in this State, with a wide range of flora and fauna species. It is recognised as home to the rare cotton pygmy goose and the buff-breasted button quail, while the ecosystem includes unusual examples of Melville Island bloodwood woodlands.

This Government is now in the process of finding a developer and manager for the site. Expressions of interest closed on 10 October. I am pleased to inform the House that no fewer than 10 groups, some very significant players in the Queensland tourism industry, have applied to develop the site. Those expressions of interest will now be short-listed by the Wetland Foundation. We expect that construction will commence by the middle of next year. If those opposite want to ask me a question on Naturelink, they can do so.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Duties Bill

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: After considerable work and extensive consultation, the draft Duties Bill has been prepared. The new Duties Bill 2000 will provide Queenslanders with legislation that reflects modern commercial practices and minimises compliance costs to taxpayers. It will replace the 106 year old Stamp Act. The Duties Bill is now available as an exposure draft, to complete the extensive public consultation process. We believe the new legislation is far superior to the outdated Stamp Act. While the Duties Bill represents wide-ranging reform of the Stamp Act, its impact on the Budget will be revenue neutral.

As members would be aware, stamp duty is one of the cornerstones of Queensland's taxation system and represents around one third of all revenue collected. The existing legislation reflects outdated commercial practices and has been continually amended over the years on an ad hoc basis. It has long been recognised that the Stamp Act does not meet business and community expectations and is a hindrance to the efficient administration of the tax. The new legislation addresses these concerns by improving the certainty and simplicity of stamp duty taxes and ensuring that it works efficiently on taxable transactions.

The Queensland Government is doing everything it can to ensure that tax legislation is relevant to all Queenslanders. In developing the Bill there has been informal consultation on parts of the Bill with representatives of professional organisations and with particular industry groups. The Government is now providing the opportunity for full public consultation on the Bill prior to its introduction to Parliament.

The Queensland Government supports the Duties Bill as a major update of State taxes and is committed to the improvements

contained in it. It is our intention to introduce the Bill into the House next year, after the public consultation process has been finalised. I seek leave to table a copy of the Bill for the information and input of honourable members.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cultural Tourism

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: This Sunday, 12 November, at Mary Ryan's book store I will launch a new publication to assist cultural tourism entitled Heritage Trails of the Great South East. This guide follows the publication earlier this year of two cultural tourism guides initiated by Arts Queensland in conjunction with Tourism Queensland. Art, Culture and Heritage Motoring Guide to Cairns and Cape York, a motoring guide to the far north, was launched in Cairns in March, and Townsville: Tropical North Queensland, Art, Culture & Heritage was launched in Townsville in October.

In September, in conjunction with local Federal member, Ian McFarlane, I turned the first sod on the construction site for extensions to the Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba and announced local company F.K. Gardiner and Sons as the successful contractor for the \$2m project. This is a major south-east Queensland Heritage Trails Network initiative which will have a visitor centre featuring high-tech, multimedia displays and research facilities adjacent to the existing museum in Lindsay Street.

The Cobb & Co. Museum has already developed as a national research centre for the history, technology and heritage trades associated with horse-drawn vehicles. These extensions will provide additional exhibition space for the nation's finest collection of horse-drawn coaches and for significant touring national and international exhibitions.

The new public infrastructure will feature environmentally sustainable design and family-friendly facilities, including interactive programs and exhibitions with a focus on Darling Downs history and cultural heritage. As well, an Aboriginal keeping place and language centre will be developed in partnership with Toowoomba's Aboriginal community to present important indigenous historical stories and perspectives.

Cobb & Co.'s co-location and partnership arrangement with the Toowoomba TAFE campus presents the opportunity for training

ventures now and into the future, with a focus on the skills and trades practised by blacksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers and coachbuilders. The museum and TAFE are currently conducting blacksmithing courses and will be extending their heritage trade training programs to cater for the significant equine industry in the region.

The Cobb & Co Museum is one of 32 Queensland Heritage Trails Network major capital works projects designed to revitalise rural and regional Queensland. Other projects in Toowoomba and its surrounds are the Jondaryan Woolshed, Glengallan Homestead at Warwick and a heritage centre at Miles.

The arts and cultural tourism are important elements of this Government's plans to boost jobs and revenue in regional Queensland. Cultural tourism allows regional and rural economies to broaden and grow in new directions at a time when they need to most. Cultural tourism means not just economic survival for small communities but recognition of the unique character of their histories, their cultures, peoples and ways of life.

This latest guide to the Heritage Trails of the Great South East published by the Environmental Protection Agency—and I acknowledge the contribution of my ministerial colleague the Honourable Rod Welford, with the support of Channel 7 Brisbane and The Great South East Pty Ltd—extends the promotion of Queensland's cultural tourism attractions to include almost 600 important heritage sites in the State's south-east. The region covered extends from Coolangatta to Cooloola and west to the Darling Downs. Eight highway trails showcase the most interesting and accessible natural and cultural heritage sites of the region.

Premier Beattie and Federal Minister for the Arts and the Centenary of Federation, Peter McGauran, launched the joint \$110m State and Commonwealth funded Queensland Heritage Trails Network in early October 1999. The State has committed \$39m to the jointly funded Heritage Trails Network, which links 32 cultural tourism and heritage sites around the State.

This new publication highlights some 600 heritage sites in the State's south-east, including some of the region's most precious national parks and forests, all within easy reach of Brisbane. I congratulate the Environmental Protection Agency on an initiative that will generate jobs and economic flow-on in Queensland's south-eastern regional and rural communities through cultural tourism.

Queensland's cultural and tourism sectors are the fastest growing employment sectors in the State's economy. This guide is good for local government, good for Queensland tourism and culture, good for jobs and local investment and good for rural and regional Queensland. I table the document.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Commonwealth States Grants (Primary and Secondary Assistance) Bill

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: As honourable members know, the Commonwealth States Grants (Primary and Secondary Assistance) Bill is currently before the Commonwealth Parliament. There is substantial opposition to the Bill.

If it is passed and fully implemented, there will be two clear effects. Firstly, the Commonwealth Minister will have significant new powers to interfere in Queensland schools. These powers are designed to implement narrow views on testing and benchmarking and allow for State education systems, and therefore the students in those systems, to face financial penalties for non-compliance. Secondly, the relative funding allocations provided by the Commonwealth to State and non-State schools across this country will be fundamentally altered from 2001 onwards.

While the Bill will increase the total funds provided by the Commonwealth to Australian schools, the share of funding going to non-government schools will increase dramatically relative to the share going to State schools. My department estimates that in Queensland alone the relativities will be altered to the extent that Queensland State schools will be short-changed by approximately \$52m per annum.

The State Government has a vision for public school education in this State—Queensland State Education 2010—which was released earlier this year. It complements the Queensland Government's Smart State initiatives that are based on the view that education is a fundamental driver of future economic growth in this State.

However, the States Grants Bill will seriously threaten the capability of State schools to progress these fundamental reforms. Queensland students who choose the State system or who are unable to access non-State schools for financial reasons will be significantly discriminated against by the new funding arrangements. They will not have

equality of opportunity to achieve those skills necessary to participate in the future knowledge economy.

The Government is committed to the maintenance and development of a strong, rich-textured and comprehensive public schooling system in Queensland catering to a diverse student and parent body. Although the rhetoric of the Commonwealth Government is that the Bill will promote choice, geographic location and income levels clearly limit choices for many. Young people in some parts of Queensland will be particularly disadvantaged where State schools are the backbone of many regional, rural and remote communities.

We will not simply stand by while the Commonwealth coalition Government seeks to reduce State schools to the role of safety-net providers of schooling. The Premier has actively campaigned against the Bill in national forums and we support the efforts of the Federal Opposition parties to amend the Bill to make it more equitable. We will continue to work on behalf of all young Queenslanders in seeking to undo the damage that is being done by the Commonwealth coalition Government.

This Bill is fundamentally divisive. The relationships between the State, Catholic and independent schooling sectors in Queensland have been harmonious and productive. The Bill threatens these relationships. Some independent schools attract increased proportions of Commonwealth funds relative to State schools. The Bill threatens to drive a wedge between independent and Catholic schools, as some independent schools secure increased growth funds comparative to Catholic schools.

Let me also assure the House that the State Government strongly supports the non-State schooling system in Queensland and values the key role of Catholic and independent schools in providing quality educational programs to students across Queensland. We welcome the increased funds to the non-State schools. We demand that the State schools receive a proportional increase.

The inequities of this legislation should be addressed by ensuring that the Commonwealth treats State schools equally. Equitable funding arrangements should be restored so that students in State schools have a fair go relative to opportunities available to students in other systems. I seek the support of all members of this Parliament to redress the many flaws in this legislation.

I have had many productive meetings on a number of subjects with the Commonwealth

Minister the Honourable David Kemp in the past. The jointly funded Queensland School for Travelling Show Children was the product of one such meeting. On this issue, however, he has not only refused to see me, but he has also even refused to return calls.

This legislation is being rushed through Parliament by a Minister who does not fully realise the impact of this Bill on Queensland schools, and who does not want to realise it. It is an ideological drive to impose an economic rationalist market culture on our school system driven by a Minister who is choosing to be blind to the effects of his Bill on the futures of our children.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electronic Commerce

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise honourable members of a number of initiatives taken by the Department of Public Works to develop electronic commerce and information systems. By the time all of these systems are operational, State Government clients will have access to a host of e-commerce services including procurement, tendering, online payment and the ability to deliver a building project from early design to final construction.

Development of these initiatives has the support of my colleagues, the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade and the Minister for Communication and Information. The Department of Public Works is developing several e-business initiatives in conjunction with the Department of Communication, Information, Local Government, Planning and Sport.

Already, one aspect of the electronic marketplace has been adopted in the form of Q-Fleet Online, which allows dealers and car buyers to bid for former Government vehicles on the Internet. The site is starting to attract a great deal of interest throughout the State.

This week, the Department of Public Works is calling for expressions of interest to set up an electronic Government marketplace. The e-market will provide participating departments and agencies with online access to supplier catalogues, which will eliminate costly production and distribution costs for business and industry. The systems allow all participating Government departments and agencies to do business and share information with clients via the Internet.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: We know that the honourable member has the manners of a razorback pig, but, Mr Speaker, I would ask you to ask him to desist, if you wouldn't mind.

Not only will the new electronic commerce system be beneficial to Government; it will also boost the IT & T industry in Queensland, which will handle the increased flow-on interest from participating businesses.

Electronic commerce initiatives are also being developed that will affect how the building industry operates in the future. In recent years, the Department of Public Works has introduced electronic funds transfer payments to contractors and electronic billing to its clients. Both of these initiatives have been successful and well accepted by all groups involved.

Over the past two years, the department has been developing e-project—a system to fully undertake building procurement projects electronically. It has also been developing an e-plan room to store design documentation electronically and publish it on the Internet to authorised users. Clients and industry groups have been consulted on these initiatives and significant milestones have been achieved recently. Construction of the new Yaralee State School at Hervey Bay was used as a trial of the e-project concept.

The briefing, design and contract administration for the school, which opened in January this year, were all administered electronically. A trial is currently being conducted of an electronic tender box as part of the e-project system. This electronic tendering initiative is the first time building construction projects in Queensland have been tendered for, accepted and where the construction contract has been administered electronically.

The e-plan room is currently operating for Education Queensland, with over 12,000 drawings being published for use by authorised clients and their representatives. These systems form an integral part of the Beattie Government's commitment to establishing Queensland as the Smart State.

The use of cutting-edge technology will have a significant impact upon thousands of small and medium-sized business owners in Queensland who each year compete for a slice of the Government's \$5 billion spent on goods and services. For them, the Government's use of e-commerce will mean quicker and cheaper business practices and less red tape. They will also help deliver better value for taxpayers' dollars.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Domestic Violence Laws

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: All too often we hear stories about the shocking physical abuse of women, children and men by the people closest to them—often the very person they should be able to turn to for love, affection and support, not a black eye or a broken arm. Up until 1989 there was no civil protection from domestic violence in Queensland.

Today women and men in spousal relationships are able to obtain civil protection under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989. Unfortunately, abuse and exploitation are not limited to spousal relationships. There are many intimate and family relationships in which people may be vulnerable to abuse. Older people and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.

The Beattie Government recognises the need to provide greater protection to Queenslanders. I am pleased to announce that Cabinet recently decided to expand our domestic violence laws to provide protection for people who are abused in informal care relationships, by relatives, or in other intimate personal relationships such as dating relationships.

Extending protection to these members of our community under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 will bring Queensland into line with the majority of other States and Territories and ensure that Queenslanders have the same level of protection against abuse as other Australians. The new laws will help address violence in families, particularly the alarming levels of indigenous family violence.

It is not always a spouse that is violent; it can be a father, mother, brother or uncle. Victims need protection from violence no matter who is the perpetrator. People do not have to live together to be abused; it can happen in a range of relationships, even when one is dating. This has been recognised in other jurisdictions. It is time that Queensland also faced this reality.

Perhaps the most vulnerable of all are people with disabilities and frail older people who are dependent on the care of others for their most basic needs. We have a duty to provide greater protection to those reliant on informal carers.

The proposed expansion of the Act will finally provide civil protection to these

vulnerable people. Some people may ask why it is necessary to expand the domestic violence legislation when people can make complaints under the Criminal Code. The answer is simple and is repeated by many survivors of domestic violence who say, "I just want the violence to stop", and our experience of the domestic violence legislation over the past 10 years is that it has protected many people from further acts of violence.

The proposal to expand the legislation has been the subject of extensive public consultation under this Government and the previous Government. There is overwhelming community support for the laws to be changed. The vulnerable in our society depend upon us to ensure that this happens. I look forward to introducing the new laws to the Parliament early next year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Office of Women's Policy

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: Ten years ago this month, 11 women made history when they began working in Queensland's first State Government Women's Policy Unit. Theirs was a unique challenge—to help the Goss Government transport Queensland out of the Dark Ages of National Party rule by ensuring that women and girls enjoyed a fair share of the benefits of a progressive Labor Government.

An Opposition member interjected.

Ms SPENCE: I can understand the embarrassment of those opposite. I am glad that the few women on the other side of the Chamber are listening. I can understand the embarrassment of those members, because Queensland was the last State to gain a women's policy unit and we had a lot of ground to make up.

Seared into the memories of fair-minded women and men were the appalling rights violations of the 1970s and 1980s, including: arrests at an International Women's Day march, raids on abortion clinics, and a litany of offensive and patronising statements—many of them made in this place against a Liberal member, Rosemary Kyburz. It is little wonder that then Senator Margaret Reynolds was moved to comment that Queensland had an advisory board for poultry, but not for women.

An Opposition member interjected.

Ms SPENCE: The members opposite are very upset about hearing about women, aren't they?

The media colourfully interpreted this as the senator saying that the State Government treated chooks better than women. At the start of 1990, just weeks after the National Party departed the Treasury benches, Queensland had no women judges, no women magistrates, no women heads of State Government departments, no State anti-discrimination legislation, no State funding for women's health centres and no State funded women's sexual assault program.

An Opposition member: What about men?

Ms SPENCE: That is a very sad interjection, but I want it acknowledged in Hansard.

Eleven months later, when the Women's Policy Unit started out, things were already on a roll. The Goss Government had appointed a woman to the magistracy, a woman Master of the Supreme Court, and yet another to head a Government department. In the wake of the unit's creation, the improvements favouring women came in thick and fast. The unit's early significant actions included coordinating the first whole-of-Government policy on the prevention of violence against women, coordinating the first women's budget statement, establishing the Register of Women, promoting information and service delivery to women in rural and regional areas and beginning a tradition of official celebration of International Women's Day.

By the end of 1991, we had the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act, the Child Care Act, the first female Supreme Court judge, the Women's Consultative Council—headed by the future Governor Leneen Forde—and, finally, State funding for sexual assault and women's health services. Tonight a group of women and men who have been associated with women's policy and human rights over the years will come together to commemorate the anniversary in the Parliamentary Annexe.

There is plenty to celebrate. For instance, we now have eight women judges and 12 magistrates—many of them appointed by the current Attorney-General and Minister for Justice—as well as three women heads of departments. The female members of the judiciary include the President of the Court of Appeal, the Chief Judge of the District Court and the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate.

The Government recently introduced a raft of legislative reforms to make historic

improvements to the treatment of women in the criminal justice system. The Government has introduced maternity leave for casual workers in the Public Service and it has been illegal since 1992 for a woman to suffer discrimination because she is breastfeeding. This is something the Federal Government is now only moving to introduce.

The Office of Women's Policy is working with other agencies on projects including the promotion of family friendly workplaces, enhancing body image and preventing eating disorders among young women and girls, and improving the treatment of women as consumers. There have been huge changes to the culture of Queensland institutions. Heaven help any Government Minister today who said, as a Government Minister said in 1985, that radical feminists have instilled into youth deviant lifestyles.

Some Queenslanders observe the improvements and ask whether we still need an Office of Women's Policy. Indeed, I can see honourable members at the back asking that question. It is an ambition of mine—and I am sure of many of my colleagues—that one day this office will be unnecessary, but I do not see that day as being just around the corner and I think that we have evidenced that this morning. Women are still underrepresented in senior positions in public and private institutions. Women still earn less on average than men. Women are more likely to be employed as casuals or part-timers in low-paying industries and are more likely to be subject to domestic violence, sexual harassment and workplace discrimination.

It is worth while celebrating the victories, but in the meantime we must keep working in a bipartisan fashion to further improve the lives of women and girls in this State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Emergency Services

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP)
(Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 a.m.),
by leave: The Beattie Labor Government was elected on a commitment to put Emergency Services on a more secure financial footing and improve service delivery to the community. As part of our commitment to a safer Queensland, we have honoured our election promises by providing record funding to Emergency Services in each of Labor's three Budgets to date.

Our achievements in Emergency Services since coming to office speak for themselves. In 1997-98 under the coalition, the department's

budget was a total of \$391.8m. This year, the Beattie Labor Government is providing Emergency Services with a budget of some \$480m. Over the past two Budgets, the Beattie Government has also injected more than \$110m into capital works funding to improve service delivery and response times. We are achieving these goals by providing over 400 new or replacement fire and ambulance vehicles plus 36 new, replacement or refurbished fire and ambulance stations throughout Queensland.

Another election commitment was delivered in January 1999 with the provision of free ambulance services to all pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants. Approximately 850,000 Queenslanders benefit from the scheme that gives older Queenslanders peace of mind and lightens their financial load.

The Queensland Ambulance Service in particular has benefited under this Government with more money for ambulance stations, vehicles, equipment and officers. The QAS budget has grown from \$158m in 1997-98 under the coalition to a record \$214.4m this financial year under Labor. In recent weeks, I have had the pleasure of officially opening three new ambulance stations that honour election commitments to those local communities. The new \$877,000 Northgate Ambulance Station is a vast improvement on the old Nundah station it replaces and will improve service delivery and response times to Brisbane Airport and residents of northern suburbs like Hendra, Hamilton, Eagle Farm, Clayfield, Wavell heights, Virginia, Banyo, and Nudgee. The new \$746,000 Centenary Ambulance Station I opened last week will significantly improve emergency response times to residents in Brisbane's south-western suburbs. Along with Kenmore and Oxley stations, it will cover suburbs including Oxley, Corinda, Sherwood, Sinnamon Park, Jindalee, Mount Ommaney, Middle Park, Darra and Seventeen Mile Rocks.

I also recently opened the new \$686,000 combined ambulance and fire station at Rosewood, honouring an election commitment by the former member for Ipswich West, Mr Don Livingstone. Construction of this station followed extensive community consultation and modification of the facility's original design, but the people of Rosewood now have a new combined fire and ambulance station that will serve them well into the future. This Government is proud of its record in Emergency Services and we are delivering on all of our election commitments.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

1986 Caboolture State Election Campaign

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.15 a.m.), by leave: Today's Courier-Mail makes allegations concerning voting irregularities in the 1986 Caboolture State election campaign over 14 years ago. The constant use of the words "scam" and "rort" in the articles refer to the application of computer aided enrolment techniques using the then State roll as a base document. Such campaign techniques, while innovative in 1986, have been in commonplace use by all political parties and candidates for many years.

A careful reading of the article does not suggest that I as the candidate nor my campaign manager, Ian Burgett, knew anything or participated in the alleged irregularities principally concerning duplicate voting. Importantly, nor does the article suggest that the alleged irregularities would have affected the result. There is a comment attributed to my then opponent that he had no knowledge of fraud and the comment by his campaign manager, who is now well known to me, I think is a reflection of the poor state of the rolls at the time.

I want to emphasise again that neither I nor my campaign manager had any knowledge of or undertook the alleged irregularities. Surely any voting irregularities would be highlighted by a check of a list of duplicate votes cast on election day, 1 November 1986, which is, I understand, maintained by the Electoral Commission.

The campaign team, comprising me and a dedicated bank of supporters, spent many months concentrating our activities on a massive doorknocking and enrolment drive aided by now commonplace computer applications and, as every member of this House would understand, plain old shoe leather.

Again, for the record, the Courier-Mail stated that I am the member for Kurwongbah. That is not true. I am the member for Kallangur.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Register of Members' Interests

Mr GRICE (Broadwater—NPA) (10.17 a.m.), by leave: Last week I pleaded guilty to smacking a disgraceful little grub. I should further plead guilty to at one time treating the grub as a friend. This person has provided to the Courier-Mail information designed to show that I may have contravened the requirements of the Register

of Members' Interests. I have not. A listing—Allan Grice Watercraft—as a possible source of income in the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 covers any boat transaction. That this person took his 14-year-old son into licensed brothel premises in breach of section 11A of the Victorian Prostitution Control Act 1994 is sufficient for anyone to draw their own conclusion.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge to the 88 members here that, during the past days of personal drama, not one word has been mentioned in this House because it was of a personal nature, and I thank them all for that. I seek leave to table supporting documents.

Leave granted.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report to Parliament on my visit to Singapore from 19 October to 26 October.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Cooke Inquiry

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (10.18 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That this House calls on the Government to reinstate the Cooke inquiry recommendations contained in the previous coalition Government's legislation to stop the vote rorting in industrial unions and electoral corruption in their political arm, the Australian Labor Party."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Electoral Fraud

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.19 a.m.): As the history of the Labor electoral corruption scandal starts to unveil, it is interesting to look at the comments made by the Premier in respect of these issues. On WIN television news in Townsville on Wednesday, 4 December, he said—

"There's no internal party investigation or any sort of that nonsense."

On Radio 4TO on Wednesday, 4 December 1996, the Premier stated—

"Basically what I've said is that we've had a couple of keen plebiscites and that's healthy for the party. There's now

an outcome, we've got two good candidates and we want to focus on the provision of good Government when we're re-elected."

Then on 4 December 1996 the Premier stated—

"I've had a chat with Karen as I have with Mike and I've indicated to both of them that there's no point continuing to respond to a bit of bruises that have come out of a couple of plebiscites."

So right from day one, the Premier has looked the other way. This morning, we see the allegations about Caboolture. I make this observation—and it has been made by a Labor insider—the programs that Labor had in place at that time would have been sufficient to enable Labor Party workers to identify who was enrolled but not resident at an address. That claim has been made internally. The honourable member for Gregory is holding up a picture of some postboxes.

Mr Johnson: Would that be Caboolture? Would that be Townsville? Ipswich?

Mr BORBIDGE: Is that Mundingburra? Is that Townsville? Or is that Caboolture?

The fact is that the history of this is that a political leader looked the other way from day one when he was well aware that there were investigations under way into serious matters of electoral corruption that go far beyond—

Time expired.

Electoral Fraud

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): Yesterday in the House we heard coalition members speaking about voting or enrolment irregularities in a number of Federal seats. Today I would like to contribute to the widespread debate in the Chamber and refer to the 1992 State election in my seat of Chermside and the Federal election in Lilley in 1993. As well, I will table documents in relation to what I have to say. In 1992 the National Party selected a Mansfield builder, Mr Doug Foggo, as its candidate. On the last day before the rolls closed, Mr Foggo enrolled in the seat of Chermside at 32 Cranbourne Street, West Chermside. It was a crowded house in Cranbourne Street, with three other adults enrolled there: Warren Tierney, Iver Maclurkin and an active National Party identity in the area Judith Humfress, who was a good local member for the National Party. However, we later heard that Doug Foggo did not live at any time at Cranbourne Street. It appears that

all through the election and following it he continued to live at his family home at Sandringham Street, Mansfield.

In 1993 Doug Foggo stood as the National Party candidate in Lilley, where he enrolled at 32 Brickyard Road, Virginia. As I wrote in my letter of 17 March 1993 to the returning officer in Lilley, there were only two buildings in Brickyard Road, both of them factories, and yet the National Party candidate and his helper, Charles Edward Allsop, were enrolled at the factory at number 32. Again, all through this period it is clear that Foggo continued to live in his family home at Mansfield.

In the 1992 State election we also saw the Reid family enrolled at 692 Gympie Road, Chermside. As I pointed out in my letter of 17 September 1992 to the Electoral Commission of Queensland, this address where constituents lived was the Liberal campaign office for the 1992 campaign. It is interesting to note that this family who supposedly lived at the office were business associates of the Liberal candidate. Before standing as a candidate in State and Federal elections on the north side of Brisbane, Foggo and his wife were enrolled at Sandringham Street, Mansfield. Today they are still enrolled at Sandringham Street.

At the time I took steps to address these concerns by writing to the Electoral Commission of Queensland and the Australian Electoral Commission in 1992 and 1993. I will forward this material to the CJC and I table this information.

Time expired.

Racing Industry

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.23 a.m.): The cat is finally out of the bag when it comes to this Government's future direction of the thoroughbred racing industry. Media reports have stated that the Government has given in-principle approval for a new body to oversee racing in Queensland—in other words, a racing commission, another statutory body to be filled by Labor mates and Labor cronies; it will be more nepotism and more cronyism. This discredited Labor Government cannot help itself.

Who made this ground-breaking announcement? Was it the Premier or the Racing Minister? No, it was a policy adviser! Let me quote from the Daily Telegraph on October 29—

"Michael Duff, racing adviser to Tourism, Sport and Racing Minister Merri Rose, said that State Cabinet had recently discussed a submission on national competition policy issues relating to the Queensland racing industry.

Duff said the submission included a proposal for a new government-appointed statutory body to oversee racing in a privatised environment. Cabinet had approved the concept in principle ... he said."

The most sensitive and controversial issue affecting the State's fourth largest industry and employer of more than 14,000 people has been announced by a policy adviser who apparently now makes public announcements about Cabinet deliberations. Nevertheless, the Government has now nailed its colours to the mast and, not surprisingly, the industry is in uproar.

The Queensland Racehorse Trainers Association, in a letter to the Premier dated 30 October, said—

"As a united body we would fight vigorously until this proposal is quashed, or industrial action of a grand scale would definitely take place ...

The Queensland Principal Club, who were democratically elected by all sections within the industry, have our full support in maintaining the role of administration, and we do not accept government appointees taking over this body.

We are now seeing once again, blatant political interference coming from the Racing Minister's office. We as an industry have had enough of all the political interference and are adamantly opposed to any government takeover."

The coalition is opposed to a racing commission. We will vigorously oppose any moves to take the decision-making process away from the industry and in Government we will not set up a racing commission.

Immigration Detention Centre, Brisbane

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): The Commonwealth Government has recently announced a plan to establish a new immigration detention centre in Brisbane under its long-term strategy for the provision of immigration detention facilities to address the expected detention needs arising from unauthorised arrivals and the detection of overstayers and those who breach visa conditions. A 200-bed low-risk detention centre constructed in the proximity of the Brisbane

Airport is expected to be operational in 2002-03. Plans will include capacity for expansion in future years. Very little is known about the plans concerning the Brisbane IDC. However, informal talks with the Federal Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs reveals that DIMA does not yet have a site near the Brisbane Airport and was planning to release a public tender in order to obtain such a site.

It is envisaged that boat people will not be accommodated at the facility; however, this has not been confirmed. Brisbane has a major international airport with an increasing number of unauthorised arrivals. Currently there is a limited detention capacity in Queensland. A small number can be detained at the Arthur Gorrie correctional facility in Brisbane, but the majority of detainees have to be flown, at considerable expense, to centres in other States. The Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre, which incarcerates criminals, is not a suitable detention facility for people who flee persecution in their own countries and may have genuine protection claims. There remains a question whether the centre offers facilities appropriate to meet the needs of refugees.

In light of the recent events at the Woomera Detention Centre, there are concerns regarding Federal policies on the handling of illegal immigrants, including security measures, and the provision of humane accommodation facilities which would satisfy the physical and psychological needs of refugees. It is difficult at this stage to ascertain potential benefits and/or disadvantages to the State. Some advantages may include the possible construction—

Time expired.

Health Service

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (10.27 a.m.): The current Queensland Health Code of Conduct 2000 reads like an absolute tyrant's handbook. I would like to quote parts of it. No. 8 reads—

"Communication with members of parliament on matters relating to official duties or affairs of the department must be restricted to established, formal channels."

No. 14 states—

"Employees must not deliberately access, store or forward information electronically in breach of legislation, departmental policy or provisions of this code."

Over the last few months many stories have come out of the Department of Health

regarding inadequate service being supplied to hospitals, inadequate operation times and people being prepped for surgery and then being sent home. As we heard from the member for Maroochydore this morning, the Department of Health is in an absolute state. A code of conduct like this one, which stops people from addressing very important concerns that they have with their workplace and serious concerns about what is going on in hospitals in our State, tells employees to shut up and tells them further that they cannot even go to their members of Parliament. This reads like Hitler's bloody handbook on the issue of health.

Health is the most important public service we have in this State. When people get sick they sometimes need to go to hospital. When doctors are working in inadequate conditions and they need help, who can they turn to in areas like the Atherton Tablelands or the Diamantina? They should be able to turn to their local member for help. When they are stopped from being able to do that, that is just utter fascism, that is tyranny of the highest order. When they cannot even take a bit of information to their local member when they know something is wrong, that is an admission of guilt.

The Queensland Health Code of Conduct for 2000 is an admission of guilt. The Minister knows it because she has had a heap of pressure put on her by me and other members down here. She knows she has done wrong; that is why she has put out this absolute garbage. Trust me, it will cause a revolt inside her department.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for Private Members' Statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Election Campaigns

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Premier: does he agree with the member for Woodridge that the State Secretary of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland holds the primary responsibility on behalf of the party for all State and Federal election campaigns conducted in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Just for the record—and I have a funny feeling we will come back to it—we should just note that the Leader of the National Party in 1992 was Rob Borbidge, the now Leader of the Opposition. I think the member for Chermshire has made some very relevant points today which I believe should be drawn to the attention of the

CJC, but I have a feeling we will come back to that a bit later on. In the interest of fairness, we would expect the CJC to treat these matters fairly and for there to be appropriate action taken, but we will come back to that.

The party secretary in the Labor Party has a very key role to play. Yes, the party secretary does run the election campaigns in a broad umbrella role. It is a several tiered structure. The party secretary sets guidelines in conjunction with the campaign committee, and then they are run locally by local campaigns.

Let me deal with a number of issues. I am deeply concerned about a number of matters. For example, I notice in today's Gold Coast Bulletin and, indeed, in the Courier-Mail yesterday that the Federal Police are now investigating some matters. The Courier-Mail article states—

"Federal police probe fraud in three seats.

The Australian Federal Police yesterday confirmed an investigation had been launched into suspected electoral fraud in three federal seats in south-east Queensland."

What are they? The three Federal electorates involved are Ryan, held by the Liberal Party; Moncrieff, held by the Liberal Party; and Bowman, which is held by the Labor Party.

It appears to me that there has been a very tangled web. We have all heard of the three-cornered contest. What we are seeing in Ryan and Moncrieff could well be the result of the three-cornered contest. No-one would seriously suggest that the Labor Party is going to win Ryan. Does anyone here think that the Labor Party is going to win Ryan? Does anyone think that the Labor Party is going to win Moncrieff? The Leader of the Opposition wanted to be the member for Moncrieff. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should tell us what he knows about Moncrieff. It is his area. What does he know about the reports in Moncrieff? He comes in here and throws around all sorts of wild allegations. What does he know?

Mr Welford: What isn't he telling us?

Mr BEATTIE: What isn't he telling us? What does he know about Moncrieff that he is not telling us? I have some relevant issues here from the Gold Coast Bulletin. The article states—

"The Australian Electoral Commission will investigate whether electoral fraud is occurring in the federal seat of Moncrieff on the Gold Coast.

...

Mrs Sullivan, who is retiring from her Moncrieff seat, told The Bulletin she was aware of fraudulent enrolments in the past.

...

Mrs Sullivan said her experience of the problem involved the property next to her home where she found a letter addressed to someone who obviously had their name on the electoral roll.

'It was a horse paddock. The letter was one from me welcoming them to the electorate.'

So she wrote to a horse paddock. That is the way the Liberal Party behaves on the Gold Coast.

I have written a letter to John Howard about these matters, which I table for the information of the House. In that letter to the Prime Minister I suggested that he establish a national Criminal Justice Commission. Why do we want a national Criminal Justice Commission? To look at a number of these things! I suggested that he should look at five things: the defeat of the former State president, Bob Tucker, in a re-run of a ballot in Ryan; claims by the former preselection candidate for Hinkler and former ALP member, Brian Courtice, that he was rorted by the Nationals out of his seat. I table that letter for the information of the House.

Time expired.

Electoral Fraud

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the obviously increasingly desperate Premier.

Mr Beattie: We're only warming up.

Mr BORBIDGE: It sounds like Merri Rose's campaign organiser has been busy down in Moncrieff.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Ask the question.

Mr Beattie: Is that the question, Mr Speaker? I am happy to respond if that is the question.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will continue.

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to allegations today that votes were systematically rorted by Labor in the State seat of Caboolture in the 1996 State election, during his tenure as State secretary, and that this was achieved with the help of computer generated street-by-street rolls, and I ask: is this what he was referring to in his best selling book In the Arena in which he refers to his

pride in the role of computers in that particular election campaign?

Mr BEATTIE: I have to thank the Leader of the Opposition. I have never known a person who has helped me publicise my book so much. It will get another run. I will have to talk to the publishers; we are going to need another run on this book. I could not have done it without him and the Leader of the Liberal Party. I will send them a Christmas card this year; I owe them one. I thank them very much for their support. I will even come around and read it to them, because clearly they could not read it themselves.

Dr Watson: It wasn't a best seller.

Mr BEATTIE: Okay, I will send the member another one and I will go around and read it to him.

Mr Hamill: At least it has a happy ending.

Mr BEATTIE: Mine does have a happy ending, unlike the member's ending, which will not be that happy.

As I was saying, in that letter I just tabled, the other things the Prime Minister should look at include Liberal Party membership irregularities in South Australia; the recent Liberal preselection in Queensland of Senator Brandis; and the Peter Reith phone card affair. I table a letter for the information of the House, along with the other two documents.

The bottom line in all of these matters is simply this: some unnamed person has been making allegations to the Courier-Mail. I read the article this morning. It seemed to me that there is the possibility that it was just an enrolment drive. The member for Caboolture got up and gave a detailed explanation. The bottom line with all this is—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, he gave a detailed explanation.

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. I have not given a detailed explanation of anything.

Mr BEATTIE: Nor are you capable of it. I withdraw it immediately.

Mr FELDMAN: I find that remark offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked that it be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw. He could not give a sensible explanation if his life depended on it. I immediately withdraw.

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive as well and I ask it to be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw.

The bottom line with all these things is very simple: the Courier-Mail has some unnamed shadowy figure who is making allegations. The person has not come forward to be interviewed. The Courier-Mail has not named the person. Three suggestions have been made to me as to who the person is. One is that they are a genuine person. Another suggestion is that they are somebody who is a front for the Liberal Party. The third possibility is that it is someone who has a mental illness. I do not know which one of these is true and, frankly, I am not going to shadow-box with the Courier-Mail. If it is not prepared to name the person then, frankly, I am not prepared to take it seriously. It is that simple.

Mr Hamill: The last two categories aren't mutually exclusive.

Mr BEATTIE: The last two categories are not mutually exclusive; that is true.

The Courier-Mail is quite entitled to publish these things, but we have no idea whether the person is credible or not. The person is not able to be tested. They are not coming forward; they are not being interviewed. I challenge them today to come forward, to be publicly named, to express their views publicly and to let people make a judgment on it.

When we come to these issues, honourable members should remember who was the Leader of the National Party in 1992, because that is the relevant issue which will be drawn to everyone's attention very shortly; it is very relevant to a matter that will be going to the CJC.

I made some reference yesterday—this is indicative of the Liberal Party's problems—to this vacant lot in South Australia. In it the couple listed under the Rostrevor address—166 Stradbroke Road—are among 132 members who joined Minister Brindal's Kings Park sub-branch in a single week and whose credentials are being investigated by the party. Other newcomers include 11 people listed at a single post office box. That is what the Liberal Party does.

Time expired.

Electoral Fraud

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to continuing allegations of voting irregularities and to a private member's statement I made in the House this morning, and I ask: is he aware of any other voting irregularities?

Mr BEATTIE: Let us deal with this issue very seriously. What the member for Chermside has told this House today is that Doug Foggo, the National Party candidate who ran against him in the 1992 State election, was living in Mansfield but enrolled on the last day in Chermside. He lived in Mansfield and falsely enrolled in Chermside. Members opposite should have no trouble checking this out because I understand he lives right next to Frank Carroll. All they have to do is get on the phone and ring him up because, I am told, he lives right next door to Frank Carroll. Then in 1993 in the Federal election he was living at Mansfield and he enrolled at a factory at Geebung.

Here are the how-to-vote cards from the National Party. Let me make it very clear, these are very serious issues that go to the heart of the electoral system. I call on the CJC today to immediately begin an investigation into this electoral fraud. If we are going to be fair and have some balance, the CJC should immediately establish an inquiry into the National Party. One of the first witnesses it should call is the Leader of the National Party at the time—1992—Rob Borbidge. He should go out and explain what he knew about Doug Foggo. He should go out and explain exactly what he knew about his enrolment. As I said, all he has to do is ring Frank Carroll. The Leader of the Liberal Party can give Frank a call. He can say, "Frank, listen mate. Who lives next door? Is Doug at home? Is Doug there?" That is all he has to do.

Mr Foley: Peter Reith can give him a card.

Mr BEATTIE: Peter Reith can give the member opposite some advice. All he has to say is, "Frank, is Doug at home?" That is all he has to do.

These issues go to the heart of electoral fraud. If each party is to be treated fairly in this State, the CJC should immediately establish an inquiry, none less than a public inquiry, into these matters involving the National Party. I have a challenge for the 1992 Leader of the National Party. The Attorney-General referred these matters to the CJC via the Electoral Commission. My challenge to the Leader of the National Party is this: is he prepared to have the same high standards that I had? Is he prepared to send these matters to the CJC himself today? That is my challenge to him. Is he prepared to do what I did? Is he prepared to lead on this issue and send these matters to the CJC? Is he prepared to do that? The answer is yes or no. Is he prepared to send

these down? Yes or no. Is he prepared to send these to the CJC? Yes or no.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I would reply to the Premier. However, if he tables the response from the Electoral Commission, we will be able to know the full story.

Mr BEATTIE: That is very good. That is a very pertinent point. However, do members know what the answer is? These matters have never been fully or properly investigated before.

Mr Borbidge: I thought he said he referred it.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, he did, but they were not fully and properly investigated. That is why the Leader of the Opposition should send the material to the CJC today.

Electoral Fraud

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Premier to his position as State Secretary of the ALP from 1981 to 1988, which included the 1987 Federal election campaign in Queensland for which he was primarily responsible, according to the member for Woodridge. I refer also to the reference in his book *In the Arena* in which he takes particular pride in the campaign for the targeted seat of Fisher in that year, which has recently been the subject of more damning allegations of electoral corruption within the Labor Party, and I ask: does he accept primary responsibility for the conduct of that campaign?

Mr BEATTIE: As I said before, I have already dealt with this issue openly and frankly. These matters go back to prehistoric times. These matters have been dealt with in the response by the member this morning. What was pursued in the *Courier-Mail* this morning was simply an enrolment drive—an enrolment drive that is pursued by every political party in exactly the same way. The National Party does it. The Liberal Party does it. Everybody does it. Let me tell the House what everybody does not do. They do not do what Doug Foggo did. He was living in Mansfield and enrolled himself in Chermside. Did he do this once? No, he did it twice. He did it in a Federal campaign and he did it in a State campaign. Frank Carroll will be particularly helpful with regard to this issue because I am told that Frank Carroll used to be a National Party person before he became a Liberal Party person. He will be able to give both sides of the story. He will be able to tell us that Doug was not only living next door but that he was a National Party person living next door.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. They can talk over the fence about this rort.

Mr Sullivan: He was always living next door.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, he was always living next door; he did not move. The only thing that moved was Frank Carroll, who moved between the National Party and the Liberal Party. Today is a test for the Leader of the Opposition. Is he prepared to get in the white limousine and go down to the CJC to hand over this material? He said no. He has not been prepared to do it. Oh, no, he will not set the standards. He will try to cover it up. I have promised a clean-up. We will see a cover-up from him. In 1992 Doug Foggo—he cannot get out of this—was a National Party candidate. He was living in Mansfield. He enrolled on the last day in Chermside. Do members know what that is? That is a rort—a National Party rort.

Let that be fully investigated by the CJC. Let the CJC establish an independent inquiry, because I do not think Doug Foggo is alone. I think Doug has a lot of friends in the National Party. This is not just a problem confined to Queensland. That is why we need a national CJC. A gentleman in Western Australia by the name of Getgood indicated that he was prepared to support a gentleman by the name of Collier in his political aspirations in the Liberal Party. What did he do? He found out that he was enrolled as a member of the Liberal Party. That is the way those opposite operate. I will table that material for the information of the House. There is only one question today: what is Rob Borbidge going to do about Doug Foggo? There is one question today. We have a National Party rort in Chermside. When is the member opposite going to do something about it?

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Premier to recently announced cuts to the ABC, and I ask: is the State Government concerned about the impact these cuts will have on local services to regional and rural Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: Before I answer the question in relation to the ABC, let me point out that in the Federal election in 1993 Doug Foggo was enrolled at a factory in Geebung. The CJC has to treat all political parties fairly. It should initiate an immediate public inquiry into this matter, and it should be started today. I congratulate the member for Chermside for having the courage to send that issue to the

CJC. I urged him to do it today so we can finally get a full investigation into the behaviour of the National Party in these seats.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite do not like it. When Doug Foggo gets caught out, they do not like it. This is a National Party rort.

Our ABC, our public broadcaster, is renowned for providing a full and considered reliable news service. This does not mean that I always like what it reports, but I accept that in its role as the national broadcaster the ABC plays an essential role in a democratic society. Queensland is already a little short on variety for State-based news. We have only one Statewide newspaper and many of the commercial stations carry little news and even less current affairs, even though they report them very well. It is fair enough for them to make that commercial decision, but that is exactly why it is essential that there are no cuts to the ABC's news and current affairs services in Queensland.

The ABC's news and current affairs programs are vital to rural and regional Queenslanders, who rely on these programs for local news and information. I fear that the recently announced ABC budget cuts will result in the reduction of the current ABC service to Queensland and to Queenslanders. Any cuts to the news and current affairs department in Queensland and plans to network programs out of Sydney in order to cut costs will be a disaster for Queensland. The ABC plays a major role in holding politicians accountable for their actions. Perhaps they would like to follow up today's story on Doug Foggo. If we do not have a quality broadcaster, then we cannot have a level of accountability and public debate. Think of what Queensland would have been like in the past 20 years if there had not been the 7.30 Report, and Queensland has lost its State-based 7.30 Report.

My Government and I will continue to put pressure on the Federal Government to ensure that the ABC is properly funded. Where has the Opposition been amidst this? The Leader of the Opposition has mouthed a few platitudes as to what should or should not happen to ABC services—all talk and no action. Where has that led? Nowhere! National Party senators have done nothing. They have not stood up for Queensland. If we take the Opposition Leader's previous performance in relation to the sell off of Telstra and fuel prices, this will go nowhere as well. Rob Borbidge and the National Party have again betrayed their constituency—the bush. This is another betrayal of the bush. We saw it with Telstra,

then petrol and now we see it with the ABC. If this National Party had any influence with the Commonwealth Government, it would have stopped it. Judging by the recent comments of the Deputy Prime Minister, nothing will be done about it because the Commonwealth Government treats the Queensland Nationals with contempt.

State Secretary, Australian Labor Party

Mr HORAN: I ask the Premier: does he agree with the member for Woodridge that the State Secretary of the Australian Labor Party is, in effect, the chief executive officer of the Labor Party and thus the person with whom the buck stops on all activities and conduct of the party throughout their tenure?

Mr BEATTIE: I have already answered these questions. Everything I have done has always been done honestly and with integrity. I have made it clear that if anybody in the Labor Party is found to have breached the law they should feel the full force of the law and they will be expelled.

Let me talk about the National Party and the Liberal Party. Did those opposite go out and campaign for Doug Foggo—a National Party rorter—in 1992? Did Liberal Party members go out and campaign for Doug Foggo? Did National Party members go out and campaign for Doug Foggo?

In the 1992 State election—we have not finished—we also saw the Reid family enrol at 692 Gympie Road, Chermside, as the member for Chermside pointed out in his letter of 17 September 1992 to the Electoral Commissioner in Queensland. This address at which constituents lived was the Liberal campaign office for the 1992 campaign. The warmth in the Liberal Party is so strong that they will live together in a campaign office. That is a warmth one has to admire. It is the sort of togetherness we do not see in Ryan and that we do not see anywhere else in the Liberal Party.

A Government member: You do not see it on the State executive.

Mr BEATTIE: We do not see it on their State executive but in these days, in 1992, they lived together in a campaign office for warmth and bonding. It is interesting to note that this family, who supposedly lived at the Gympie Road office, were business associates of the Liberal candidate. They all lived together. Before standing as a candidate—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite do not like it. Hear them squeal. We have a rort—a

National Party rort, a Liberal Party rort. It is off to the CJC and those opposite are all going to have to explain themselves. Do those opposite like it? No, they do not like it.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Is the Leader of the Opposition going to send it off? Oh, no. He would not send it off. He would not do what we did. Those opposite would not do that. We have to rely on the honest, hardworking, devoted member for Chermshire—the only honest man around.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Premier is misleading the House. He did not send it to the CJC. The Electoral Commissioner did.

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

Mr BEATTIE: Here is his chance. He can send the matter down to the CJC. He can send Doug Foggo down to the CJC. Is he going to do that?

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Are you going to do it?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Are you going to do it?

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He is not going to do it. Do honourable members know why? He campaigned for Doug Foggo. He was his leader in 1992. Poor old Doug did not win.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Did the member for Toowoomba South say he campaigned for him? Yes, he campaigned for him. What was the Leader of the Liberal Party doing? Was he out there campaigning for all these rorters as well? What does he know about the Reid family enrolling at 692 Gympie Road, Chermshire? What does he know about it?

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He does not know anything about it! Joan Sheldon was the leader. What does she know about it? No, she does not know anything about it! This will go to the CJC. I say to the CJC today: in the interests of political fairness there needs to be a public inquiry into the National Party and the Liberal Party, starting today.

Fuel Prices

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade to recent reports that Prime Minister John Howard remains unmoved

on reducing excise on fuel, and I ask: will the State Government continue to pursue the Howard Government for a better deal for Queensland motorists?

Mr ELDER: We will. Just before I address the petrol issue, I think I need to talk a little about Chermshire. When the member for Chermshire broke this, we saw those opposite start to scuttle and talk. Do honourable members wonder why? It is because Doug Foggo is not alone, is he? The Leader of the Opposition has been nice and quiet on this. The allegation is that the Premier never sent ALP material to the CJC. My challenge to the Opposition Leader is to send this. I will tell the House the difference. He will not send it, but it will get there. Doug Foggo is not alone, is he? He is not by himself. So it will be an interesting inquiry from the CJC when it comes into the actions of the National Party and how it moved people into seats and how it distorted the roll. Those opposite have their own time in the dock coming.

I return to the two issues that are really hurting those opposite out in the bush—that is, GST and fuel prices. They know that these issues are hurting them out in the bush. Fuel prices impact more than any other issue on their constituency. The reason Howard will not move on the excise is simply that he is putting together a billion-dollar war chest for the next election. That is the only reason he will not do it. He knows that with the likely 3c rise in excise that will come in February, just at the time small businesses are about to submit their second business activity statements, will give him 50c in every litre pumped into every car—in the bush, in the city, from every agricultural vehicle that is used and from every business vehicle that is used. He knows that 50c of that will go in tax. That will give him between \$1.7 billion and \$2 billion in revenue. That is what this has all been about. It is about his war chest. The following are not my words, but I would like to repeat them—

"The Federal Government is hoarding the extra revenue being generated from GST on petrol to use for porkbarrelling."

They are not my words. They are the words of the chief executive of the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, David Purchase. Every motoring organisation and industry group out there knows exactly what Howard is up to in terms of this. He will not move because he is pork-barrelling. He will not move because he is building an election war chest. But the people he hurts are the people those opposite supposedly represent—those in the bush, those in industry and those in the

small business sector. They are the ones who are being hurt by this, as are average families in this State and this country. If those opposite do not think fuel will be an issue in the next election, they are kidding themselves.

Optometrists

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. In the September/October 2000 issue of the Comet, Greg Johnson, Executive Director of the Optometrists Association of Australia, Queensland Branch, had a letter to the editor printed. I table a copy. In the letter he outlines one of the proposed amendments to the Optometrists Act 1974 and advises of the likelihood of a decline in service under the spectacle supply scheme to pensioners and other beneficiaries. He advises that this reduction in supply could occur as big business moves in to take over practices after deregulation of ownership. What diminution in the free supply of spectacles to pensioners and other beneficiaries will there be as a result of proposed changes?

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance. This relates to legislation before the House. Are you happy for me to answer the question?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will seek advice from the Clerk. If the Minister wishes to reply to the question, she may. Otherwise she may take the option of not answering, as it is a Bill before the House.

Mrs EDMOND: I am happy to answer the question. Optometrists have raised the question of ownership of optometry practices as being essential for the provision of services. It is something that is disputed and was not found to be the case under the NCP review of optometrists. In fact, it is rather a surprising claim. The optometrists are claiming they can be stood over by other owners of optometry practices.

I actually find it really surprising that a couple of members of the optometry association are making this claim. I have to say: it is tantamount to saying that optometrists alone, of all the professions, need protection from other influences in terms of their professional integrity. I find that an absolutely amazing thing to contemplate. No profession other than pharmacies has restrictions on ownership—not medicine, not dental practices, not physiotherapists. They can be owned by anyone. All the other professions recognise that their professional standards are such that they do not need to

be owned by a physiotherapist to practice good physiotherapy, for example.

I think the claim by the optometrists is erroneous. It was not supported in the hearings of the NCP review. I understand that there is a lobbying campaign going on now to the effect that it will impact on services. No evidence of that was presented to the NCP. This is part and parcel, as I said, of the registration Acts before the House.

Exports

Mrs LAVARCH: I refer the Treasurer to Queensland's important export industries and their significance to the State's economic performance. Can he please inform the House of any opportunities or threats which may impact on the ability of Queensland exporters to access overseas markets?

Mr HAMILL: As honourable members would be aware, Queensland relies very heavily on its exporters for the general economic welfare of the State. It is a matter of record that over the last three years net exports have not contributed to gross State product in a positive fashion. That has really been the impact of the Asian economic crisis upon a number of our key overseas markets, particularly obviously in Asia.

In fact, it is worth while noting that last year Japan alone contributed almost 30% of our total merchandise exports market and, whilst we saw growth in that market, it is only this year that we will actually see our exports make a net positive contribution to gross State product. That is very important for Queensland because what we are experiencing not only in Queensland but across Australia is an economic downturn as a result of rising interest rates, interest rates which have been spurred further by the GST and its inflationary impact. So exports will be very important for Queensland and for the State's economy over the months ahead.

It is also a fact that the parlous exchange rate for the Australian dollar does offer something of a silver lining for Queensland given the reliance—

Dr Watson: It is a very big silver lining.

Mr HAMILL: The Leader of the Liberal Party says that it is a very big silver lining. It is also a fact that a number of our exporters have hedged their prices, so that the impact may not be as great as some would wish. It is also the case that for a number of our major export industries that rely upon imported capital the exchange rate will have a significant detrimental effect on them when they come to

import machinery. That is a matter of considerable concern.

The other matter which I mention in this context, given the importance of Asia, is the difficulty which the Howard Government seems to have in engaging in a constructive and collaborative arrangement with our Asian neighbours. In fact, it is a matter of grave concern to Queensland that Australia, which started so well in negotiating the APEC arrangements, now looks like being frozen out of the Asia/Europe summit meetings. That is something that ought to be seen as a matter of grave concern for all Queenslanders, particularly those involved in export industries, because it is vital for Queensland that Australia can maintain a constructive dialogue with our Asian neighbours. I urge the Federal Government to review its Australia-centric policy and start engaging with our near neighbours in a constructive fashion in the interests of all Australian exporters, particularly those here in Queensland.

Electoral Fraud

Dr WATSON: In asking the Premier a question, I refer him to his limp excuse yesterday that he does not always know which of his ALP colleagues has been named at the Shepherdson inquiry because he sometimes takes several days to read the official transcript, and I ask: given that the Shepherdson inquiry has now been in recess for two weeks, can he inform the House if he has now caught up with his homework? If so, can he also inform the House what action he has taken in relation to his ALP colleague in this Chamber who has been accused of signing at least two fraudulent electoral enrolment applications and of running a notorious AWU safe house for Labor parachutists?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before the Premier answers this question, I repeat my warning from yesterday that we do not reflect on matters before the Shepherdson inquiry.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, because I am determined to be helpful, and because I am open and honest, as we all know, I can answer at least 60% of the question. The rest would be covered by your ruling, Mr Speaker, but I am happy to try to assist the Leader of the Liberal Party; he needs all the help he can get, he really does.

Dr WATSON: To assist the Premier, I have been quite explicit. I have not canvassed the evidence. I just asked what his actions are.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, can my three minutes start now? I do not want to waste any of my time because I really want the Leader of the Liberal Party to be well informed. He needs to be educated. By the way, just so it is clear, I want to table the material I referred to before in relation to Western Australia, because I think it is important that it be drawn to the attention of the House that the campaign director there was Senator Chris Ellison.

Let us come back to the issues involved. Yes, I have from time to time read the transcript. I have to say, though, that my primary function is to keep Queensland running effectively and efficiently—which this Government is doing. We are performing. This is a can-do Government. Things are happening. I do not always sit and read every part of the transcript, that is true, but I do skim through it all, which is what I indicated I would do. I cannot give an assurance that I have read every word on every page. Frankly, I have better things to do. But, yes, I generally skim through it. When I said that I read it, I mean that I generally skim through it. I am aware of issues that have been raised at the inquiry. As I have said to the Leader of the Liberal Party on previous occasions, if a stage is reached where I need to take action—and I did say they would have to be serious allegations—and I have already talked to him about the sort of criteria—

Mr Connor: That's not serious!

Mr BEATTIE: They have to be credible ones. If they were made by the member for Nerang, no-one would take them seriously. Under those circumstances, I will take appropriate action. At this point, it has not reached that stage. But let me make it clear that if I believe that appropriate action needs to be taken against anybody, that action will be taken.

The Government, through the Attorney-General and after consultation with me, did send the material—the Ehrmann affidavit and other material—to the Electoral Commission with a broad reference which enabled it to be sent to the CJC. We have been open about all this. We established this inquiry by our action and we will continue to act in the same manner. I do not see, though, from the Leader of the Liberal Party or from the Leader of the National Party anything similar. The Leader of the Liberal Party had an opportunity in relation to Doug Foggo today and he has not done anything.

Dr Watson: I have sent a number of things.

Mr BEATTIE: What about Doug Foggo? The Leader of the Liberal Party wants me to, but he will not. All right, we will.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: We will. But will he do it? No, no. He will not; we will. We will send it there because I think if we are to have some fairness, today the CJC should examine this material and it should do exactly what it has done in relation to the Labor Party—which I support. There should be a full, open and public inquiry into National Party and Liberal Party rorts. All we want to do is to be treated fairly and equally. Labor Party rorters should go to jail, National Party rorters should go to jail and Liberal Party rorters should go to jail. Let us clean it up once and for all.

Building Industry

Mr MUSGROVE: In asking a question of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, I refer him to the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative and the Government's expansion of employment opportunities in the building and construction industry, particularly amongst young Queenslanders working on Government projects, and I ask: how is this policy providing much-needed trained workers in the Queensland construction industry?

Mr BRADY: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, it is absolutely vital that the Beattie Labor Government continues with the policies that it has implemented in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships in the building and construction industry. They have never been more important.

Because of the impact of the GST that is causing the extraordinary depression in the building industry right across this country and the failure of coalition Governments in Canberra and in the non-Labor States to do anything about encouraging apprenticeships and traineeships in the industry, it is important that Queensland continues to lead the way, as we do with the Beattie Labor Government's programs.

One of the most important programs has been for the first time really making sure that the 10% training policy works. That is the policy that requires that all people doing construction work for the Government of Queensland and Government owned corporations ensure that 10% of the workable hours are worked by apprentices and trainees. In fact, that policy is working very well.

We saw an example the other day. Last Tuesday I attended a function at the Woodford Correctional Centre with my ministerial colleagues Tom Barton, the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and Robert Schwarten, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing. We were there to inspect a new building at the centre which is to be used as a gymnasium and hall. The building was constructed entirely by apprentices. A total of 70,000 hours of student training has been delivered during the expansion of the Woodford Correctional Centre. The apprenticeship honour board on site at the Woodford function told the story. More than 300 apprentices had worked at the centre, with about 50 apprentices and trainees on the site at the time that we were there. This is what a good Labor Government can deliver; it is a policy, of course, that will be abandoned if the coalition is ever returned to power.

In addition to that, of course, we also implemented the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. Since that fund was launched in January last year, it has encouraged private industry firms in the building and construction industry in this State to employ nearly 1,100 additional apprentices and trainees. The target this year is a further 980, and we are well on the way to achieving that goal. We are talking in terms of thousands of young men and women getting opportunities in the building and construction industry only as long as the Beattie Labor Government is in power. These are not policies that have ever been followed by the coalition parties. In addition, of course, we also pay cash bonuses to the building industry, which have also been successful in creating new training positions.

Electoral Fraud

Mr QUINN: I refer the Premier to the answer given by the Minister for Tourism and Racing yesterday when she confirmed that union organisers were allocated to Labor candidates during election campaigns, and I ask—

Government members: Party organisers.

Mr QUINN: The question is: who pays the salaries of these organisers while they work on Australian Labor Party election campaigns, to whom are these organisers responsible, how are they allocated and have their services been declared in the relevant Electoral Commission returns?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to answer this question. By the way, did the member for Merrimac campaign for Doug Foggo at any

time? I just want to know that. I thought that the member for Toowoomba South campaigned for him.

By the way, I was intrigued to hear the member for Toowoomba South ask a question concerning this Government doing something about petrol prices, yet it is the Prime Minister's decision and the member for Toowoomba South will not do anything about it. I have to say that that is a beauty. Why doesn't the member for Toowoomba South ring up John Howard and tell him to do something about it?

Let us come back to the question. This Government has acted openly and honestly in all these matters. Those opposite regularly put in FOI applications looking for material. I understand that one was put in to my department. I never interfere with those things. My department provides honourable members with whatever they want. I understand that the Opposition will be getting certain details today. I was sent a copy of the material after it was provided to the Opposition. I am flicking through the material now to see what decisions have been made. I will table a copy of this material for the information of the House in order to show how open this Government is. We have nothing to hide. We have behaved properly right from the beginning.

As I understood what the Minister for Tourism said yesterday, she said that, as happens in the National Party, the Liberal Party and every other party, there are organisers—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Oh, I see, you don't have organisers. Who organised your election campaign—the Phantom and the missing dog? The Phantom and the missing dog run the Opposition's campaign.

Mr Mulherin interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: As the member for Mackay said, there was an organiser in Dawson. National Party organisers are everywhere.

Those opposite attack my experience as a party secretary. Let me say that in my experience as a party secretary I have seen National Party and Liberal Party organisers all over the State, so they need not try to tell me porkies about it.

An Opposition member: Who pays?

Mr BEATTIE: I don't know who pays. Anybody could pay. They are not union organisers; they are party organisers. The honourable member was wrong in that assertion. They are paid by the Labor

Party—the organisation—just as is anyone else.

There is only one relevant question that arose in question time today, and that is how many members opposite campaigned for Doug Foggo? The Leader of the Opposition cannot say that he did not campaign for him, because he was one of the team. Was this a case of see no evil, hear no evil, do no evil? The Leader of the Opposition should tell us what he knew. He is not going to do the old three monkeys trick, is he? He is not going to tell me that he did not know anything about this, is he? Is he going to do the three monkeys trick? That is what I want to know. It is a case of see no evil, hear no evil.

The Leader of the Opposition has been around for how long—20 years? Does he mean to say that he has never seen any of this? I have heard this line before, haven't I? He has been here for 20 years and he knew nothing of this! We will send it off, because all we want is to be treated fairly. We want to be treated equally. If the CJC is going to treat this Government fairly and equally, there will be a public inquiry into National Party and Liberal Party rorts.

Electoral Fraud

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Premier. This morning, the House heard that in 1992 a Liberal Party campaign office in suburban Brisbane was the home of four Liberal Party supporters. I ask: is the Premier aware of any action taken by the then Liberal Leader, Joan Sheldon, to rectify this enrolment anomaly, and could there have been other such irregularities at Liberal Party campaign offices?

Mr BEATTIE: I think one of the other relevant questions is: what did Mrs Sheldon do? Here is the how-to-vote card. Have a look. There are a couple of photographs on this one. One of the photographs is of Keith Schafferius, the Liberal candidate for Chermiside. There is also a really charming photograph of Joan Sheldon, who was the Liberal Party Leader. It is a nice photograph. Do honourable members like it? Joan obviously likes it, because she approved it. Joan, we agree: it is a lovely photograph.

But what did the member for Caloundra do about these things? How many people visited the Liberal campaign office? Did they move beds around so that people could type things? Did they move beds around so that they could actually get some letters out? Can honourable members imagine going into this Liberal Party campaign office with a bundle of

mail? You would be stumbling over beds. There would be pillows all over the place. What did the member for Caloundra do for conveniences?

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Rorts are not desperate stuff. Rorts are something we are going to do something about. Whether these rorts are in the Labor Party, the National Party or the Liberal Party, we will do something about them.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The National Party members do not like it. I say to Queenslanders that the real test is this: when these matters came to my attention, they ended up in an inquiry. When they came to the attention of the Leader of the National Party and the Leader of the Liberal Party, what happened? There was a cover-up. This Government wants a clean-up; those opposite want a cover-up.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Did the member for Moggill campaign for Keith Schafferius? Did he know him? Did he campaign for him? Did he? The member should tell the world what he did.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go. What I want to know is this: did the current Leader of the Liberal Party visit the campaign office? Did he trip over one of the beds on the way to the typewriter? How many people were crammed into this office? Honourable members can imagine what it would have been like if someone wanted to go to the loo. It would have been a nightmare.

Mr Schwarten: Where did they shower?

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, where did they shower? Where did they shower in this campaign office?

Mr Hamill: It was the "slumber" party.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, the "slumber" party.

Mr Foley: Specialising in sleeper issues.

Mr BEATTIE: Sleeper issues, right. The truth is that this occurred under Joan Sheldon's leadership. It was also under Rob Borbidge's leadership. What did he do? He did nothing! It is now a matter for the CJC to do something about it. Here are people who rorted the system. This is an opportunity for those opposite to do the fair thing, the honest thing and the open thing.

Keith Schafferius is a private investigator. I reckon he could get to the bottom of this. Let us call in Keith from the Liberal Party, the private investigator. He will get to the bottom of

this. He will find out who was in whose bed. He will find out who was doing what letter distributions and who was rorting what.

The member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Moggill have been caught out. They have to adopt the same standards as this Government has adopted. They have been exposed in black and white rorts—National Party rorts and Liberal Party rorts.

Electoral Fraud

Mrs SHELDON: Would the Premier confirm that at the last State election Paul Joseph Braddy was registered at the address 70 Richmond Street, Gordon Park, and that Robert James Gibbs had his permanent registration at the Commercial Hotel, Brisbane Road, Redbank at the date of the last State election?

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Caloundra knows that, under the existing law, members of Parliament can nominate on the electoral roll where they live. Every honourable member can do that. Does the member for Caloundra know what they did? They complied with the law, because that is what the law allows.

The people I referred to earlier were not members of Parliament. These were people who were rorting. Under the law—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Members opposite know the rules; they know the law. They know what members of Parliament can do.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

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

Mr BEATTIE: We did not want to raise these things with the member, but he knows that he is in exactly the same position as Bob Gibbs and Paul Braddy. The member for Caloundra just dobbed him in.

Mr BORBIDGE: The question is: was Bob Gibbs living at Redbank and was the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations living at the address?

Mr SPEAKER: Is this a point of order? The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr BEATTIE: Paul Braddy has a house and he lives there. These guys were not living in a house, they were living in a factory. And when they were not living in a factory, they were living at the Liberal campaign office. Here we go. The Leader of the Opposition again does not like it.

Mr BORBIDGE: Minister Braddy was living upstairs, because when we became the Government he asked for further time to move his gear out.

Mr BEATTIE: If the Leader of the Opposition wants us to go through every one of his members, we are happy to. However, he knows what the Electoral Act provides.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. I had a house at 17 Richmond Street. I lived there. I also sometimes stayed here. I could stay in both places, and I did. I now have a house at 110 Swan Street, Gordon Park. I still have a room upstairs and I stay there sometimes, too.

Mr BEATTIE: More to the point, so does the Leader of the Opposition. Today, everybody saw him in the lift. I think that if the Leader of the Opposition is going to take that view, he should not stay here; he should go home every night. I know a couple of people saw him in the lift today. They saw him in the lift twice. He did exactly what the Minister did—the terrible man! And that terrible young lady did exactly what the Minister did as well. The member for Caloundra should not stay here. They are not going to cover this up. This is a rort, it is a rort, it is a rort, it is a rort, it is a rort.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Can the Premier tell us whether his Trade Commissioner in North America was a permanent resident at the hotel at which he was registered on the roll at the last election?

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

Mr BEATTIE: I have to tell the Leader of the Opposition that at least we know where he is at night, which is not what we can say about some of those guys opposite. This is a National Party rort and a Liberal Party rort—every one of them.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I find the comment by the Premier that I lived here at Parliament House offensive. It is untrue. I ask him to withdraw it. Just so that he can see that justice is done in this State, I would like to table the relevant roll so that he can send it down to the Shepherdson inquiry.

Mr BEATTIE: Did the member stay here last night?

Mrs SHELDON: I stayed here last night, because Parliament was sitting. I did not live here the way Minister Braddy and Bob Gibbs did month after month, year after year.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us be clear. All of these diversions do not detract from the fact that this is a rort, a rort, a rort, a rort, a National Party rort, a National Party rort, a rort, a rort, a rort and a rort. That is what it is. They got caught out and they do not like any bit of it. Let us be clear: it is a rort, a rort, a rort, a rort and a rort. That is what it is. It is a National Party rort and a Liberal Party rort. Who was the leader? Rob Borbidge was the leader and Joan Sheldon was the Leader of the Liberal Party. They have been caught. They have had every one of their sticky fingers all over it, and they have been caught, every one of them.

Prostitution

Mr MICKEL: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: can he inform the House whether the City Country Alliance has changed its stance on the new Prostitution Act?

Mr BARTON: Certainly, the most strident opponents of the Government's prostitution legislation, when it was debated in this Parliament last year, were the City Country Alliance members. Of course, at the time of the debate on the legislation they were still One Nation and launched into a spirited attack on the legislation. According to them, the prostitution legislation would lead to the destruction of the family and the end of the world as we know it.

I would like to refer to the remarks made by the member for Caboolture when he spoke against the legislation on 1 December 1999. He stated—

"It is clear that the passage of this Bill is not in the best interests of our society. It will not achieve anything. It will not strengthen the family unit. It will not make our streets safer and more secure and it will not create a happy, harmonious society which requires a strong functional family unit.

What this country needs is strong, moral, upstanding Governments which will resist the evil diatribe which is contained in this Bill. This legislation does not wash with every other moral, decent, upstanding person in our society."

That was one of the more memorable sermons from the member for Caboolture on the grassy knoll. Therefore, it came as quite a surprise for me to find out that CCA has endorsed Peter Schuback as its candidate for Rockhampton. In order to keep it in the family, it has also endorsed Mrs Schuback as the CCA candidate for Fitzroy.

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. We have not endorsed Peter Schuback.

Mr BARTON: That is the advice that we have. When I saw Peter Schuback—

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. Obviously it is wrong and perhaps the Minister should withdraw it.

Mr BARTON: I am not going to withdraw it, because my advice is that they have endorsed Mr Schuback. The same Mr Schuback wanted to set up a chain of brothels in central Queensland.

However, Mr Schuback was not only out there supporting what the Government's brothel legislation entailed; he wanted to take it even further. Mr Schuback, who has certainly associated himself with the CCA—and there is lots of evidence to indicate that they have associated themselves with him—has been out there indicating that he wants to set up a chain of brothels all over the State. He wanted to set up one in the old Rockhampton Post Office in the middle of town and wanted it to be also a male brothel. That is the same person who associates himself with the CCA. It would be very interesting to find out where he would fit in, in fact, he were to be elected on a CCA platform.

I notice the CCA members bleating, but they have been linked to him. They now want to deny it, but it is very clear that they have one standard when it comes to standing up in here and quite something else when they are out there scouting around trawling for anybody who is prepared to stand up and put their name on the CCA ticket. We will be very interested to see what happens in the future.

Burdekin Bypass

Mr KNUTH: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. The Minister indicated to the people of the Burdekin that a decision and recommendation would be announced publicly in September 2000 as to which Burdekin bypass route would be selected. Considering that those people who might be directly affected by the chosen route have now patiently suffered waiting for a further two months, I ask: is the Minister going to make a decision this month or is the whole Burdekin bypass issue too politically sensitive for the Beattie Government to announce before an election date?

Mr BREDHAUER: The answer to the latter part of the honourable member's question is no. It will not be delayed until after the election, as has been asserted by the Ayr Advocate and by the member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly.

As the honourable member would know—or would have appreciated, I should have thought—a considerable number of submissions have been made to the Department of Main Roads in respect of the Burdekin bypass. When I went to Ayr and had a look at the Burdekin bypass proposals and also met publicly with representatives of a range of organisations with an interest in the Burdekin bypass, I gave a commitment that I would take into account all the submissions that they made and that I would make sure that my department considered in detail all the issues that were raised with us in submissions and in the community consultation phase.

Mr Knuth: When?

Mr BREDHAUER: The member should just calm down, take a pill and let me answer his question. The problem that we have had all the way along through this is the duplicity of the member for Dawson and, dare I say also, the member for Burdekin. The member for Dawson started the Burdekin bypass proposal. When the member for Gregory was Transport Minister, she stood up and announced, unbeknownst to anybody, that the people of Burdekin deserved a new bridge across the river—the bridge that the member wanted to paint pink. That is the one, the pink bridge. Then another day the member for Dawson woke up and said, "If we are going to have a bridge, we had better have a road to it." She thought, "That is not a bad idea." So then we had not just a new bridge; we had a bypass study to go with it.

Mr Knuth: I don't want it.

Mr BREDHAUER: I know that the member wants the old pink bridge. We can tart it up with a bit of paint for him if he likes. Then the member for Dawson said, "Let us put it all on hold", because the heat got a little bit too much for her. She did not like the pressure that she was getting from the canegrowers in the Burdekin area.

About six weeks ago, after two and a half years of study, the member for Dawson said publicly that we should stop the whole process—just abandon it, leave the lines on the map, give the community no certainty. I wrote to John Anderson and he said: ignore the member for Dawson; get on with the study and finish it. That is what I am doing.

The announcement will be made as soon as due consideration has been given to all of the submissions that have been made from the people in the member's electorate, as I gave them a personal commitment, as it would happen, when I went to Ayr about three months ago. The Department of Main Roads

is in the process of finalising the study and the final decision will be announced before the end of this year—well before any election. The member, the editor of the local Ayr Advocate and everybody else who is running this line that we are not going to make a decision before the State election can just rest easy. I can assure them that the decision will be made well before Christmas and well before the next State election. So the member should just stand by. Notwithstanding his interference and that of the member for Dawson, the people of the Burdekin will get the answer that they want and they will get certainty delivered to them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The time for questions has expired.

PRIVILEGE

Electoral Fraud

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Earlier today the Premier tabled documents which he said were in response to an FOI request from my office. The Premier was correct in that assertion, in that I had requested access to all documentation and briefing notes held by his department in regard to electoral roting. What the Premier did not tell the House is that there are 165 pages of exemptions which he will not release, including correspondence from Crown Law—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order!

Mr BORBIDGE:—to the Premier and from the Crown Solicitor to the Premier.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet.

Mr BORBIDGE: That is 165 pages exempted to cover up—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I suggest that this is not a matter of privilege suddenly arising; it is a debating point. The Leader of the Opposition has now made his point. I call the honourable Attorney-General.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. What the Leader of the Opposition says is untrue. These are not decisions made by me. I find them offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. I did not make these decisions. They are made by the due officer within the department. That is offensive. I ask that the statement be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are now in the time to deal with Government business. I have ruled it is not a matter of privilege. I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. In view of the comments made by the Premier, I table—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. I now warn you. I am now going to warn you. You are impossible.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Premier has 165 pages of secret documents he will not release.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are impossible. You have no respect for the Chair. I warn you on under Standing Order 124. It is unbelievable. The Leader of the Opposition has no respect for the Chair. I now call on the Attorney-General.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.35 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Foley, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.35 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The main purpose of this Bill is to enact new racial and religious vilification laws. This Bill honours a promise made by me on behalf of the Labor Party at a major public meeting prior to the 1998 election, when racial vilification was a live issue.

Today I wear a tie presented to me by a Chinese community leader, Sister Linda Yuen, which includes the classic circular image of balance and harmony embracing the differing elements of yin and yang. It is a fitting symbol for the goal of a diverse but harmonious society in which the incitement of racial hatred has no place.

The Bill outlaws public Acts which incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or

severe ridicule of a person or group on the basis of race or religion. It is a clear statement that this type of damaging behaviour has no place in our community. It will target not just hate-speech, but all forms of communications to the public, including writing, displays, signs, gestures and other conduct, and communications by electronic means.

Until now, the Anti-Discrimination Act has proscribed only racial or religious vilification which incites unlawful discrimination or another breach of the Act. The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and affected groups have been calling for stronger laws for some time.

The Bill will repeal the existing vilification provision and enact new laws modelled on New South Wales legislation. It will provide both civil remedies and criminal sanctions for acts of vilification. Victims will now have an accessible and inexpensive means of redress. Complaints will be able to be made to the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland where they will be dealt with in accordance with the existing dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms established under the Anti-Discrimination Act.

The emphasis, as with all complaints to the commission, will be on conciliation. Where a matter cannot be resolved by conciliation it may ultimately be referred to the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal for hearing and decision. The criminal sanctions will apply only to the new offence of serious racial or religious vilification. This offence requires the additional element of threatening, or inciting others to threaten, physical harm towards the person or group, or any property of the person or group. It is punishable, in the case of an individual, by a fine of more than \$5,000 or six months' imprisonment, and in the case of a corporation, by a fine of more than \$26,000.

As with other offences in the Anti-Discrimination Act, a prosecution will be by way of summary proceeding on the complaint of the commissioner. In introducing these new laws, the Government has taken particular care with regard to the implications for free speech. The Bill contains a number of safeguards to strike a balance between this fundamental right and the right to an existence free from racial and religious vilification. In particular, the new laws will apply only to public, not private communications. The civil provision—the new section 124A—also provides for a number of exceptions to the general prohibition. In essence, these are modelled on the traditional defences that

apply in defamation law and are designed to protect the right to free speech.

The publication of fair reports, the publication of material in circumstances which would be subject to a defence of qualified privilege in defamation law and Acts done reasonably, and in good faith, for academic, artistic, scientific or research purposes or other purposes in the public interest will be exempt. However, none of these exclusions will apply to the offence of serious racial or religious vilification. This is because the new section 126 requires that the incitement be done knowingly and recklessly. This sets it apart from section 124A where intent will be irrelevant. This approach is appropriate given that a conviction for the offence may lead to a term of imprisonment.

These laws will not stifle legitimate debate on matters of public interest. They prohibit only the type of communication that, by its nature, undermines social stability and cohesion.

In addition to these measures, the Bill contains a number of amendments which are not related to the anti-vilification objectives. These are mainly minor amendments aimed at improving the operational efficiency of the Act, but two are of particular significance. Firstly, the Bill provides for extra-territorial operation of the Act so that it will apply to conduct on ships connected with Queensland. At present, in cases of alleged unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment which occur on a ship, the only avenue of redress for a complainant may lie in Commonwealth legislation. This is unacceptable as, when the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission withdrew from Queensland, there was a community expectation that the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland would fill the gap.

The Bill will also correct an anomaly in relation to work and work-related discrimination. At present, the Act provides only limited protection in situations where work is done, or proposed to be done, under an arrangement between a principal and a person other than the worker. Unlike other Australian jurisdictions, the Act does not expressly prohibit discrimination by the principal against a worker in such situations. This means that it would be open to a principal to set discriminatory workplace conditions with no liability attaching to the principal under the Act. The Bill will ensure this loophole is closed.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (QUEENSLAND) BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and
Minister for The Arts) (11.40 a.m.), by leave,
without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a
Bill for an Act to facilitate electronic
transactions, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and
Bill, on motion of Mr Foley, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and
Minister for The Arts) (11.40 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second
time."

In the face of significantly increased
business activity and stronger market forces
created by electronic commerce,
Governments, corporations and individuals can
no longer plod along historical tracks or seek
the preservation of the status quo.
Governments and businesses are discovering
that old solutions do not work with new
problems. The parameters of delivering
Government and non-Government goods and
services in our economy have changed. In
order to provide appropriate public policy
responses in the economic, legal and social
areas in the wake of this technologically driven
process called electronic commerce,
Governments need to understand why, where
and when electronic commerce is important.

Electronic commerce is now critical to the
delivery of all Government and private sector
services. The Government's first instalment in
providing a sound legal infrastructure upon
which electronic commerce can flourish in this
State is the Electronic Transactions
(Queensland) Bill 2000, which aims to remove
any existing legal impediments to the use of
electronic transactions. The Bill is designed to
ensure that a transaction is not invalid simply
because it took place by means of an
electronic form of communication. It is
intended that the Act will provide a framework
at the State level which will—

facilitate the use of electronic
transactions;

promote business and community
confidence in the use of electronic
transactions; and

enable business and the community to
use electronic communications in their
dealings with Government.

In October 1998, all Attorneys-General at
a meeting of the Standing Committee of
Attorneys-General agreed in principle to the
Commonwealth's proposal for a national
uniform legislative regime and to enact model
electronic commerce legislation based on the
recommendations of the electronic commerce
expert group report and relevant articles of the
United Nations Commission on International
Trade Law Model Law on Electronic
Commerce. The Bill removes legal
impediments to electronic commerce based on
the principles of media and technology
neutrality. This means that the law does not
discriminate between different forms of
technology and it treats paper-based
commerce and electronic commerce equally.

The Commonwealth's Electronic
Transactions Act 1999 received royal assent
on 10 December 1999 and commenced on 15
March 2000. The States of Victoria and New
South Wales have already had the opportunity
to pass the uniform State and Territory
Electronic Transactions Bill. This Uniform Bill is
not identical to the Commonwealth Act but
similar to the extent that it closely mirrors the
substantive provisions of the Commonwealth's
Act. When enacted by the States and
Territories, the uniform Bill will differ in two
important aspects from the Commonwealth's
Act. Firstly, the Commonwealth's Act has a
two-stage implementation process which has
not been adopted in the uniform Bill.
Secondly, it will apply to contract law.

All contracts in Australia are based in the
laws of the States and Territories. Enactment
of the uniform Bill will mean that, for the first
time in Australia, the law will make absolutely
clear the general principle that a person can
enter into contracts electronically. The Bill first
establishes the general rule that, for the
purposes of a law of Queensland, a
transaction is not invalid because it took place
wholly or partly by means of one or more
electronic communications. It then provides for
specific provisions stating that a requirement or
permission under a law of Queensland for a
person to provide information in writing, to sign
a document, to produce a document, to record
information or to retain a document can be
satisfied by electronic communication, subject
to minimum criteria being satisfied. Those
criteria establish objective tests that are based
on criteria of reliability and reasonableness.

The Bill also makes clear that conduct of
electronic transactions will require the prior

consent of parties. That consent may be inferred from conduct or given subject to certain conditions. The Bill also contains provisions for determining the time and place of dispatch and receipt, and the attribution, of electronic communications. Finally, the Bill authorises the Governor in Council to make regulations.

Electronic commerce is also a catalyst for many dramatic changes such as internal organisational functioning, as evidenced by the rapid proliferation of intranets. It is also facilitating a change in how Governments deliver their public products, that is, their services. An impact of this Bill will be the need for the Queensland Government to review its laws to ensure that they are consistent with the underlying policy principles contained in the Bill and where necessary to adjust those laws to avoid arguments over statutory interpretation and conflicts of laws. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP)
(Minister for Police and Corrective Services)
(11.45 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Weapons Act 1990."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Barton, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP)
(Minister for Police and Corrective Services)
(11.45 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

In 1996, this country was shaken by an act of wanton, senseless violence at Port Arthur in Tasmania. The shooting deaths of so many innocent people at that historical tourist attraction provoked an unparalleled outpouring of public feeling and, with it, an unmatched determination for change. That determination was to ensure Australian Governments acted responsibly to take all reasonable steps to

prevent such an event occurring again. To the credit of all involved, Australian Governments did act responsibly at the time. A national weapons scheme was agreed to by all Governments in Australia.

All Governments, and all parties then in Australian Parliaments, bore some pain but, despite that, we supported the legislation necessary to establish that national weapons scheme. Out of those dreadful events at Port Arthur, an important spirit of cooperation and maturity evolved in terms of intergovernmental relations and cooperation on the issue of guns laws. I for one am pleased that, by and large, that spirit remains in place today.

The Bill aims to refine the legislation which was developed in response to the events at Port Arthur. It significantly strengthens that legislation and deals with an issue that was not foreseen in 1996. The Bill will amend the Weapons Act 1990 to require the licensing of category H weapons rendered permanently inoperable. The Bill also will place greater controls on weapons rendered temporarily inoperable.

In Queensland, a category H weapon is defined to include a concealable firearm if it has not been rendered permanently inoperable. A "replica" is defined under the Weapons Act to include a category H weapon rendered permanently inoperable. Such a weapon does not require licensing, registration or any record of disposal. The amendments we seek to the Weapons Act are required as a matter of public safety.

Opportunistic and unscrupulous guns dealers allegedly have been restoring category H weapons, which previously were rendered inoperable, to full working order. These dealers have allegedly utilised this loophole to proliferate the sale of supposedly permanently inoperable semiautomatic pistols. These actions have allowed the dealers to dispose of allegedly "replica" pistols without any record of the purchasers. As a result—and a very concerning result it is to Governments and police services around the country—a number of these weapons, fully restored to working order, have been found in the hands of criminals in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

In response to this situation, an amendment was made to the Commonwealth Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulation, effective from 18 August this year, to reduce the opportunity for licensed dealers to import large quantities of category H weapons. However, this action alone will not prevent unscrupulous dealers or armourers continuing

this type of activity with category H weapons already in Australia or which may be smuggled into Australia. Very real concerns are held for public safety if this activity continues.

The Beattie Labor Government wants to ensure the safety of persons in Queensland by amending the Weapons Act to close this loophole. This amendment is sought to remove the reference to category H weapons rendered permanently inoperable from the definition of "replica" under the Weapons Act. To give effect to the proposed licensing requirement for these weapons, an amendment is required to the provision governing collectors' licenses to include category H weapons rendered permanently inoperable. Additional amendments are required.

Firstly, to limit the licences issued for weapons rendered temporarily inoperable, it is proposed to make these provisions only apply to those weapons which have an obvious and significant commemorative, historic, thematic or investment value. Secondly, an amendment is sought to change the definition of a "collector" under the Act which will mean the weapon would need to be of commemorative, historic, thematic or investment value. These amendments would be consistent with resolutions of the Australasian Police Ministers Council meeting held on 7 July 1996. A three-month amnesty will be allowed for persons who have possession of category H weapons rendered permanently inoperable before the commencement of the new provisions. This will give time for those persons to obtain a licence for their weapon. The amnesty will not apply to persons acquiring category H weapons rendered permanently inoperable after the commencement of the amendment.

I now move to the second major component of this legislation. Earlier this year, this House passed two pieces of legislation which had a fundamental impact on policing in Queensland. The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the amendment Act consolidated all police powers under one Act in an Australian and possibly world first. However, the most important aspect of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act is that it gives our police officers the powers they need to effectively combat crime. The powers contained in that legislation are helping to make our communities safer through a commonsense approach to police powers and responsibilities in a modern policing environment.

These powers include DNA testing powers to allow the police to test suspects and all

prisoners in order to build a DNA database; powers covering covert operations which will protect undercover police and provide stringent procedures for those operations; move-on powers allowing police to move-on people from war memorials, malls, race tracks and places where street prostitution takes place; and blood and urine testing powers which will enable victims of crime to know if they have contracted a disease. In addition, the legislation contains provisions allowing for the diversion of people caught with small quantities of cannabis to treatment programs and discretion to divert drunks to treatment facilities or safe havens. There are a range of other powers and responsibilities contained in that groundbreaking legislation. However, all members here should be familiar with those by now.

Today I introduce an amendment Bill to overcome what might be a drafting defect in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. The potential defect arises from the inclusion of a reference to the use of force in section 144(d) of the Act. This section allows for the use of a tracking device. Primarily, it is focused on providing magistrates with the power to issue this limited type of surveillance device warrant. On the other hand, section 131 of the Act, which permits a Supreme Court judge to issue a surveillance device warrant for the use of more intrusive devices, contains no reference to the use of force to install, maintain, replace or remove these devices. As a result, an argument has arisen that the absence of a reference to the use of force in section 131 relating to Supreme Court warrants and, conversely, its mention in section 144 relating to magistrates' warrants may indicate that the Parliament only intended to allow force to be used by police when installing, maintaining, replacing or removing a surveillance device under a magistrate's warrant. I am certain that all honourable members will agree that nothing is further from the truth.

While I am loath to take up Parliament's time on an issue of this nature, I will use this opportunity to clear up any doubt that might exist. Let me say clearly that it was, and still is, the intention of this Parliament that the use of force in this case to accompany the exercise of any power under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 or any other Act be centrally located in section 375 of the Act. Indeed, the use of any type of force by a police officer, whether against a thing animate or inanimate or against an individual, is centralised within that part of the Act containing section 375. Clearly, the

consolidation of the use of force powers within a central part of the 2000 Act is done for a very good purpose. It allows a central reference point for clear understanding of those powers and it overcomes the need to constantly repeat provisions relating to the use of force in individual sections of the Act.

There should be no question as to whether a police officer is entitled to use force when exercising a power under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 or under any other Act. However, if the question arises, the answer is simply to be, yes, they may, because that is the intention of Parliament. Furthermore, honourable members will agree it is the intention of the Parliament that a person helping a police officer may use reasonable force under section 375. This includes any person assisting in the exercise of any relevant power under the 2000 Act or any other Act. However, so that an argument does not arise over a legalistic play on words, section 375 is to be taken to include a person assisting a police officer to install, maintain, replace or remove a surveillance device, as well as a person helping a police officer to exercise any other power. Without the inclusion of the words "it is the intention of Parliament" as a preliminary to each and every section of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, I do not know how to make this any clearer.

Honourable members will note that this Bill has retrospective operation to the commencement of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. I acknowledge Parliament generally exercises great caution with Bills that contain retrospective provisions. However, in this case retrospectivity is necessary to ensure the original intention of Parliament leaves no room for ambiguity. I will make the point, and I make it as strongly as possible, that this amendment does not arise from any interpretation of the law resulting from an appeal lodged with the Court of Appeal or, for that matter, any legal challenges that I am aware of. It is a proactive amendment resulting from legal advice from the Solicitor-General that a problem with statutory interpretation may—and I repeat, only may—arise at some time in the future. Indeed, the problem may never arise or the issue may be resolved in the favour of the prosecution by Appeal Court judges.

Nevertheless, it would be highly repugnant to all Queenslanders to think a criminal who has committed an extremely serious offence could escape justice because of a potential misinterpretation of the original intention of Parliament. I am certainly not

prepared to place myself in the position where a potential drafting defect in an Act could allow the likes of a murderer or drug dealer to escape the punishment they deserve. I am sure honourable members will agree with my stance. The amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Weapons Act 1990 contained in this legislation are important and necessary for effective policing in Queensland. I urge all members to support this legislation. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2)
Second Reading (Cognate Debate)**

Resumed from 8 November (see p. 4141).

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12 p.m.): In my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bills I will speak about a number of local issues and a number of issues that relate to my shadow portfolio. I will speak first about my electorate of Toowoomba South. There are a number of very important issues.

In the Toowoomba area at the moment there is a window of opportunity for some of the greatest economic development that this State has ever seen. I refer particularly to the proposal to pump recycled water from south-eastern Queensland to provide secure irrigation supplies in the Lockyer Valley and on the Darling Downs. That will have an immediate \$200m a year economic benefit. Work is proceeding on an engineering study that will identify the infrastructure costs of that project.

There has been good support from the Federal Government, through Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson. There has also been support from the Brisbane City Council. The State Government, through an interagency committee, has provided funding for one of the feasibility studies—of course, the first feasibility study was funded by the coalition Government—and for the current engineering study of infrastructure costs. It looks to be a great proposal that will provide for economic benefit to the Darling Downs and for a major increase in exports. It will solve the environmental problems of Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River. It will also provide a part solution to the environmental problems in the Murray-Darling system further down in this State and in other States.

Associated with this proposal for water is the exciting proposal by Everal Compton and the Australian Transport and Energy Corridor to provide a four foot eight and a half inch line from Melbourne right through western New South Wales to Toowoomba, from there to Fisherman Islands and now, after a meeting in Toowoomba yesterday—with support again from Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson to undertake a further feasibility study—up to Emerald and from there to the port of Gladstone. This is a visionary project that would make use of substantial amounts of the standard gauge railway line that is already in place. Importantly, it will enable people producing exports and people who are importing to run very long trains and to double-stack the containers on those particular trains—to really bring about a transport revolution for many States in Australia.

Associated with these two proposals is the plan for a second range crossing on the northern edge of Toowoomba, to be funded by the Commonwealth Government. An amount in the order of \$24.5m has already been provided. A substantial amount of that has been used in purchasing properties in the identified corridor. It is important that that project comes forward as quickly as possible.

The Warrego Highway through Toowoomba carries the largest volume of freight in Australia. It is the route for transport semitrailers and B-doubles going from Brisbane to Darwin and from Brisbane to Melbourne. Anyone who sees the volume of semitrailers going through the main east-west street of Toowoomba, James Street, and the problems that causes at every intersection controlled by traffic lights—they have to go through 14 or 15 of these intersections and on either side of the lights there will be six or seven B-doubles—knows that this second range crossing is very important. More importantly for the transport industry, that range crossing would take half an hour, three-quarters of an hour or maybe more off the travelling time from Brisbane to Melbourne. It would allow the trucks to access the range at about 80 kilometres an hour.

Associated with these three proposals is the proposal for a major transport and warehouse hub just to the western side of Toowoomba. This, together with the exciting development by Everal Compton to look at the feasibility of taking that four foot, eight inch line up to Emerald and across to the east to Gladstone, means that this area just west of Toowoomba could become the major regional transport and warehousing hub and collection centre for Australia. It could bring about the

economic development, employment, growth and development that is so necessary in rural parts of Australia. Geographically it is ideally located. With its association with these other exciting projects—the second range crossing, making the crossing of the range far easier, and the water proposal, which will make the Darling Downs one of the greatest food and agriculture producers in the world—and with access to export opportunities it will be quite amazing.

There are two proposals. One is by EDROC for a transport and warehouse hub at Charlton. The other is by a private company, Wagners, which is a very successful transport and quarrying company in Toowoomba, to not only develop their property at Wellcamp Downs into a major transport and warehouse hub but also have banded industrial sites that can provide for a whole range of industrial activities.

I liken these four proposals to the sort of development that happened in central Queensland back in the 1970s and 1980s when coalmines were opened, rail lines were built and ports were developed on the east coast. It provided a major boost to central Queensland. It is the sort of thing that regional Queensland has been looking for. With good cooperation in these four projects by local governments, the State Government, the Federal Government and private enterprise, this will certainly be a major boost to Queensland. It is what Queensland needs, it is what the Darling Downs needs and it is what Toowoomba needs. I urge the State Government—through the various Ministers involved in the water proposal, those involved in assisting Everal Compton in his work, those involved in transport, in urging the ongoing construction of this second range crossing, and those involved in the EDROC processes with the Charlton warehouse and transport concept—to support these projects for the betterment of our State.

I will speak briefly about the development of the hospice in Toowoomba by a community committee. Toowoomba being a major regional centre, it is essential that there be a hospice for the dying in our city. The people involved in the committee, under the leadership of Graham Barron and others, particularly Sister Flint, have done an enormous amount of work in developing the plans. They have been to look at the very successful community hospice at Ipswich. To date they have raised somewhere in the order of a quarter of a million dollars towards the construction of the hospice. They still have a long way to go. They have to raise somewhere

in the order of \$500,000 or \$600,000. They have received a lot of gifts in kind as well. The Toowoomba City Council has provided the land for the hospice. The hospice is planned to provide in the order of six beds. It will be a great boost to those families who would like to see their loved ones who are suffering from a terminal illness have access to the comfort of a hospice, which is like a home but which still has the highly professional and committed care that is necessary.

Once this hospice is developed and paid for by the community, I think it will be important for the Queensland Government to step in and provide some form of assistance in the area of recurrent budget. I know it has been done in other instances. As a member of the previous Government I had some involvement with the Ipswich hospice, as did the Health Minister who preceded me. It is difficult for community groups to cover the ongoing costs. In relation to hospices being developed in various regional areas, if Government can provide something like the cost of one nurse 24 hours a day, then the balance of the nursing care, personal care, administration and everything else can be funded by that community through their annual fundraising and the volunteer systems they put in place.

What has happened to the Toowoomba Base Hospital during the term of this Labor Government has been an absolute tragedy. There have been reductions in the number of beds and in the number of staff. The morale at the hospital has become such that it is very difficult to replace specialists who have left that hospital. Today I will give one example of the tragic reduction in services.

On the first weekend of the school holidays a father came in an ambulance from Chinchilla with his daughter, who had a badly broken arm. That happened to be the day the Toowoomba hospital was on bypass. Can honourable members imagine a hospital the size of Toowoomba being on bypass to the ambulance? The ambulance officers were told to take this child, who had a badly broken arm, either to one of the private hospitals in Toowoomba—that is, St Vincents Hospital, which now thankfully has an accident and emergency unit for those people who have private health cover—or to Ipswich or Brisbane.

I do not think it has happened before in our history that the accident and emergency centre at Toowoomba has had to be bypassed by ambulances in favour of Ipswich or Brisbane. Toowoomba is a city of 90,000 people and it has a surrounding immediate population of some 40,000 or 50,000. It is the

major regional centre for all of the south-west of Queensland. We are a city like Townsville. That there was an instruction issued to an ambulance that it had to bypass the hospital is an absolute disgrace. It shows the level to which the service has dropped at this hospital and the drastic need for an improvement in the direction of and the management and policy that exists at regional hospitals in Queensland, but particularly at the Toowoomba Base Hospital.

What is needed at Toowoomba is a measure of truth and a measure of communication. We need to get together with the senior specialists, staff and senior nurses who are committed to the hospital. Some people have worked there for 25 years. Even though they are private practitioners, they have given their valuable and committed service as specialists to the hospital for 25 years, yet they have been totally left out of the loop in terms of changes that have been made in the past couple of years. I certainly hope that the change of administration brings about a better understanding of the importance of the Toowoomba Base Hospital so that things like Accident and Emergency can be open 24 hours a day and there is no direction for ambulances to drive 100 kilometres or more down the road to Ipswich.

I also want to speak about the police station at Toowoomba. It is very important that it be redeveloped as a major new watch-house and police station. That project has been on the books for some time and, as the local member, I certainly appreciate the fact that I negotiated with three members of the Labor Government on a proposal for a major redevelopment in the inner city that may have involved the police station property. We received assistance on that; that may have held up the construction of the police station for 12 to 18 months. In the meantime, some good accommodation has been found for police—for the traffic branch in premises nearby the police station and for the district office in other facilities nearby. An amount of \$100,000 has been provided in this Budget for the police station and it is important that that project continues and that a date is set for the commencement of construction in the new financial year, because it will take 18 months to two years to complete the new watch-house, which is desperately needed, and the police station. I have asked a question on notice of the Police Minister but he has been non-committal on a commencement date. I certainly ask that that construction commences in the next financial year.

I also quickly mention that we have been able to obtain some funding for new gymnastics and indoor facilities at the Harristown State High School. It is one of the great high schools of Queensland now; it is about the second biggest high school in the State. It enjoys a fantastic reputation for its academic, cultural and sporting activities.

As patron of the Police Citizens Youth Club, I am also pushing very hard to get some funding to extend the club. It has almost 3,000 members. It does a fantastic job for the children of the inner city part of Toowoomba in developing young leaders and providing those children with all sorts of gymnastics, judo and other activities. The proposal for the Police Citizens Youth Club means that it will have an Internet cafe-type arrangement in the new building. The location of the facility in the middle part of the city will encourage young people to come through the doors of the PCYC and, once they have come through the doors, they will see the various activities that are available. I believe that the activities provided by the Police Citizens Youth Club provide our greatest opportunities to prevent crime. The Toowoomba City Council is providing the PCYC with up to \$400,000 towards this project. So it is the case that the people of our community are prepared to put their hands in their pockets and fund this project; we are seeking a similar amount from the State Government.

I want to touch on a comment that the Premier made this morning regarding the question I placed on notice yesterday about fuel prices. The Premier has plenty to say about fuel prices but not much in the way of answers. I have asked Minister Spence a question on notice about the price differential of 9c that exists on the price of fuel at petrol stations that are only about 10 to 50 kilometres from Toowoomba on the Warrego Highway. I understand that perhaps some petrol stations have a bigger volume of throughput than others, but a 9c differential just does not make sense at all. I hope that the Minister for Fair Trading can tell me what action can be taken so that Toowoomba motorists can have the advantage of the cheap prices that are available 10 to 50 kilometres down the road on the eastern side of the city.

In the time that remains, I turn to matters relating to my shadow portfolio of Police and Corrective Services. In the area of Corrective Services some serious financial problems no doubt emanate from this Budget. There have already been moves to cut eight staff from community corrections—one of the most

important aspects of Corrective Services—and moves to increase that number to 31. This will affect community corrections people in regional areas of Queensland in particular. The area managers have discussed what is required of them. I have my theory on this; I reckon that this is because of the equity return. No matter how the Treasury Department and the various Ministers try to cover up the equity return, they have to find that amount of money. The Treasurer can say that he is providing the money for them to pay it back; that is a lot of rubbish and hoo-ha. The departments have to find this equity return money out of their existing budgets and it is starting to bite, and bite deep.

Just last week we saw a fire in a laundry at one of the jails here in Brisbane. That fire spread to the extent that it burnt out wires, which meant that the maximum security unit could not be used. Then it got into B Block and half of B Block was gutted. The prisoners who were locked in their cells could not be removed from them because the officers in charge of that block did not have the qualifications to use breathing apparatus; they had to bring officers from a block about 70 metres away. That is another example of the shortage of money in Corrective Services. The department just does not have the funds for enough staff; there are not enough funds to ensure officers attain suitable qualifications. We can see the dangers present in circumstances as the fire I have just mentioned.

Look at some of the problems that have occurred at Woodford: prisoners were bashed so savagely that they were put into the Princess Alexandra Hospital suffering from head injuries; warders have been injured in the bashings. That is another prime example of the result of the lack of funds and the lack of adequate staffing to provide staff security in those various very dangerous positions.

When it comes to police numbers, the coalition Government can hold its head high and take great pride in the way it introduced the second police academy, at Townsville. It did that despite the opposition of the then shadow Police Minister, Mr Barton. As a result of that massive recruitment program and doubling in the number of police academies, there has been a huge increase in police numbers, which has been a wonderful legacy we left to the Labor Government.

Compare that with the legacy that it left the coalition. When we attained Government, Queensland had some of the worst police-to-population ratios in Australia. The police

recruitment system was actually delivering a net loss of numbers to the Police Service. We had to pick up the pieces; we had to put together a new academy and put in place increased courses to provide these extra numbers. We hear the Police Minister making dishonest and hypocritical statements that the increase in police numbers under the Beattie Government is greater than that under the coalition Government. That is the sort of hypocrisy the people are getting sick of. They are sick of politicians twisting the truth. He only has to say that there was a great system put in place that started to deliver these massive numbers and that within a matter of about 18 months it delivered the targeted increase of something like 320 to 350 extra police per year. Queenslanders can thank the coalition Government for the system we put in place and what it is delivering.

But if we travel around the State and ask police, particularly in country and rural areas, what they think, they will say, "Where are the police? Where are these numbers? We're not seeing them." Have a look at the vacancies in Ipswich. There are 23 vacancies there. There are five vacancies at Warwick. The department cannot fill vacancies at major towns like Ipswich and Warwick. That is indicative of the administration under this Minister; he cannot fix the problem of vacancies. Despite the massive increase in police numbers that occurred under the coalition Government, many parts of rural Queensland do not have relief pools to provide relief to rural police stations.

Let us look at crime figures. There has been a 7.6% increase in property crime, even though we have had this large increase in police numbers.

I would like to talk about the Metropolitan North area of Brisbane, that region of the Police Service where the cluster system brought in by the Labor Government has been a total failure. If elected to office, we in the coalition Government will get rid of the cluster system. We will give back to the people of the north side of Brisbane police stations and police officers based in the suburbs and the areas of Brisbane North where they live so that they can have confidence in a police sergeant and a senior constable they know and so that they can approach these officers and their staff who will know where the villains and the mischief-makers are, who will have a bit of local knowledge and will be able to bring down the rate of crime, particularly the break and enters and property crime that is escalating at a rate of 7.6% across the State.

We are already seeing the Labor Government repeating the mistakes of clustering. It is going to centralise a large number of CIBs on the north side of Brisbane. For example, Boondall, Hendra, Sandgate and Petrie will be grouped together. All the staff will be concentrated in one station to cover that large area. It will bring together Indooroopilly and Ferny Grove and station the detectives at Ferny Grove. Imagine detectives stationed at Ferny Grove going out to investigate something at Bellbowrie, which is about half a day's drive away!

Once again, we see the Labor Party centralising police functions, which means that people in the suburbs do not have contact with their police officers and that police officers do not have the intimate local knowledge they need to increase their clear-up rates and to prevent crime.

I would also like to congratulate the members of the coalition on the Sunshine Coast who have been fighting a major battle for justice to get enough police—

Time expired.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.20 p.m.): In addressing the Appropriation Bills, I want to detail to the House the hoax of this Government's Smart State policy. As with so much that this Premier has engaged in, it is inherently dishonest and it is inherently deceitful. We have heard a great deal of political capital made by this Premier and this Government about how he is transforming the economy of Queensland into the new economy, and how we are now one of the leading new economies, not just in Australia but pretty well anywhere around the world as a result of his commitment and his policies.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, some very real figures and statistics are coming through to indicate that, despite the best efforts of many homegrown entrepreneurs and companies that have come to Queensland over a long time, we are not getting the direction that we should be getting in relation to IT & C.

I recently addressed a question on notice—No. 1092—to the Premier in relation to the amount of State Government grants for research into biotechnology actually paid over a period of time. The answer is worth detailing to the House. The Premier said—

"The Queensland Government is committed to supporting and expanding biotechnology research in both the public and private sectors."

I am talking now specifically of biotech. The Premier continued—

"To this end, the Government has made grants totalling approximately \$198,925 in 1998/99, \$7,481,260 in 1999/00 and \$4,806,200 up to 30/9/00."

Let us examine the financial year 1999-2000. This is the Premier who says, "Biotechnology is the future of this State. I am leading this charge. I am transforming the Queensland economy." In the financial year 1999-2000, the Premier stated that the following funds were paid by the State Government—

"\$932,141 to the University of Queensland, representing the first two payments of a \$15m grant for building the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the St Lucia campus."

That was an initiative of the previous coalition Government. In fact, I negotiated Centenary of Federation funding with the Prime Minister so that the Institute of Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland could have access to Commonwealth funds. The Premier cannot claim that as his.

Let us go down the list. The Premier continued—

"\$6m representing the first payment of a \$20m grant towards the completion of a comprehensive Cancer Research Centre, which will host research teams from various universities (Griffith, University of Queensland)."

This is an admirable project, and we support it. Why do we support it? We support it because it was an initiative of the previous coalition Government. The honourable member for Toowoomba South, who was then Minister for Health, took the submission and the arguments to the then Cabinet Budget Review Committee so that the previous coalition Government could make the commitment for that funding. So \$7m of the \$7.4m that this Government is spending in regard to biotechnology in Queensland comes from initiatives of the previous National/Liberal Government.

Let us look at what the Premier has done and what he can call his own. We see \$3,000 towards expenses incurred by a leading scientist from James Cook University to speak at Bio 2000 in the United States, \$15,000 to the North Queensland Cardiac Vascular Institute, \$15,000 to prepare a report for the development of a north Queensland biotechnology industry cluster, \$5,000 to sponsor a delegation of United States

commercial experts to travel to Townsville and conduct workshops, \$24,490 to the University of Queensland, \$175,000 to separate organisations associated with the University of Queensland and \$12,500 to the Central Queensland University for research into advanced waste water treatment.

I do not quibble with that, but what I am saying is that if the Premier is backing his biotech record on this, it is a pretty pitiful effort. The University of Southern Queensland is doing some exciting things in the entire area of research and development across a whole sphere of applications, but has it received anything in this brave new world of Premier Beattie? I certainly cannot find it in the Premier's response.

Mr Horan: Australia's and the world's No. 1 university.

Mr BORBIDGE: Australia and the world's No. 1 university, as the honourable member reminds me. In 1999-2000, we find that \$7m of the \$7.4m in respect of biotechnology funding and initiatives for universities and for major institutes in this State was committed by the previous coalition Government. The Premier has found about \$400,000 and he has the Al Gore syndrome. We have heard this story about how the Vice President, who still might be President, invented the Internet. The current Premier thinks that he invented biotechnology. The reality is that, of that \$7.4m, \$7m was set aside for initiatives of the previous coalition Government.

I want to speak more widely about information technology and communications, and I want to talk about the key performance indicators because they are a very real cause for concern and expose the chasm between the Premier's rhetoric and the Premier's actions. I want to talk about the unemployment rate, average weekly earnings, business bankruptcies, the number of venture capital investments, the value of venture capital investments and the preparedness of the State of Queensland for e-commerce.

I am advised that the unemployment rate has drifted up on this morning's figures and it is now 7.6%. But let us look at last month—7.5% in Queensland and 6.4% in Australia. We have the third highest figure in Australia. We are level-pegging South Australia. We are managing, under Premier Beattie, to beat Tasmania. I guess the Premier still has not managed to undermine us to the extent of that unfortunately economically crippled State.

I refer to performance indicator No. 2. Let us have a look at average weekly earnings.

Male weekly earnings in August 1998—just after Premier Beattie came to office—were \$711. In August 2000, male weekly earnings were \$705. Male weekly earnings have dropped under the Labor Government in Queensland. At the same time, the Australian average increased from \$721 to \$727.

Let us have a look at performance indicator No. 3—business bankruptcies. In 1997-98, there were 1,352 bankruptcies and the Australian average was 691. In 1998-99, there were 1,678 and the Australian average was 844. In 1999-2000, on the latest figures available to us, Queensland is accounting for 28% of Australia's bankruptcies.

Let us look now more specifically at the high-tech sector. I refer to the number of venture capital investments for the December quarter 1999: New South Wales and Victoria, 89; Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia, 34; Queensland's contribution, nine. In terms of the number of new venture capital investments, the total for 1999: New South Wales and Victoria, 269; Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia, 102; Queensland's contribution, 31. Yet the Premier would have us believe that we are leading not only Australia but also the Pacific Rim—we are leading; we are leaving everyone else behind in our dust. It is simply not true. We are slipping further and further behind.

I turn now to performance indicator No. 5, venture capital investment for the December quarter 1999: Queensland, \$18m; New South Wales and Victoria, \$192m; Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia, \$51m; Queensland's contribution, \$18m. The total for 1999 in venture capital investment: Queensland, \$65m; New South Wales and Victoria, \$573m; Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia combined, \$147m. So the total for 1999: New South Wales and Victoria, \$573m; Queensland, \$65m.

I refer now to Queensland's preparedness for e-commerce. We hear a lot about the potential for e-commerce and how important it is in terms of this new economy that Premier Beattie and his colleagues insist that they have created in this State over the past two years—as though nothing ever happened before. According to the Allen Preparedness Index, the consumption BtoC E-com and supply cluster BtoB e-com/Government initiatives, Queensland ranks second last with Tasmania just ahead of the Northern Territory. So under this high-tech guru, the Premier of Queensland, who claims that he invented biotechnology, who claims that he is

positioning Queensland across-the-board to be the modern, new-age economy in Australia, Queensland rates second last with Tasmania, just ahead of the Northern Territory, in respect of the Allen Preparedness Index for e-commerce.

I believe that those figures are alarming. I believe that those figures indicate firmly that the Smart State is nothing more than a public relations gimmick by a smart political operator. The reality is that, under those figures, compared to other parts of Australia Mr Beattie's Smart State does not exist. It is a policy hoax. It is a policy vacuum. It is empty rhetoric that is simply not based on appropriate action or the appropriate implementation of policies.

In the time that is available to me, I want to talk about one of our older industries. I want to talk about the total betrayal of the Gold Coast and the tourism industry by the member for Currumbin, who currently pretends to be the Minister for Tourism in this State. We have seen a number of major decisions made by this Government that send a shiver down the spines of investors. I just want to talk about two. I want to talk firstly about the Brisbane light rail project—and we know that the Brisbane light rail project was effectively sabotaged by the Minister for families, youth and other such matters, Ms Bligh.

Mr Horan: It would have done great things for West End.

Mr BORBIDGE: It would have done great things for her electorate. But we know that she managed to convince the Minister for Transport and her Cabinet colleagues that the project should not proceed.

The damage that was done was that the Government actively encouraged a number of key consortia to spend money and to develop proposals based on their stated acceptance of a particular course of action. Then, of course, we had the reversal and collectively those companies ended up being out of pocket by millions and millions and millions of dollars. I would not have had a problem if, on coming to Government, Premier Beattie had said, "We don't support the light rail project. It is the policy of the Labor Party to discontinue it." At least then the private sector would have known the rules and they would not have continued to plough millions and millions of dollars into a process—

Mr Horan: Leads them up the garden path, like he did with the RNA. He leads them up the garden path, but he knows what he is going to do with it.

Mr BORBIDGE: He leads them up the garden path and, millions and millions of dollars later, they are out of pocket. Those companies will not say much, because they have to work, live and operate with this Government and with the Brisbane City Council. However, the simple fact is that the next time the Government wants to do something, there will be a lot of major players around Australia asking, "How can you believe anything that the Queensland Government says? They are just as likely to do a backflip. We are just as likely to spend a few million dollars and we are just as likely to do our dough. We will go somewhere else. We will go to New South Wales. We will go to Victoria. We will go to South Australia. We will go to Western Australia."

That is precisely what this Government has done in regard to Naturelink. The Premier's justification for scrapping Naturelink yesterday was that it was an election promise that there would be no commercial development in national parks. Why did the Premier not tell the proponents then?

Mr Horan: Week one.

Mr BORBIDGE: Why didn't the Premier tell them that on week one or on day one? Why did his own Government have this project described as a project of major State significance as recently as last December and have Ministers like the Minister for State Development actively encouraging the proponents to go ahead and spend money—some \$3m?

Again, I say to members opposite: I would not have such a difficulty with what they have done—although I do; but I would not have a difficulty to the same extent—if, when they became the Government, they had said, "This is our policy. Don't spend any more money on it. We have made a commitment that there will be no commercial development in national parks. We can't see how you can get around that. So forget about it. Sorry, fellas." But they did not do that. The members opposite encouraged the proponents of this particular project to spend \$3m, under the auspices of their Government, under the guidance of their Government, only at the 11th hour to make a decision not based on good Government but based on political expediency and the fact that the discredited Minister for Tourism is going to need green preferences and green support if she is going to have any hope at all of holding her marginal seat of Currumbin at the next State election. Once again, we see a deliberate pandering to the environmental lobby so that come the next election the

members opposite can maximise their chances of receiving green preferences not only in Currumbin but in other seats as well.

I believe that the members opposite have treated the proponents of Naturelink in a shabby, disgraceful and disgusting manner. They encouraged them, just like they encouraged the people who came forward in the expressions of interest process in regard to the Brisbane light rail project. The members opposite wonder why private sector investment is falling away. They are wondering why they cannot get the big projects up. They wonder why they cannot achieve the Premier's 5% unemployment election promise. They wonder why job creation in Queensland is running at half the level it was when they came to office in 1998.

The fact is that this Government has done a dingo act so many times on the corporate sector and on the investment community that they do not trust them and they do not want to do business in Queensland anymore. They have undermined the business investment climate in this State. I say that this Premier has undermined the business investment climate in this State in a manner in which his Labor predecessor, the former member for Logan, would never have contemplated. I can only assume that the former Premier had better advice.

This Government has done enormous damage. Despite being the Smart State, it has failed to deliver in terms of IT and T. It has failed to deliver much at all over and above the previous coalition's commitments in respect of biotechnology. In regard to the investment community in this State, it has shown not only to the investment community in this State but also the investment community elsewhere that it is a Government that cannot be trusted, that its word will not necessarily be honoured.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (12.39 p.m.): I rise to take part in this debate on the Appropriation Bill and, in doing so, I, too, want to refer to some of the performances of the Beattie Labor Government and its commitment to jobs, especially in high unemployment areas. Of course, my electorate of Caboolture is certainly one of those.

I know that, as the previous speaker said, the push is on for Queensland to become the Smart State. There is a big push to keep our children in school and to actually push them on to achieve in higher education. I take on board that there is this real push to make Queensland the Smart State. I hope that it is not just a ploy to hide the real unemployment

statistics but a genuine push to spur on our children to indeed achieve in the higher education area, especially at university and TAFE. But then again, we always wonder.

This cannot be done without the commitment—and real commitment—from this Government to support higher education and the concept to its fullest. There is a proposal—and I want to highlight this—in my electorate of Caboolture for a university campus. That proposal is for a partnership between TAFE, the QUT and local and Federal governments. That needs highlighting constantly. It certainly needs support from every level of Government to ensure that this project gets the success that it deserves. This project needs real support, real initiatives from this Government and perhaps a little bit of incentive and money to push it on.

I want to highlight that students from the Caboolture Shire either have to travel to Brisbane or to the Sunshine Coast to receive their tertiary education. I do not have to explain to this Government the dire circumstances of the Caboolture electorate in terms of unemployment and job security. Caboolture always seems to end up being the poorer cousin of most other places. Certainly there is that umbrella aspect when we consider some of the things that have been given. However, this time Caboolture needs to be able to cut down on those transport costs that are a burden on most of the families of that electorate. Those transport costs are inextricably tied to the ability of students to gain those tertiary qualifications.

I certainly do not need those financial burdens explained to me, as my daughter is in the last days of her double arts degree at the University of Queensland where she will also graduate with a Bachelor of Education. This has been a hard four-year slog for her, and it has certainly been a real drain on the purse strings of the Feldman family just to get her to and from the university. A lot of the lecture times do not correlate with public transport to and from Caboolture, especially trying to meet buses if my daughter goes by train. Also, the current cost of petrol has added to the financial burden not just of my family, but most other people whose children are travelling to and from Brisbane or to and from the Sunshine Coast to enable their children to gain a tertiary qualification.

My daughter has also had to tie herself down with part-time employment. It is the only way she is going to be able to save some money to put behind her as she approaches being in full-time employment. This ties her to

Caboolture, so she is not able to live in Brisbane or take some other job down here, and she sorely needs the income from that part-time job to get her through.

Our children in Caboolture need that part-time work to assist with family budgets. However, it restricts the time available to our children to actually educate themselves. Most of them opt for a longer period of education rather than trying to get it all done in the short term. They actually stretch their degree out over a longer period and try to work their way through it. The families in the Caboolture electorate—as is the case in your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker—are not very well off. The children need to try to better themselves, and their parents support them in doing that. Throughout their time at university, of course, they are also building up a HECS debt. That will downgrade their eventual pay packet as the tax man takes his extra cut—that is, if they do in fact get the job that they dreamt of for the four years or so that they toiled hard at university.

That brings me to another small matter that is connected with appropriation, and that is the money that has been allocated to the northern bypass of Caboolture. The resumption process has begun. It is good to see that this project has finally been given approval and the money has been allocated. However, the people of Caboolture and Wamuran are still looking to see when this work will actually commence. The Minister for Transport, the Honourable Steve Bredhauer, made a promise earlier this year in regard to the Moodlu Bridge. It is a very dangerous little bridge. It actually has a curved entrance and exit which makes passing, especially passing of heavy vehicles, very dangerous. Heavy transport travelling between Caboolture, Woodford and Kilcoy out to the Brisbane Valley and then on to areas such as Kingaroy uses that particular route. Buses also have to travel along that route. Several vehicles have collided on the Moodlu Bridge. It is a very common occurrence for trucks and buses to lose their mirrors as they pass each other on that very dangerous little bridge, which goes over the old Wamuran railway spur.

The promise made by the Minister for Transport was that this bridge would be gone by Christmas, but I do not think that will occur. I do not think the residents and the children of Caboolture and Wamuran will get that Christmas present, and I think they will be disappointed when Santa does not deliver it. I hope that there are not more serious incidents on that bridge which result in devastation over the Christmas period.

That leads me to a couple of negative comments that I must make in regard to what is happening in Caboolture at the moment. I note that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition touched on the issue of bankruptcy, and this seems to be a real possibility for the people I am about to speak of. I want to tell the House about the plight of a Caboolture small business operator. He is an auto-electrician, a car air-conditioner repairer and fitter. He lives with his wife and four children. These two people, who are the real salt of the earth dad and mum, kicked off their small business in Caboolture some 16 years ago.

I am talking of Steve and Annette Ross. Steve served this country with distinction in the Royal Australian Navy, and after six years he took his option to retire. With his wife Annette and their children, he returned to his home town of Caboolture and they set up this small business. They took advantage of the home loan available to ex-servicemen to purchase a modest dwelling on Pumicestone Road at Caboolture, which was a rural and residential area at that time.

Like most people, Steve sought to better himself, and a bank loan later they commenced the operation of their small business called Cab-Air. Steve worked from home with his truck. He put in long hours; he worked his tail off to make his business viable, and it certainly was viable. Steve has always worked hard and supported the community through various clubs and charities. He assisted the Caboolture Cricket Club, the Caboolture Soccer Club and the Grant Road Sports Centre where his children engaged in their love of recreational activity. Steve and Annette also supported the naval cadets at Bribie Island. He is an instructor and his wife, Annette, is a member of the committee.

Steve's hard work enabled his business to expand and he moved into small premises off Morayfield Road. He then began to employ and train job seekers from the Caboolture and Morayfield areas. At one time Steve employed five people, but he currently employs three in his small workshop at Morayfield Road. He still maintains his on-road service to his customers from his vehicles. As I have said, Steve always gave back to the community that he did not want to leave. He built extensions onto his home, which he turned into a five-bedroom, two-bathroom highset with a large double lockup garage in the backyard. Security was also installed in the garage, because he houses all of his work equipment in his truck. The lifeblood of his business is in that shed. As

he is an auto-electrician, he is often called out to do on-road work after hours.

Annette has always worked alongside Steve in the business and provided the clerical support that a struggling small business needs. However, this year has seen a double blow dealt to this hardworking Aussie battler and his family. The GST hit his business with a thud and he has seen a downturn in his normal trade of over 20%. He only said to me the other day that he knows this is a sign of the hard economic times that all families are facing, and he reflected on how hard it must be for other families as well. Of course, Steve is a bit like that; he thinks of others a lot more than he thinks of himself. He reflected on how these people are now probably driving around in unroadworthy vehicles because they cannot afford to have them fixed.

It was the Liberal coalition Government that dealt that blow to Steve with the introduction of the GST. But now the trifecta of bad luck has descended on him in the form of the Beattie Labor Government and the Main Roads Department as they set about to resume his house and land on Pumicestone Road for the construction of the northern bypass of Caboolture. In the original plans for the bypass, Steve's house was not to be touched but, because of an oversight in relation to the duplication of the railway line between Caboolture and Landsborough, the on and off ramps had to be relocated and there was a need to resume the Ross homestead. Of course, this resumption process of Steve's and Annette's place is the end result.

Steve and Annette do not want to stand in the way of the betterment of Caboolture, but they expect just compensation for their house and land. There is no denying that the area where Steve bought his home is a predominantly lower socioeconomic area and that there are predominantly high-set, three bedroom homes. The compensation that has been set is probably reflective of those three-bedroom dwellings, not of the place that he possesses which he built himself. He made his house a home and he does not really want to sell it or move out, but he is being forced to do just that. He wants just compensation or to be compensated on just terms, as they say in that well-known movie *The Castle*.

I had a meeting in my office with three representatives of the Main Roads Department, Annette Ross and her legal adviser. Annette pleaded her case, in tears at times, but that appears to have fallen on some deaf bureaucratic ears. It appears that even

though our home is our castle, it can be stripped away from us with no consideration given to the way we have extended it, built it up or dreamt of maintaining it over, as in this case, 16 years.

Annette even pleaded with them to find a similar home with the same amenities in the same area that they could move straight into but, alas, they could not. Annette herself had spent the last 12 months since the notification of the bypass changes trying to find one in that affordable price range that the Main Roads Department advised her that they would probably be offering her as compensation. As Annette has said, real estate agents have just laughed at her when she has tried to find a place similar to hers in that price range. She does not seem to be able to get some recompense from Main Roads in relation to the compensation for her home in its current state. It is no wonder Main Roads did not take up the challenge to go up and have a look, because they, too, knew that it would probably be virtually impossible to find one for that price where she currently is or in the Caboolture area.

I say to the Minister that it is not good enough by a long shot to offer the small compensation that they have been offered. If a home is not located for them straight away that they can move into, they cannot swap over that defence services home loan. So they will lose that cheap home loan that they currently have and it will be gone forever. Considering the way the banks are lending at the moment and the rates, they know that they have lost the ability to own a home such as the one they own now. Of course, they have already borrowed on the equity in the home for the business, so the business will be gone as well.

So in one stroke of a bureaucrat's pen another five people have been added to the unemployment queues at the Caboolture CES and four more children will suffer needlessly. Struggling sports clubs and organisations that Steve and Annette supported over time are going to be the other losers in the community. They know all about those possibilities. All this could be changed with the extra few thousand dollars that they have asked for as just and fair compensation, and which should be paid to them.

Steve and Annette are totally disgusted with the process and so are their many friends and supporters, most previous Labor supporters, too, I might add until this action to resume their home and not truly compensate them for it. I believe the Minister might have

one more opportunity to act fair, reasonably and justly when Steve and Annette meet again with him and his representatives. I pray that, with a bit more action, a more beneficial outcome for them and the Caboolture community might result.

Speaking of the resumption process, I should say that the people of Ningi are also looking to more fruitful and beneficial discussions with the Main Roads Department and the representatives of Cardno MBK and Associates who are doing the study out there at the moment with respect to the proposed bypass of Ningi. This, I know, is under way. They would like me to highlight here that consideration should be rightfully given to the two options that they have written to the Minister for Transport about, and those two options have received the majority of community support at Ningi.

The two options are the pink option and the alternative blue corridor that has been highlighted. The alternative blue corridor option runs through land owned by Southern Pacific Sands. Southern Pacific Sands has turned out to be a reasonably community-minded company that is willing to work with the community and give it a better outcome in relation to the upgrade of Bribie road. The Bestman Road estate, which contains a large group of concerned residents, valued the input of Mr Ian Harrison from Southern Pacific Sands in putting forward this fifth option, the alternative blue corridor, that will take away the 90-odd trucks a day that rattle past the residents' doors on Bestman Road between Bribie road and the front gate of Southern Pacific Sands. The community wins out with this option, with no forced resumptions and a willing company sharing the use of its land, or a company that is at least willing to be part of the resumption process of the land that is required.

Bribie Island and Ningi residents have also asked about the blow-out in the cost of the upgrade of the footpath on the Bribie Island bridge. They want to know from the Minister what that cost is now. It started out as a \$350,000 upgrade of that path for a rail and some lighting. Now they are cutting through bridge girders of concrete and steel and building outward extensions, or passing bays. People are wondering about the final cost of the new work taking place on the bridge. At the outset, the cost of an external 2.5 metre walkway that was going to hang off the side of the bridge was estimated to be somewhere between \$800,000 and \$1m. At the time that was considered to be too expensive, although it was a far better option. The Bribie Island

Chamber of Commerce and the people at Ningi and Pebble Beach want to know the cost of this poor alternative that is now being proposed for the bridge in placing passing bays on the 870 millimetre wide narrow strip of concrete that acts as a walkway. They also want to know what effect the cuts in the girders and the bridge will have on the bridge's strength. They wonder whether this option is being pursued because of a political single-mindedness; it was raised by the hopeful Labor aspirant, the previous member's wife, for the new electorate of Pumicestone. Is this the reason for the reluctance of the Minister to meet with the Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce and the Ningi District Community Association, which want to raise this matter with him?

The Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce is also looking for a deputation with the Minister for Police to discuss 24-hour policing on Bribie Island, because it is a rising issue there as well. I asked a question on notice of the Minister, who replied that 24-hour policing at Bribie Island was not an issue at this point but that down the track it might be considered. The people on Bribie Island consider that now is a more appropriate time to be discussing it, because there has been a rise in the rate of crime, traffic complaints, hoon complaints, teenage drunkenness and drugs. Bribie residents feel that the police response times to these complaints is not being dealt with adequately. The predominantly aged population on this idyllic paradise need to feel safe and secure in their homes. Having more police officers stationed over there and a 24-hour police presence on the island is something that they feel would be more beneficial to their needs and to the needs of the community in general. Surely the community feeling the strain of a distinct lack of police numbers should have some sort of say with respect to those—

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (2.30 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Appropriation Bills, I want to touch briefly on two or three issues. First of all, I refer to the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, otherwise known as the Forde inquiry. That was an important inquiry which had major ramifications. In establishing the inquiry the Government built up many expectations. Raising expectations creates a demand that those expectations be met. This side of the

Chamber cautioned about building up too many expectations, because one has to tread carefully in relation to this issue.

Appropriate support services need to be put in place to ensure that once issues are brought up—in many cases, they are nightmares for many former residents—there are appropriate support services to meet those requirements. Expectations regarding the Forde inquiry were built up, but unfortunately according to many former residents of institutions those expectations have not been met. Sufficient support services have not been put in place. It needs to be stressed that one has to exercise a great deal of care when reawakening the abuse people have suffered. People live day to day knowing what happened to them, but once they begin to talk openly about their experiences before an inquiry there needs to be an appropriate support structure.

The Government indicated that it would accept all but one of the 42 recommendations of the Forde inquiry. However, that has not occurred. In fact, the Government has not met the recommendation in relation to funding the inquiry recommendations. Far from it. I turn to the report to the Parliament by the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee dated September this year. The committee made very scathing comments in that report. We need to remember that this is the Government's own committee. It was not a committee set up by anybody other than the Government, yet the Government's own committee has been most scathing in relation to funding. The report states—

"Current projections indicate that even after the full flow through of the 'Progressing Forde' funds in 2002-03, Queensland will only be funding at 52% of the standardised expenditure. On current projections an extra \$32.53 per capita would be required to bring Queensland expenditure on family and child welfare in line with the costs to deliver a nationally comparable standard level of service. This is now equivalent to \$113 million."

The Government is a long way short of that amount indeed. Whilst the Government might say it has met all but one recommendation—the one it has not met deals with placing juveniles in justice detention centres—it is quite obvious that the implementation committee says that this commitment has not been met by the Government. It has not met this recommendation at all. Here is yet another

recommendation not met by the Government in relation to this inquiry.

Page 16 of the report refers to recommendations 18, 24, 34 and 35. I turn first to recommendation 18. It is worth noting that under that recommendation the department has a legislatively imposed responsibility to collect information relating to the abuse of children and young people in residential care facilities and juvenile detention centres. Again, progress to date is very abysmal indeed. The report mentions the collecting and publishing, or helping collect and publish, information and statistics about harm to children. Whilst that is contained within the Child Protection Act 1999, the report states—

"The Committee considers this section to be a general power and believes that it does not meet the intent of the recommendation for FYCCQ to be legislatively mandated to collect information regarding the abuse of children and young people in residential care facilities and juvenile detention centres and out-of-home care."

It goes on at length in this regard. It states further—

"The Committee believes that the information should be published in each annual report of FYCCQ."

We again see that a recommendation has not been met by the Government, even though it has been well over 12 months since the Government indicated it would support all but one recommendation. This report is dated September of this year.

I will move to another section of the report, because every section of this report is scathing in its attack. It quite clearly highlights the fact that the Government has a lack of basic information, amongst other things, in relation to the implementation of this report. Without knowledge and information, it is obvious that there will be great difficulty in implementing the report itself. The Government should appreciate, as the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee does, that this is a basic requirement of the recommendations. Recommendation 24 is that the department develop and implement an information system that records individual complaints and trends and institutional abuse. The report states—

"The Committee regards the implementation of this recommendation as a priority. It recommends that FYCCQ and the Children's Commission provide to the Committee by the end of 2000 a

comprehensive framework that will articulate the manner in which complaints are recorded, investigated, responded to and trends reported. The Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of changes to give effect to this recommendation."

I will have more to say shortly about the way in which the department handles complaints it receives about child abuse. I raised that matter during the Estimates committee and there has been more media attention given to the issue in recent times.

Continuing with the issue of complaints and grievances, the Minister was given another hurry up in yet another section of the report. Recommendation 34 covers a range of matters requiring the department to develop and implement policies which ensure a range of easily accessible, confidential complaints mechanisms for children and a range of other issues of a like manner. The report states—

"The Committee believes that the creation of a comprehensive and flexible framework for complaints and grievances available to children and young people is a core recommendation of the Forde Inquiry and believes that implementation must occur this year. It will continue to monitor the implementation of changes to give effect to this recommendation."

Again, whilst there are things in the pipeline, that is some distance away. Whether they meet the requirements of the recommendations, only time will tell.

Out of the 42 recommendations, it is fair to say that the committee is scathing of a large number of them. I again stress that this is the Government's own committee. It is not a committee of the Parliament. It is not a committee set up by the Opposition. This committee was set up by the Government itself to monitor the implementation of the Forde inquiry recommendations. There are a whole range of matters in relation to recommendation 35 to be put in place by December 2000. This has not occurred to date. The report states—

"Again the Committee is of the opinion that the implementation of this recommendation is of crucial importance to ensure prevention of the problems documented in the Forde inquiry. The Committee believes that the implementation of this recommendation in the near future (by the end of 2000 at the latest) must be given priority. The Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of strategies to fulfil this

recommendation and has requested that copies of policies or procedures be provided to the Committee as they are developed."

And so it goes on.

Recommendation 23 is covered on page 29 of the report. This recommendation is that the department establish a short-term residential facility to enable proper and comprehensive assessments when children are first admitted to care. The report states—

"The Committee strongly believe that every child or young person admitted to care has the need for an individual case plan and ongoing assessment of that case plan. The Committee will continue to monitor the activities to implement this recommendation."

That is yet another recommendation that has not been implemented at all.

I raise these matter because I have been getting more and more calls and letters from people who are concerned because the recommendations are simply not being implemented. The Government may say that they are, but as we know it is all about perceptions with the Government. This can't do Government has not implemented these recommendations. Far from it! The more time the Government spends looking at these issues the less likely it is to put in practice many of the recommendations. It hopes that time will dim the memory in relation to these matters.

There are more pages of recommendations. Recommendation 41 states—

"That the Department develop transitional programs to prepare young people in the care of the State for independent living and help them to make the transition by providing assistance to gain employment, education and housing."

The committee report states—

"The Committee recognises this as an important area and will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies and provide a detailed evaluation of them in its second report."

We see these scathing comments being made time and time again, and so the report goes on. It deals with issues of funding. There was grave criticism in relation to the setting up of the trust fund to provide support services and counselling services for many of these former wards—people who had been in these institutions.

Whilst the Government talks about these matters, the recommendations are simply not being implemented according to the Government's own implementation unit. The chronicle of the Government's incompetence seems endless. Individually, these issues should embarrass the Government. It seems to want to make so much out of this. This can't do Government, a Government of perceptions and rhetoric, is certainly a Government of non-delivery.

Even worse are the personal tragedies being lived out by people who were given false hope by the Government when it set up the Forde inquiry and made promises about setting things right. These people get on the phone, crying—that is understandable—because the counselling and support services they need are not available. Many of these people have become desperate. There are reports of people taking their own lives.

The situation is becoming more desperate by the day, and there is a need for the Government to address some of these issues if it is serious. Issues were raised in this report and the Government made certain commitments. The report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions was presented to this Parliament in August 1999. More than 12 months later the Implementation Monitoring Committee highlighted the fact that many of these strategies have not been put in place and that commitments have not been honoured. Many people faced abhorrent abuse over time in these institutions, and they believed in the rhetoric of the Government. Now they find that promises have not been fulfilled. Many of the comments they are making are most scathing indeed.

A matter that flows from this is the child protection reform strategy. I will refer to some of the issues we have seen in the media of late. During the Estimates committee hearings I raised the issue of reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. In relation to complaints that were being phoned in, I asked whether there was follow-up and exactly what was occurring. Certain assurances were given by the Minister at that time. Yet it now quite clearly appears that many of the priority 1 cases and certainly well over 200 priority 2 cases in this State have been simply written off by the Government and by the department and swept under the carpet.

It has been reported that some priority 1 cases and some 97 priority 2 cases at Ipswich were written off. These are cases with a high priority because they involve assessments that

there is the prospect of real damage being done by people about whom complaints are being made—people who are allegedly committing abuse of these young people. Cases that are categorised as priority 2 involve a high risk of future significant harm. Priority 1 cases involve a high risk of immediate danger. Priority 3 cases involve a low risk of immediate danger or low risk of future significant harm.

Surely priority 1 and 2 cases must be investigated. Yet the Government is simply wiping its hands of these matters, and the Minister simply says, "An error was made", and blames the department. All too often in this area the department gets the blame for a whole range of matters that crop up from time to time. If the department is to blame for these issues, then it is up to the Minister, as the responsible person, to put in place processes and programs to deal with these situations when they arise, to ensure that they are properly followed through. That is the responsibility of the Minister.

In the September quarter alone some 97 priority 2 cases were written off in Ipswich, out of a total of over 200 priority 2 cases around the State. Clearly, one of the reasons is that departmental officers are having trouble with the heavy workload involved in these matters. If the Government does not put in place the resources it said it would to meet these requirements, then departmental officers find that they have to move on to other issues that come in. Certain cases are slipping between the cracks and are being written off.

That does not send the right message to people who are committing child abuse in the community—far from it. It says to those people that there is a chance that, even though a complaint has been made, their case will not be followed up and they will get away with it time and time again. That simply is not good enough. Abuse cases cannot be shelved—that simply cannot be defended—because it just sends the wrong message and, of course, real cases are slipping between the cracks.

The Government talks about fulfilling many of these commitments in three or four years' time. In three or four years, much more damage will have been done to Queensland's young people. The way this Government meets its commitments, those commitments will not have been met in three or four years' time anyway.

I refer to the issue of noise barriers on the Western Freeway in my electorate. This is an issue which has not yet been resolved. Whilst some work has been done in relation to noise

barriers, the situation is that, unlike in many other areas of the city, these noise barriers are not high enough to combat noise. Noise is still a major concern and is a major problem for those trying to get some sleep in the wee hours of the morning, particularly in the hours between 4 and 6, when noise from heavy vehicles travelling along the freeway travels considerable distances because of the lack of background noise.

Whilst the Government has engineers looking at this problem from time to time, many of the people affected by noise lived there long before the freeway was upgraded. In fact, some of them lived there prior to the freeway even being built. There are some residents of very long standing in the area. Little has been done in recent times to resolve the noise issues. I again ask the Government to give further consideration to this problem of noise.

The noise levels currently are in the mid 60s. Unfortunately, it always seems that the threshold noise level is never met at whatever time of the day the tests are carried out. But noise levels coming from the freeway in the middle of the day, with the great deal of background noise, are vastly different from those experienced in the wee hours of the morning, when there is no background noise and noise travels a far greater distance.

There is a need to upgrade the noise barriers, to increase the height of the barriers. It is an issue that concerns a large number of my constituents living along the edge of the freeway—more so in recent times with the upgrading that has occurred and even with the upgrading of the bikeway. The placement of a bikeway along the edge of the freeway has meant that some of the vegetation has been removed and other changes have occurred which have aggravated the noise levels that emanate from the freeway.

Finally, I refer to the lack of will on the part of the Government to get on with the job of cleaning up graffiti on Government property around the city. It is quite apparent that graffiti being put on these facilities is simply not being cleaned off. I know that the railways are supposed to have a program of regularly going around cleaning graffiti, but that simply is not occurring. The same applies to other Government instrumentalities. When the graffiti is finally taken off, after many weeks, it is not long before it is back again, unless the police have been fortunate enough to apprehend the offenders in the particular instance. I do think that there is a greater will

needed, because one needs to ensure that graffiti is not allowed to run rampant—

Time expired.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (2.50 p.m.): One of the concerns that I have, and I am very genuine about it, is the spread of noxious weeds in Queensland and indeed Australia. I am not necessarily blaming this Government. I can recall when parthenium weed first started to spread, and that was when Ken Tomkins was the Minister for Lands. While some action was taken at that time, I do believe stronger action could have been taken and we might have eliminated this weed, which is indeed a curse.

Since then, there have been many other weeds introduced from various other countries. We are very much becoming a global community. We have seen the giant rat's tail grass introduced into central Queensland, in particular. On this occasion I have to say that this Government and the Federal Government have to do more to really grapple with these problems, because the more these very serious noxious weeds spread, the less ability we will have to produce, and it is as simple as that.

We talk a lot about conservation, but the basic ways of conserving our land are to indeed deal with the issue of weeds that spread throughout our State rendering much land useless. A property north of Marlborough that I recently inspected had a carrying capacity of 1,800 head of cattle. That capacity is now down to 600 and all the evidence is that this weed will totally choke out this property and render it useless. That means, of course, properties nearby are being affected as well.

So my real message is that we have to deal with this problem. It is extremely serious. We need to not only implement biological control and employ additional scientists, but where a lot of these weeds can be attacked manually I believe we should use the better type of prisoner or, if possible, use the Army to bring the problem under control. We really must get serious and attack it in a very big way.

Imported weeds tend to grow better in Australia than they do in their own country, as is the case with some of our gums in California; they grow much better there than they do here.

Mr Swarten: And in South Africa, the blue gums.

Mr LESTER: Yes, that is right. Of course, in South Africa they have this giant rat's tail grass.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr LESTER: We have got it in Yeppoon all right.

I also make another call for further funding for national parks. A lot of work has been done in trying to provide funding for national parks, but more is needed. I do not think it is unreasonable of me to say that Fraser Island is degenerating as a tourist area because of a lack of maintenance. People like George Done have contacted me in recent days again calling on me to visit that park to make the appropriate comments about the lack of maintenance there. It is a great pity that there is a lack of maintenance there.

I move now to comment on some parts of the Keppel electorate. I appreciate the work that has been done on the road between Emu Park and Rockhampton. There has been, in recent years, a lot of permanent widening done. A temporary widening of that road has also been completed. Temporary widenings are what I say they are. They have been useful, but we are at a point where further permanent widening works need to be done on the Rockhampton-Emu Park Road. I signal that issue at this point.

While the Main Roads statisticians tell me that there is not sufficient traffic on the Rockhampton-Yeppoon road for a double lane highway, I ask these people to look to the future and just recognise the huge growth of that area. It is the eighth fastest growing area in Australia at present and the third fastest growing area in Queensland. I believe we might even do better than that as time goes on. We do need double lane highways on busy roads like that. There has, unfortunately, been a couple of very bad head-ons in recent times resulting in very serious injury and death.

The police station that I have been talking about which is to be situated at Cawarral is a very necessary addition to the fine services that we have in the area. The district includes Keppel Sands, Cawarral, Mount Chalmers and Coowoonga. The existence of removable temporary police stations at Emu Park and, I understand, Gracemere means that the time is right for the placing of a police station there. I know that the Police Minister will tell me that this is an operational matter and it is to be decided by the police department's senior officers. It is, however, my role to signal in Parliament that the police station is needed there. These areas are all growing at a very fast rate and obviously a single officer station there would be very appropriate. There is no reason that it cannot be done and I would like to see it done along the lines of community

policing that has been trialled by the Criminal Justice Commission where the officer gets to know everybody in the community. They can actually prevent a lot of crime because they know what is going on. We need to be preventive rather than responsive. While I think the world of all of the people in Cawarral, Coowoonga, Keppel Sands and Mount Chalmers, it is a simple fact of life that as the population grows we will have more crime.

The Minister for Public Works is looking at me. I want to thank him for coming to Cawarral to inspect the addition of the preschool there. That was very good work done by the Public Works Department. It was a top project—the very latest in the area. Where possible, local contractors were employed and generally it was a very good effort.

Mr Schwarten: We had a good day.

Mr LESTER: It was a good day. We made it a totally non-political day, just giving credit to the people.

Mr Schwarten: Being good neighbours.

Mr LESTER: Yes, and it was good to see. The people of Cawarral appreciated it. Of course, every time we get an addition like this people contact me about the need for additional services such as a police station and so on.

Before I finish what I had intended to say—which was approximately 10 minutes' worth—I need to signal the great concern that exists in Yeppoon at present. There is a move to take away permanent fire officer surveillance in that area. That is unbelievable when an area is growing at such a fast rate. We have always had a permanent officer available 24 hours a day in case of a fire. Those four officers are now going to be placed on daytime duties. This means that during the night, when some of the worst fires occur, we will not have the services of permanent officers. The fire authorities tell me that they could be contacted if the fire is really serious, but this has caused concern in the Yeppoon area.

I raised this matter with Merri Rose when she was the Minister for Emergency Services and she gave me a commitment that nothing would happen with the fire officers. Well, it did not happen while she was Minister, and that is fine, but it is starting to happen now that she is not the Minister responsible for that portfolio. The appropriate people will hear from me. I shall be doing what Vince Lester does best in no uncertain terms.

Mr Kaiser: Make cream buns.

Mr LESTER: I will do more than that. I am concerned that a person in the Labor Party as

senior as the member would make such a remark over such a serious issue. The member should be fighting for me and taking to task those people in authority who are trying to take away my permanent fire officers. I look forward to the member's support and not his ridicule. I am having a meeting in a few days' time and I would hate to have to tell those people that the member was ridiculing my efforts in the Parliament. If the member behaves himself from now on, I will save him that embarrassment. I have every right to raise the issue and fight for it with every ounce of energy that I possess. I will do that.

I have distributed various news items about the way in which I am going to deal with this matter. I will deal with it very fairly. I will make sure that people in authority at the fire service have an opportunity to explain to the public why these things are being done. It will be left for the public to judge this matter.

The ball is in the Government's court. I await further developments. This matter will be handled fairly and justly by me, but it will also be handled in the interests of my constituents. The 10 minutes that I promised to take is up, and I thank the Parliament for its forbearance in listening to me.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (3 p.m.): I have always been of the belief that a Government's success and integrity is judged by the citizens of the State. We would like to think that our Governments would fulfil all commitments they made during the election process.

Being elected to this Parliament as a member of the Government is a great honour. I have always been of the view that it would be nice when one leaves the Parliament, or when one's term in Government is finalised, to walk away and leave a legacy to the people of Queensland. That is something that all Governments should aim for.

I believe that in the two and a half years that the Labor Party has been in Government we have proved to be a very good Government for the people of Queensland. The Government has been able to achieve a number of things that past Governments have walked away from because they were perceived as being too difficult. Whilst the media perhaps believes that this is a difficult time for the Government, we have continued to focus on the work that needs to be done. It is a time for us to reflect on what we have achieved as a Government. We should also give some thought as to what we would like to achieve in the future.

I believe this Government has achieved a great result in the area of native title. Native title has always been a complex issue since the Mabo and Wik decisions were handed down. This has not been an easy issue for any Government to tackle. Over time, through various pieces of legislation, the Government has been able to arrive at an outcome we believe is workable. Each side has had to bear a little pain, but eventually it will be for the benefit of the people of Queensland. I am particularly pleased about the native title legislation that we were able to pass through this Parliament.

Recently in this House we passed the Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Bill. As a former unionist, I am particularly proud of this piece of legislation. This Government has also introduced amendments and changes to the Industrial Relations Act. I do not believe that we always get it right, but this has been a listening Government. We have tried to work in a cooperative manner with the trade union movement. We have worked our way through the issues which affect the unions and their membership. We have been true to the cause of Labor in terms of being a good Labor Government that cares for the workers of this State, and in particular our trade unionists.

This House recently passed the Vegetation Management Bill and the Water Bill. We have been able to achieve significant reforms in those areas. I have been fortunate enough to attend several Community Cabinet meetings throughout the State where we faced a hostile reception, particularly in relation to vegetation management. On a number of occasions, the protesters were misinformed and did not have the correct information. In my view, they were badly represented by organisations which represented farmers, graziers and people who live on the land.

The Premier sat through those meetings and took a lot of abuse from people. A lot of us in this House would not subject ourselves to such treatment. However, the Premier was prepared to sit there, listen to people and tried to find a solution to the problem. Anyone who has attended these forums would agree with me that he is a Premier who is greatly respected by the people of this State. He is very much a people person. I am very proud to be a member of a Government that has worked very hard at taking Government to the people.

We have made great advances in the area of fisheries. The Minister for Primary Industries has worked very hard to ensure that we have long-term, sustainable stocks of fish.

This will be of benefit to both commercial and recreational fishermen. The Government has had to work very hard in this area but has been quite successful.

The Government has achieved many things in the area of the Queensland Police Service. We have improved police numbers and police facilities throughout the State. I believe that most honourable members would agree that we have increased police numbers in our electorates. The matter of police powers has been addressed and we have been able to find the balance between civil liberties and giving police sufficient powers to enable them to do their job.

I take this opportunity to put on the public record my deep appreciation and thanks to our now retired Police Commissioner, Jim O'Sullivan. I have known Jim for quite some time. We became very close acquaintances. I hold Jim O'Sullivan in very high regard in terms of his ability as leader of the Queensland Police Service. As he said, he has left the Queensland Police Service in very good shape.

I wish to refer to transport. In the south-east corner of the State we have the huge busway program. When it is finished it will be a good legacy for this Government. The people of Queensland will say, "I remember the Labor Government that put in this busway." In terms of what we have achieved in relation to road safety, I certainly do not think that this Government alone can take the credit for that. Over the past five or six years in particular, Queensland Governments have done very well in terms of reducing the number of fatalities on our roads. At one stage, that figure was very high. We have managed to bring it down. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years that figure has climbed a bit. However, we are forever vigilant and we have to work very hard to reduce that figure.

In terms of the tilt train project, we are extending it all the way to Cairns. The tilt train has been enormously popular and, as a Government, it is something of which we should be particularly proud. I understand that today the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads will announce major road building programs to take place over the next five years. Again, that is something of which a State as decentralised as Queensland should be particularly proud.

We have had the success of having Virgin Blue establish its headquarters in Queensland. That certainly will open up competition. Virgin Blue has indicated that it will be flying to cities with a population of 50,000 or more. So towns

such as Townsville, Cairns and even Darwin will benefit greatly from that.

In terms of Education, I believe that we have done particularly well with the Secondary Schools Renewal Program. That program was badly needed. Most of us who represent solid Labor seats would recall the lack of spending on schools in Labor electorates before we came to Government in 1989. We have had to come from a long way behind to build up facilities and resources in our schools. However, we have continued to work away at that and I think that we have done a job of which we should be proud. We have also tried to improve facilities in primary schools. They have been of enormous benefit to those schools. I know that, from my representations to the Education Minister over the past couple of years in particular, he has been very understanding of the needs of young people and teachers in my electorate and we have been able to achieve a number of things.

Child-care services and disability services—and particularly disability services—were ignored for a long time. We have come from a very low base. We have made commitments to spend more money and allocate more resources to disability services. Although we still have a long way to go—and that has been acknowledged by the Minister and the Government—we have done quite a bit.

In terms of the multicultural area in which I work, I refer to the implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy. Only yesterday, the Premier tabled a report on the progress of that policy. It is an area I am particularly proud to have worked in. I take this opportunity to thank my staff for the enormous amount of work that they have put into this Government's multiculturalism policy.

The Department of State Development has been a great success for the Government. It has been able to make achievements in the meat industry in terms of being able to restructure that industry and keep a number of jobs. In terms of the regional forest agreements—the RFAs—I think that we were the only State that was able to reach a broad agreement with all the groups. That has been an outstanding success for us as a Government in terms of being able to bring people together—the timberworkers and the greenies—and find a way through the difficulties to ensure that small regional towns survive. It was not easy. The Opposition roundly criticised us. However, those regional forest agreements have stood the test of time and have been a great success. New

industries have also been attracted to this State by the Department of State Development. In that regard, the department has done a great deal of work and is to be congratulated. Earlier I mentioned Virgin Blue, but the Department of State Development is also working hard in the aerospace industry to ensure that it is a growth industry for this State.

We have also had improved resources for our emergency services. Our rural fire brigades and the Queensland Ambulance Service have received new facilities such as ambulance stations, improved facilities in fire stations and improved equipment for rural firefighters. I think that the Minister should be particularly pleased with the progress that we made in that area.

In terms of public housing, I think that most tenants in older public housing have particularly welcomed the refurbishment work that has been undertaken. I know that in my electorate there are a number of seniors units. A large amount of refurbishment work has been done on those units. Several new public housing units have also been constructed. The last two that have been built have won design awards. Of course, we would like to see more. However, the Minister has spoken about the difficulty that he is experiencing with the Federal Government in terms of funding for public housing, but we have managed to do what we can. I think that we should be particularly pleased with what we have done.

Previously I have spoken about the future direction that I would like to see us as a Government take. As a Government, I do not believe that as yet we have worked hard enough to utilise existing educational facilities in this State. Although in some areas it is pleasing to see that those facilities are used after hours, it is my great concern and has always been my great concern that schools and TAFE colleges—but particularly schools—are locked up after 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock. It is one thing to say that the Internet is a good learning tool for students. However, a number of students simply do not have computers at home and, therefore, do not have access to the Internet or do not have a study environment at home. We should be doing more so that our schools are open to ensure that students have access to the school library, have access to computers and to the Internet and to ensure that students have a good learning environment so that, if they want to study in peace and quiet, they have the opportunity to do so.

Also, in terms of the sporting facilities that are available at those schools, we need to do

far more with our schools on weekends. In my view, we are only tinkering at the edges; a lot more can be done. We need to continue to work on building links between universities, TAFE colleges and schools. In my electorate and in the northern corridor, the QUT Carseldine campus, the North Point TAFE and all of the high schools in that area are starting to forge links. I think that we will see more of that occurring in this State. I believe that will be of great benefit to students throughout Queensland.

Earlier in the debate today I heard the honourable member for Toowoomba South talking about treated water being pumped up through the Brisbane Valley and into Toowoomba and how that would be a great asset for the Darling Downs region. I agree with that. We should look forward to that happening. However, I say this: a large sum of money is being spent on costings, on engineering programs and all of the things that go with it to see how it would work. However, at the end of the day, the costs may be too great for any one State Government. That is why I believe this State Government—and for that matter any State Government in the future—will need to engage the private sector a lot more in projects. We cannot continue to rely on the public purse for major infrastructure programs, because the public purse simply does not have the money. As a member of a Government, my view is that our core responsibility is the provision of services in the areas of health, education and law and order. It is easy for members of the Opposition to say that we should build a pipeline to the Darling Downs. Some people have indicated to me that that pipeline might cost as much as \$1 billion. Where does the State Government—any State Government—find \$1 billion?

Members should not get me wrong: I think that it is a very worthwhile project. I believe that water is the key to the success of Queensland in the future. We need to get water to all of that inland area. I do not have the answer myself, but it is a legacy I would love to leave to the people of Queensland, to all those farmers out there. We have growing industries like the wine industry and the cotton industry; as all of those types of industries continue to grow, they will need more and more water. Yet, we just do not have it. We need to find the programs. We need to engage the private sector in a far greater way than ever before if we are going to be successful and have an economy that continues to grow. The future of those rural and regional towns depends on water more than any other thing in this world. We need to

do more. We need to engage the private sector. It cannot be expected that State Governments simply have a bottomless pit of money to be able to fund that. I sincerely hope that in the next term of a Labor Government this issue is something that will be looked at in a very meaningful way.

I believe there are other things we can do. I recently heard Jim Soorley speak about tunnels under the river. I do not have a problem with that, but it is going to have to come from the private sector. Again, we simply do not have a bottomless pit of money. The State Budget is in the vicinity of \$18 billion. That \$18 billion is spent. It gets spent on services and facilities that are needed for this State. Putting in underground tunnels is fine, but the private sector is going to have to come to the party—

Time expired.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (3.22 p.m.): In speaking to these Bills, I will be running over some of the aspects that have been brought to my attention. I will not try to run through the whole smorgasbord of departments and waste the time of the House.

For a place like the Sunshine Coast, of course, I will be speaking mainly about infrastructure expenditure rather than recurrent expenditure, because in a place that is growing as quickly as the Sunshine Coast it is very important to have infrastructure in place for all the things that are needed there. Usually recurrent expenditure—hopefully—follows the provision of infrastructure to provide services.

Infrastructure is important. I am sure it is the same in other growth areas. I cannot speak for them, but I am sure areas like Cairns and the Gold Coast also have growing pains and are always playing catch-up football and saying, "We have this growth rate and we don't have this and we don't have that." I do not know whether any Government at any level in any State has really been able to anticipate growth rates in some of these places and actually have the infrastructure in place to accommodate the growth.

One of the most difficult things is not just putting the infrastructure in place, but anticipating where it can be put without causing problems. That is why it is very important to plan ahead. I will speak a little later on such things as the proposed railway to the Sunshine Coast. It is critically important to decide whether that is going to happen, what sort of infrastructure that will be and where it will be, because the earlier it is planned for the fewer people are disadvantaged. If the decision is put off, the opposite happens. One

could say the same thing with the straightening of the north coast rail line to north Queensland and putting in the extra line. The decisions that have to be made are whether to have an extra line and whether to follow the existing track or straighten it out at the same time. I have seen aerial photographs of the route; some of the decisions that people in this place are going to have to make in the near future are somewhat frightening. There will be huge ramifications of straightening out the north coast line, because it runs through some very nice agricultural land—pineapple farms and that sort of thing. That is going to be a decision that Governments will have to face. That is just an example of why we have to foresee to the best of our ability what is going to be needed in the future and plan for it so that people know it is coming and can make their lifestyle choices and so that councils can plan around that.

One of the issues that I have promoted and followed in this place and elsewhere is policing. I will not go into a lot of detail on the debate on police numbers in the north coast region. I have gone through that on a number of occasions and I will not do so again. One of the reasons this aspect keeps being brought up is that we have a particular problem at the moment commonly known as hoons and hoon drivers. It seems to be one of the prices that people pay for living in places that people like to come to visit. We have a lot of people coming to the Sunshine Coast. I am not saying there are no locals amongst the hoons; that would be incorrect, but a lot of people come from other places to places like the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast for the weekend and they actually terrorise the neighbourhood, whether they be local residents or people there on holidays, by the way in which they drive their vehicles, which is both unsafe for other people on the roads and themselves and, of course, very disturbing. It is amazing how many people can be woken up at 2 o'clock in the morning by noise from two or three vehicles within two or three kilometres of where they are trying to get to sleep. So it is quite a serious issue.

I have had a number of discussions with police officers about how to address this and with Queensland Transport people about addressing the problems of these vehicles, the noise they emit and their roadworthiness. I am confident that we can get on top of that problem. I see problems like this as challenges.

As the Sunshine Coast area is one of the busiest maritime areas in Queensland, particularly for recreational fishing, there is a

requirement for water police. We have a couple of very good officers at Mooloolaba. Although I say "at Mooloolaba," unfortunately they are not there any more. They have recently shifted away from the water down to Kawana, which is most unfortunate. The temporary office they were in was quite cramped and not suitable for their purposes, but at least it was near the water where their activities are. And it was where they could talk with people and observe what was going on in and around the harbour, where they could talk to the boating and fisheries people and Queensland Transport Maritime Division people about areas of common concern and interest. Now that they have moved down to Kawana Police Station, they are away from the culture of the waterside.

This needs to be addressed. I have brought it up in the House before and I have spoken to people about it. I believe the Sunshine Coast deserves to have the same sort of facility that we find at the Gold Coast and Cairns—and I have visited both of those places—where the Maritime Division of Queensland Transport, the DPI Fisheries and the water police are in the same building. A lot of people do not know which department they need to talk to, but somebody who goes to the one in Cairns can be redirected elsewhere in the building to have concerns addressed. That is something that is going to require the cooperation of the Police Department, Queensland Transport and DPI Fisheries. What often happens is that one department may see it as an urgent thing, whereas one or other of the other departments do not have it at the top of their priority list and therefore it does not happen.

I would like to make a multiple request of the three relevant Ministers that this be looked at with the idea of some cooperation. The land is there at the spit at Mooloolaba. There are already existing buildings being used by non-maritime users. What would be most suitable is a building with space for the three services and the boats. The Department of Environment should also be included, because although its officers do not currently have the facility they do have the need to get on the water from time to time. The departments could then work very closely together. That is a very important issue for the future.

In relation to policing, it is now time for a police station in or around Buderim. I talked to senior police officers years ago and they identified Beerwah as having a higher priority. In the spirit of looking at things from a regional perspective, I said, "That's fine. Let's go for the Beerwah one." We do have a police station at

Beerwah now and it is now time, I believe, for one at Buderim. It should be next in line for a police station because of the huge growth rate not only in Buderim but also in the Chancellor Park area. It is also very close to the Bruce Highway, which would be advantageous considering that police conduct various activities on the Bruce Highway. That is a very important consideration.

I said earlier that we have a fine police station at Kawana. I am very pleased to have been involved in the Police for Kawana Waters Committee before I came into this place. I remember making representations to the then Minister, Mr Mackenroth. We did get that police station. It is a very nice police station, but unfortunately it is open only in daylight hours. As that station is situated right on the Nicklin Way where a lot of people travel—both locals and visitors to the coast—a lot of people have need to call in to a visible, large and modern police station only to find that it is open only during office hours. Senior Sergeant Paul Sarquis did a trial some time ago opening until about 11 o'clock at night. It was clear from that trial that it was appreciated and used by not only locals but also visitors to the area.

I turn now to emergency services. Recently, in the House we had a debate in relation to the Kawana Fire Station. I believe that, once again, we have a very good station there. It is manned by the auxiliaries, who do an excellent job. There is no doubt about that. However, I believe that fire services for the Kawana and surrounding areas would be enhanced if we had a supplement of full-time officers there to do some of the things that full-time officers can do best. I would like to once again request that that be given serious consideration. In relation to ambulance services, we have fine ambulance stations both at Buderim and Kawana and great staff who do a great job. In the time I have been in this job I have not had any complaints about ambulance services in and around my electorate, and that is great. I would like to compliment them on that.

The new station that has opened at Maroochydore on the Sunshine Motorway is a joint facility for fire and ambulance. I have had the opportunity to visit it only once, but I understand there are some activities on Saturday, and I hope to call in and see that great station again. The location of this state-of-the-art station should enhance both fire and ambulance services to the central Sunshine Coast area.

Education is obviously one of the important issues on the Sunshine Coast. I

compliment all recent Governments of both political persuasions because I think the provision of schools on the Sunshine Coast has been excellent. We have some wonderful schools. I think four or five have been opened in my electorate since I have been in this job. That is possibly something of a record. They include the Mountain Creek State School, the Mountain Creek State High School, the Chancellor Primary School and the university. I believe there are another couple in the pipeline, including a primary school at Glenfields and also a high school out near the university.

They do a wonderful job. The Mountain Creek State High School competes quite openly with the very good private schools that we have in the area. As I understand it, the Kawana Waters State High School has the highest proportion of overseas fee-paying students of any school in Queensland. They are very proud of that record. They have a lot of students from China. This adds quite a dimension to the schooling activities at that school. They are very pleased with that. We need to make sure that the provision of education continues. It is very important to get the schools, as I mentioned, out at Chancellor Park and the high school and the primary school at Glenfields moving along.

Talking of moving along, I should talk about roadworks. If I had to select one section of infrastructure that is most important on the Sunshine Coast, I would have to say roadworks, because it affects almost everybody every day. We do have a good main road through the Sunshine Coast—the Sunshine Motorway. That is now so busy that the two lane sections of it on the central coast need to be upgraded urgently. Once again, I would strongly suggest to the Minister for Transport that the four laning between Buderim-Mooloolaba Road and Maroochydore Road and the section of the motorway from Mooloolaba out to the Bruce Highway be brought forward. That is desperately in need of work, as is the intersection of the Sunshine Motorway with Buderim-Mooloolaba Road. It is a very awkward interchange and the traffic flows very slowly. A lot of people are held up in traffic at that interchange. Although it will be a fairly complex task and not inexpensive, it is something that really has to be done.

The intersection of the Sunshine Motorway and the Bruce Highway is another one that causes concern. People travelling north to Nambour departing the highway have to cross traffic intending to travel north on the highway. I would suggest without much fear of contradiction that that is the most dangerous

intersection on the Sunshine Coast. There have been fatalities at that intersection. I would ask that, when the intersection is being designed, it be done in such a way so that that part of the intersection can be completed first without compromising the overall planning.

I have mentioned the Kawana arterial in this place before. It is the new proposed road which is west of the Nicklin Way, joining Caloundra Road with Mooloolaba. It is planned to be on the multimodal corridor. The land is there. When the Briztram project was dropped, I had no hesitation in suggesting in this place and to the Federal Parliament that that money be put towards constructing that road, and it could be called the "Federation Way". I believe it would be one of the best alternatives for using those funds. It would certainly go a long way towards easing the problems of the Nicklin Way, which has almost got to the stage where it cannot be redeveloped any further. I think it is carrying almost 40,000 vehicles a day. That really needs to be addressed. It is now six lanes at the northern end and it cannot be redeveloped any further. So that needs to be brought forward.

Rail to the Sunshine Coast is a very big issue. I have talked about the necessity for planning early for such things. We now have the corridor notionally in place. I think we should be very seriously thinking about exactly what mode of transport we should be using there and keep that firmly on the planning agenda.

In the area of sport, we now have a synthetic track at the Sunshine Coast University, which saw a lot of international teams training before the Olympic Games. We also have nearing completion a synthetic hockey track at Ballinger Park. I am pleased to have had some involvement in both of these projects. To make that hockey track really fire, a clubhouse is needed where people can come and go, get changed and showered, and all those sorts of things. I will be looking forward to making a submission for some funding to finish off that job. We can produce Olympic standard hockey players on the Sunshine Coast, but at the moment they have to go elsewhere to train and to play on synthetic fields. We are very keen to get that happening on the Sunshine Coast.

A new Olympic-sized pool is needed near the university. I understand that the university is keen to have the pool on its property. It would service three adjacent schools—the Siena Catholic College, the proposed State high school and the existing primary school, as well as the Chancellor Park community. That is

a very important project. I will be talking with the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing and the Minister in relation to that.

There is also the issue of skate bowls. A few years ago people would not know what a skate bowl was. They are popping up everywhere. They seem to serve a very real purpose in the community with young people. They love them. However, there are some problems attached to them if they are not run properly. That needs to be dealt with. Putting them near a pool with management to look after them to ensure that children do not come to any harm is better than plonking them in a paddock somewhere and hoping the kids look after themselves. We know that kids cannot look after themselves, particularly when there are people who tend to prey on them.

I will not get through all the infrastructure I wanted to mention today. It is obvious that the Sunshine Coast needs a lot, because I cannot get through the list of things it needs in 20 minutes. I noticed in the Sunshine Coast Daily this week that consideration is being given to closing the detox unit at Nambour Hospital. That issue needs to be looked at, because there is a significant problem with people requiring that service as a result of alcohol or drug abuse. Whatever happens in that regard, I hope the need for that unit is considered before there is any cost cutting. It provides a very good service in the area. The Mooloolah River National Park requires fencing and a management plan. That issue needs to be on the list as well.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.40 p.m.): In rising to join the debate on the Appropriation Bills, I say at the outset that it is of concern that there is a drop in the growth rate of the Queensland economy. It has been predicted to fall from 4.25% to 3.75%, despite improvements in the Asian economies with which we trade.

My electorate is quite large. It covers about 300 kilometres of the Queensland coast, extending between Townsville and Cairns. It grows well over 20% of the State's sugar crop. The sugar industry has recently experienced low world prices. However, it is pleasing to note that things are improving. Some six to eight months ago, sugar was being sold for US5c a pound. It is now improving by US10c to US11c a pound. The greatest proportion of the crop—some 85%—is exported. Therefore, it is necessary for us to be competitive on world markets.

The Federal Government gave the industry a great deal of support when the necessity arose. The past two or three years

have been very bad years. My electorate was different to many other areas of the State, which are currently experiencing drought. In fact, the area from Laidley to Roma and Warwick, and out towards Emerald, has had a very rough trot. I visited that area recently and I realise the difficulties that have been experienced because of the dry weather. However, that is very much in contrast to the experience in the northern part of the State. I recall that for 17 days in November last year my electorate received something like 32 inches of rain. One would have to go back to the records of 1894 to register similar rainfall in November. That was detrimental. Crops had just been harvested. The young plant cane and the ratoons coming out of the ground suffered severely to the extent that the Herbert River district and many districts in the northern region only harvested half the normal crop.

That situation was not just as a result of wet conditions. The destruction of crops by rats was a significant problem. There were also problems with orange rust, which is unique to one particular variety, Q124. This was the main reason the crop was reduced in size and sugar content. Sugar farmers and millers do not get paid for the volume of crop but the volume of sugar content. Therefore, a major reduction in sugar content knocked the industry around very badly. There were also problems with greyback cane grubs. This variety of grub is very difficult to combat. Chemicals that were used 15 or 20 years ago to combat the grub are no longer able to be used because of their ingredients. There is a worldwide move away from using such chemicals. There was some threat that the chemicals may have been picked up in beef being sent to countries such as the United States. Therefore, farmers had to stop using those chemicals, but nothing we have used since has been really successful in combating cane grubs. As a result, crops have suffered very badly in some areas. The Innisfail district, with its sandy and volcanic soils, has had major problems for the past 10 years.

In relation to rodenticides, zinc phosphate has come onto the market. It is proving to be successful. It has undergone many trials, and that chemical will be distributed. However, a major problem is that rodenticides that are very effective can linger so long in the species they are meant to eradicate that owls and hawks, which prey on rats, can suffer ill effects from them. Of course, these can be very detrimental. One reason we had to stop using a particularly successful chemical was that it had too long a residual effect and it adversely affected bird life.

Another major concern relates to the need for the Herbert River drainage scheme. It was funded in 1993 by both the State and Federal Governments to the tune of \$19m each. There was an industry component in relation to drainage relating to drains, rail lines and a whole host of infrastructure important to industry. One of the few drainage systems left behind at present is the Herbert River district drainage. There are a few drainage boards—in fact, five altogether—that are very active. They have been in place for a long time and they have been effective in providing farm drainage in the Wet Tropics of north Queensland.

A major problem with drainage in the north is that, in many cases, there is no access to the sea. The coastal strip is a major mangrove area with prolific mangrove growth and, at times, silts up. As a consequence, the natural drainage system used in the past is no longer accessible. I believe that revocations will be necessary in relation to these areas to allow those drainage systems to be put in place. They are particularly necessary after extended periods of rain. Often during the wet season there are major floods, and there is nothing much we can do about that. However, as the floodwaters subside, it is important to be able to drain the water within a reasonable time to allow crops to dry out. Generally the growing of crops in these areas has been very successful but, at the end of the day, it is essential that we get these drainage schemes up and running. Good drainage is necessary to enable us to cope with inundation over a long period.

A draft coastal management plan has been put out. There is a lot of concern that the committee does not include a large number of stakeholders. In fact, it is considered one of the deficiencies of the scheme that the legislation did not give sufficient capacity to those people directly involved in coastal management—that is, the rural community and those people who live close by—to be represented on the committee.

As I have indicated, a deal of concern has been expressed by many people that we will not be doing the types of things that are probably in the best interests of the environment. I have to be very mindful—I am sure all of the people who live in those areas are very mindful—of the need to maintain good environment credentials. There is no question about that. Also, there are things that have to be done. If the committee does not have a clear determination to provide substantial assistance to all of the people that are involved in these regions, we will find—we have found this to be the case to date—that necessary work will not be done. Money has

been provided over seven years and nothing has happened.

I mention the group of people who provide harvesting of the cane crop. They have had a very rough time. They have very expensive equipment—worth something like \$750,000, if not up to \$1m. With very small crops or crops being cut under adverse conditions, it becomes very costly. Their viability can certainly be put at risk. Last year's was a very poor crop. They virtually had to cover the area for a crop double the size. Because they are paid on a tonnage basis they did not receive reasonable remuneration for their efforts. Some of them will find themselves in a very difficult position, because they buy some of these machines on lease agreements, on time payment, with loans and so on. If people base their finances on the fact that they have X number of tonnes to cut each year and for some reason or other, through adverse seasons or through a range of issues I described previously, the level of crop anticipated is not reached, then they suffer very badly. The other issue is the price of fuel, which is dramatically affecting their costs.

I will now deal with bananas. The area has crops valued at somewhere around \$200m. From time to time there are price variations. Presently they are worth a reasonable amount of money. Growers are making a fair thing out of them. The major problem they have at present is the threat of imports from the Philippines. An application has been made to AQIS by the Philippines Government to bring bananas in to Australia. That partly came about as a result of the fact that we were exporting live cattle to the Philippines. It was quite a good trade but, unfortunately, the Philippines has now gotten to the point that it is saying, "If we are going to continue on with this trade, we want consideration for the crops we grow, such as bananas, to be able to send them to Australia." The Philippines has a distinct advantage in terms of cheap labour. A lot of these organisations in countries such as the Philippines and Ecuador are run and backed by American businesses and they are using some of the best technology in the world.

Disease is a major problem in the Philippines, and it has diseases we do not have. Where black sigatoka has been picked up throughout the cape, the industry itself has been particularly vigilant. It has had the capacity to plant resistant varieties—probably not totally acceptable commercial varieties but varieties that allowed those areas to grow bananas without the threat of attracting this black sigatoka. There are a few other very

detrimental pests and diseases in the Philippines that could be of major disadvantage to our clean, green image.

Maybe one day the industry will be able to say, "We will reduce our chemicals to such a level that we can export bananas that are to a large extent or even totally free of any chemical usage." That organic-type product is highly sought after around the world. In fact, during the time the papaya fruit fly was in north Queensland, there was a group north of the Daintree producing bananas and exporting them to Japan. That gives some indication that some of these areas have the capacity to do that sort of thing now. Of course, if the industry works even harder, it may be able to provide a large proportion of organic product.

All of this has affected investment confidence. It is not particularly high at present. Today a group of people came to see me. It was a bipartisan arrangement. I asked the Minister and his departmental people to attend. The Minister could not make time to come in, but he sent along some of the departmental people—policy advisers and so on—and people from DPI. The group that came to see me outlined an initiative whereby the stems of bananas could be made into a paper-type product. Tom Johnston, from Tully, has been very active in this area. We heard from people representing Visy Board and Komatsu.

Komatsu, in conjunction with Tom Johnston, has made a machine that is able to pick bananas. It is on a little Komatsu excavator. It has the capacity to do away with this backbreaking labour of carrying bunches of bananas around in very wet conditions. Of course, there is a condition with Weil's disease in our part of the world, which is attributed to rats.

I think this is a worthwhile initiative. We are following it through. I hope that, with the assistance of DPI, we can get to the point of putting together a new concept for the banana industry—that is, picking by machine. This group is also involved in making a paper product, which could be useful for cartons. It has a lot of good qualities—it is almost a greaseproof material—so I think it would be very beneficial.

All too often we see concepts such as this lost to Australia and lost to Queensland. Governments have to put their best foot forward to ensure that when a concept comes along they assist it to be brought to fruition. There are other forms of involvement—commercial-in-confidence arrangements and so on—and they are not easy to work through.

But I think that is really the challenge for Government. How does it go about assisting these types of industries to get to a point where they generate jobs, activities and certainly income for the State of Queensland?

I will very briefly mention the tourism industry. The Hinchinbrook electorate has excellent prospects for tourism. It has the rainforests and the reef. It is unique. In many instances they are only a few kilometres apart. There is a project at Port Hinchinbrook put together and pretty much funded, I understand, by an Australian—Keith Williams. Some ridiculous situations are starting to develop in relation to the coastal management plan. I understand that he is allowed only 50 days a year on which to conduct boat trips up and down the Hinchinbrook Channel and that boats can be no longer than 20 metres. But the fact that there are something like only 50 days a year to do this type of thing is ridiculous. We saw sugar ships that were probably as much as 100 times bigger than the 20 metre boats going up and down that channel, and yet there was no problem. In fact, in that area in Missionary Bay we have seen the dugong population hold its own, if not improve, over a period.

We have other ridiculous situations such as planes flying sightseers around at 1,500 feet. For safety reasons alone anybody flying through the Hinchinbrook Channel from time to time has to get down to 500 feet to get under the cloud, and planes being used for sightseeing ventures have to go to 1,500 feet. We cannot ski up and down the Hinchinbrook Channel. There has been no problem with sugar boats and speed boats travelling up and down the channel. I am not aware that there have been any dugong deaths in recent times from boat usage there.

Of course, no floating reef can be put out at Britomart Reef or any of nearby reefs, yet even during the Goss period I recall seeing at NQEA's premises in Cairns a floating pontoon the size of a football field that was going to be taken out to be anchored at one of the reefs.

A road called the H road was built during the construction of the Kareeya Power Station. It is a very serviceable road which was built when the power lines were put through the rainforest and which goes from the Tully Gorge through the rainforest to Millaa Millaa. It is in good condition. It is not a road that people can travel very quickly on; it has whoa boys in place. That road has been there for some 40 years or even longer. About six months ago Powerlink decided to stop people going up this road, despite the fact that there are already

preventive measures like gates and that sort of thing situated at either end. Powerlink dug a hole that was something like a tank trap, something that even a D8 would have trouble getting through, to stop any use of that road. After all the rhetoric about it being a World Heritage area we should be enabling people, particularly those who have difficulty in walking, to be able to see it.

Time expired.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—CCAQ) (4.02 p.m.): I rise today to make a few comments on Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2000, which authorises the Treasurer to pay an extra \$326.75m from the Consolidated Fund for unforeseen expenditure of various Government departments.

There is no doubt that over the past decade or two the majority of Government Budgets were directed at infrastructure development on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and other large population centres along the coast of Queensland. This direction of major funding was due to a population boom in Queensland that was unprecedented for any State in Australia. Most of the population growth was due to interstate migration and the spending on such infrastructure was certainly necessary to cater for the demands created by such a population increase. This migration has now slowed and it is time that this Government directed its energy towards infrastructure development in the rural and regional areas of Queensland. This development is absolutely essential if the current tide of centralisation of population growth in the coastal regions is to be checked.

In my electorate alone, the farming community of the Lockyer Valley injects approximately \$90m into the State's income each year. This area, together with the Warrill and Fassifern farming districts, plays a major part in the rural income of south-east Queensland in general. Thus, it is time that Governments, instead of largely ignoring these rural areas, thanked the people for their contribution to the wealth of this nation by providing more infrastructure including better roads, better health facilities and access to these facilities, increased spending on our ageing schools in these areas and the provision of sporting and cultural facilities.

One of the most unfortunate things that I have noticed since becoming the member for the electorate of Lockyer is that there is some differentiation between the procedures of allocating grants to shires of different sizes. Shires with a smaller population are definitely disadvantaged when it comes to receiving

grants from Governments to provide infrastructure to their residents. In particular, because they have smaller populations some shires such as the Boonah Shire have a great amount of difficulty in receiving any grants at all to assist them to build better cultural facilities for activities in the communities.

At the moment, the Boonah Shire Council has a great problem with its civic hall. The hall is in great disrepair. The building is unstable and the floors have basically had it. The whole building needs to be pulled down and a new one built. Unfortunately, this will cost somewhere around \$3m; that is \$3m that the Boonah Shire Council certainly does not have, and as a smaller community it has great difficulty in raising that sort of money. My suggestion to this Government and any other Governments that come into this place is that we should be looking at these smaller communities in general. We should be pushing a policy under which, each financial year on a rotational basis and on an as-needs basis each smaller shire is provided with a grant of money to build these sorts of facilities for its residents. In that way over a period of years these facilities—particularly cultural and sporting facilities—could be provided to smaller shires.

At this juncture, I wish to thank the Minister for Local Government, Mr Mackenroth, for the recent grants that he has given to the people of the Shire of Gatton, which has certainly received some significant grants—approximately \$1.5m—from the Government in the last 18 months. Gatton, with a population of a little over 15,000, will be rewarded with a great sporting facility. I thank the Government for that.

There is no doubt that rural areas such as the one that I represent have been under attack from many changes in the past few years. Many of these have been caused by the advent of what I have labelled the disastrous National Competition Policy. The impact that deregulation of the dairy industry has had in my electorate is only now starting to be felt. Many businesses have reported a marked downturn in their activities due to this deregulation. Already about 20 dairy farmers in my electorate have withdrawn completely from the industry. Some of these dairy farmers produced fairly significant amounts of milk. I know of one dairy that produced in excess of one million litres of milk each year. It has now closed due to deregulation.

Even my family veterinary surgery business is suffering quite markedly as a result of the deregulation of the dairy industry. For

the first time I have seen farmers come into the business and say, "Sorry, this month we can't pay your bill. We just haven't got the money." I can understand that. We have to sympathise with those people. What we try to do is to assist them as much as we possibly can. We have to keep supplying farmers with the necessary drugs and other things they need from a veterinary surgery to keep their business going in the hope that sometime down the track they will start to come good again and return to being an important feature of our economy and our district.

But at this stage of the game there is no doubt that these people are certainly in dire straits, and the delay in the granting of the dairy restructure package is adding to their woes. The delivery of that restructure package has now been put back and at this stage it looks as if they will get their money around February of next year instead of this November. That, to me, is a great tragedy that will certainly put more of the dairies out the back door.

The cost of the impact of the new Vegetation Management Act, the new Water Act and the new forestry agreements in my electorate will take a little while to be ascertained, but I believe that the impact will be quite significant. The Lockyer electorate is largely a rural-based electorate with a huge horticultural component. Water is an essential ingredient in the ability of this area to produce quality produce. I have heard the member for Hinchinbrook talking about the devastating impact of the recent drought. Even though some areas have received fairly substantial rainfalls, if they do not get follow-up rainfall they will quickly return to drought condition. Many areas at this stage have received only very small amounts of rain—some one and a half to two inches. Some areas may have received four, five, six or seven inches, but the water from those very heavy rains just flooded away down the streams anyway.

What concerns me about this is some recent activity in the central Lockyer area by DNR officers who at this stage and to my way of thinking are issuing unreasonable water allocations to many traditional irrigation farmers, which will have a far-reaching impact on the economy of the area. These DNR officers are allocating as little as 0.9 megalitres of water per hectare to farmers. That amounts to as little as four inches of rain per year. There is no way in the world that irrigation farmers can survive on 0.9 megalitres of water per hectare. They might as well pack up their gear, have an auction sale and get rid of the farm. The social impact of such activities is going to

be great. Farms will be devalued and a lot of bankruptcies will probably follow. I have twice written to the Minister and I am awaiting his reply.

Last night in this House the member for Toowoomba South, Mr Horan, spoke about one of the most exciting proposals that has been projected for south-east Queensland. I refer to the proposal to pump recycled effluent waters from Brisbane, Ipswich and Logan Cities to the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. It has the potential of producing a huge economic boost for both the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. It will add considerably to the economy of this State.

This proposal has been under examination for some time and, hopefully, is overcoming its last hurdle towards reality. The consultants, Kinhill, Brown & Root, are due to report to the interdepartmental committee by early December. This is an essential project which must go ahead for a number of reasons. It will overcome the problem that the DNR officers are causing in the area at present. As I said, these officers are downgrading the allocations of water that farmers can use from the underground aquifers. It will virtually drought-proof the valley and make it a major horticultural production area. It will be a sustainable production area. The productivity of the Darling Downs will be increased with the introduction of this water from the south-east region of the State. The Lockyer Valley is a major horticultural production area and the Darling Downs is more directed to such things as cotton production.

Projects such as these are essential to the wellbeing of this country. This particular project is a classic win/win situation for the people of Brisbane and its surrounding regions. It will have cleansing effects on the environment of Moreton Bay. Moreton Bay is a pristine environment, and we will see the removal of some 200,000 megalitres of fresh water—waters which are quite polluted—from the bay each year. It will be a win/win situation for the bay and for the Brisbane area. It will also be a win/win situation for the farmers of the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. It is a visionary project. It is a project that the Government must grasp in order to ensure the future of this State. I urge the Government, and particularly the Treasurer, Mr Hamill, to ensure that State Government money is provided to back such a project.

I heard the member for Sandgate comment on this proposal. I agree with some of the very good points that he made. I realise that State Governments cannot entirely fund

such projects. I do not believe any honourable member or any farmer would disagree with that suggestion. There are a number of factors in this project that are very important. It will have a major positive environmental effect on Brisbane and the Moreton Bay area. Local Government must have an input into this proposal. There is no doubt that private enterprise will provide quite a lot of money for the project. However, initially, Governments have to grasp the nettle and go ahead with it. Governments must provide the seed funding for this undertaking.

There has been a lot of discussion between intergovernmental committees in relation to this matter. I have attended some of the meetings. I have talked with representatives of Kinhill, Brown & Root and with Greg Fahey from the Department of State Development. Hopefully, if all the figures are correct, this project will go ahead in the near future.

With the completion of the M1 motorway to the Gold Coast, I believe it is now time that the Main Roads Department redirected its efforts to providing a good, safe roadwork to people in regional areas. In my electorate alone, there is a huge number of old wooden bridges on main roads which must be replaced. At the last count, I believe there were still 10 of these bridges existing in my electorate. They are very expensive bridges to replace. They are not very big, but there is not one that could be replaced at a cost of under \$1m. Most of these bridges have been scheduled for replacement under the Roads Implementation Program, but this program has slipped behind schedule. I ask the Minister to reassess the program and have these bridges replaced as soon as possible. Some of the bridges are quite dangerous.

I believe many members of this House would be well aware of the bridge across Purga Creek at Peak Crossing. The woodwork of the bridge has been eaten away by white ants. I thank the Minister for Transport, Mr Bredhauer, for the speedy rescheduling of the replacement of this wooden bridge. I have just been briefed by Main Roads officers who are involved with that project. I thank the Minister for making those officers available to brief me on this matter. A very good bridge is planned to cross that creek. This particular bridge will cost some \$2m. I urge the Minister to try to get the Roads Implementation Program back on track.

Hopefully, with the completion of the M1 motorway, many hundreds of millions of dollars will be going towards the upgrading of the

major highway network throughout Queensland. In particular, I refer to the duplication of the Gatton bypass. It is essential that something is done to this bypass in order to reduce the number of single-car accidents and head-on collisions that have occurred along this section of the highway.

The duplication of this section of the Warrego Highway is estimated to cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$30m. It will complete the dual carriageway from Brisbane to Toowoomba. This section of the highway currently carries around 12,000 to 14,000 vehicles a day. Most of the money involved in this project will be Commonwealth money. I urge the Minister to talk to his Federal counterpart in an effort to have this section of the highway duplicated as quickly as possible.

There is no doubt that the Toowoomba bypass is an essential piece of roadwork that has to be carried out. It will require a lot of tunnelling under the Toowoomba Range. This project will cost the Federal Government some \$250m. The bypass will ensure safe travel between Ipswich and Toowoomba.

I urge the Minister for Main Roads to continue to push for the electrification of the railway line between Ipswich and Toowoomba. This is an essential project which will largely depend upon Federal Government input. It will probably also need major input from private industry. Hopefully, the railway link from Melbourne to Brisbane will come through the Lockyer Valley.

Mr Lucas: They are working on the corridor now, aren't they?

Dr PRENZLER: They are working on the corridor now. A lot of discussion is occurring between the people involved. The project is progressing quite well. I thank the Minister again for proposing the corridor. I hope that it will go through sometime within the next 10 years. It will give us a railway corridor from Melbourne to Brisbane, and it will complement the electric train service between Ipswich and Toowoomba.

Projects such as the water project for the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs, the duplication of the Warrego Highway, the Toowoomba bypass and the upgrading of the railway link between Ipswich and Toowoomba, together with the associated engineering works, are big projects, but they are essential to the development of this State.

Recently, the Minister for Education announced the construction of a new high school in the Flagstone area of my electorate. This new high school, together with the recently completed Laidley State School, will

assist in the education of young people in my electorate. I thank the Minister for these facilities.

Unfortunately, the older schools in my electorate are suffering badly. Some 533 students attend the Gatton State School. There are 21 permanent teachers, but the school has only 20 classrooms. This situation has led to improvisation being the order of the day. As a result of pressure being applied to the Department of Education, we have seen the arrival of a prefabricated structure that will act as a temporary classroom. Unfortunately, this building is totally inadequate for the teaching of children. I urge the Minister to take note of the plight of this school and to instigate a building program at the school as soon as possible.

In addition, the high schools in my region of Gatton, Laidley and Boonah have been there for quite a while. The other night the high school at Gatton had its 40th speech night, which I attended. The high school at Boonah had its 36th speech night, which I also attended. I was a Year 8 student 36 years ago when that school was built. That school certainly needs some attention from the Building Better Schools Program to rejuvenate it so that it can cope with the teaching requirements of the new millennium. I take this opportunity to again thank the Minister for Housing, Mr Schwarten, for the work that Q-Build did after the disastrous storm that hit that school late last year. Certainly, Q-Build—and I thank it very much for this—responded very quickly. It has done a great job of rebuilding that school up to new wind classifications. Certainly, the school is much better off for it. At the same time, Q-Build replaced a lot of the old asbestos roofs. Certainly, because of that disastrous storm a major upgrade of the school was undertaken.

I notice that the Minister for Education, Mr Wells, has just walked into the Chamber. The science laboratories at the Lockyer District High School at Gatton date back to the start of the school some 40 years ago. They are in urgent need of refurbishment. I say to the Minister that I will be taking up that matter with him very shortly to see whether we can get something done under the Building Better Schools Program.

Mr Wells: Perhaps you can make a representation on it.

Dr PRENZLER: I think I will.

Recently, Gatton college was renamed the Gatton Campus of the University of Queensland. This renaming was not before time but occurred only through concerted local

pressure to ensure that the campus survived. Unfortunately, this campus has been largely ignored by its parent university since its amalgamation in the early 1990s. As I stated in my submission to the Brown report, this campus fulfils an essential teaching niche in Queensland, particularly in the agricultural area.

This campus should really be a stand-alone agricultural university. To do this, we have to have some innovative ideas. One of the ideas that has been generated by members of the campus, the businesspeople at Gatton as well as me is the establishment of a farm mechanisation centre that would fill an important niche in relation to farm machinery safety and also the promotion of home-grown farm machinery enterprises of Australia. A submission has been presented to the Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Palaszczuk, to establish such a facility in conjunction with the University of Queensland and the State Government. All this facility requires is a seeding grant to get it established. It will then become self-supporting by providing an essential service to machinery manufacturers in Australia. As a consequence, this facility will allow the training and education of machinery design engineers in this State. Once again, I take this opportunity to urge the Minister for Primary Industries to push this proposal at the next meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Agricultural Ministers. I know that he is going to do that. On numerous occasions he has talked to me about it. I urge him, if he can, to make sure that that is done, and hopefully a seeding grant can be given so that this facility can take off.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (4.22 p.m.): I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill. One of the areas that will be funded by the Bill is the Department of Fair Trading. I note that the Minister is in the Chamber. It is to fair trading issues that I want to direct my comments.

On 18 October, I spoke in this Chamber about a telephone scam. At that time I told Parliament of a 69 year old lady of Wynnum West in my electorate who was telephoned by a canvasser and told that she had won a free mobile phone. That lady had never entered a competition at all, but she was told that she had won a competition. She was a relatively unsophisticated person—a normal sort of person—and thought, "That is great. I have won a mobile phone."

A few days thereafter a sales representative turned up. For that mobile phone that the lady had supposedly won she had to pay a \$1 deposit. Why did she have to

pay a \$1 deposit? I say as a lawyer that it was probably to make her part of a binding contract—a consideration to support the contract. That lady was then signed up for a \$39 per month fixed fee on the mobile phone that she had won. The fact is that these days people can go to a mobile phone store and get all sorts of mobile phones for free. However, people do not really get them for free because they pay for them when they pay their monthly subscription. That is what happened to this poor lady. These are outrageous bait tactics, they are quite unfair, and they took advantage of this lady's vulnerable position. This lady did not need a mobile phone but she was forced into a situation where she had entered into a contract.

I am delighted to say that when I wrote to the Minister about this matter she acted very promptly and her department dealt with the issue. To its credit, the company agreed to cancel the contract and allowed my constituent not to be bound by the monthly fee. However, I know that was because the Minister's department raised the issue with that company. How many other people are there in Queensland who have been taken in by similar tricks? I am greatly concerned that people do not really understand that there is no such thing as a free lunch and there is no such thing as a free mobile phone.

Ms Spence: I think that it should be acknowledged that the woman was fortunate to have the representation by the honourable member.

Mr LUCAS: I am pleased that that lady came and spoke to me about it and thought that I could help her. She was one of these people who has no-one to turn to. She was not a wealthy person. She was living in rented premises.

Mr Johnson: The sharks of life.

Mr LUCAS: That is right. Unfortunately, the sharks of life took this lady as a victim. The fact is that that lady was an unsophisticated person—a lovely pensioner residing in rented premises—and she was taken advantage of. How many other people are there who do not understand that what is free up front might in the long term have a great cost?

On Monday this week it was of great concern that I got a telephone call from another constituent. This man had been contacted by an electronic telephone service. This man indicated to me that a computer telephoned his house and told him that he was one out of 100 people who were selected to win a home security system. That computer

asked whether he would want to avail himself of it and to leave his name and details after the tone. This man thought, "That is fantastic." He stated his name and shortly thereafter he was contacted by a person who organised a sales representative to come around and see him.

This person—I will call them Brett—lives at Wynnum North and essentially is a battler. He is a labourer who on average works a week per fortnight. He does not have full-time employment, but he gets all the employment that he can. He lives in a rented house. He does not even own the house that he lives in, but these people sell him a home security alarm system. Those people went around and said to him, "You have to listen to this presentation that we are going to give you if you want to collect the home security system." So those people sat this man and his partner down and explained the system to him. Then these people said, "If you sign up for this, it will cost you a fee of \$47 per month. But you cannot get out of it." He said, "Gee, it sounds really good", and signed up for it. So this man was then committed to three years of \$47 per month for an alarm monitoring system for a house that he did not own, but he has two Rhodesian ridgeback dogs. This man did not need a security system and he was ripped off. To make matters worse, these people made him sign a bank withdrawal authority. They did not tell him when it starts. So it overdrew his bank account and he wears another \$20 for that.

I think that it is about time that we took action. I know that the Minister is very interested in the issue because again I have written to her about it and she has expressed her concern to me. It is about time that we took action on these sorts of marketing tactics. I have spoken to other people in my electorate who have also been phoned by so-called companies offering so-called free alarm systems. It is just not on.

When I contacted the company, I was told that there was a 10-day cooling-off period. My constituent told me that, in fact, what happened to him was that the sheet that had the 10-day cooling-off period on it was torn off the contract that he was given so he had no knowledge of it at all. We should not be allowing the situation where people can use a so-called excuse that a person has won a prize when that person has never entered a competition. This man in question never entered into a competition. He never filled out a form to win a home security system; it was just an artifice to get him to sign a contract.

We must outlaw this sort of behaviour now. It is not fair, it is not Australian and it is not the decent thing to do to give people the impression that they have won something when, in actual fact, they are signing themselves away for a lengthy period, particularly when they have no need for the product. As I said, my constituent is a battler. He does not need a security system. He came to see me because he had nowhere else to turn. He does not have the money to hire lawyers. He needed to talk to his member of Parliament, and I am glad that he came and saw me. As I said, when I raised it I found that a whole lot of people in my electorate had similarly been canvassed about "winning" home security systems. It is simply not fair that people are exposed to those sorts of high-pressure tactics.

The Minister has done very well in relation to her legislative initiatives in precluding people from canvassing after hours. I support her in that. The unfortunate thing about consumer affairs law is that as one loophole or one crack is closed another one opens. This is one issue that we have to look at. We need to outlaw the situation where marketeers claim that people have won a competition when, in actual fact, they have never entered a competition and they ought not win a prize. To sign up for such a contract is a rip-off.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (4.30 p.m.): I wish to canvass a number of issues in relation to not only my portfolio area of Transport and Main Roads but also other areas relating to Government agencies in other portfolio areas and that affect people and businesses in my electorate of Gregory.

When we as members of Parliament think about this, the most important issue is how our fellow citizens—the people in our communities—are affected. Even though funds are allocated from Government Budgets to certain areas, certainly many areas are still crying out for funding; they seem to have been left high and dry. I will touch on that as I progress. Although pork-barrelling is often discussed in the House, it is time to be fair dinkum with all of the people of all electorates and give them a fair share of what they deserve.

I wish to mention police services. Police in western communities are no different to police in any other community in the State. For a long while now we have had fantastic police officers in the Gregory electorate. I have said that before and I further endorse the great work they do on a daily basis. But they can do the work only if they have the staff necessary

to do the work. A remote area like Windorah, which is 300 kilometres south of Longreach and on one of the main arteries to the west between Quilpie and Birdsville and Longreach and Birdsville, has not had a resident police officer for over 12 months. This is totally unsatisfactory; the local people are sick and tired of this. Relieving officers have come from Longreach or the second officer from Jundah will come and fill in for a couple of days or even just a few hours and then go back to Jundah. After a long period we have just had the sergeant's position in Jundah filled.

The same can be said for places like Thargomindah and Quilpie, which are in my colleague's electorate of Warrego. The sergeants' positions there have not been filled. I know people who have applied for the positions but, because of the requirement for a CJC clearance, they have not been given the go ahead to take up the positions. It is absolutely ludicrous that we have people who want to go to those communities and be a part of them for two, three or four years but who cannot be given the go-ahead. That is totally unacceptable. I trust that the Police Minister, or some of his advisers, are listening so that some of these anomalies can be fast-tracked and corrected. It is an unfortunate situation.

All places, whether they are remote communities, larger towns or cities throughout the State, deserve to have a full complement of police. We have heard the Minister say how police numbers are growing and the recruits are coming through the academies in Brisbane and Townsville, yet we do not seem to be able to get police officers to the places where they should be. Officers genuinely want to come to these places, but they are not given the go-ahead because of the stringent selection panel interviews they are subjected to. I believe that that is totally unsatisfactory and not acceptable to the wider community.

I also put on record my acknowledgment of the great work of the former commissioner, Mr Jim O'Sullivan, over his period of eight years as commissioner of this State. I think Jim O'Sullivan is a truly wonderful person. In the couple of years that we were in Government, in Russell Cooper's absence and as the Acting Police Minister I had occasion to work with him a few times. I cannot say enough good words about Jim O'Sullivan. I wish him and his wife, Del, all the best for their retirement. I wish Commissioner Bob Atkinson all the best as he now takes the reins of the Queensland Police Service and trust that he can lead it in the same way that Mr O'Sullivan did.

I raise the issue of rural power that was addressed in the House last night by the member for Callide, the shadow Minister for Mines and Energy. That is an issue that is not going away. We have to respect the people who live in isolated, remote communities. They have been subjected to Third World conditions for far too long. To be able to flick a switch to turn on power is something that many people take for granted today, but people in some of those western, north-western and peninsula regions are still dreaming of that. I think it is going to take a coalition Government to overcome that.

I know not everyone can have rural power, but the commodities produced in those regions certainly speak volumes for them. Natural gas is coming out of the ground at a rate of knots and being pumped through to Mount Isa. There is an abundant supply of oil, coal and all the other commodities we need to produce power or any other sort of commercial venture. Yet it seems that although the natural resources come from those western areas we cannot have the products that flow from them.

I believe rural power, or power of any type, should no longer be provided to only a relatively few; all people are entitled to have that convenience. Those who are unable to have rural power—the people in the Barcoo, Boulia Shire, my region, the honourable member for Mount Isa's region, areas west into my area of Diamantina, down into the Bulloo Shire and Thargomindah—are some of the best producers in the nation. They produce masses of cattle, wool and other commodities that enable business operations on the eastern seaboard to function throughout the year.

The important factor to remember here is that these people do not ask for a lot from day to day, but this would be a very small bonus. If it has to be a community service obligation to give them that power, they should be entitled to it as recognition of the effort that they have put in throughout their lives. This issue is not going to go away. It is near and dear to the hearts of many people in western Queensland and one that is high on the agenda of the coalition when we return to Government next year, because I can assure those people that Jeff Seeney will be fast-tracking the implementation of that policy.

I will also touch on the area of professional medical services in the west. I notice the member for Fitzroy is just walking from the Chamber now. No doubt this topic is near and dear to him, too. When we talk about flying surgeons and flying doctors—

A Government member: He is going to stay and listen now.

Mr JOHNSON: I hope he does, because I know he will support me on this. The issue is that of the Flying Surgeon based in Longreach. That service is sacrosanct to the people of remote western Queensland. Whether or not the service is carrying out medical procedures, it is absolutely paramount that we have full retention of the Flying Surgeon service based in Longreach. At the same time we have flying doctor services based at Rockhampton, Charleville and Mount Isa. They are very important and integral parts of our flying medical services throughout central and western Queensland.

I am pleased the member for Fitzroy has stayed in the House, because over the last 12 months we have witnessed two horrible accidents in coalmines in central Queensland, and it is the flying medical services that we need to be able to provide on a daily basis that mantle of safety to people in those predicaments, so that we can save lives by rescuing people from predicaments that place their health at risk.

I say to the members on the Government side that the services of the Flying Surgeon from Emerald to the east, Claremont, further south to Charleville, north to Mount Isa and in the Longreach region are absolutely critical. Those services must be retained. I have written to the Minister and asked her to place an advertisement to fill the void in Longreach caused by the resignation of Dr Allan Basson. Hopefully, we will see that advertisement run before too long. A lot of people in the local community are concerned that the advertisements are not going to be placed, that this position is going to be declared void and go somewhere else in the central region or further to the east. That would be a totally unacceptable situation. I appeal to the Minister for Health today to immediately call for applications. I know that an American surgeon filled in for some two months, but it is absolutely paramount to the ongoing viability of medical services in western and remote Queensland that that position is filled permanently.

June Lithgow, the District Director of Health in Longreach, has told me that the position will be kept open until the end of 2001 and filled. I have to say that 2001 is not on this agenda; this has to be ongoing, it has to be an indefinite posting and one that is not negotiable. We will not be compromising on that. I put that on the record today. I can assure the people of western Queensland that

it is not negotiable; we will not compromise. I want to see the Government put in place a procedure now that is going to make absolutely certain that we retain the full services of the Flying Surgeon in western Queensland. So many lives have been saved and so many more lives will be saved because of that professional and sacred help that we have which a lot of people in this part of the world take for granted.

Another issue I want to touch on while I am talking about medical services is dental health. Again, we are crying out for professionals to come to western Queensland. As with doctors, although we have difficulty attracting them in the first place, we need to engage them on a bond so that they remain in the area for a reasonable time. That is something that I believe the Government has to look at closely. These professional people, whether they are doctors or dentists, are a very integral and important part of encouraging people to stay, live and take up positions in western Queensland. The first thing people ask is: what medical services are available? When you look at places like Charleville, Roma, Emerald, Longreach, Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Charters Towers, they are all wonderful centres—

Mr Purcell: If you've got trouble with your teeth, mate, we'll fix it for you.

Mr JOHNSON: With my teeth? I don't have many teeth, but we won't go into that today. I have a couple there, though.

Mr Purcell: You were starting to slow down a bit, mate. We thought we'd fire you up again and get you going.

Mr JOHNSON: It is just a touch of laryngitis. However, I will get over that.

Mr Quinn: Don't put them in my glass.

Mr JOHNSON: I wouldn't do that. We always have to have a couple of comics in the place; we have to put a bit of colour into the joint. I always enjoy a comment from the member for Bulimba or the member for Fitzroy, because they understand exactly what I am talking about. I believe that they support me totally in what I am trying to encourage the Government to do here today.

Another issue that I want to touch on is my shadow portfolio. I have seven minutes left to talk about the portfolio of Transport and Main Roads. I was pleased today to see the Minister for Transport and Main Roads launch the Roads Implementation Program for 2000-04, the five-year program. I hope this document has not been gutted. I hope it puts substantial funding arrangements in place, not

just the ones for the budget for the next couple of years but ongoing indicative funding. Again, it is absolutely paramount to the ongoing viability of shires right across this State that we can take advantage of that program, because it provides jobs security for local councils and work forces throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. Local authorities have been waiting for that document for a long time. I have not seen a copy of it yet, but I was pleased to hear the Minister's assurance that he would get a copy to me some time today.

Another matter that I want to touch on is the railways. There is a lot of angst in the railways community. I visited Townsville recently, and there is concern about the future of those railway workshops. I have given those people a commitment that under a coalition Government those workshops would not close. They are sacred to north Queensland. We must not forget the importance of those railway yards to the north-west mineral province of Mount Isa. Transportation of that mineral out of north-west Queensland is essential to that project. We also have to consider passenger and freight services not only to the north-west but also to the north and south of Townsville, and the ongoing maintenance and upgrade of QR rolling stock in north Queensland.

Mr Reynolds: Hear, hear! I agree with you 100%.

Mr JOHNSON: I thank the member for Townsville very much. I put that on the record here today. I hope that the member will support those workers in the Townsville railway workshops and support me in making absolutely certain that the Townsville railway workshops become a stand-alone entity. It is of paramount importance that they be given their own management rights and procedures and that they have their own expertise. We need to guarantee those jobs. Those workshops are currently doing a magnificent job building 300 cattle wagons.

Mr Reynolds: A tremendous job they've done.

Mr JOHNSON: It is state-of-the-art. A couple of weeks ago I witnessed about 130 wagons just about to come off the assembly line. It is essential that we keep the work going at those workshops. I can assure the people of Townsville that that will become a reality on the election of a coalition Government. I can assure the people of Townsville and the railway workers of Townsville that I will continue to work overtime to ensure the security of jobs in that operation in Townsville.

Another issue I want to touch on today is Walkers in Maryborough. Last week I visited the Walkers operation in Maryborough and I inspected some of the great work they are doing there. The last one of their 50 locos is just about to come off the assembly line. The 30 three-car sets that the coalition Government commissioned from them is just about complete. At the moment they are hoping to win a contract for six three-car sets for the Gold Coast railway. I hope that that contract is awarded to Walkers. It is absolutely critical to the future ongoing viability—

Mr Bredhauer: You've got a hide. You're the person who complained about us giving the tender to Walkers for the new tilt train.

Mr JOHNSON: Because you didn't put it out to tender.

Mr Bredhauer: Three hundred jobs to those workers in Walkers, and you've done nothing but complain about it for two and a half years.

Mr JOHNSON: I said that to the management of Walkers last week in Maryborough, too. I said to the gentleman in question, "I didn't agree with the way you got that contract. It should have been put out for open tender." The Minister knows that himself. He did not put it out for open tender.

Mr Bredhauer: You didn't want the jobs to go to the 300 workers in Maryborough.

Mr JOHNSON: We believed that it should have been put through the fair and proper tender process, and the Minister knows that as well as I do. That is the way you should do commercial and corporate business, and the Minister knows that. However, members on the other side of the House do not have an understanding of how commercial and corporate business works. The Minister can do what he likes; he will not wind me up on this issue. I know that, when it comes to credibility, the Minister has never been seen there. He has never been seen walking through the workshops in Townsville. I do not know whether the member for Townsville has invited him to visit or not, but I suggest that he does. I know that 40 jobs are going to be lost from Walkers before Christmas, and another 200 will go by June next year if they do not win some of these contracts. I hope that the QR contract for these Gold Coast cars can be beneficial for that company.

The other issue that I want to touch on in the short time remaining to me is major capital works by Main Roads. I know that the Minister and the Premier recently opened the Pacific Motorway, which was a project that created a lot of jobs in Queensland—probably a

maximum of 3,000. A lot of the people employed by those construction companies, and people from further south and further north, are now looking to see what projects are coming up. I say to the Minister today that if there are projects up for tender, it is essential they are fast-tracked so that we can keep those jobs going in Queensland.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.50 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Appropriation Bills, I want to make a few very brief comments about education. I do so because I am concerned about the level of underfunding of education in Queensland over the past three years. Queensland has a long history of underfunding education compared with the national average. To illustrate this point, one only has to go back to the change of Government in 1989. There was a large campaign by the Queensland Teachers Union to raise education funding in Queensland to the national average. If my memory serves me correctly, one of the policy promises of the Goss Government at the time was to achieve that feat. Sadly, that was never achieved in the six-odd years of the Goss Labor Government.

It was not until the coalition came to office in 1996-97 and 1997-98 that education funding in this State rose above the national average for the first time ever. It was a tremendous achievement to find the available resources to ensure that happened. Benefits were achieved and a range of innovative programs developed and put into schools across-the-board, no matter where they were located around the State. Sadly, the latest statistics indicate that in 1998-99 Queensland had slipped below the national average again, and that is to be regretted. Even though the expenditure per student is small in terms of the decrease, when it is added up across the system the results are quite profound.

In 1997-98 Queensland was \$132 above the national average for per capita spending on education. Under the Beattie Labor Government, that funding slipped to \$75 below the national average. So it slipped \$200 straight away. Since that time, indications in the next two Budgets have shown that underfunding has continued. In fact, the 1999-2000 Budget barely kept pace with inflation and enrolment growth. There is a view that there was a cut in real terms in the Education budget. In my mind, the last Budget, which came down some months ago, again cemented the fact that education is underfunded. In the Budget Papers, there was a real cut in terms of per student expenditure.

Although there was a small increase of \$34 per student in high schools, primary education suffered a cut of \$22 per student, special education was cut by \$428 per student and distance education was cut by some \$72 per student.

The quality of an education system is not judged solely on the funding available to it. In fact, there are many instances throughout history where funding for education in a number of States has been well above the national average, but the results have been well below national expectations. However, funding is a critical component in ensuring a quality education system. It again comes back to how Governments spend the funds and what policies are in place, but funding is critical. In a State such as Queensland, which has a large number of smaller schools, the cost of education is higher than in more densely populated States such as New South Wales and Victoria. Therefore, when Queensland slips below the national average, we are in real trouble. That is the problem we have at the present time.

For the past three years the figures quite convincingly show that the funding needed for education in State schools has not been delivered. It is all very well for the Minister for Education, Mr Wells, and the Premier to embark upon a bout of Canberra bashing, saying that the Federal Government is shifting funding from the State Governments to the non-Government schools or whatever it may be, but those opposite cannot mount that argument when they themselves are underfunding State schools in this State. That is a hypocritical stance to take. The figures quite convincingly show that funding in Queensland has fallen below the national average in 1998-99 and, by all measures, looks as though it will continue over the next two Budgets.

Mr Sullivan: That's a bit rich from a coalition that for 30 years had it well below the national average.

Mr QUINN: I point out to the member for Chermside that there has been only one Government in this State which brought education funding above the national average, and that was the coalition Government in the Budget periods 1996-97 and 1997-98. The independent figures show that the first Budget the current Government brought down reduced it below the national average again. Those opposite did their old trick. They cut funding and we slid below the national average. Those figures are not in dispute. How can members opposite come in here and

mount the argument that the Commonwealth should supply more funds for schools when they themselves are underfunding State schools? That is the most hypocritical stance those opposite have taken.

However, the Opposition is not the only one to say this. The Queensland Teachers Union is no friend of the coalition, yet it supports what we have said. It recognised from the independent figures that there has been underfunding of education in 1998-99. It makes the point that the two Budgets since that time have not repaired the damage. In fact, they have taken funding even lower than the national average. So we are not alone in saying this. The Queensland Teachers Union is right beside us on this point, because its policy for quite some time has been to get funding above the national average. That is one of the points I wanted to make about funding for education today.

The Minister has mounted the argument that cost effectiveness and economies of scale make no difference. The economies of scale argument comes back to a number of issues. Economies of scale are achieved in two ways: larger schools and larger classes can be created, which reduce overheads, or programs and services to students can be cut. They are the only ways to create economies of scale, and that is what underfunding of education produces in this State—larger schools, larger classes, cuts in programs. Take your pick! I think we are starting to see evidence of that in our schools at the present time, because there is now a mid-year census. Whereas previously there was only one per year, there are now two per year. However, larger classes and therefore larger pupil/teacher ratios cut flexibility from schools. My office has received quite a number of phone calls about classes which have been constructed or "deconstructed" mid year because of a change in staffing in a school. That is causing enormous angst and problems not only in schools but also amongst parents. That is one outcome of underfunding in education.

There are other outcomes. For a start, the programs that need to be put in place sometimes cannot be put in place. For example, I refer to the lack of serious drug education programs in our schools. An independent analysis of the amount of money spent on central drug education budgets across all the States shows that Queensland is simply not in the ballpark. In fact, we are right out the back door. Queensland spends something like 50c per student compared with Victoria, which spends \$10 per student—the highest amount in Australia. The Government

can mount all the arguments it likes, as the Minister has done, about teachers in classrooms teaching drug education programs, and that happens in other States as well. However, an analysis which compares centrally held drug education funds right across the nation shows where there is serious underfunding. As I said, Queensland is the lowest with 50c per student, whereas Victoria is the highest with \$10 per student. Again, the figures speak for themselves.

I turn to the school cadets program. It is true that more students have entered into the program over the past three years, but it is also true that there really has not been a significant increase in the funding. If the Government really had a commitment to programs such as school cadets, police in schools and so on—those programs for students who really need some assistance in self-discipline and those programs which create self-reliance, self-esteem and a whole range of social outcomes for students—in the three Budgets we have had so far from this Labor Government there should have been more money allocated. That more students are participating while the funding has remained static really shows no commitment to the program whatsoever. I know from my discussions with and visits to schools that this is one of the programs that the high schools really see as having positive benefits right across-the-board for all students who enter into it.

I will touch on something that has come to light just recently. It concerns information technology grants and allowances. The previous funding mechanism allowed schools to receive payments in February and October. Schools would get 50% of their allocation in February and the other 50% in October. By and large, that allowed schools to plan with confidence. I am now made aware that from next year, 2001, there will be one annual grant. One hundred per cent of their allocation will be made in October. The problem with that is that in October this year schools got 50% of their IT budget. It will be another 12 months before they get their next IT allocation. So for a 12-month period they really have to make do with 50% of the money they normally would have had. I know that some schools are looking at some quite serious cutbacks in terms of programs and at ways they can supplement their IT programs to try to get them over that six-month period in which they will not have any money at all.

The effect of this, of course—besides the effect at the school level, as I have mentioned—is effectively a saving for the

budget this financial year. It is 50% of the program that is not being paid out as it would come due in February. Instead, the Government is rolling it over into the next financial year. Effectively it has saved itself 50% of the program in this financial year. That is a symptom of underfunding, as are all the other cases I have mentioned. That is why I am concerned.

Over the last three years, as I have said, there really has been an underfunding of education. If we want to be the Smart State, if we want to have all the benefits that flow from an educated populous and work force, we cannot continue to deny education the funds that it needs. Whilst we do not judge the quality of the system purely on the funding available, it is a key component in overall terms.

I make the point again: Queensland, because of the larger number of smaller schools, has a relatively high-cost system. We cannot be compared with the more populous States of Victoria and New South Wales that have a larger number of larger schools. They have the economies of scale, if it can be termed that way. It is very difficult to make a judgment as to what level of funding is correct. The best approach is to look at the national average. We were above the national average for a couple of years. We have now slipped behind. The last two Budgets at least look as though they have taken us further behind. I am concerned—and I am quite sure that parents and teachers are concerned—about this underfunding that has gone on over the last three years.

If the Government is going to address this problem, the next Budget really should see a significant increase in education funding in this State. No longer can we afford to keep on cutting in per capita terms across certain sectors—mainly the primary and special education sectors. I understand why there needed to be an emphasis on the high school programs, in light of the way the funds were distributed before. In 1997-98 and 1996-97 primary education funding was above the national average and secondary was below. I understand the need to redress that, but overall we simply cannot continue to underfund and redistribute funds from a small pool of money. That is not the way to have a quality education system. While it is equitable, it is equitable in a declining fashion. What we should be looking at is increasing funding, getting it above the national average, where it ought to be, and then, if we need to, redistribute funds. I am satisfied that the issues I raise have been addressed. However,

I get back to the point I made before: it is not the quantity always; it is the quality. But quantity is also important in terms of funds.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.05 p.m.): I take the opportunity of debate on these Appropriation Bills to deal with some issues relevant to my shadow portfolio of Mines and Energy that are important to every Queenslander. I take this opportunity to speak in this Parliament about the Queensland coal industry and to make some long overdue comments about the regrettable attitude that this Government has taken to that great industry.

The Queensland Government has for some time made a financial contribution to the Cooperative Research Centre for Black Coal Utilisation, based at the University of Newcastle. Unfortunately, this Government and Minister McGrady have seen fit to reduce their contribution to the Cooperative Research Centre and they have seen fit to reduce the amount of money they have been prepared to contribute to research and development in the coal industry generally.

Queensland depends very heavily on the black coal industry. It is an industry that has provided enormous benefits to Queensland over many years. Yet this Labor Government is abandoning the coal industry, and that is not too strong a term. This Government is abandoning the coal industry in a range of ways and reducing the amount of effort that it is making to the sustainable future of that industry.

The greenhouse issue is obviously a very topical one at the moment. Understandably, the Black Coal Cooperative Research Centre, the CRC, has been doing a deal of research into the emissions question and the viability of recovering carbon dioxide at the point of generation. The studies done by the Black Coal CRC have confirmed that it would be costly to remove carbon dioxide from boiler waste gases by available chemical scrubbing technologies, given that the means of extraction would have to be retrofitted to existing power stations. The main reasons are, of course, the large volumes of gas to be treated and the relatively low concentration of carbon dioxide in the waste gases.

However, the interesting point is that, even in these inherently unfavourable conditions, where the extraction mechanisms have had to be retrospectively fitted to the existing power stations, adding the additional cost of carbon dioxide recovery and disposal would, according to the studies, cost about 7c per kilowatt hour. When this cost is added

to the very low cost of our large-scale coal-fired generators, which currently are around 3c per kilowatt hour, the end result in the sent-out cost of electricity would still be around 10c per kilowatt hour. And that is no more than most of the renewable or alternative energy power projects. That is the point, for whatever reason, this Government has chosen to ignore.

Even given the high cost of removing the carbon dioxide from the emissions of our coal-based power stations, Queensland coal-fired power can still be produced at a competitive price when compared with most other energy projects. Of course, we should not be prepared to incur those costs until there is much more certainty about what is really needed in terms of emissions, until there is much more certainty in terms of what we need to do to meet our international commitments.

However, it must be acknowledged that, if it has to be done, conventional coal-fired generation can reduce emissions and still be competitive with other energy alternatives. This belies the falseness and the fraudulence of this Government's energy policy. The Queensland Labor Government has embraced an energy policy that will mandate a 15% market share for gas-fired electricity by the year 2005. It has justified that energy policy by the need to meet and reduce gas emissions.

The research that has been conducted by the Black Coal CRC in Newcastle—research which was, partly at least, funded by this State Government—has indicated that our coal-fired plants can meet emission control limits if we need to, albeit at a large cost. We can meet emission limits from our existing power stations, and we can meet them at a cost which will be competitive. That is what the research that this Government has funded has indicated. But still this Government's refusal to even consider this option would seem to indicate that its energy policy is based on some motivation other than the greenhouse gas emission issue. It is ignoring the results of the research that it itself paid for.

As I have said before in this place, the Kyoto Agreement and the greenhouse gas emissions issue are being used as a convenient excuse by this Government to adopt a policy which is all about providing a rails run for a single project in the Queensland energy market. It is about tipping the playing field in favour of one project that seeks to import energy from New Guinea to the detriment of every other energy proposal and to the detriment of every other energy proponent in the Queensland industry.

The Black Coal CRC at the University of New South Wales has established that if greenhouse gas emissions do have to be greatly reduced, it would be much more cost-effective to build the carbon dioxide recovery into the new units in new coal-fired power stations. There are other ways, too, of making carbon dioxide recovery cheaper, for example, still using the familiar pulverised coal-fired boilers but with oxygen-rich combustion in recycled flue gas to produce a concentrated carbon dioxide waste gas.

International Energy Agency studies indicate that substantial reductions in carbon dioxide recovery costs could be achieved by these means. Requirements for low carbon dioxide emission power generation would thus considerably improve the attractiveness of this new technology.

It is also worth noting that the US Department of Energy, in its Vision 21 program, has strongly embraced the concept of carbon dioxide sequestration as a viable and potentially economical technology for sustainable energy scenarios, including indefinite sourcing of power generation from fossil fuels. This would involve the disposal of carbon dioxide emissions by dissolving it in sea water or injecting it into deep porous rock formations.

Given that the sourcing of power generation from fossil fuels can be a competitive scenario, can be a sustainable scenario, the Queensland Government should be allocating much more funding to research such as that being carried out by the Black Coal CRC. Given the large deposits of black coal that Queensland has both for domestic use and for overseas sale, the Queensland Government should be leading the field in encouraging research on all the issues surrounding carbon dioxide emissions. The Queensland Government should be supporting the investigation of every possible alternative technology to ensure that Queensland's vast resources of black coal have a ready market in the future.

The Queensland Government's energy policy favouring renewables and natural gas over coal is regrettably misguided and it ignores the research results that the Government itself has funded. The correct approach, the logical approach, would be to prescribe emission limits, if emission limit prescriptions are to be part of an international approach, and then let the market decide how best to meet those limits. Let the technology develop to meet the emission limits, and it will if market forces are allowed to operate.

To create mandated markets for one particular energy source is an interference in the market that is misguided at best. It is even more misguided to interfere to support another foreign energy source, given the extent of Queensland's coal resources and the extent to which Queensland's electricity generation industry is based on the mouth of the mine black coal-fired power stations.

It is clear that pressures are increasing worldwide on all Governments to demonstrate a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy conversion technologies and other energy intensive industries. Everyone agrees that Australia should play its part in a move in that direction, but there is no reason for Queensland to be running in front of the field. There is no reason why Queensland should rule out what, on logical examination, appears to be our best options. Whatever we do needs to be part of a national and international approach; it needs to be part of an agreed approach.

Numerous options are available for the control of carbon dioxide emissions, including new combustion technologies, energy conservation, renewable energy technologies and carbon dioxide sequestering. It is important to understand the relative costs and merits of each of these options in order that informed decisions may be made. Many of the available technologies will only become commercially available when the market dictates that there is a place for them. The important thing is to realise that there are options other than the simplistic one that this Queensland Government has adopted. There are options other than the simplistic abandoning of our coal industry in favour of other fuel sources that may be only marginally different in terms of emissions.

The studies at the Black Coal CRC at the University of Newcastle have shown that retrofitting existing black coal-fired power plants with CO₂ removal systems is technically feasible and the industry can, if the market demands, meet emission limits and still be economically viable. There is a future for Queensland's coal-fired electricity industry—a great future—and the Government should be helping the industry to meet the challenges to ensure that that sustainable future is realised. The Government should be increasing the contribution that it makes to industry research rather than decreasing the amount of money that it is prepared to commit to ensure the future of the great coal industry. Other research is being conducted by private companies and other organisations involved

with the Australian coal industry, and that is as it should be.

Coal is the major source of energy for power generation in Australia, with about 85% of the market. It is the major source of energy for power generation globally, with about 40% of electricity being generated from coal in global market terms. Coal also provides essential carbon for the production of iron and steel, with 70% of the world production using coal and coke. The Australian coal industry and the Queensland coal industry, more especially, will continue to play a vital role in world steel and energy production for decades to come.

However, that is not to deny that there are significant environmental challenges for the industry. It needs to be recognised that the industry has already become cleaner, more efficient and environmentally aware. The industry has already made great strides. The coal industry is striving towards continuous improvement in the performance of coal and other energy technologies, particularly in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. Those continual improvements are being demanded by the community to ensure a sustainable future for the industry.

The Government should be supporting the industry in these endeavours. It is important to understand all the complexities of the issues rather than to make knee-jerk reactions in the way that this Labor Government has done with the compilation of its energy policy. It is important that decision makers at all levels of Government work with the industry to identify and quantify the environmental credentials of coal relative to other energy sources. It is important that we quantify the impact of new technologies that are emerging in coalmining and that are emerging in terms of combustion and waste utilisation. It is important that we develop new approaches to better compare the environmental performance of coal with other energy sources, and it is important that we develop strategies based on quality data and analysis to improve the environmental performance of the industry. We also need to improve the overall perception of coal as an energy source. We need to improve the perception of customers and the community generally.

The coal industry, to its credit, has made major financial contributions to studies into the environmental credentials of coal. It is important that we as a community understand the complexity of the issues. It is important that we do not oversimplify what are very

complex decisions. There needs to be a whole-of-life-cycle analysis for every energy source. Whole-of-life-cycle analysis is an appropriate methodology to comprehensively compare the environmental impacts of all energy sources, as it allows the quantification of all emissions and the calculations of emissions saved. For example, the by-products of one process might be used to replace products in another process, thereby avoiding emissions associated with those replaced products.

It is much more complex than just measuring the amount of carbon dioxide at the point of combustion. In electricity generation, life cycle analysis accounts for emissions that occur as early as in the manufacture of the construction materials, during the construction of dam walls and power stations, while extracting resources such as coal and gas, while transporting resources to power stations, including natural gas transmission and distribution, and of course the combustion of fuels to produce the electricity.

It is that sort of life cycle analysis that the Queensland Government should have done, and failed to do, before it opted for a mandated 15% market in Queensland by 2005 for one particular energy source. It is those complex issues that this Government should have looked at and come to terms with before it made simplistic decisions that were not based on logic and science.

In coal-fired generation, 97% of emissions occur at combustion, whereas in gas-fired generation more than 10% of the emissions can occur in gas production, in processing and in transportation. That is why whole-of-life-cycle analysis is so very important. Taking account of displacement credits and advanced combustion technologies, emissions from coal-fired generation can conceivably be reduced by about 30%. Advanced technologies for gas-fired generation might also reduce emissions by 20%, and the maximisation of fly ash use in cement manufacture and co-firing of biomass with coal could reduce the life cycle analysis emissions from coal to be equivalent to those from gas-fired electricity generation. No-one really knows, but the indications are there that energy sources can be very comparative.

For coal-fired power stations, up to a 10% reduction in overall impacts can be achieved by using fly ash as a cement extender. Its use depends on attitudes as well as some technical issues. This is an area that needs promotion and development like so many others. It is an issue for coal producers, it is an

issue for the power industry and it is an issue for the Queensland Government as well. It is an issue for the Minister for Mines and Energy if he is interested in the future of Queensland's coal industry. There are also opportunities for gas and organic fuel co-firing with conventional pulverised coal. There are a range of emerging technologies involving combined cycle technologies.

Once again, these are issues that the Queensland Government should have looked at. It should have looked at them before it committed this State to an energy policy. It should be still looking at them now. These are the areas in which the Minister for Mines and Energy should be supporting ongoing research. The Queensland Government should be encouraging the development of practical strategies for maximising displacement credits for coal ashes from electricity production. It should be encouraging and quantifying options for improving coal-based electricity generation by a range of new technologies. It should not be abandoning the coal-fired electricity industry, and it should not be abandoning the coalmining industry which not only provides a great domestic fuel source but also provides a competitive fuel source product for the export market.

The coal industry itself is preparing to spend \$3m on a two to three year study of the environmental impact of the full coal cycle, and a further \$1.5m on promoting coal as a fuel suitable for use in an increasingly sensitive global environment. Given the importance of the coalmining industry to Queensland, given the contribution that the coalmining industry has made to Queensland to date, and given the potential contribution that the industry can make in the future, the Queensland Government should be making a similar commitment.

There is enough evidence from preliminary work to assume that coal can be no more polluting than natural gas once the full cycle of production is taken into account and the new technology is used. In addition, the Queensland Government needs to contribute to an industry promotion campaign to counter some of the negativity—to counter some of the simplistic negativity—that has achieved credibility only by repetition.

I wonder whether the Minister for Mines and Energy understands the complexities of this issue, or is he just a captive of the environmental extremists in his party's left wing? Is he sacrificing the future of this great industry to environmental slogans and simplistic concepts that do not stand up to logical and scientific examination?

It is well to place on record the size and success of the Queensland coal industry. Rising productivity levels and lower operating costs have lifted the competitiveness of Queensland's coal industry through a difficult trading environment. Productivity jumped 26% in the 1999 calendar year to 14,491 tonnes per employee, and the State also strengthened its international standing with 17 central Queensland hard coking coalmines placed in the world's top 20, including the top 13 mines being in Queensland.

Coal production improved with records achieved for saleable product up to 123 million tonnes. Exports improved to 102 million tonnes in the 12 months ended 2000. Higher output resulted from some expanded capacity at the Burton, Ensham and South Walker Creek open-cut mines and at Moranbah North, Newlands and the Oakey Creek underground mines, and from two new open-cut operations at Coppabella and Foxleigh.

The coal industry has worked hard to remain competitive in the world market and it deserves greater recognition from this State Government. It deserves greater recognition from the Minister for Mines and Energy. The contribution the industry makes to the State economy cannot be understated.

The potential for the future is great. Although world coal demand is predicted to grow steadily over the next five years, analysts have cautioned that coal prices are likely to decline. Faced with that future, Queensland producers are employing diverse strategies to remain competitive. Contract miners are being used, small niche markets are being developed and many producers are focusing on workplace reform.

The Queensland Government's energy policy can only delay investment in the coal industry. The Queensland Government should be supporting the industry's move to a sustainable future. It should be encouraging full life cycle assessment of the environmental economic and social aspects of coal use and insisting on that full life cycle assessment in its own decision-making process.

The Queensland Government should be facilitating the development and use of sustainable coal based energy technologies, and it should be recognising the transition paths and policies that lead to sustainable coal use. It should be ensuring the sustainability of this great Queensland industry. Instead, it is sending negative signals to the community at large about the coal industry, and it is sending negative signals to the world market about a product on which the economy of this State

depends. It is doing so not for environmental reasons but for pure cynical political reasons. This Labor Government's attitude to the coal industry is regrettable and it will be to the detriment of every Queenslanders.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): I believe this is an appropriate time to look at how we are performing as a State. Many earlier speakers in this debate have done that, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer.

I would like to make some comments in respect of the way I see it and also support the comments that earlier speakers have made. I begin by saying that day after day we sit in this Chamber and the Premier comes in and tells us all about the achievements of the Queensland economy. He espouses that message broadly throughout the electorate—throughout the State. Obviously, one would expect him to do that. We would expect him to talk up the Queensland economy relevant to what we can achieve. This would give confidence to our people and to people who may want to invest in our economy.

I do not believe in being negative. I do not think it pays to be negative. One diminishes confidence in business if one is negative about the prospects of the outcomes for the State with respect to other States and other economies. Having said that, the Opposition has a responsibility to point out the failings of this Government. We need to point out where the Government and the Premier are misleading the people with regard to economic management.

The measure of how well the Queensland economy is doing should be the measure in comparison to other Australian States and the overall performance of the Australian economy. On comparative terms the indicators show that we are not doing so well, or as well as we should be doing. The comparative figures were earlier given to the House by the Leader of the Opposition.

The unemployment figures came out today and I believe we went up a notch to 7.6%. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, our last unemployment figures were 7.5% and the Australian figure was 6.4%. Queensland had the third highest unemployment rate, being only above South Australia on 7.6% and Tasmania on 9.7%. This is not a good indicator and it is not a reassuring figure for the Premier and the Government who are looking at achieving a 5% unemployment rate.

We can go a little further and look at the number of bankruptcies. In Queensland in

1997-98 we had 1,352 bankruptcies against an Australian average of 691. Again, that is not a good indicator for the performance of the Queensland economy. In 1998-99 Queensland had 1,678 bankruptcies against the Australian average of 844. Again, that is a very negative figure as far as business confidence is concerned.

I come now to consider the number of venture capital investments. In the December quarter of 1999, New South Wales and Victoria had 89 venture capital investments and Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia together had 34. Of that figure, Queensland had only nine.

If one looks at the total for 1999 one sees that New South Wales and Victoria had 269 and Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia had 102 between them. Of that figure, Queensland had 31. That is not a figure that will give confidence to business operators and investors.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to preparedness for e-commerce. Queensland ranked second last with Tasmania, just ahead of the Northern Territory. Surely, they are not figures that the Premier would want to speak about. He would not want to hear the Leader of the Opposition, or me, saying that they are the figures that Queensland is enjoying in comparison with the rest of Australia.

This morning I heard the Deputy Premier—and I have heard this many times—trying to pass off the failings of the Queensland economy on the GST. One would think, when listening to the Deputy Premier, that the GST applied only to Queensland. Of course, we all know that the GST applies to the whole of Australia. So there is no doubt in my mind that when the Deputy Premier keeps harping and harping and knocking and knocking and being negative about the GST and the implications of the GST on business, he is indulging in a very cynical exercise of political opportunism. I give the Premier his due: in this instance he has not been quite as negative as the Deputy Premier. However, that negativity is counterproductive because, at the end of the day, it erodes business confidence.

The latest QCCI Pulse survey indicates this erosion of business confidence. I know that the Deputy Premier has used the QCCI survey results to demonstrate to the Parliament that the GST and petrol prices are causing problems for business. However, as I said earlier, we should make a comparison between Queensland and the rest of Australia to gauge a true measure of how Queensland is doing and how people see Queensland

doing. In terms of people's expectations of the Queensland and Australian economies, the QCCI Pulse survey showed that 37% of people expect the Queensland economy to be weaker or much weaker this time next year. I ask members to remember that figure. Thirty-one per cent expect a somewhat weaker or much weaker performance in the Australian economy. So 6% less than the 37% of the people surveyed think that the Australian economy will be weaker. In other words, a higher percentage of people think that the Queensland economy will be weaker this time next year. In terms of Queensland and Australia's business environment, 34% of respondents classified Queensland's business environment as good to very good, whereas 39% classified the Australian business environment as good to very good.

Mr Deputy Speaker has studied economics and he would appreciate the significance of these figures. That survey demonstrates that the business community believes that the Australian economy is performing much better than the Queensland economy. Despite the negativity of the Deputy Premier in terms of the GST, which is nationwide, and the excise levied on petrol, which is a Federal issue, businesspeople have judged that the Australian economy is better than the Queensland economy. I sheet home some of the blame for that result to the Deputy Premier in that he is destroying confidence in the Queensland economy with his negative attitude towards the GST, which is a fact of life.

The GST was introduced by the Federal Government. The Federal coalition won the last election on the promise that it would introduce a GST. Of course, there are humps in respect of the first return of the business activity statement. It is recognised that it is a complex process and that many businesses are having problems meeting the requirements of the business activity statement and that it is costing them. It also places time constraints on people in respect of the management of their business.

The question that we have to ask ourselves is: why is the process so complex? My understanding is that the Australian requirements are about an inch thick whereas the New Zealand requirements are only about a quarter of an inch thick. The reason for that is quite obvious. The New Zealand GST is based on what the Labour Government of the day introduced. It was a simple goods and services tax that applied to most things, including food. The New Zealand Government did not have the exemptions to the tax that the Australian Federal Government was forced

to make by the Democrats and the Labor Party. The Labor Party, by default, ensured that the Democrats were able to get the amendments to the GST that they wanted. As a result, we saw people question why an uncooked chook is GST-free whereas a cooked chook attracts a GST, and so on. However, the reality is that the blame for the difficulty that businesses are facing in getting over the hump of returning their first business activity statement can be sheeted home directly to the input of the Federal Labor Party and the Federal Democrats.

I would like to take a moment of the time of the House to outline the experience that I and several other Opposition members had with the GST some years ago. We were part of a delegation to New Zealand after the New Zealand Labour Government had introduced a GST. At that time the Federal Opposition, under the leadership of Dr Hewson, was proposing to introduce a GST in Australia. I ask members to bear in mind that it was some time before the then Labor Treasurer and later Prime Minister, Paul Keating, had proposed to introduce a GST. As part of that delegation, I well remember talking to many organisations in New Zealand about the effects of the GST and how people coped with it and how they coped with their returns.

One of the highlights of that trip was an audience with Roger Douglas, who at that time was the Labour New Zealand Treasurer and the architect of the GST in New Zealand. I distinctly remember him saying two things to that delegation: one was that at some stage or another Australia would have a GST. Roger Douglas did not believe that Dr Hewson could bring it in, based on the fact that its introduction was so difficult. The New Zealand Labour Government was able to get a GST through only because of the bipartisan support of all the other parties and the unions. During its introductory stage, the New Zealand Government approached the issue of the GST very cleverly, knowing full well that the public was not supportive of it. The Australian Government also knew that the public was not supportive of the GST. However, they recognised the benefits that it would have for the economy.

The second thing I distinctly remember Roger Douglas saying was that whatever we did, we should not allow exemptions from the GST. He said that we should compensate generously those people who would be adversely affected by the GST, but we should not allow exemptions because that would take away the simplicity of the tax and limit its real benefits to the economy. An argument

develops as to what should be exempted and what should not be exempted and then there is confusion, and businesses experience problems in returning their business activity statements—all of the sorts of things that we are seeing happening now in Australia. Roger Douglas said further that the Canadian Government allowed exemptions and lost Government at the next election. Hopefully, the Federal Government is not going to lose Government at the next election, because I believe that business generally has accepted the benefits of the GST.

However, everybody acknowledges that at this point there is a hump with the GST, as there was a hump when it was introduced. But having said that, there was no doubt from what was said by Roger Douglas, a Labour Treasurer, that we should not make exemptions to the GST. The exemptions were made on behalf of the Democrats and the Labor Party, who would not accept a tax package that was supported by the Australian people at the last election.

At the end of the day, the Labor Party does not have any credible tax policy of its own. All it is proposing to do is to roll back the GST. Of course, if Labor were to be elected to Federal Government and did that, that would cause more confusion and problems within the electorate. So all that Labor and the Deputy Premier have been able to do is knock, knock, knock, knock. As I said earlier, that in itself has been a contributing factor to the erosion of business confidence in Queensland, which is reflected in these figures that are produced in the QCCI Pulse survey.

The reality is that in comparative terms in the market place we should be well ahead of the other States, because we have had a very strong economy for many, many years from successive Governments; we have had an economy with no debt, and our basic economy has been so far ahead of those of the other Australian States that it is not funny. Queensland has many natural resources. The member for Callide just spoke about the coal industry, the mining industry and the primary industries. You name it, Queensland is able to do it. We are able to do it if we are positive about it. We need confidence to do it, and confidence is the key ingredient.

We can add value to all of our products, and it is acknowledged by everyone in this House that we have to do that. We have to use innovation. Our people have the capacity to do that. Our people are our greatest asset. When somebody asks, "What is your greatest asset?", the response can be put in three

words: "People, people, people." We get up here and say we have them, so why aren't we doing better? We have a clean and green environment. We have tourist attractions that people want to see. Our standard of living is one of the major factors that led to Boeing establishing its headquarters in Queensland—and that was under our administration. When we were in Government, my department was able to demonstrate to Boeing executives and employees that we had these health and education facilities and living conditions that were far ahead of those in places that were competing with us for Boeing's headquarters.

Our proximity to Asia is an advantage over the other States. Asia has a recovering economy. I do not care what the Treasurer said today about Asia's weak economy. Asia's economy has been recovering for the last two or three years, and we should have been able to benefit from that. We have more overseas offices than any other State, and many of those were established during our time in Government, which lasted for only two short years. We established offices in Shanghai, Los Angeles, Jakarta and Semarang. We established sister-State relationships. The Texas sister-State relationship that was talked about by the Honourable Premier was established during our term, and I pay tribute to the member for Clayfield, Santo Santoro, because his connections there were a key factor in establishing the sister-State relationship with Texas. So, we have all of those advantages. On top of that, we have the Premier's promotion, his salesmanship. The Premier likes to think of himself as being a supersalesman, but at the end of the day it is not happening, as the figures I gave to the Parliament before indicate.

Morale in the Public Service is low. The Government should not deny that; it is very low. One of the reasons it is low is job security. We have just seen redundancies in DPI, Natural Resources and Environment. The feedback I am getting from Education and Health, in particular, is that morale is extremely low. As I have said, business confidence is extremely low.

As the honourable member for Moggill, the shadow Treasurer pointed out in the last Budget debate, while the Government skites about its big Capital Works Program, only a small proportion of that program is actually new money. Business knows that. The Gold Coast road is finished now and there are no major projects on the books for businesses to feel confident about having projects to go to and providing jobs, with the resultant circulation of money stimulating the economy.

There is no doubt in my mind that morale and confidence are low.

While the Deputy Premier and the Premier get up and announce new private investment from overseas, we see jobs being lost in Queensland. Austoft laid off 96 this morning. That is a big blow to the Bundaberg economy and the people of Bundaberg. So, while we had the Deputy Premier announcing a new investment into Queensland this morning, at the same time we had that headline in the Bundaberg News Mail.

I would like to finish on the fact that one of the other reasons confidence is low is that this Government has taken the liberty to encroach on people's property rights. No compensation is to be paid if people lose water rights. With the vegetation management provisions, while there are arguments between the State and the Commonwealth as to whether compensation should be paid, the reality is that compensation is not being paid. I have land-holders in my area who are experiencing economic hardship because they are not receiving compensation.

Time expired.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (5.46 p.m.): It is time that the Main Roads and Transport Minister, Steve Bredhauer, faced reality and accepted that the integrated transport study for the Kuranda Range is busy trying to answer the wrong question.

The study is looking for the best road to service future urban growth nodes to be developed at Myola, Speewah and Koah. In other words, the question is: what road should be built to best urbanise Kuranda and its hinterland. Urbanisation will be the inevitable result of building a major road to Kuranda.

The study is following the directive of the FNQ 2010 regional planning process. It is as if the planning process was hijacked by an anti-East Trinity development lobby who vetoed placing the overflow population growth from Cairns on the other side of Trinity Inlet. The planners did not want to place that population growth on viable cane land north and south of the city, either. That would risk closing down the last sugar mill and putting several hundred people out of work.

Looking further out, the planners found Kuranda up in the hills only a half hour's drive from the city centre. They felt the rural areas around Kuranda could be the solution. There would be no need to disturb the acid sulfate at East Trinity and no need to wipe out the remnants of the once proud sugar cane industry. The planners believed that the overflow population from Cairns might live 400

metres above sea level in new suburbs around Kuranda.

But what about Kuranda's tourism industry? Kuranda is one corner of the region's so-called tourist triangle. Its attractions rate amongst the best in the country. It is a very valuable industry and is sustainable in the long term. Why compromise that sustainability by dramatically altering the nature of the area? The populations of the future Kuranda urban growth nodes would have to commute to Cairns to work, hence the need for the road. There would be very few employment opportunities in the nodes themselves. Under this plan up to 70,000 people could be commuting down the mountain to Cairns. The environmental impact of all that traffic would be enormous. It seems that, of the three options for accommodating the overflow growth from Cairns, the Kuranda option would be the most damaging, the most expensive and the most inconvenient when viewed from every conceivable perspective.

The FNQ regional plan clearly needs to be refocused away from impractical concepts aimed at appeasing minority interests. It needs to take a big picture view of what is working for the people of this region now and plan ways to make that continue to happen. One thing that is not working as well as it should is road access between the major population centres of the region, specifically Cairns and the tablelands. The most acceptable, and therefore busiest, of the available roads between Cairns and the tablelands is the Kennedy Highway, part of which is the Kuranda Range road. It is quite steep in places with very tight corners; it is so steep and tight that B-double trucks cannot use it. It is often closed in adverse weather and is the scene of too many traffic accidents. It is usually congested and has few passing opportunities.

The study has reported that the Kuranda Range road is rapidly reaching its capacity. On present growth patterns, it will reach saturation point in the next few years, and will be overloaded from that time on. Less than half the traffic on the Kuranda Range road is actually going to or from the Kuranda area. The majority of it is going through Kuranda because that is where the road takes it. It is actually travelling between the Cairns area and the tablelands, the cape and the gulf areas. All that through traffic is forced to take a 17 kilometre detour to the north through Kuranda and Smithfield, twice crossing the Barron River, as it travels from Mareeba to Cairns. The main reason for that is past planning decisions,

which is why present day planning decisions need to be made intelligently and realistically.

Mareeba is ideally placed to accommodate industrial and urban growth. It is perfectly suited to a new regional airport development. It is an existing, established, productive community with enormous potential to do a better job of providing for the Cairns overflow growth than Kuranda could. All it needs is a new direct highway link. Such a link could readily be developed in the form of the Lake Morris-Davies Creek road. It is a 45 year old route, originally built to service the logging industry, which now serves as a powerline corridor. It is as close as possible to a straight line between Cairns and Mareeba. It would provide far greater benefits to the region and its residents than a Kuranda Range road upgrade for about the same money. It is the only degraded corridor through the wet tropics World Heritage listed area.

The public consultation phase for the integrated transport study for the Kuranda Range resulted in massive public support for the Lake Morris-Davies Creek road. Of the 3,629 persons who signed their name to a point of view regarding the integrated transport study, 99.23% want the Lake Morris-Davies Creek road built. The residents of the outlying areas of the Cairns region require and deserve a new highway link that directly connects their two biggest population centres. This road must be environmentally sensitive, reliable under tropical weather conditions, suitable for heavy freight, user friendly and not destructive to the existing sustainable industries.

It is time the correct question was asked: "What road development would best link Cairns and the tablelands?" The answer to that is the Lake Morris-Davies Creek road. A total of 3,601 local individuals recently told the Queensland Government that. The number included over 10% of the electorate of Tablelands. It would be a sad day for democracy in this State if all those people were to be ignored by the Government they elected.

It is time the Minister did what has to be done: leave the Kuranda Range road as it is for the Kuranda people and their tourism industry and build a highway to serve the region on the logical, central alignment that benefits the most people—the Lake Morris-Davies Creek road.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (5.51 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate tonight and to speak of some issues, particularly when we are dealing with appropriation, that are important to my own

electorate of Caloundra and to the Sunshine Coast in general. There is no doubt that one of the big issues facing our Sunshine Coast is the lack of transport infrastructure. Very recently the shadow Minister for—

Mr Sullivan: What, a tollway?

Mrs SHELDON: We do remember very well what Tom Burns did. First of all, Wayne Goss promised that he would remove the toll. Remember him? Then he got in and totally reneged on that promise. Tommy Burns went up and said that he was "going to shift the toll", which was then on the Maroochy River bridge, "down amongst Mike Ahern and his mates". Ahern was then the member for Caloundra. Indeed, not only did Tom Burns shift it down to Mooloolaba, which was just a one-way road, you might say, between Mooloolaba and Buderim; he did better than that—he put another two tolls on the road as well!

The Sunshine Coast people reacted as one would think they would to that Labor Party iniquity and they kicked out its only member up there. Remember Ray Barber? So now it has no members on the Sunshine Coast, and it will not have any in the future either, I can assure it. We came to Government and we fulfilled our promises. Yes, we removed the toll and we removed the iniquity on the Sunshine Coast that the Labor Party had wrought on it. Did members opposite notice the word I used?

When we look at transport infrastructure—and those iniquitous tolls was a classic example—we see that this Labor Government has not in any way provided adequate funding for adequate road or rail infrastructure on our Sunshine Coast. The shadow Minister, Vaughan Johnson, came up and did a very thorough examination with coalition members up there last week. He is certainly fully aware of the needs of our region. I would like to relate a couple of very important needs in my own electorate of Caloundra.

One is the four laning of the Caloundra Road from the Bruce Highway to the Pierce Avenue turn-off. We in the coalition put four lanes in from Pierce Avenue into Caloundra. However, the four laning from the Bruce Highway to Pierce Avenue is needed because drivers come up in four lanes and then they have to swing around a very narrow and difficult roundabout. As Mr Johnson said, that certainly does need to be improved. Then it goes into two lanes. In peak hour it is chock-a-block. It is the main road that goes to the Corbould Park Racecourse. That has created real problems because of the heavy traffic with the horse floats and all those sorts of things.

Then drivers finally get back onto the four lanes coming into Caloundra.

The coalition had done a lot of work in this regard. Main Roads had conducted a very good consultation with the local people—one of the best consultations I think we have ever had in relation to transport. There were three choices. The community chose which one it wanted and it had to take environmental concerns into consideration. The route was chosen. We put \$800,000 into a planning study to get this off the ground and then, of course, the Government changed. The Labor Party has put no money into that road and it is still floating around somewhere in the out years. In other words, it is not funded. We will fund that road; we will put it in place, and we will see that that is done.

Another major issue is the Kawana arterial road, because there is considerable congestion along the Nicklin Way. We have a growing population. We have seen that in the redistribution of electoral boundaries of which there have been two in the past 10 years, and there is now an extra seat in that Sunshine Coast area. With the projected growing population, that road is becoming a major problem. If the Kawana arterial road was funded from Caloundra Road through to the back of Kawana, to the new estates that Kawana Estates is developing, and if it was linked up with the Sunshine Motorway, which would be extended and widened, then that congestion would be eased because people would be taken off the Nicklin Way. They would not have to come right around there. To widen that road—and there are great difficulties because there are houses and difficulties on both sides—would be extremely expensive.

The multimodal corridor that the coalition gazetted and set down is there. That is where the Kawana arterial road is planned, and it should go ahead as soon as possible. We have had quite extensive consultation with Kawana Estates. I know that the council is certainly behind it. If that road is treated as a priority and put in place, it would save a lot of congestion and a lot of taxpayers' money compared with any other alternative. Of course, that is in the never-never, too. It is somewhere in the out years and there is no funding allocated at all. So in other words, there are no forward estimates. That sort of planning would not only affect the electorate of Caloundra; it would affect the new electorate of Kawana. The road goes up into Maroochydhore and then it would go out onto the main highway. It would considerably affect

a large percentage of the population on the Sunshine Coast.

I would also like to look at the issue of the rail corridor and find out when that is going to go ahead, if it is going to go ahead. Is it going to be heavy rail? These are the questions that people really want answered, because they were given a very sham form of consultation. Their concerns were not taken into consideration. I think we have to find out: is the rail going ahead? Where is the connection back onto the main line? Is it going to be heavy rail? Is freight going to be used? Is it going to be light rail? Are we looking at a busway?

I think there are two issues here: whether you have a heavy rail connection loop onto the main line and some type of people mover along the coast, be it busway or light rail—and I think that is eventually what will have to happen—or whether it is satisfactory just to have a heavy rail line coming in where this Labor Government has proposed it will go, which is right through my own area, through the houses and the residential areas in Aroona. These people bought their homes and established there. There was never going to be a railway there and all of a sudden it is dumped on top of them. That is not looking after the average person; it is not looking after the battler. It is really trampling on people's rights. Often their only investment is their home. Now their homes have been devalued because, as I said, the rail line will most probably go in along there. That is the Minister's preferred route. So if people are trying to sell their house, they have this problem hanging over their head—the fact that a railway is literally going to be thundering through their backyard.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, adjourned.

COOKE INQUIRY

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP)
(5.59 p.m.): I move—

"That this House calls on the Government to reinstate the Cooke inquiry recommendations contained in the previous coalition Government's legislation to stop the vote rorting in industrial unions and electoral corruption in their political arm, the Australian Labor Party."

The Cooke inquiry proved that the ALP has contempt for industrial democracy. The Shepherdson inquiry will prove that the ALP has contempt for democracy full stop.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think the member should be very careful here and remember my ruling yesterday.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, I do remember, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: This is not a motion on the Shepherdson inquiry.

Mrs SHELDON: No, it is not.

Mr SPEAKER: I think we have to be extremely careful that we do not stray into that area. There are no expressions of guilt from the Shepherdson inquiry, and I think the member would realise that. If the member speaks to the motion, that is, the Cooke recommendations, I would appreciate it.

Mrs SHELDON: I am, Mr Speaker. You will find that I am not dealing with the Shepherdson inquiry.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, the member is. The honourable member was referring to the Shepherdson inquiry finding the ALP guilty of corruption, which is not allowed. It is sub judice.

Mrs SHELDON: I did not say the Shepherdson inquiry had found that, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: The member did.

Mrs SHELDON: I said "will prove".

Mr SPEAKER: Even so, I think the member is straying into bounds where she should not.

Mrs SHELDON: In 1989, Mr Marshall Cooke, QC, was appointed to inquire into the activities of particular Queensland unions. There were 188 days of public or private sessions at which 276 witnesses gave evidence. There were 3,667 exhibits tendered. The transcript ran to 12,934 pages. Mr Cooke made numerous recommendations. I can tell the House in one word what the Goss Labor Government and then the Beattie Labor Government did with those recommendations—nothing! The fact is that Labor under Goss and Beattie does not believe in making the union movement open and accountable because Labor simply does not believe in industrial democracy.

In 1997, the coalition Government introduced the Industrial Organisations Act. We did what Goss would not do and what Premier Beattie and Mr Braddy have since undone. We implemented the majority of the Cooke inquiry recommendations. The Industrial Organisations Act introduced by the then Minister for Industrial Relations, Santo Santoro, removed union rorts, improved union accountability and, importantly, introduced and

confirmed democracy in trade unions. However, democracy and accountability in the union movement in Queensland enjoyed a very brief life. Democracy in the union movement was killed in Queensland last year when Labor repealed most of the Industrial Organisations Act.

To some people, the death of democracy in the union movement may not seem too serious, but the implications go far beyond the union movement. The fact is that people with a criminal disregard for democracy in the union movement very often end up as Labor members in Parliament. That very fact is illustrated in this House. Last Thursday, Marshall Cooke, QC, was interviewed by Andrew Carroll on ABC Radio. Mr Cooke, the man who devoted nearly two years of his life to looking very closely at the way unions conduct their activities, had this to say. He said—

"A very big majority of politicians on the Labor side have cut their teeth in the union movement and if there is this entrenched view in the union movement, as we discovered from our inquiry that it's all right to rot the ballots to stay in power, the prize for state governments and federal governments is much bigger and one needs to wonder whether the same sort of rotting goes on at state and federal elections as well."

One does not need to wonder anymore. The Shepherdson inquiry has confirmed that people graduate from rotting union elections to rotting State preselections to rotting State elections. As Karen Ehrmann said in her affidavit dated 10 August this year—

"I was a bit player in a well known scheme being carried out by the AWU long before I was involved."

I have no doubt that the Federal inquiry established by Senator Chris Ellison to be chaired by Mr Chris Pyne will establish beyond any doubt that the kinds of rorts we have heard about in the electorate of Fisher in 1987 were widespread.

The unions, through their political arm—the ALP—have been able to spread a cancer in Queensland, and that cancer has a double effect. The first effect of that cancer is that aspiring ALP politicians learn the ropes on rotting as they rise up through the unions. The second effect of the cancer is that merit plays no part in the selection of people to occupy seats in Parliament. The result is a House full of people on the Labor side who owe favours big time to their union backers and stackers. In his final report, Marshall Cooke, QC, said that

his inquiry was not the easiest to conduct. He said—

"The connection of the union movement with the Australian Labor Party injected political overtones into the inquiry."

"Connection" has to be the understatement of the year. Bill Ludwig said that he sees the ALP as the political arm of the union movement. "Siamese twins" would be a more accurate description. All unions were hostile to the inquiry and all wanted to close it down after Labor came to power on 2 December 1989. No doubt Wayne Goss would have liked to close it down, too. However, he was smart enough to realise what a gross act of hypocrisy that would have been, seeing as he had just won power thanks to the Fitzgerald inquiry.

The aim of the Cooke inquiry, in Marshall Cooke's own words, was to "signpost the way for reforms in union accountability"—something the Premier seems to have ignored. Mr Cooke erected some very clear signposts, but the ALP has bulldozed them all. The commissioner's report dated July 1991 made a number of recommendations specifically in relation to the AWU. Mr Cooke found that, essentially, the AWU was a union run by officials for officials. Not one rank and file member of the union held a position of power within the union. The executive was totally made up of paid officials. All of these paid officials were subject to dismissal at the whim of the big boss, Mr Bill Ludwig. Honourable members might remember the saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Cooke inquiry recommendation, which the coalition introduced in 1997, was that no more than 30% of the executive could be paid officials. Amazingly, when this was repealed by Mr Braddy and Mr Beattie, the AWU had the gall to claim that it was repealed on the basis that it was undemocratic.

Another Cooke recommendation was that the union hold an annual general meeting where members could actually question the executive and even put forward policy. In another show of utter contempt for democracy, the AWU got around this one by having a delegates meeting but only paid officials ever got to be delegates. So, again, the rank and file was ignored and democracy was crushed. Another recommendation of Cooke which the coalition introduced was that rival candidates be given a chance to gain election within the AWU. Previously, rival candidates who were running against the official ticket were not

given any opportunity to make their views known. The coalition's Industrial Organisations Act made it law that a statement from each be included with the postal ballot at the union's expense. It was also made law that the AWU's official newspaper, ironically called *The Worker*, must carry each candidate's statement. The reason Labor gave for repealing this one was a doozy. It said these statements could contain defamatory material and *The Worker* did not want to publish defamatory material.

Democracy died when the Cooke inquiry recommendations were repealed. The Cooke inquiry uncovered voting fraud in four unions, including the Australian Workers Union. It detected electoral fraud in the AWU in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, almost 200 suspect or forged signatures on ballot paper envelopes, 169 suspicious duplicate ballot papers and hundreds who claimed they did not vote but were recorded as voting. It is an old tale, is it not? Have we not heard all of this before and are we not hearing it now? It sounds just like an ALP preselection to me.

Last week, Mr Beattie was quoted in the *Courier-Mail* as saying the Cooke inquiry was "ancient history". The reality is that Mr Beattie is going to be history because he allowed the cancer to go unchecked. How blind, how deaf and just how big a mushroom can one man be? It defies belief for Peter Beattie not to have some inkling of what was going on in the organisation he led first as State Secretary and then later as parliamentary leader. It is not as if Mr Beattie is a hands-off sort of guy who leaves everything to his subordinates.

Mr Borbidge: Compulsive meddler.

Mrs SHELDON: He is a compulsive meddler. In August this year he took it upon himself to take over the media duties of Judy Spence and Robert Swarten and several of his other lame duck Ministers. He now believes that he is the Minister for The Arts as well. He has left Matt Foley in the dark. Mr Beattie is a person who likes to be in the engine room. To continually wipe his hands of any knowledge of misdeeds means he is either the most naive man in the world or he is not telling the truth.

Queensland is in dangerous hands with someone so naive at the helm. The question is: what did Mr Beattie know, when did he know it and why did he do nothing? Queensland needs people at the helm who believe in democracy. For too long the union movement has been the training ground for the ALP's riggers and rorters. I call on the Parliament to bring back the Cooke inquiry

recommendations as enshrined in the coalition's Industrial Organisations Act. We must bring back accountability to the union movement. We must bring back democracy, and we must bring back decency. It is up to this House to see that that happens.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.09 p.m.): In rising to second the motion moved by the honourable member for Caloundra, I make the observation that it says something about the desperation of this Government that the Minister is going to move an amendment to congratulate himself and to congratulate the Government on a job well done, particularly when one looks at the intent of this motion, that is, to stop vote rorting in industrial unions and electoral corruption.

I would have thought that if the Premier was a man of his word he would have been prepared to support a motion such as this, because any amendment to this motion will mean that the Labor Party in Queensland is not prepared to take appropriate action to stop vote rorting in industrial unions and electoral corruption.

The Cooke inquiry was in many respects about the abuse of the system by a number of unions. It was about industrial relations democracy. What we now see are the same sorts of problems—the stench of corruption engulfing this Government with regard to electoral matters—that were placed before the people of Queensland before, at the time of the inquiry by Marshall Cooke, QC. I will quote a couple of comments made by former Commissioner Cooke on ABC Radio on 2 November 2000. He said—

"Well, with regard to the AWU we established that there had been ballot rigging and ballot fraud."

Isn't that familiar? It reminds me of what is unfolding at another place at this time. He went on to say—

"We set out a uniform code for running union elections which attempted to provide safeguards and checks to ensure that ballot rorting was made more difficult and if it did occur it could be readily identified or more readily identified than it can now."

He continued—

"We also made some recommendations about financial statements and things that should be provided to members so that they know exactly what their money was being spent on."

In the same interview he was asked what happened. Former Commissioner Cooke said—

"Well, nothing happened while the Goss Government was in. With the change of Government, the Borbidge Government—I think Santo Santoro was the Minister at that time—introduced amendments which included the majority of the recommendations which we made. With the return of the Beattie Government, most of those were repealed."

I repeat: "most of those were repealed". This is a Government that claims and pretends it is interested in doing something about stamping out rorts and electoral corruption. It abolished legislation based on the recommendations of the Cooke inquiry to make sure that what was happening, what had been established under the Cooke inquiry, could happen again—a licence to rort in the trade union movement, presided over by this Premier and this Government who now say that they have had nothing to do with rorts in the electoral system. Marshall Cooke went on to say—it is worth repeating—

"You see, most—a very big majority—of politicians on the Labor side have cut their teeth in the union movement and if there is this entrenched view in the union movement as we discovered from our inquiry that it's all right to rort the ballots to stay in power, the prize for State Governments and Federal Governments is much bigger and one needs to wonder whether the same sort of rorting goes on at State and Federal elections as well."

I think Tony Fitzgerald had a word for it. He called it a "culture"—a culture that he said had developed in the Queensland Police Service over a period of time. I contend that there is a culture of corruption that has grown out of the trade union movement in this State which has extended itself to and infected the political wing of the trade union movement, the Australian Labor Party in Queensland—the genesis of so much that we have heard following on the revelations of Karen Ehrmann and the decision by the Electoral Commission to refer this matter to the Criminal Justice Commission and the subsequent hearings. We have heard it before. We heard it in the Cooke inquiry. We legislated to stop it. Labor legislated to legalise it.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and

Industrial Relations) (6.14 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'House' and insert the following—

'congratulates the Government on its fair and balanced industrial relations legislation (through the Industrial Relations Act 1999) which included those recommendations from the Cooke Inquiry which were fair and practicable. Further, that this House acknowledges the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act 1999 relating to the conduct of ballots in industrial organisations are entirely consistent with the unanimously supported recommendations of the tripartite Industrial Relations Taskforce.'"

We are really back to old times when the member for Caloundra and the member for Surfers Paradise are in duet again—both of them incapable of telling the truth in this place.

Mrs Sheldon: How unkind!

Mr BRADY: But how accurate. First of all we had the speech from the member for Caloundra, who made the claim that we had not implemented any of the Cooke recommendations, which of course was then contradicted by the member for Surfers Paradise, who said that we had implemented some. The truth is that we did implement significant numbers of the Cooke recommendations—first of all in Goss Government legislation and then in the legislation which I brought into this place. I will list 12 of the most important recommendations.

The recommendations that were adopted by the Goss Government and then reinstated by the Beattie Government are as follows: limiting those who could be auditors of industrial organisations to those who are registered company auditors under the Corporations Law and who are not employees or officers of the organisation; requiring the Electoral Commission to conduct elections for officers in industrial organisations—a fairly important thing to do if we want to have honest elections; increasing penalties for unauthorised interference in union elections; requiring amalgamation ballot papers to be kept; and requiring the Electoral Commission to conduct amalgamation ballots. This in turn was reversed by the coalition Government in its much-vaunted legislation.

The Beattie Government has kept all of these provisions in the Industrial Relations Act which I introduced to this place, as they are fair and practical and reflect community standards. This Government has also adopted a

requirement that financial accounts of industrial organisations be prepared in accordance with Australian accounting standards. The coalition Government, on the other hand, did not adopt that Cooke inquiry recommendation. By contrast, the Industrial Relations Regulation 2000 that we introduced actually requires organisations to comply with Australian accounting standards. It actually achieves the purpose of requiring organisations to comply with the accepted accounting practice contained in Australian accounting standards so that organisations are accountable to their members.

The Government also adopted a number of other Cooke inquiry recommendations. These include prohibiting organisations from using their resources to support a particular candidate in a union election, requiring additional security measures to be taken in elections of industrial organisations and making it an offence to interfere in an amalgamation ballot. We did not implement any of the sensible inquiries of the Cooke inquiry? I have listed them!

The member for Caloundra knows so little about her shadow portfolio that she has come into this place and misled the Parliament—I believe by accident, because she does not know what she is talking about. Then we had the statement by the member for Surfers Paradise, who demonstrated by that statement just how biased Nelson Marshall Cooke was. I know that gentleman. He and I were doing law at about the same time. He is one of the most Right Wing Liberals ever elected to the Federal Parliament. He was a true precursor of the other former Liberal who did an inquiry for the coalition, Peter Connolly—another biased ex-Liberal member of Parliament, whom they call upon in time of need to do their dirty work for them. Nelson Cooke is a man incapable of being fair.

Mrs Sheldon: Marshall.

Mr BRADDY: Nelson Marshall Cooke is his real name. He is incapable of being fair to the Labor side of politics. The comments quoted by the member for Surfers Paradise show how unfair he is, because Nelson Marshall Cooke said that most of the members of the Labor side of politics cut their teeth in the union movement. We have done a quick count. On this side there are eight of us, not including me, who are former union officials—and there are a lot more than eight of us on this side of the Parliament. That shows how little Nelson Marshall Cooke knew about the Labor Party—how biased he was.

The master of the half-truth, the member for Surfers Paradise, repeated the defamation that we all owe our livings to the union movement. What a load of nonsense! It is about time those opposite got their facts straight. We have adopted many of the fair recommendations of the Cooke inquiry. We rejected the others. We have been vindicated in many instances. A report prepared for the Federal Government by Blake Dawson Waldron—

Time expired.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.19 p.m.): I am pleased to second the amendment moved by Minister Braddy. I thank the member for Caloundra for providing the opportunity tonight for me to talk about the tremendous contribution Minister Braddy has made to Queensland through the very fine legislation which is the Industrial Relations Act 1999. While I am tempted to respond to the union bashing that members on the other side of this House engaged in with their not so hidden agenda of breaking the union movement—always raising, as they do, that ridiculous spectre of the AWU as some kind of bogeyman—I will resist that temptation and instead address the really important elements of the Industrial Relations Act 1999 that, thanks to Minister Braddy, all of us in the Beattie Government can take some credit for.

One of the important things in that legislation is the establishment of an independent industrial relations task force. It was from that base and through widespread consultation with all of the players involved in industrial relations—not just with employer bodies and not just with unions—that we were able to undertake the best review that there has been of the Queensland industrial laws and on the basis of that set the Bill in place.

In the end we adopted a substantial majority of the task force recommendations. However, the Bill also introduced other important and progressive changes that the Government considered a priority. Some of these more innovative features of the legislation reflect the changes that have occurred in the work force, such as new statutory rights for conditions of employment for all Queensland workers. Very clearly, we have seen significant changes occur over the last 10 to 15 years in what typifies a normal working arrangement. For instance, in 1999 it was reported that only 37% of the work force was employed in a typical 9 to 5 Monday to Friday job. This change in the pattern of work hours is still unsettled and has brought requirements that all of us in this House should

attend to for a more flexible response to the work force issues that arise.

That is where Minister Braddy's Bill has led the way. The new laws brought Queensland into the new millennium with regard to such issues as the increase in female employment, the development of new and emerging industries, higher levels of casualisation, part-time and contract work, increasing levels of work intensification and the need for workers to balance work and life despite the exigencies and pressures of life in the nineties and now in this new millennium.

A further consequence of the growth in non-standard types of employment has been the unparalleled growth in dependent contractors and workers engaged under contract for services in traditional award regulated areas. These industries include cleaning, security and building and construction. As the member for Cairns I know that that certainly applies to the regional areas of Queensland.

In response to these changes, the laws for the first time in Queensland's history codified essential community standards of employment such as annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, carer's leave, bereavement leave and parental leave for all Queensland workers regardless of whether they are covered by an award or an agreement. The legislation, I am also pleased to remind honourable members, recognises pay equity as an industrial issue and updates the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers to include equal pay for work of equal or comparable value. A review is currently under way.

The other areas of reform included in the Act were the invigoration of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission which, for the first time in 80 years, has a full-time president.

There are many, many more elements of that Bill of which we should all be proud, but this is an opportunity for me to pay particular tribute to Minister Braddy for the good work that he has done and to pay particular recognition to the fact that this is his last term in Government and that with only some six months to go there may not be many more opportunities to recognise how his experience, his balanced approach and his determination to face all of the conflicting parties—employers and the many different unions involved—have led to the steady development of a balanced and fair approach that will leave Queensland with a wonderful legacy long after he has moved into his retirement and is having, I hope, a whole lot more fun than he has in this House on many occasions.

This is my tribute to him. I am proud indeed to be part of the team with Minister Braddy.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.24 p.m.): Queensland is being run by a Premier who has presided over rampant electoral corruption within the ALP for the best part of 20 years. At best, he has turned a blind eye; at worst, he has actively facilitated that corruption by winding back the statutory reforms recommended by Marshall Cooke, QC, and passed by the former coalition Government.

The people of Queensland are entitled to wonder why any Government would turn back the clock to the bad old days of routine rotting and ballot rigging in the trade union movement. Marshall Cooke's inquiry uncovered hundreds of cases of blatant fraud in at least four unions, including the Australian Workers Union. But, as I am sure the member for Cairns knows, it was certainly not alone.

One of the most brazen examples of the systematic rotting involved the Transport Workers Union election in 1980. It is worth revisiting the supplement to Mr Cooke's fourth report of June 1991 in which he detailed some of the evidence provided by Mr George Allan Goold. I will quote it. It is interesting to go back and read this stuff to see how long rotting has been endemic in the ALP and in the union movement. That is why we have to look at some of this history, to find out exactly how bad it has been and why the current revelations should not come as a surprise. Mr Cooke's report states—

"Mr Goold was standing as an organiser in Brisbane on the Williams/McPaul ticket in the 1980 election. He alleged that completed ballot papers were collected, reopened and, if they voted for the opposition, the markings on the ballot paper were 'whited out' and the ballot paper was completed for the Williams/McPaul team.

Even more shocking was Mr Goold's allegation that he collected returned, unclaimed ballot papers from the post office."

That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

"He described how the returned envelopes were easily obtained."

Mr Cooke then went on to quote from Mr Goold's sworn statement and said this—

"A few minutes later, he came back with the bag full of envelopes, the returned unclaimed envelopes, I took this bag."

Mr Nelson: Was it a brown paper bag?

Dr WATSON: I will come to that. The statement continued—

"The bag itself was a green bag which was used for carrying money to and from the Reserve Bank. It was not a standard Reserve Bank bag but was used by another bank to send in money and was then redundant to use by the Reserve Bank and it came into my possession whilst working for Brambles Brinks. It stood about 18 inches in diameter and nearly 3 feet high when full, which it then was. I took it in a type of 'bear hug' to carry it out of the Post Office and there were loose envelopes on the top of the open bag. It was full to the brim and I had to be careful with the top ones lest they fall out of the bag."

You would not want to lose some unfilled in ballot papers, would you? Mr Cooke noted that Messrs Goold, McGarth, Williams and McPaul reportedly opened these envelopes and completed the unused ballot papers therein for their favoured candidates.

He then returned to Mr Goold's statement which said—

"Our system was to open all the envelopes, sort the ballot papers into piles for each colour for each position. We couldn't open a window or door or have the overhead fan on, because it blew the pile of ballot papers about, so we encountered considerable heat inside the closed up house with no ventilation as we continued our activities. The ballot papers were stacked on the dining room table, which was then a new pine circular table. Some envelopes we opened which contained cheques and some union matters not related to the ballot were placed aside to be dealt with later. We then proceeded to fill in the ballot papers, marking with a cross the ballot papers according to 'our ticket', as opposed to the official ticket supported by Bevis.

The exercise was carried out on a table, the top of which was marked with the imprint of many 'Xs'."

Mr Cooke went on to observe that the incident was notorious within the Industrial Elections Branch of the Australian Electoral Commission and presented "a strong prima facie case of ballot-rigging on a grand scale".

That example of systematic rorting occurred more than 20 years ago—in 1980—but the more things change the more

they stay the same. As Mr Cooke said in the Courier-Mail just last week—

"Why would you stop? If you think it's alright to get power in a union by those sorts of means, why not when the prize is bigger?"

That is why I commend this motion to the House. By winding back the statutory reforms proposed by Marshall Cooke and implemented by the coalition, this Premier and this Government have paved the way for a whole new era of ballot rigging within the Queensland union movement.

Once electoral fraud takes off in the industrial wing of the Australian Labor Party, it is only a matter of time before it graduates to the political wing of the Australian Labor Party and the systematic rorting of local, State and general elections. That is not acceptable.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): There have been a number of comments made in this debate about people on this side of the House who cut their teeth in the union movement. I am one of the eight, and I am proud to declare myself as one of the eight people on the Labor side of politics who cut his teeth in the trade union movement. I spent 10 years in what I consider to be an honourable pursuit in representing the interests of workers in improving wages and conditions. I represented workers, many of whom were not capable or were not in a position to represent themselves. I, together with all the other members who come from that background, am very proud to stand here and say that that is my background.

The Cooke inquiry was finalised in 1991. That is nine years ago. It is clear what this motion tonight is all about. It is simply another union-bashing exercise from an anti-worker, anti-union coalition. I ask those opposite: what about giving some recognition to the good things that the trade union movement does? I do not believe that in the five years I have been in this place I have heard one statement from members opposite about the good work that is undertaken by the trade union movement.

What about the tireless efforts of trade union officials in representing workers in wages and conditions bargaining? What about the work involved in representing workers before the commission when they have been unfairly dismissed by employers? What about the tireless efforts of union officials aimed at resolving disputes?

We hear about the disputes that hit the headlines. We hear about the strikes. For every matter that hits the headlines, another 100 have been resolved by negotiation, and most of those involve trade union officials. However, there is very little recognition by members opposite of that type of work.

It is obvious that members of the Opposition are more interested in the ancient history of the Cooke inquiry. As has been outlined by the Minister, Labor Governments and the coalition Government have implemented many of those recommendations. In fact, more recommendations from the Cooke inquiry were implemented by the Labor Government than the coalition Government.

The coalition had its chance to do something about this when it was in Government from 1996 to 1998. As I recall it, the coalition did not revisit the recommendations. The coalition prefers to waste our time in order to deflect attention away from its real agenda. We are all aware of the coalition's agenda in the area of industrial relations because the member for Clayfield let the cat out of the bag about six to 12 months ago when he said that he wanted to hand over the industrial laws of Queensland to the Federal Government. He wanted to hand them to Peter Reith.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. The comments that have just been made by the honourable member for Nudgee about me are untrue. I did not say that. I find the remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr ROBERTS: I withdraw, but it is very clear when you put one and one together. The member for Clayfield made it perfectly clear that he would fix the industrial system of this State once and for all if he ever got back into Government, and that can only mean one thing from the coalition perspective—to give the powers to the Federal Government. That is the Opposition's agenda. It does not matter how much those opposite bleat and complain; that is what the member for Clayfield meant when he made that statement at the end of the debate on the Bill last year.

Let us get back to Peter Reith. This is the man upon whom the coalition models its industrial relations policies. Let us go back to the waterfront dispute of a couple of years ago. Who remembers the balaclava-covered thugs on the Hamilton and Fisherman Islands wharves? What about the attack dogs that stood there intimidating the workers and the protesters who were there to support the

workers? That is the style of industrial relations supported by the member for Clayfield, the member for Caloundra and other members of the coalition.

That is the type of industrial relations that members on this side of the Chamber reject. This Government is concerned with trying to put in place a fair and just system, rather than one which is based on thuggery. A type of industrial relations based on thuggery was clearly demonstrated during Peter Reith's and Santo Santoro's waterfront dispute. Santo Santoro was in it right up to his neck.

I want to move on to some other issues related to this matter. As I have said, given a chance the coalition will take us back to the Federal system. The key point about that is that it will involve deregulation of the labour market—

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.35 p.m.): The Parliament has no choice but to support the motion moved by the member for Caloundra because it is quite evident that if the recommendations of the Cooke inquiry, as implemented by the coalition and withdrawn by the current Government, had been implemented much earlier it is quite possible that we would not have seen the endemic political corruption and cheating which we have seen permeating the Labor Party, the political arm of the union movement, over the past 10 years—or even longer—in Queensland.

It has been interesting to sit here and listen to members opposite speak about the important role of the union movement. The union movement has an important role. The union movement has had an extremely important role in this State and in this nation for more than a century. I recognise that, and I commend those people who have worked in the union movement for their achievements on behalf of working men and women in Queensland and in Australia. That is why the union movement will always, and should always, have an important and respected role in this nation and in this State.

It was also interesting to note that we have a lot of alienated workers out there as well. A lot of workers feel that their paid officials—those who are elected to represent them—are not representing the interests or the aspirations of grassroots unionists. I hear that a lot as I move around my electorate. People say to me, "The only time you see a lot of those people is when they turn up to collect the union dues. But when you have a genuine industrial problem, or difficulty with your

employer, they are not there." That is an important lesson for the union movement.

If one considers the concerns that have been raised in the motion moved by the member for Caloundra, it is very clear that a number of provisions could have been implemented earlier which may have addressed the situation that we are experiencing in Queensland today. Marshall Cooke recommended that the rules of every industrial organisation should provide for an annual general meeting of members of the organisation at which resolutions binding on the committee of management can be carried. The coalition's industrial relations legislation—killed off by the Beattie Labor Government—put this recommendation in place.

Marshall Cooke also said that if such an annual general meeting takes the form of a meeting of elected delegates, then no more than 30% of the total number of delegates shall be full-time paid officials of the organisation. This is a commonsense proposition which was also killed off by the union-organised Government led by the member for Brisbane Central.

What about other issues such as the political objects fund which was put in place and which was killed off by the Beattie Government? Marshall Cooke was very keen to ensure that grassroots unionists had some degree of effective control over those who purported to represent them and some degree of democracy—something that those opposite who profess to believe in democracy do not really believe in when they have the chance to legislate for such things in Government. What happens as a consequence of the contempt which many of the paid officials of the union have demonstrated over the years? We have seen the political arm of the union movement indulge in such underhanded political activity that it has now led to an inquiry just across the way.

We have also seen desperation on the part of the Government. We saw that desperation today as the Government came into this place and sought to implicate the National Party in these sorts of things. The member for Chermside stood up and spoke about ancient history. In 1992 he wrote to the Queensland Electoral Commission with a number of allegations against Doug Foggo. It was quite remarkable. We have some statutory declarations here which show that Doug Foggo actually enrolled at 32 Cranbourne Street, West Chermside, a month before the election. He also stayed there following the election. I table that statutory declaration.

With regard to the allegation that he was enrolled for the electorate of Lilley at the time of the 1992 Federal election, I can inform the House that he was actually enrolled for Petrie. The member for Chermside was asked, "Where is the letter to the Electoral Commission?" He said, "I can't find that. I am only a backbencher. I don't keep that sort of information." However, he had all the other information. He came in here and continued the pathological untruth telling that we have seen from that side of the Parliament.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): The members opposite try to rewrite history to suit their own political needs, and generally they get it wrong. One thing that they would not admit is that some of the recommendations of the Cooke inquiry were so unworkable and so unwieldy that implementation of them by any Government was not possible.

The recommendation that official misconduct within unions should fall within the jurisdiction of the CJC was one of the most bizarre. It showed that Marshall Cooke had a distinct lack of understanding of the role of the Criminal Justice Commission, as did the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge.

On 4 August 1992, Mr Borbidge asked the then Premier, Wayne Goss, whether he would abide by Cooke's recommendation for the CJC to act as a union watchdog. Premier Goss replied—

"The CJC is a public sector body and we propose to maintain its role in that regard ... In New South Wales, ICAC"—

the Independent Commission Against Corruption—

"does not investigate unions. There is no provision for such a watchdog in other jurisdictions."

If Mr Borbidge was fair dinkum, he would have implemented the watchdog recommendation when he was Premier. He did not. He did not even try. He knew that it was a load of nonsense. Queenslanders need to know that Mr Borbidge and his colleagues want to get rid of the CJC. They do not like to be accountable. But when it suits them, they are happy to hand over investigations to the CJC.

Another major problem with the Cooke inquiry was that slabs of material that Marshall Cooke gathered could not even be published. Large chunks of the report had to be held back from the public because it included material that the Director of Public

Prosecutions advised was inappropriate to be printed at the time. At that time, in contrasting the Cooke inquiry to the highly respected Fitzgerald inquiry, the then Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Ken Vaughan, stated—

"Mr Fitzgerald had the foresight to deliberately omit evidence which could have been used in court cases against individuals. This allowed the publication of his report in full. In comparison, Marshall Cooke, QC, not only included evidence, but also went so far as to weigh that evidence and comment about whether or not he considered a person had committed a criminal offence."

The members opposite are well aware of these problems that were thrown up by the sloppy nature of the Cooke inquiry and the report. Many people saw the Cooke inquiry as a politically motivated stunt to take the heat off a dying, corrupt coalition Government. They knew that it was a concerted attack on trade unions, an attack on working people. The coalition members make a living out of undermining the interests of working people. It is the labour movement in this State that has fought hard and won a better deal for working people. It is the labour movement that has fought hard and succeeded in gaining better wages, safer workplaces and leave entitlements for people throughout this State.

It is the Liberal/National Parties that have actively sought to destroy trade unions. It is the Liberal/National Parties that have fought against improved wages and conditions for working people throughout this State. The former coalition Government did nothing to bring about a fair and balanced industrial relations system in this State. It shied away from that and, when it comes to industrial relations strategies, it now defers almost entirely to the wishes of the disgraced Federal Industrial Relations Minister, Peter Reith.

In 1992, the Goss Labor Government enacted legislation to ensure that industrial organisation elections were conducted by the State Electoral Commission. This legislative amendment was based on a Cooke recommendation. The Beattie Labor Government has also implemented or continued with several recommendations of the Cooke inquiry. There now is a requirement that the financial accounts of industrial organisations be prepared in accordance with Australian accounting standards. This measure was not adopted by the former coalition Industrial Relations Minister, now backbencher and mobile phone enthusiast, Santo Santoro.

The measure was contained in the Beattie Labor Government's Industrial Relations Act 1999. The fact is that the Beattie Government has done far more than the Borbidge/Sheldon Government did in bringing about a balanced system of industrial relations in this State—a system that looks after both the interests of workers and the interests of employers.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (6.44 p.m.): Before I make a few comments about the motion that we are debating, I wish to state on the record my belief that Marshall Cooke, QC, was a very distinguished parliamentarian and is a very distinguished lawyer. He still practises as a lawyer and makes a better living than any of the other lawyers opposite could hope to make. He was also a very ethical commissioner, so much so that when the Government changed he was kept on as a commissioner. He was funded as a commissioner—albeit not as well as he should have—and his terms of reference were extended at his request by the then Government. If Marshall Cooke was so bad, the members opposite should have shut down his inquiry. They did not, and they did not for very good reasons—he was doing a good job. He is still a very distinguished citizen. He is a good constituent of mine. In common with all members on this side, I am pleased to be associated with him.

This motion again displays the hypocrisy and the deceitfulness of this Government—a Government that does not believe in industrial democracy; a Government that believes in allowing industrial thuggery and electoral fraud within industrial organisations, and by this I mean unions, not employer organisations, to flourish; and a Government that is happy to replenish its parliamentary ranks, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested, from the union movement which is electorally corrupt. Object (h) of the current Minister's legislation—which he did not mention in his second-reading speech when he introduced his legislation and on which he did not elaborate—states—

"The principal object of this Act is to provide a framework for industrial relations that supports economic prosperity and social justice by—

(h) encouraging responsible representation of employees and employers by democratically run organisations and associations."

So what did the Minister do when he brought in his legislation? What did the Labor Party do to uphold the fine and noble sentiments that it espouses in this object that

is contained within its legislation? It abolished the essential—and I stress, the essential—industrial democracy provisions that the coalition had enshrined within its industrial relations organisations legislation.

For the record, the Government abolished the following provisions—and members opposite should forget about all the others that they kept; these are the ones that they abolished—that a full-time officer or a full-time employee of the organisation or branch of the organisation may not be elected to an office in the organisation or branch, other than an office stated by the rules to be a full-time elected position; that the organisation's or a branch's management committee membership must not be made up of more than a total of 30% of the organisation's branch full-time elected officers or full-time employees; that there must be an annual general meeting of its members—not of delegates but its members; that its annual general meeting must be held within five months of the end of each of its financial years, including a financial year under section 195(2); that its annual general meeting may pass a resolution that binds the management committee of the organisation or its branches; and that its annual general meeting takes the form of a meeting of elected delegates, and that no more than 30% of the delegates may be full-time elected officers or full-time employees of the organisation.

Of course, the Government also abolished the political objects fund provisions within the coalition's legislation. All of those provisions were democracy provisions that guaranteed grassroots control and involvement in the unions. They are the provisions that the members opposite do not talk about. They are the provisions that they abolished.

Why did the coalition implement those provisions? Just in case the members opposite were not listening, I point out to them that the previous coalition Government put those provisions in because Marshall Cooke, that person whom they are all trying to character assassinate, found some interesting things. In summary—because I have outlined them already—he found that union funds were used to pay for prostitutes for union officials; union funds were used to purchase real estate for union leaders; union money was diverted into secret slush funds; there was massive ballot fraud in union elections; there were forged signatures on ballot papers; union members were treated with contempt by some of their leaders; and union leaders made secret

decisions that were not revealed to their members.

That is why the previous coalition Government enacted the provisions which this Government then abolished. That sort of culture will again flourish because the Government has destroyed industrial democracy within unions. The Government has taken away the control of the unions' affairs from their grassroots members. No amount of mealy-mouthed statements that the Opposition are anti-workers will stack up. Under coalition Governments, more workers got jobs than they are getting under this Government. Under coalition Governments, job security for public servants in the Public Service was guaranteed and pay increases were given that more than matched the national average, including averages within Labor States. That is what happened in Queensland under coalition Governments. We support unions, we support union leaders and we support union officials, but only those who are honest who believe in industrial democracy, and not the crooks that Marshall Cooke discovered.

Time expired.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): I support the amendment to the motion. In 1998 the Beattie Government established a tripartite and independent industrial relations task force to review the previous Government's legislation and to make recommendations on a new industrial relations system which reflected and accommodated the emerging new labour market. But we will hear nothing of any substance from members of the coalition about the report of that task force, because they do not want to know about it. It is too much a part of the real world.

It is important to note that the task force was independent and representative. It was chaired by a noted industrial relations expert, Professor Margaret Gardner, and drew equal representation from unions and employer organisations. Professor Ron McCallum, a noted expert in industrial law, was another independent member of that task force. The task force carefully considered issues associated with the regulation of industrial organisations. It also considered submissions from organisations and individuals about the operation of the provisions of the 1997 Workplace Relations Act.

It is important to note that the task force was not driven by an ideological agenda with predetermined views of the roles of unions, nor was it stacked with pro-union or anti-union members. It was drawn from a cross-section of representatives of all industrial organisations throughout the length and breadth of

Queensland. It reached its recommendations in the light of an understanding of the issues and the evidence and arguments put by organisations and individuals who made submissions.

Equally important is the fact that the task force had access to information about the history of the regulation of industrial organisations in Queensland, including the findings of the Hangar and the Cooke inquiries. The task force subsequently made 166 recommendations, 34 of which dealt with the regulation of industrial organisations. Of these, 28 were adopted by the Government in legislation. But the Opposition is totally silent on those things. The recommendations provided a strong foundation for democratic and accountable industrial organisations. The Opposition is also silent about the fact that the task force comprised a broadly representative cross-section of industrial organisations throughout Queensland.

Recommendations adopted by the Government with respect to union elections included the retention of model election rules; access to the roll of members entitled to vote; candidates being given a copy of the roll; a requirement to specify before an election the process to be used to decide the outcome, that is, first-past-the-post or preferential voting; rolls for elections to be cut-off rolls; prohibitions on organisations favouring one candidate over another; prohibiting a person from disadvantaging another person in relation to an election; provision for the Queensland Electoral Commission to conduct elections which will be paid for by the State; and regulations prescribing the material that candidates can publish to prevent publication of misleading statements. The Opposition is totally silent tonight about those reforms. They are opposed to them.

The provisions of the Act with respect to union elections were also consistent with the recommendations of a 1997 Commonwealth standing committee on electoral matters and a report prepared by Blake Dawson Waldron for the Federal Government on a review of current arrangements for the governance of industrial organisations. Not a word has been said by the Opposition about those two reports.

Members opposite may recall that the Federal Government at that time was the Howard Government, a Government not known for its support of unions; indeed, a Government that displays what its real industrial principles are by the way in which it practises industrial relations, best demonstrated by the waterfront maritime dispute of two years' standing.

On the issue of the accountability of industrial organisations, the task force recommendations that were adopted in our legislation—and the members opposite are silent about these as well, or if they do not like it they ignore it—were that accounting practices should accord with Australian accounting standards; an organisation need only record the total amounts spent on professional services; only the total of compulsory levies and voluntary contributions needs to be listed in accounts; officers' remuneration should be recorded in banded amounts, and so on. I strongly support the amendment to this motion.

Time expired.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

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

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Any future divisions on this motion will be of two minutes' duration.

Question—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

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

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 7.03 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

CORPORATIONS LAW

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND)
(8.30 p.m.): I move—

"That the Queensland Parliament calls on the Commonwealth Government to amend the Corporations Law and related legislation to require that large companies undertake a social and cultural impact assessment before making significant corporate decisions which may change the operation of the company or substantially increase its market share, and that a discussion paper be prepared on how corporate governance laws should take account of the social responsibility of corporations."

I move this motion out of a sense of frustration that ordinary people, especially in the country, and even honourable members appear to be powerless against the juggernaut of competition reform and the lack of concern for community values shown—maybe shown under compulsion of the Corporations Law—by company directors when they make some of their decisions. Only last month we heard about the National Bank's record profits, and at the same time we heard of the bank's latest plans to close a further 100 bank branches over the next 12 months.

Also last month I organised a nationwide telephone link-up involving Woolworths senior management and Australian Milk Producers Association's dairy industry representatives from all States in Australia. During that nationwide telephone link-up, Woolworths senior management acknowledged that they had concerns with the price that some processors tendered for the supply of milk. They had concerns that the price tendered may have been unsustainable. That concern was supported by the dairy industry representatives on that telephone link-up, who echoed the concerns that the price tendered for the supply of milk by the milk processor Dairy Farmers was unsustainable.

When I put this concern to Woolworths senior management, they said words to the effect that it was not their problem; it was the processors who submitted the price to supply the milk. The problem is that, even if the directors and managers who make these decisions want to make a more humane decision that preserves services for country people or that preserves a reasonable farm gate price and a chance of economic survival for milk producers, they may feel that the Corporations Law compels them to ignore these factors. Even if the Prime Minister lectures the banks on the fact that they, like

Telstra, have a community service obligation, the directors and managers find contradictory obligations in the Corporations Law. Sections 180, 181 and 184 of the law provide that decisions have to be made in the best interests of the corporation, and section 232 gives shareholders a right to sue the directors if their conduct of the corporation's affairs is contrary to the interests of the corporation as a whole.

I am a conservative. I believe in competition. I believe in the right to have a go. But the absolute maximisation of profits and dividends to shareholders cannot be pursued to the exclusion of all other obligations. I believe the Corporations Law should be amended not so that community obligations totally override the pursuit of profits—that would be silly—and not even so that they are prohibited from making more than a reasonable profit; but so that when directors or managers have a choice between two paths which would both produce a reasonable profit they are free, or even encouraged, to choose the path which would also promote wider community interests.

I am sure that banks could still have made pretty good profits without closing as many branches as they have over the past few years, and I am sure that Woolworths can continue to make a handsome profit without screwing the price it pays for wholesale milk down so low that even their own senior management share concerns and wonder whether the successful tenderer will be there for the next round of tendering. It is true that this might make life more complex for company directors and managers. They will have to strike a balance between their corporation's interest and the community's interest instead of obsessively promoting just one interest.

I am also a solicitor. One of the first things I remember learning in law school is that we lawyers have a mixture of duties. The duty to the client sometimes has to come second to the duty to the court and to the public interest. Lawyers manage to make those choices when there is some tension between the client's interest and the public interest, and I am sure that company directors will be able to as well. They might even feel happier in their heart of hearts about the decisions that they may end up making.

I have referred in this motion to the extra obligations to be imposed on the corporations that have substantial powers in the market. Corporations such as Woolworths that have substantial power in a market already have

special restrictions on what they can do, and which are imposed by section 46 of the Trade Practices Act. They cannot deliberately take action where their market power could be used to damage competitors and thus make the distribution of market power even more uneven. I am suggesting that they should also be encouraged to stop the less powerful players in the market from committing suicide by offering absurd prices just to keep the custom of the powerful corporation. This is the only country in the world where 80% of the food market is controlled by three corporations. Some special responsibilities already come with that degree of market dominance, and I am suggesting that another responsibility should be added.

This motion is very indirect. I ask this House and the Premier to ask the Prime Minister to take some action. This is because this House has no real power over the duty of company directors and managers. This is ironic because when we look at the statute books, we see that the Corporations Law is law in Queensland because of the Queensland Act, the Corporations (Queensland) Act of 1990, but all that this Act says is that the Corporations Law which is stated in the Commonwealth Act is law in Queensland and the details are found in the Commonwealth Act. We still have a theoretical power to make laws about corporations, but we have pretty well given it away by Commonwealth/State agreements. Our Act also states that, if the Commonwealth amends the Corporations Law, the amended version automatically becomes law here. So in practice all we can do is ask the Commonwealth to take action. I seek support from this House for this motion tonight.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (8.37 p.m.): As the motion put forward by the member for Nicklin seeks to extend the social responsibility of corporations, I am pleased to second this motion. Entrepreneurial flair, capital investment and risk taking by corporations form the backbone of a healthy economy. However, a sustainable economy and environment will be achieved only if economic and social objectives are in balance. There is increasing public concern about globalisation, economic rationalism and the impact that competitive market reforms are having on job insecurity and economic inequality. The divide between the rich and the poor is growing, and we have an enormous income and power divide between the working poor and the so-called gold-collar workers in our community.

There is increasing public concern that multinational corporations control our economy and community, not duly elected Governments. There is increasing public concern that unless private corporations, particularly powerful multinational corporations, are more accountable to the public, we will witness further environmental degradation, erosion of jobs and wages, and the decline of locally based industries. Many corporate citizens are socially responsible, but we witness daily accounts of unethical practice and environmental abuse from a range of companies, and it is important that we keep these sorts of companies in check and make them accountable.

I am pro-investment, pro-economic growth and pro-jobs. Our State and Federal Governments must continue to provide the foundations for corporations to grow and prosper. But social, industrial and environmental considerations must be given equal importance. We know that the Howard Government has no problem giving a helping hand to big corporations. The current debate on fuel prices is a case in point. At no time has Mr Howard challenged the corporate practices, particularly the pricing practices of the multinational oil companies.

I support the member for Nicklin in his call for the Federal Government to amend the Corporations Law to enhance the social responsibility of corporations. To date, corporations have been called to account through the efforts particularly of the labour movement, the environment movement and consumer groups. It is time the Federal Government got some spine and used legislative powers to bring greater social responsibility to the actions of some of these irresponsible corporations. The Australian Council of Trade Unions Secretary, Greg Combet, has been leading some very innovative trade union/shareholder alliances to tackle the might of multinational corporations.

The ACTU, the CFMEU and other shareholder alliances have flexed their collective muscle at corporate AGMs in their quest to make big corporations more accountable for the blow-out in executive salaries, unfair industrial relations, workplace health and safety breaches and environmental practice. One of those targeted companies has been Rio Tinto. The union/shareholder alliance rallied internationally to muster more than a million votes at the Brisbane AGM of Rio Tinto in favour of its corporate accountability resolutions. That was 20% of the votes cast, which is a unique and amazing achievement. This must have had a few board

members shaking in their boots and would have been a blow to the Rio Tinto CEO, who claimed that he had 99% of votes in his back pocket.

Rio Tinto has an international track record that it cannot be proud of in environmental and other areas. A 1996 report of the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility in the UK stated—

"The company's actions show very significant abuse across five complete sections of the Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility."

A 1998 report alleged that loss of land and income, forced evictions of local people by the military, pollution and social upheaval were a legacy of Rio Tinto's Kelian goldmine.

It is encouraging to see that many of the world's leading institutional investors have developed policies that address the impact of their investments on society, the environment, employees and human rights. I am very pleased that the Beattie Government has been particularly diligent in leading the charge in terms of humanising National Competition Policy. There are many benefits in a more competitive environment—I do not deny that at all—but it is important that problems which result from job insecurity and the downsizing of corporations are dealt with and that we have a stronger public interest test. I am very pleased to see the developments in the past week or so and congratulate the Premier on his diligence and leadership in this area.

It is also incumbent on our Government, particularly in its dealings with big corporations and those receiving Government incentive packages, that it insists on fair industrial, environmental and health and safety practices and stricter adherence to local industry content policy when negotiating arrangements with them. There is certainly a lot to be said for the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. There has to be more public accountability. I support his motion tonight.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (8.42 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. If there is a chance for CCA to give NCP a good kicking, we will take it. Community dissatisfaction, disenchantment and inconvenience are now a fact of life. This is a new and unwanted public emotion that has not had to be dealt with in years gone by. Every day, and generally several times per day, we are advised of instances where the public has received a mauling at the hands of the banking cartels, the supermarket monopolies and privatised or partly privatised

Government owned corporations. In this day and age of mad economic rationalism where the only consideration is the mighty dollar, people are becoming the victims rather than the customers.

In most cases, the people most hurt by the heartlessness of the modern-day corporate environment are the very people who are least able to cope with such harsh treatment and such inconvenience. I refer to the elderly in our community who have been loyal to, say, a particular bank all their life and are now being rewarded for their lifetime of loyalty with the local branch of their bank withdrawn. Many of these people have trouble coping with the latest whiz-bang technology. They do not want to have to do their banking at an automatic teller or on the Internet or over the phone, where they do not know who they are talking to and they have to go through myriad button pressing to speak to anybody. With spiralling bank charges, these people deserve and should be able to expect a decent level of service. I know that that is not what the people in the community and the community organisations of Kilcoy expected, but what they got was the closure of the Commonwealth Bank.

Dr Prenzler: And in Laidley.

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, and in Laidley. It is tragic to see small communities wither and die, and it is not just about a company and an individual client. Whole communities and an established way of life are being torn asunder throughout Australia even as we speak. Banks amalgamate, rationalise and withdraw services and a small town loses a few bank employees. The town could be losing the president of the Apex Club, the secretary of Rotary or the treasurer of the local cricket club. The bank employees' children are withdrawn from the small school causing the loss of a teacher, and the whole tragic cycle starts over again.

Dr Prenzler interjected.

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, local businesses lose as well. The same process has occurred with the same results as predatory supermarkets have gobbled up family-owned grocery businesses and the local butcher shops. Decreased job opportunities and decreased customer services are the price we pay for increased corporate profits. No-one denies the right of the shareholder to expect a return on their shareholding. What must be borne in mind, though, is that the corporations are depriving their profits from the communities and there must always be a balance that ensures the community receives an acceptable level of service in return.

Normally the balance is achieved by competition among the service providers, but it is quite ironic that the much-vaunted National Competition Policy spurned from the mind of Mr Fred Hilmer is in fact delivering the opposite. The formation of monopolies, oligopolies and cartels is tilting the balance against the customer. It is now absolutely essential that we retain the balance by legislation, because that is the only way that it can be forced to be done. It will be pretty hard to create competition when there is only one bank and one store. It could be exactly like the old song says—

"I load 16 tonnes and what do I get

Just another day older and deeper in debt

St Peter don't you call me because I can't go

I owe my soul to the company store."

That could be the song of the new century.

Corporations benefit from communities. I believe that it is eminently reasonable to expect that they should be required to subject their operations to a meaningful community benefits test. Just as citizens do, and perhaps even more, corporations have a social responsibility. It is not unreasonable to expect corporations to be good corporate citizens. It is certainly not unreasonable for consumers to be assured of a reasonable level of service and to have that assurance enshrined in legislation. I commend the member for Nicklin for bringing this motion to the Parliament for discussion. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (8.47 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the principles of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. The requirement on companies for a social and cultural impact assessment before making significant corporate decisions will mean that the corporations involved will have several steps to implement before they can make a significant decision. To get the information being asked for in this motion, there will be a requirement for consultation with the affected communities. I believe that there are many in our communities, particularly regional Queensland, who believe that large corporations have little idea of the impact on them as individuals and as isolated communities when these corporations make their decisions. It will require the corporation to have consideration of the issues raised by community members. It will result in a decision which has at least had the opportunity to be informed.

Companies such as banks say that their focus is their customers. We see stickers and slogans to that effect hung on bank walls, yet they close rural branches because those branches do not achieve unrealistic profit levels. What about support to the community? The Commonwealth Bank was a bank for the people. It had a branch at every post office—that was when every town and outpost had a post office! It provided a service to all sized communities and did okay as far as its financial returns were concerned. Then the bank was privatised.

Banks now require a \$500 minimum deposit or charges apply. They have added costs to face-to-face transactions to encourage customers to use ATMs and then placed charges on the use of ATMs. They have alienated older customers who are afraid of technology, who are afraid of being exposed as they stand at ATMs on the street, and said to them, "If you feel frail and disadvantaged, come on in. We'll just charge you more." Telstra did the same. The sale of 49% of Telstra was, and remains in my view, reprehensible. I remain of the view that strategic community infrastructure should remain in public ownership. These instrumentalities include roads, rail, ports, communications, electricity, water and the like. If the privatisation of Telstra proceeds past 49%, I believe the result will be, without exception, greater rural dislocation. Even now, people who live outside of the south-east corner or other major regional towns face increased costs to connect to this lifeline.

The pricing policies of Woolworths have been mentioned. That pricing policy, agreed to by the large supermarkets, had scant regard, if any, for the impact on the very people who provided the product—the dairy farmers.

This motion refers to the requirement for a social and cultural impact assessment to be done before significant corporate decisions "which may change the operation of the company or substantially increase its market share" are made. Australia has the highest level of market share by the smallest number of conglomerates of any country I have been able to identify. Every other country I have looked at that has a highly developed economy has a limit on the amount of market share single entities can have. We do not have that. This study, this requirement, this obligation, will ensure that more information is available not only to the companies making the decision but also to the community that will be affected by it.

NCP required community benefit tests. It required public interest tests. When NCP demanded that the water boards examine privatisation, recouping the full cost of the sale of water, it required a community benefit test. I believe the assessment contained in the motion is no greater or no lesser an obligation. This motion intends to introduce a new facet to the decision-making process.

Does business need profit to succeed? Of course it does. But some profits, as published recently, are not healthy. They are embarrassingly excessive—exorbitant. When banks announce billions of dollars of profit and on the same day or the very next day announce that they are going to close branches and increase charges to the community, it is time to bring some accountability into the process. The people in my region and, I believe, right across Australia feel that it is time that occurred. This motion seeks to ensure that corporations consider more than just the profit motive. It will require corporations that derive a living—a profit—from our residents to consider also their issues when making decisions.

Time expired.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (8.52 p.m.): The law of corporations has come a long way since the South Sea bubble burst. Protections have been built into the law for shareholders and for third parties dealing with corporations. Statutory duties have been imposed on company directors to prevent rip-offs and to promote responsible conduct.

This motion argues for greater social responsibility on the part of corporations. It involves a broad statement of principle rather than detailed legislative machinery. As such, the Government is willing to support this motion. If this motion is passed by the House tonight, I shall have pleasure in bringing the matter before the Ministerial Council for Corporations, which sits in the latter part of next week, in conjunction with the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.

The circumstances in which Corporations Law now develops have to be considered in the light of the High Court decision in Hughes. That case demonstrated that the current framework of law involving agreements between the Commonwealth and the various States was an unsatisfactory and uncertain basis, given the decision of the High Court. Accordingly, at the July 2000 joint meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General and Ministerial Council for Corporations,

agreement was reached in principle to refer power to the Commonwealth to deal with the High Court's decision in the Hughes case.

But as has been pointed out by the honourable member for Nicklin and very eloquently, may I say, by the honourable member for Archerfield, it is important that those Governments in more direct contact with the people—namely, State Governments—should continue to play an important role in the process of development of the law. Indeed, the agreement entered into provides for such involvement. This is an example, I think, of the evolution of the law of corporations into areas of social responsibility. So I shall be very happy to take this matter up with my colleagues in the ministerial council.

That referral of power is designed not to abrogate an interest in this area on the part of the States. Rather, it is designed to make sure that there is certainty. Workers need jobs, and that means there must be a framework of legal certainty in which corporations can operate. We have acted promptly in order to ensure that that legal certainty is available for corporations and, hence, their employees. But it is important that we do what we can to reform the law of corporations.

In one area in particular the Queensland Government has worked hard to seek to reform the law. I refer in particular to the area of workers' entitlements in the event of company insolvencies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 12,000 workers lose their jobs every year because of the financial problems of their employers. We saw in the waterfront dispute the experience of workers losing their entitlements, it so appeared at one stage. We need to ensure that that does not happen again.

As a result of the persistence of the Queensland Government and other Labor Governments, the Commonwealth has passed the Corporations Law Amendment (Employee Entitlements) Bill 2000. That increases protection for employee entitlements in two ways. It extends the duty of directors not to engage in insolvent company trading and to prohibit a company from entering into a commercial transaction that is not a debt. Secondly, it prohibits agreements and transactions entered into to prevent the recovery of employee entitlements. Severe penalties will apply for breaches of these provisions. Having pressed for these reforms, Queensland is pleased to see them passed. However, we do wish to see, in the consideration of the CLERP 8 process, consideration given to giving employee

entitlements priority over all creditors, both secured and unsecured.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.57 p.m.): I do not believe there would be too many members in this Parliament who would disagree with some of the sentiments and concerns expressed about the actions of the banks, the chain stores and so on. Although the Opposition supports the sentiment behind this motion, it cannot support the motion before the Parliament.

I will highlight a couple of issues. First, the honourable member's motion does not provide the definition of a large company. That is something that would certainly create some issue. I will read out the names of a number of local companies which people in the electorate of Nicklin would consider large. They are Juniper Pty Ltd, building contractors, just down the road at Mooloolaba; Rod Smith Parts and Bearing Co., motor accessories; Crosby Rural Services and Hardware, hardware retail; Nambour Tractors and Implements, agricultural machinery; Arrow Electrical, electrical contractors; Skinners Subaru, new car dealership; and Brown and Thorne Pty Ltd, builders. In that community and any other community, many small operators would consider those companies as large companies. This is what needs to be spelt out. There are some real issues here. Whilst what is contained in the motion is aspiratory, certainly there would be some issue in trying to achieve its aims.

The motion refers to social and cultural impact assessments. For some time Queensland has had a process requiring rural impact statements prior to legislation going before Parliament. Are the rural communities any better off? Have the decisions made on their behalf been any better? I think they are decisions we really need to look at in order to consider whether this is the right way to go.

We need to look at a number of other issues. Tonight we have heard a lot about the matter of the predatory chain stores, and I think that that is something we would all agree with. How many people in this Parliament do the bulk of their grocery shopping in Woolworths, Coles or Franklins? I would say if I went around here, the majority of people would put their hands up. I do not shop in those places because I believe in shopping at my local IGA. I very rarely darken those other companies' doors. Probably 2% of my shopping would be one in those places, and only for items that I cannot get locally. Many

people say they aspire to something. I think that the best way to achieve some of these things is to let our actions in the community show what we believe.

I think we would be better off looking at a charter of social responsibilities and encouraging Government to work with large corporations to look at those sorts of things rather than trying to legislate. If we did legislate, we then have to try to define what is a large company, start to define nebulous concepts and then try to interpret whether what they are doing is in line with the expectations of the Parliament or the community. I think that that is an issue of some concern for people.

As I said, whilst this probably provides goals which very few people could really disagree with, the achievement and the expectation of it is something that would probably let the community down. I think we are better off looking at other areas.

I think that the Auctioneers and Agents Act of 1971 as amended provides us with some examples of the sorts of things that we can do in working with companies and corporations to try to achieve these results. With regard to a range of professionals, including commercial agents, motor dealers and auctioneers, the Act says that a committee may, as a guide to the standard of professional conduct expected of auctioneers, compile a code of professional conduct of auctioneers. In this case the code says it must be approved by regulation.

Whilst I am not necessarily advocating regulation, I am saying that we probably should look at some other legislation that we have in place in this State and look at examples of things that may have worked in the past and work with large corporations to achieve those outcomes. I do not think that there is necessarily a strong relationship with NCP and all of the issues that have been raised here tonight because many of the issues relating to the banks happened when deregulation occurred in the middle of the 1980s.

I think we need to be very careful about the decisions that we make and the interpretation of things as we seek to look at them in later times. I do not think that this is the best way of achieving it. However, very few people would argue against the concerns that have been raised here tonight.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2)
Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from p. 4227.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (9.02 p.m.), continuing: Earlier, I was speaking about the need for good legislation and good transport infrastructure in the electorate of Caloundra and on the Sunshine Coast. An issue of particular concern to the residents and to the environmental groups in my electorate is the proliferation of jet skis. The use of jet skis in the Pumicestone Passage is causing considerable stress to local residents, their amenity, lifestyle and safety. Accidents have occurred with recreational fishers, with children and with people swimming in the passage. Very prolific grass seabeds are located in the passage and it is a noted national marine park. It also hosts many migratory birds, which are being disrupted by the careless behaviour of jet ski owners and by the noise and fumes emanating from those jet skis.

The Government proposes to introduce legislation dealing with this issue. The regulations proposed in that Bill are far from adequate. It would be fair to say that in meetings that have been held the community has unanimously rejected those regulations. To my knowledge, the Minister will be bringing forth those same regulations. If the Minister is consulting with people, he has to listen to what they are saying. Hopefully, as legislators, we will put in place what the vast majority of the community wants. That is what we do in a democracy.

Another issue of concern in my electorate is policing and the number of police we have. I would like to endorse the work done by the police at the Caloundra Police Station. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work done by the Juvenile Aid Bureau. The JAB's staff do not have an enviable task. There is certainly not enough of them. The great majority of crime in my area is juvenile crime, some of it drug related, some of it related to juveniles who have very little responsibility shown toward them at home and who often have been expelled from schools or have chosen to be truants. A lot of the petty crimes—the break-ins, the car thefts and so on—are perpetrated by those people, so the JAB has a big job.

I have a great concern that, with the establishment of a new police station at Beerwah, two of our JAB officers will settle down there. That really is not good enough. We need them in Caloundra. At the moment, we have a complement overall, I believe, of something like 35 police. I would like the

Minister's assurance that none of those officers will be taken down to Beerwah, because we need them all in our area.

Of course, the Minister can put extra police in areas around the State because the coalition built the academy in Townsville. That allowed more police to be trained. Those officers are now coming on stream and they can be placed in those areas. I urge the Minister to look at the model of the police to population ratio. It is very inequitable on the Sunshine Coast.

The other issue I would like the Minister to address is twofold. With the growing activity on the waterways in the Caloundra electorate, we need our own branch of the Water Police. There is no point in ringing officers at Mooloolaba and having them come down only to find that by the time the police launch arrives the perpetrators have well and truly gone. Caloundra has an increasing number of canal developments that need to be policed. As I said, we need the Pumicestone Passage, which is a natural wonder, well protected from those who would act as delinquents and hoons and destroy it.

We also need to make sure that adequate police are provided on the beat. A tourist area like the Sunshine Coast, which has a great influx of people during tourist periods, needs to have a corresponding increase in the police force. I am not saying that this should be restricted to the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Cairns and areas where there is an influx of tourists. At the moment, the number of police who have to do that job in the busy tourist periods is the same as the number during off-peak periods. It is a nonsense to say that when the population swells fourfold the same number of police can do the job. They just cannot. It wears them out; they become very stressed; and, of course, the community is not getting the policing that it deserves.

A squad could be implemented to do just that sort of thing around the State. If that were done, then we would not have this problem that occurs. The resources provided need to be over and above the police allocated to police stations during normal periods. I think this needs to be given budgetary consideration.

Health is another issue of great concern to my constituents. A number of elderly retired people reside in my electorate, as well as a number of young mothers and a number of single mothers with the responsibility of looking after their children.

There is only one word that can be used to describe the dental resources at Caloundra

Hospital, and that is appalling. I place on record my absolute support for the dentists and their staff at the dental clinic in Caloundra. They do an incredible job with very few dentists and very few resources to do it. There should be a complement of at least four dentists at that hospital. At the best, we have only two dentists. Often we have only one dentist because the other dentist has to do school duties. This year they have been allocated the duties at Caboolture. The school conditions are just ridiculous.

People are told to line up at the dental clinic in the morning at 6 o'clock—rain, hail or shine. There is no cover; sometimes they line up in terrible weather. Often only the first six patients are taken, so the rest have to go home.

The dentists come on duty about 8.30 a.m. Old people are often very distressed by this, as are mothers with children. Often, mothers who have children who have to go to school have to leave the queue, take the children to school and return to the end of the queue. I have had to contact the Minister about a number of cases where emergency dental services have been needed. One case involved a single mother of three children who had an exposed nerve in her tooth. She was putting Blu Tack on the tooth to try and settle the tooth down because she could not get the service that she required. Are we a caring community or is this the Dark Ages? People deserve basic health care at a much better level than that.

The new development at the hospital, which the coalition Government funded five years ago, is finally under way. This development will be very beneficial to the people of Caloundra, but only if it is adequately staffed and resourced. I intend keeping a watching brief on this matter, because it has taken the Minister for Health nearly three years to get this show on the road. Large hospitals, such as the Royal Brisbane Hospital, have been built in five years. However, we could not manage to spend \$14.6m in Caloundra. One can only believe that the capital went elsewhere, even though it still stayed on the books. That is a budgetary deceit in itself.

We have an excellent sport and recreation centre at Currimundi. The coalition funded the improvements to that centre to the tune of more than \$3m. These improvements were very desperately needed because the Currimundi Recreation Centre is used predominantly by students from our State schools for recreation, sports and camps.

Private schools and primary schools are also permitted to use the resources at the centre. The recreation centre is now catering for people with disabilities. This has been a wonderful development. The centre has a heated swimming pool. However, there is no management plan in place, even though it has been requested by the manager and the Minister. We now have a management plan which has been with the department for some time but has still not been approved. As a result, we cannot go ahead with staffing of the recreation centre.

Until very recently, we could not use the heated pool. It sat there in all its pristine beauty because we had no-one who could supervise users of the pool. A little money has now been made available to the manager which enables him to employ some casual staff. As a result, clients using the recreation centre can now use the pool. The situation was very similar to the "Yes Minister" hospital—a hospital which was up and running, which had a full administrative staff and a waiting list, but no patients. One could say the same of the Currimundi Recreation Centre. We had a built centre, we had staff, we had a heated pool and we had lit tennis courts but the clients could not use it. What a nonsense!

I ask Minister Mackenroth to give approval to the management plan. I also ask him to give the centre adequate resources so that it can be well run. The lit tennis courts and the pool could be rented out to the general community at a not too expensive rate. This would allow the recreation centre to gather some funds which would allow it to function.

I want to raise the question of the establishment of a TAFE college in Caloundra. At the moment we do not have one. We have an apology for a TAFE where a few things can be done, but resources are very limited. Caloundra High School has embraced the Pathways program very enthusiastically. I support that program. However, our students cannot attend a TAFE college in Caloundra; instead, they have to go to Nambour, Cooloola or Mooloolaba—all of which are a long way away from Caloundra High School. A number of employers in Caloundra are interested in being involved in the registered training organisation and are prepared to act as private providers. I know that the high school would like to incorporate a TAFE college as part of its establishment.

However, the high school would need an extra building to cater for the TAFE college. Across the road from the Caloundra High School we have an old Telecom site and

building. I encourage Education Queensland to buy that site, which would enable us to erect a TAFE college there. This is something which could be looked at jointly by DETIR and Education Queensland. The high school would be very happy to have a TAFE college as a co-campus. This could reduce administrative costs. The establishment of the college would allow our students to have a full TAFE education. At this stage, Education Queensland has said, "No, definitely no more land."

I am aware that Australia Post wants to sell the land. Australia Post will not achieve a ready commercial value on the property because it is well away from the commercial centre of Caloundra. It would be excellent if Caloundra High School could obtain this land and go ahead with the construction of the TAFE college. Students in Caloundra would benefit considerably if this project came to fruition.

In a growing community such as Caloundra and the Sunshine Coast we have a lot of needs which should be attended to. One of our needs in Caloundra is for a courthouse. The present courthouse is a joke. It is sitting on land owned by the Department of Justice. The old police station is next door. Police officers in Caloundra have now gone to their new police station. The courthouse land is a Government asset and needs to be sold. The money obtained could be used to build a new courthouse away from the centre of the town—

Time expired.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (9.15 p.m.): This Government has continually denied that our public health system is in crisis, yet inadequate hospital services are raised in this House every sitting day. Townsville General Hospital and Kirwan Women's Hospital are certainly experiencing difficulties with unacceptable delays in surgery.

Recently, Dr Sondergeld of the Australian Medical Association of Queensland visited with medics and TGH management. He claims that patients would wait, and had waited, for years for surgery. He cited a patient whose hernia operation has been scheduled for 2010. He went on to say that doctors had raised issues through hospital channels for six years without success and that doctors had been recruited, only to be told that there was no job because of funding. He said that bed numbers at the new \$170m Douglas Hospital would be 25% fewer than the old hospital had in the mid 1990s.

The Minister's answer to this was to put out a media release in conjunction with the

member for Townsville in which she claimed slight improvements in operation numbers between the June and September quarters, with Mr Reynolds praising the hospital staff. Yet this week up to 10 patients will fly to Prince Charles Hospital for heart surgery. It is cheaper for Townsville General Hospital to send patients south. By giving Prince Charles Hospital more patients, it meant that the hospital met its budget target and shored up its recurrent funding.

North Queenslanders are not so easily hoodwinked. They want answers to the big questions, not glib media releases with obscure statistics from the Health Minister and the Premier's man in the north. I urge the Minister to look at the big picture and answer the big questions. It is apparent to all, including the Queensland AMA, medical staff, nursing staff, patients and their families, that the Townsville General Hospital and Kirwan Women's Hospital are underfunded and underresourced. It is apparent to all except the Minister.

Whilst I am talking about hospitals and funding, I want to raise another issue. I advised this House that in June 1999 I called on the Townsville/Thuringowa Water Board to open the Ross River Dam for recreation. At the same time, I asked the Minister for Transport to fast-track the State's contribution towards the Ross River Bridge. The good news is that, following my call, public consultation and research has taken place and the dam will be opened for community recreation. This is particularly good news for residents of the Upper Ross River area and will be a major drawcard for tourism.

A new section of road from University Drive past the new Douglas Hospital and James Cook University, and a bridge over Ross River, constitutes an essential link for Thuringowa residents and is crucial to our city's development. There are bottlenecks at the Nathan Street intersection and at the roundabouts on University Drive. Hospital emergency vehicles will be delayed unless this road and bridge are built.

The Douglas Arterial Road will not be part of the future national highway system for 10 to 15 years. The construction of the State-developed hospital has brought forward the need for the road. It would remain the State's responsibility until that time. The State Government should share funding with the Federal Government 50/50—that is, \$20m each, not \$7.3m from the State and the rest from the Federal Government.

The Federal Government is happy with this arrangement, both the Townsville and Thuringowa mayors are happy with this arrangement and the people of Townsville and Thuringowa are happy with this arrangement. It is up to the State Government to stop posturing and cooperate. People are fed up with finger-pointing and buck-passing and they do not want any more electioneering over the Douglas Arterial. It will not win brownie points. They want this access and they want it when the hospital is opened. I call on the Government to do the right thing by the people of Townsville and Thuringowa and let us build the bridge.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (9.19 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2000. In speaking to this Bill, I would like to take a moment to remind all in this House that the State Budget 2001-01 Capital Statement states that the Wide Bay/Burnett area received \$119.41 per person which, according to the table, was the lowest per person spent in any region, and 1.09% of the Budget expenditure, which was the fifth lowest across the State. Of course, the highest expenditure was in Brisbane, which received 37.2% of the Budget. I ask this Government to seriously consider a more generous distribution of funding to rural Queensland.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the Ministers of the various departments the areas within the Barambah electorate that need attention. I will start with what would appear to be the most common request from all the mayors in all the electorates—I should say all but one—and that is in relation to the roads. I spoke very briefly with the Minister in the lift and told him that I would be bringing the state of the shire roads to his attention. Although I acknowledge the Minister's reply that a couple of years ago \$30m was spent in the area, it would be remiss of me not to pursue the ongoing needs of the area. The Minister would be the first to admit that \$30m in an electorate the size of Barambah would cover but a very small percentage of the roads.

One of the most often neglected transport issues is that in some areas the roads are not built to handle traffic such as B-doubles and road trains. The Wondai Shire considers that the Byee road and the narrow bridge over Barambah Creek should be upgraded before the closure of the railway line from Murgon to Byee. There is also a need for passing lanes on the Bunya Highway between Wondai and Kingaroy. The Kilcoy Shire is pursuing overtaking lanes on the D'Aguilar Highway on

the western side of Kilcoy to Yarraman. I often travel along that road and I can attest to the long stretches of that road where it is impossible to pass. This road takes in the Blackbutt Range, where I have been told that it will have pull-off bays, but these are really inadequate considering the increasing volume of general traffic and trucks travelling to Tarong North and through-traffic to Rockhampton. There is also a need for funding to rehabilitate the D'Aguilar Highway just west of Kilcoy.

The Rosalie Shire is desperate to have the New England Highway Cooyar to Kingaroy roads upgraded, in particular the construction of passing lanes and the widening of the roads. Nanango sees attention paid to the D'Aguilar Highway from the top of the range to Boobir Creek and Coomba Gully Bridge as being two of the most urgent projects in need of completion. A further section needing attention is the Maidenwell-Bunya Mountains road which, as the Minister would know, is fast becoming the gateway for tourism in the area. Also throughout the shire there is an urgent need for the replacement of guard rails.

In regard to all of these matters we are told that there is no money in the kitty. All of these projects and more could be completed with the millions of dollars that are wasted on projects such as the super stadium that no-one wants and the footbridge that is slowly growing across the Brisbane River. The Chippindale Bridge is an issue in the Kilkivan Shire. I have brought that matter to the Minister's attention only recently. It is a matter that has been of concern to many residents. I have been informed that this bridge is to undergo repairs and maintenance that will "restore" it to its flood-prone condition. I am reliably informed that this bridge is the lowest point between Ipswich and Rockhampton. The bridge is subject to flash flooding, and traffic from the north in particular has limited visibility before being confronted with a flooded waterway.

I will not go into the detail of this matter as the Minister has my letter and letters from other people in which community concerns are conveyed. This issue would have to be acknowledged as a major works project, but I ask the Minister to seriously consider it as this road is a major traffic carrier.

When I use the word "isolation", what do members think of? Sometimes when we are immersed in the turmoil of everyday living we may crave isolation. It is not unusual to want to get away from it all to some quiet place, just as long as we have access to the necessities of life, such as medical attention, shops and the

comforts to which we have become accustomed. However, there is another type of remoteness that is not so pleasant—a remoteness that has been caused by the closing of services that once enabled people who lived in certain areas to communicate with and commute freely to populated areas.

Our forefathers opened large tracts of land well away from the populated coastlines, dangling enticing carrots to encourage people to take up residence and make the barren land productive. They built railways and infrastructure designed to make the remote areas more accessible and tolerable places in which to live. For instance, people in the Kimberleys have one of the finest services in the world, the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Without that service, that area would still be largely unpopulated.

So how remote is remote? In Barambah, many residents are either elderly with family living away or are ill and in need of specialist treatment. Previously, these residents could travel to Toowoomba, Gympie and Hervey Bay on one bus service that used to run the route. Now, Dunkley's bus service has shut down because it cannot afford to provide a service without subsidisation. It could not make a profit from the small numbers of people who used it, even though they may have used it quite frequently and consistently. A few years ago, the trains stopped coming to Barambah except to pick up peanuts, railway sleepers and sometimes cattle. Now people's only means of public transport to Toowoomba and Gympie has gone and they are forced to go to Brisbane, since that is the only bus route to a major centre that is left. How long will it be before that service, too, is unviable?

This Government has insisted that long-distance transport has to be competitive and not receive subsidies. However, it has also admitted to continuing subsidisation for three bus services in western Queensland. The coalition Government started these subsidies in 1997, because the services were under threat of being withdrawn on commercial grounds.

There was a time when Australians paid taxes to provide services to communities. As the word "service" indicates, these were not profit-making ventures; they were put in place by Governments who had the best interests of their voters at heart and profit was not a concern. Now if services do not make a profit they are left to die, strangled by the withdrawal of the taxes that subsidised them. Now we must have the level playing field, or NCP. These ideologies do nothing more than

impoverish the impoverished while lining the pockets of big companies that can afford to serve a little in return for their huge profits. Hasn't anyone told these companies that their free donation to the community may even be a tax deduction for them? Or don't they have to worry about tax because they are multinationals?

The main concern of the Cherbourg Community Council at the moment is the capacity of its current sewerage system to cope with the growing demand. Recent research from consulting engineers has indicated that replacement and relocation of the treatment plant will be required within the next two years. I ask the Minister to treat this matter as one of urgency.

One area needing attention is the availability of public housing. During the Community Cabinet meeting conducted in Kingaroy, the Minister opened a set of units in Kingaroy. Although we are grateful for that, there is a need for much more as waiting lists are quite long throughout the entire electorate. In particular, and on behalf of the Wondai mayor, I ask the Minister to give the Wondai Shire special consideration, as that shire has no public housing at all.

Once again, I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services an issue that concerns the police stationed at the Blackbutt Police Station. Police in that area are confronted with the situation in which approximately 75% of the area's roads are unsealed or clay/dirt roads, which are not just difficult but at times impossible to navigate during periods of wet weather. Blackbutt is surrounded by large tracts of State forest and many of those roads are in that State forest. It is essential that the staff of this police station be equipped with a four-wheel drive vehicle so that they can continue to protect the residents of the area. As I have mentioned, I have brought this matter to the Minister's attention. He informed me that he would pass it on to the relevant authority to be addressed. I understand it is in the pipeline, and I thank the Minister for that. Hopefully, the requisition of a four-wheel drive will be forthcoming sooner rather than later.

The opening line in an article quoting QUT marketing and international business lecturer Dr Mark McGovern states, "Farmers' incomes tipped to disappear". The article goes on to state that the average Australian farmer's income is predicted to drop to nothing by 2017. That grim prediction is the result of a study undertaken at the Queensland University of Technology which looked at incomes in the

1950s and took into account current industry trends. In that article, Dr Mark McGovern stated that agricultural leaders are afraid to confront their futures and must act now to change the income decline. Dr McGovern stated further that our entire agricultural industry needs to be analysed. He went on to say—

"We need to change the whole structure so that those who are presently successful can be even more so.

So this assumption that a few successes are going to change the industry's fortune or a few farmers leaving are going to be able to change the fortune of the industry, these things are going to be just inadequate for the task at hand, so a fairly fundamental re-think is what I'm calling for."

I would like to ask the Minister to concentrate his attention and effort on ensuring that the Premier and the rest of the Beattie Cabinet understands the severity of the crisis facing rural industries in Queensland so that action can be taken and the future of rural industries is secured. In doing that, I would like once again to bring to the Minister's attention the concerns regarding the Minister's or his department's apparent lack of appreciation for the tick eradication program and the delay in extending tick eradication into areas such as Coolabunia, Moffatdale and Boobie.

I am told that this implementation could be achieved with current staffing levels and minimum extra expense. Drought has been mentioned by many members tonight. It has been stated by experts that the ongoing effects and the recovery of those affected is between two and five years. Therefore, it is essential that these people be supported and not left floundering. Dairy deregulation and the true cost has also been addressed by many. The dairy industry in Barambah has also suffered severely.

One area which I believe is vital to community development is the need for Government to provide incentives to encourage industry to rural areas to establish employment opportunities for residents west of the ranges, especially in communities like ours which have suffered through deregulation, NCP and Government legislation.

At a recent meeting of the Burnett Catchment Care Association held on 19 October in Wondai, those who attended expressed concern about the spreading of noxious weeds. I would like confirmation from the Minister that he did in fact get the letter

from the BCCA meeting in which it was stated that due to drought there was a necessity to transport grain and fodder from areas far afield such as central Queensland, an area known for its parthenium. The drought has also forced the movement of stock to feedlots that have been stocked with animals from other areas, which has allowed the spreading of noxious weed seed due to the manure from these feedlots being spread across our paddocks as fertiliser.

Present local government regulations cover the control of known outbreaks of noxious weeds, but do not cover the cleaning of agricultural machinery or trucks transporting the fodder and stock. The Burnett Catchment Care Association is quite concerned about this gap in noxious weed control and I would ask the Minister to review this area in an endeavour to control the spread of these noxious weeds.

Health is an issue that has been mentioned many times tonight. For every shire in the electorate, Kilcoy Shire especially asks for more and better integrated health services for the aged. Respite is a rapidly growing need in all shires and there is an urgent need for the coordination and education of the public as to the availability of the services already in existence in their areas. Throughout all the shires of the electorate there is a consistent request for health services to be maintained and upgraded, not rationalised and downgraded. The Minister may feel she is being particularly picked on, but it is apparent that no-one is convinced they are better off—not the councils, not the staff of the hospitals and not the patients.

I would like to relate one case brought to my attention in which the person involved, on reading the Minister's reply, felt the Minister had called her a liar. That is a very offensive thing to do. Mrs Hale broke her ankle on 1 July 2000. Her husband phoned the Nanango Hospital and was told it was a doctor-free weekend, which happens once every month. He was advised to take his wife to Kingaroy as x-rays could not be taken at the Nanango Hospital without a doctor's authorisation.

I sent my constituent's letter to the Minister. In the Minister's detailed response, she stated, "X-rays, if required, are able to be ordered by the doctor and can be taken at Nanango Hospital if a qualified x-ray endorsed nurse is on duty." The Minister obviously did not read my constituent's short, 10-line letter. It clearly stated it was a doctor-free weekend, which happens once per month. So it was impossible to get an x-ray at Nanango.

Mrs Hale travelled to Kingaroy, a 56 kilometre round trip. A doctor saw her and stated that it has to be a matter of life and death before a radiologist could be called in. The doctor treated the ankle as if it was broken and administered some pain-killing tablets. She made an appointment for an x-ray to be done on Monday morning. Mrs Hale spent the weekend in severe pain. Monday's x-rays established a couple of spiral breaks which required specialist attention.

This Minister has apparently surrounded herself with bureaucrats, many of whom have trouble understanding the real situation. Legislation and answers to questions that come through indicate that she is so far out of touch that in my lifetime it is possible she will not even touch back to earth. Sadly, good people who deserve better have to live with the results. Let me assure the Minister for Health that if the number of complaints coming through my office are any indication, her department is a shambles.

Farrholme has served the elderly well in Kingaroy and they have been cared for by the hospital staff with great respect and consideration. In a couple of years Farrholme will close, and I ask the Minister where she plans to ship these elderly people to? I would ask her to establish facilities in Kingaroy for the growing aged population and not close Farrholme until alternative accommodation is available.

The Minister for Education, Mr Wells, proved his ignorance recently over the true community feeling about the education system. From his response to my comments in my weekly column, apparently I touched a raw nerve with the Minister. Mr Wells accused me of being critical of our local State schools, but nothing could be further from the truth. Even the best teachers in the electorate cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. If the education system is inefficient, no-one will be able to make it work. Mr Wells stated in his letter to the editor that I should ask the community in the region if they were happy with the education system. Mr Wells is apparently unaware that my information concerning the community's feeling was gleaned from a reply paid questionnaire that I distributed quite a few months ago throughout the electorate in which I asked the question, "Does the education system meet the literacy needs of children today?" The result was that 12% of the respondents said yes and 88% said no.

I used the results of this survey and the Courier-Mail's questionnaire results. Mr Wells

should follow his own advice and check his information more thoroughly. I wonder if the Minister fired similar shots across the bow of the Courier-Mail in a response to its negative results. Mr Wells quotes figures from his own departmental survey indicating that 60% of State school parents were satisfied with the system. I would like to see that survey if the Minister would be so kind to produce it. If the Minister has been truthful, one wonders why the Courier-Mail claims that only 28% of parents believe their children have been adequately taught. This, in conjunction with my own findings, seems to indicate that Mr Wells is believing only what he wants to believe. I ask the Minister to not shoot the messenger but to ensure his information is accurate. We do not expect miracles, but there is a situation here that needs addressing.

Members will have noticed that I have conveyed just some of the most urgent needs of the mayors of Kilkivan, Murgon, Cherbourg, Wondai, Nanango, Rosalie and Kilcoy Shires. The Kingaroy mayor is the only mayor who has not conveyed the needs of his shire. I can only assume he believes the shire does not need anything, when in fact that shire has greater needs for infrastructure than most others. I have mentioned some of the shires needs, but time constraints compel me to limit representation.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the various Ministers and the staff of their departments for their assistance whenever needed. They have been most helpful in resolving many issues.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (9.38 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Appropriation Bills, I wish to bring to the attention of the House some of the issues of concern to my constituents. The citizens in the electorate who use the Boyne-Tannum road have raised concerns with me. I have presented a petition to the House which will be formally received tomorrow about the intersection of the Tannum Sands Road, Elizabeth Street and Hampton Drive. The intersection has attracted black spot funding of \$150,000, which has been allocated for signage and additional lighting.

However, the community is looking for things like a roundabout to reduce the potential for accidents. It is a busy road. It is a feeder road for the high school. Tannum Sands Road has quite a high level of holiday traffic, which means people who are unfamiliar with the area use the road. The intersection is an unusual one. It is probably safe if

approached fairly slowly, but most people do not roll through it at 20 km/h.

I notice that a press release today from the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads that acknowledged that \$3m would be allocated to complete a new rail overbridge and pedestrian underpass at Leixlip Creek. That will enhance flood immunity and improve safety for the Calliope schoolchildren. It will cost approximately \$3.3m. Completion date is November 2001. I welcome that announcement. The issue was revisited a couple of times by the member for Gregory when he was Transport Minister, and now the current Minister is revisiting it. I know the students, and particularly their parents, of Calliope school are looking forward to that underpass actually being constructed, as it will get the kids off the Dawson Highway.

There was one announcement that I would have to call intriguing, to say the least, that is the allocation for overtaking lanes on the Gladstone-Benaraby road. Both the Minister for Transport and the current ALP candidate made much of the \$2m allocated for the overtaking lanes. The only difficulty is that it has been in the RIP for three years and the maturation date for that was this year, which was the big announcement. In terms of funding, that has been worked on for three years. Both the previous Government and the current Government had agreed to that allocation for some time.

On behalf of the staff and students of Gladstone State High School, I say that it really has been an encouragement to know that the school has been recognised in the Secondary Schools Renewal Program. They did not make Stage 1, Phase 1, but they have made Stage 1, Phase 2. I have spoken to the Minister fairly quickly on this issue. There are 23 schools in Phase 2, and the project has been capped at \$3.3m because of the number of schools involved and the limit on the amount of finance that is available. It sounds like a lot of money, but with the redevelopment of a site like Gladstone State High School—it is not on a flat block of land, it is on a hill—added disadvantages need to be taken into account. A full refurbishment of the site has been costed at \$6.4m.

The proposal that has been put forward to the Minister and that I believe has received very positive consideration is for the demolition of three 50-year-old buildings—an arts building, a maths building and business tech building—and for their replacement with a technology block and an arts block with adjoining services. Reworking the proposal, to

cut it down to under that capped amount of \$3.3m, means that it is going to be a poor alternative. It has been estimated that we are \$1m short of being able to demolish those three old buildings—and they are old buildings. The area underneath the high block building is being used as an arts room. It is not recognised as an actual room because it does not meet specifications, but students are working out of that block. The choice is to get the job done for \$3.3m, which would be substandard, or for \$4.3m a state-of-the-art refurbishment could be done under the Secondary Schools Renewal Program. It would see the school through for many years and ensure the levelling of those three buildings, resulting in a clear building site and a multilevel solution.

That school was built during a period when Gladstone was under a lot of stress. QAL was being constructed, there was a huge influx of people and they just had to put students somewhere. So the actual mapping of the school site was not able to be done. That is not an adverse reflection on any Government, whether it be this Government or previous Governments; it was a matter of necessity. Those three buildings are very old and the opportunity is afforded to us to be able to do an excellent job. The students there are also working on a sustainability program. If that refurbishment is done well, it could be a model school for integrating sustainability, environmental techniques and a new building design which would be able to be used right across the State. Not only the staff but also the parents and the students are enthusiastic to see a good solution. The current buildings are high maintenance and it would be a shame if, even though it is a significant amount of money, for the want of \$1m the project would be of a standard inferior to what it could be.

The other school in my electorate that is looking immediately for funds is St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School. It has a funding application in at the moment for Stage 1 of a three-stage expansion. It is looking for \$400,000 in funding from State and Federal Governments. The school has enjoyed a 38% increase in student numbers. That has really stretched its resources. It is out in a newer housing area in a young suburb. I know that the school is well regarded for its staff, its quality of education and its care for its students. I would certainly commend the funding of that Stage 1 refurbishment for St John's.

Some time ago the Roseberry shelter was granted approval for a new building by the

Minister for Housing. I commend him. He has been very supportive of the work that Roseberry House has done. It is several years now since the approval was given, and they are looking to see the realisation of that building. I made some inquiries a couple of weeks ago and was advised that the tender had been released; there was an expression of interest for the group apprenticeships to put in a price for the construction of that building. We certainly look forward to seeing the time when that can be formally opened.

Meals on Wheels in my electorate plays an integral role in retaining people in their homes, as I believe it does in every electorate. Each of us would be able to point to volunteer groups who assist in getting the Meals on Wheels out for Families, Youth and Community Care to keep older people in particular in their homes. The Gladstone Meals on Wheels, which has been presided over by Prescare, has been advised that Prescare wishes to withdraw. The stand-alone facility, which has been constructed on land granted to Meals on Wheels, is in the tenure of Prescare, which is saying that it wants \$125,000 for that facility.

It is important that the community retains ownership of that facility. It is specifically built for Meals on Wheels. It is a kitchen that meets all the standards and it would be a tragedy to see that facility lost by Meals on Wheels. I do know that Blue Care has expressed interest in taking over Meals on Wheels. Its core business is aged care provision and it does a very good job of it. Irrespective of what happens in the short term, I believe it is critical that the funding for the acquisition of the Meals on Wheels kitchen from Prescare be made available by the Government to ensure the continuity of that service not necessarily in the short term, but in the long term.

The care for our people with disabilities is ongoing. We have a high need, as most electorates would, for foster care placements. The constant challenge for a number of our organisations is to find families who are willing to take on the responsibility of children, knowing that in many instances there is a cost to them. Funding is paid to caregivers, but small difficulties have been found in that the clothing allowance does not cover the actual cost to clothe the children who grow out of their clothing so very quickly. Whilst I do not have a specific request in terms of the amount of money that is needed, I do know that foster carers are finding it more and more difficult to extend their compassion and care to these young children, particularly the ones who grow quickly and who are tougher on clothing. This

is happening because they as individuals and as families are finding it difficult to afford the cost because clothing and similar allowances just do not cover all the needs.

Queensland relies heavily on tourism as a job generator; it is acknowledged that it is one of the growth industries in our area. An irony occurs when visitors from regional Queensland come to Brisbane. There was such an instance today when two bus loads of students came down for a week in Brisbane. One of the things they do is tour Parliament. They also go to the museum and they have a wonderful time. But bus drivers who live outside of Brisbane find it very difficult to find anywhere to park. It used to be that there were parks at South Bank, at the Lyric Theatre and in William Street and the bus drivers knew they could park the bus there for the period that the students were away doing their activity. All of those parks have disappeared. The only city bus parks are in Alice Street—for the quickest two bus drivers in the town. If they cannot find a park they have to constantly move their buses around but remain within a suitable distance so that they can pick up the students, deliver them to their appointed venues and be available to them during the lunch break because the students leave their lunches on the buses. It is not just student travel, either, that experiences that problem. Bus loads of retired people—pensioners—who come down to Brisbane also experience that. Their bus drivers face the same problem.

If people are going to be encouraged to come to Brisbane for shows, other cultural pursuits and educational pursuits, a simple issue such as car parking in the centre of Brisbane should be made more accessible. That is a tourism issue. One bus driver I spoke to said that they had been told that they could park in the Valley, but it is too far away. Senior citizens do not want to be standing around for 20 minutes while a bus materialises. They need to be able to access their transport quickly and conveniently. Representations have been made to the Brisbane City Council. It has not absolved itself of the responsibility; it appears that it is pretending that the problem does not exist. I draw that issue to the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Racing, because it is an issue that reflects the accessibility of city facilities for regional and rural Queensland. I have also spoken with the Minister for Tourism and Racing about the relocation of the racetrack in Gladstone. I am pleased to note that she is supportive and interested in the issue. That matter is being progressed. It is essential that the track be

available for sale so that the proceeds can be used to offset the costs of relocation.

Each electorate can point to problems it faces in relation to emergency services and critical services. Gladstone has a wonderful police force. The officers are competent, efficient and do the very best they can in sometimes very trying situations. On the many occasions I have spoken with the Minister for Police and Corrective Services he has been responsive in attending to the issues I raise with him, and I thank him for that. Recently, four trainees were confirmed as appointed to the Gladstone district. Appreciation was expressed in the media for those appointments. The difficulty is that, as soon as those appointments were confirmed, five people were transferred out of the district to positions they had applied for previously. So it is back to the status quo, that is, we got four but lost five. As I have previously said in this Chamber and in the media, there is a similar problem with emergency services, in particular the ambulance service.

In these industries names are attached to positions. The roster in the Police Service may have 37 uniformed officers. Names may be attached to the positions, but in many instances the people are not available to do the work. An example of this point is Paul Ruge. Paul has been selected to assist the United Nations peacekeeping forces in East Timor. Sergeant Ruge is a wonderful police officer. He does a great job. His wife is also involved in a community-based position. She, too, does a wonderful job. However, for six months he will be in East Timor. Paul will be retained on the list of officers available to fill the roster in the Gladstone district for that six-month period, but he will not be there to do any of the work. There is a constant problem of a roster that has to be filled with names against the positions vacant in a region but where the people are not available to do the job. Paul will be in East Timor. Others may be away on leave, because they have court responsibilities or health problems. The actual number of officers available to do the work continues to reduce.

There was a recent instance of road rage in Marmor. A vehicle pushed a man off the road and the driver of that vehicle jumped out of his vehicle to allegedly assault the man while he was still in his vehicle. The Mount Larcom police officer is attached to the Mount Larcom station, but he is on holidays and has not been replaced. I believe that the Marmor officer is also on holidays and has not been replaced. The only available officer was in Gladstone. He had to go to Marmor to assist

the man. In the interim, the man sat in his vehicle absolutely terrified.

I ask the Police Minister to look at giving relief to districts which have a significant number of officers who are not available to fill the roster, even though they are still on the payroll. It places untold stress on the officers who remain. It means that officers cannot realistically go to important calls and, as occurred with the Marmor incident, calls of safety, because officers are not available. The positions are not vacant, but there needs to be surplus police numbers in order to fill those positions when the vacancy is for a protracted period.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Yes, a pool is what is needed. There are still problems in attracting specialist services to hospitals in my region. There was recently a problem with an obstetrician/gynaecologist position. I thank the Minister for Health for her department's response to inquiries from me, but we as a Parliament will continue to face the challenge of meeting appropriate specialist services in rural and regional Queensland to give a service to the community which it deserves.

Some time ago the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer required from the Gladstone Port Authority a debt for equity swap. To my knowledge, that has not been finalised. I still remain opposed to the principle of it. However, Mayor Peter Corones said that whilst he was opposed to it he would put forward a number of issues to be funded from that debt for equity withdrawal. These matters should not be predicated on the Government allocated part or all of that \$75m for these projects. They are projects that stand alone on their merit. They should be funded because the community deserves that recognition.

These projects included an expansion of the library, funding of a multipurpose sports complex, an expo at the waterfront as a tourism drawcard called the Gladstone Showcase, the CBD redevelopment and waterfront redevelopment for tourism and a number of other projects. I particularly commend to the Minister the multipurpose sporting complex and the library. Both are critical community infrastructure. They can be defended because our community not only needs them but also deserves to have those facilities available to it. The funding should be made available not because of the debt for equity swap forced on the GPA—

Time expired.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—IND) (9.57 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to

address the Appropriation Bills. My electorate of Maryborough lies within the Federal electorate of Wide Bay. A recent Federal parliamentary research paper identified that the Wide Bay Federal electorate is amongst the most disadvantaged in Australia, taking into consideration a range of socioeconomic factors. My constituents rely on a diversity of heavy and light manufacturing and primary industries for their income and lifestyle. Currently, all the components that make up the diversity which gave our community strength and resilience are under threat. Identifying how to make a living whilst preserving some remnants of a lifestyle is now similar to looking for Lassiter's lost reef. I can see the most determined, tenacious workers wilting. The member for Bulimba knows that there are some very hard workers in Maryborough.

Currently, my constituents feel threatened by both the Federal and State Governments. The blind acceptance of globalisation and the WTO rulings by the Federal Treasury and Ministers establishes an underlying feeling of insecurity. Such insecurity is firmly entrenched by the following examples. Firstly, heavy engineering companies experience difficulties encountered when the privatised West Australian railways calls for tenders for around 170 rail carriages. Such a tender is within easy reach of the very large European companies such as Adtrans and Siemens, but it is very difficult for companies such as Walkers and its subcontractors, who are faced with supply lead times of up to six months for stainless steel and the confusion caused by the intermittent supply of imported steel from Korea at a price up to \$200 a tonne lower than that of Australian steel.

Secondly, insecurity is more deeply entrenched when farmers know that 70% of European beef farmers' income and 81% of Swiss farmers' income is generated by Government subsidies and intervention. Yet our Federal Government deliberated for six months about imposing a small import duty on Danish pork, whilst our pig farmers perished, and then concluded that allowing the continuation of pork importation would cause a drop in the marketplace but then the market would stabilise and farmers would be able to rebudget.

Thirdly, that insecurity and the feeling of loneliness increased when, later, two bright young Queenslanders within the QDPI, using a better econometric model, illustrated that the pork market will not stabilise and thus will not provide a basis for forward budgeting and decision making.

Fourthly, the feeling of being below consideration increases when second and third generation dairy farmers who responded to the continuous economic gospel started by Doug Anthony to "get bigger or get out" and who managed substantial, efficient businesses throughout their lives are told by the Prime Minister and his Minister for Primary Industries that they can go and work on the slaughter line in an improved pig slaughterhouse. What a great vision for these efficient farmers!

I acknowledge that the examples I have mentioned are all generated by the Federal Government, but they establish the economic environment in which my constituents are expected to compete and survive. I ask: can we blame them for feeling insecure and at the mercy of non-sympathetic Governments? Unfortunately, that environment colours constituents' reception of the activities of this Queensland Government, and I submit that this Government has been equally non-sympathetic to primary producers and rural communities.

I will start with a short consideration of this Government's capital works budget for the year 2000-01. The Wide Bay/Burnett region has been allocated 1.9% of capital works expenditure but has 6.6% of the State's population. I have already identified that the Wide Bay Federal electorate, which almost conforms geographically with the Wide Bay/Burnett region, enjoys one of the worst socioeconomic situations in Australia. So what has this Government done to redress this deplorable and uncomfortable environment? The capital works plan for the Wide Bay/Burnett represents an expenditure of \$119.41 per inhabitant—the lowest in the State, with the highest being Fitzroy with \$693.25. Brisbane will enjoy \$346.81 per person—almost three times the expenditure planned for the Wide Bay/Burnett.

I say to the Treasurer that electors in my electorate consider that this capital works budget is politically driven, not driven by careful consideration of economically assessed investment and certainly not driven by consideration of the relative socioeconomic conditions of different regions within this democratic, egalitarian State.

In the past, Maryborough was the administration and supply centre for the Wide Bay region, including the North and South Burnett districts. The distribution of required purchases and the orderly collection of product was facilitated by the rail lines running from Maryborough to Kingaroy, Gayndah and Eidsvold and to Hervey Bay.

My family operated a wholesale drug company. Our only comparative advantage was simply that we could deliver orders overnight, courtesy of the rail lines and QR's excellent service. Our comparative advantage and that of other Maryborough distributors disappeared with the downgrading in the rail services, despite the road service offered by Q-Link.

I receive constant complaints, particularly from older people, that they find it very difficult to access the essential services which are located in Maryborough and which continue to disappear from small rural communities. They constantly ask why this Government cannot supply or assist with the provision of rail motor type services or equivalent public transport services which can adequately service the small communities that lie near the rail tracks or near the highways.

The retail industry in Maryborough desperately needs to increase its shopping population. It cannot do this without attractive travel services in and out of Maryborough. We are grateful for the current upgrading of the Bruce Highway around Gunalda, but this work is Federally funded. The member for Gregory is to be congratulated on his quick and recent identification of the importance of the roads from Maryborough to Biggenden and Maryborough to Hervey Bay and the need for them to be upgraded urgently. We are constantly being told of the importance of drive-by tourism, but the lack of upgrading of roads—called goat tracks by the aligned Maryborough Council—does not show our tourism operators that this Government is prepared to back its rhetoric by facilitating investment in roads.

The Maryborough CBD is starting to look like a ghost town from a western movie. I thank the Minister for Primary Industries for supplying the lethal blue and white striped tents which currently shroud our termite infested buildings, but if the current trends continue I will have to ask him to leave those tents there to liven up the appearance of the CBD. Caring Governments must realise that the viability of regional cities depends on a multitude of contributors internal and external to the city. If one of these contributors is knocked around, then people within the provincial city and in the surrounding districts suffer.

For many years Walkers was the major employer in Maryborough. It is still seen as the economic indicator. In the last few weeks I had a meeting with Walkers' management. The foundry, despite its deserved reputation for

innovation, is almost without work, and uniquely skilled tradesmen are starting to contemplate a bleak future. The rolling stock workshop is currently confronted by the situation that if new work cannot be found very quickly then the employment graph is all downhill. It is important that it is recognised that the lead time from winning a contract to the employment of tradesman can be up to nine months.

Walkers in Maryborough recognises and is grateful for the efforts of this Government, especially the building of the tilt train, but QR employees who are currently being invited to take early voluntary retirement tell me that the tilt train can be more effectively promoted and filled with passengers and that, if the staff numbers at Maryborough West are further decreased, they will not be able to provide the first-class service that a train of this calibre demands. Another tilt train or some specialised adaptations will capitalise on the past investment in developing this technology, will assist Walkers and will assist the tourism industry.

The headquarters of EDI's energy division are now based in Maryborough. They desperately need to be significantly involved in the supply of the co-generation plant currently being considered by Stanwell and the Maryborough Sugar Factory. I have just organised for one of CSIRO's best foresters to examine the farms close to the sugarmill to establish if we can grow short rotation timber to supply fuel to the co-generation plant in the non-crushing season.

The biggest employer in the Maryborough district is the sugar industry. We are fortunate to have a very progressive and considerate mill ownership. With their leadership, sewage irrigation is being developed and the total production of cane has increased to almost one million tonnes. Sugar growers need reliable irrigation water, and currently they are very nervous about continuity of supply and the price.

Recent legislation such as the Sugar Bill, the Vegetation Management Bill, the Water Bill and so on have imposed the need for farmers to construct maps and plans of their properties for water control and vegetation management. I accept the logic of this request, but I cannot find any logic in the steady reduction of QDPI and DNR field staff who once could have been expected to assist farmers acquire the necessary skills.

Orange rust is infecting cane variety Q124 in the north, and a significant proportion of Maryborough cane is 124. The Maryborough

Sugar Factory is assisting farmers access cheap loans to replace variety 124. I cite this to prove that the Maryborough community is prepared to get active and to help itself, but more Government concern for rural communities which are already under duress would improve the reputation of this Government in rural areas.

During debate on the clean food legislation I made a plea for research funding to ensure that that Bill could achieve its objectives with the minimum of inconvenience and cost and the maximum efficiency. The 1999-2000 report of the Sugar Research and Development Corporation provides an example of what a sound investment such research can be. The SRDC research achieved a benefit cost ratio of 6 to 1. More precisely, it spent \$33m to bring a benefit to the cane industry and the communities involved of \$200m.

I urge the member for Inala to seriously consider the widespread benefits of such research. I gratefully acknowledge the current activity of the Department of State Development relating to the diversification of the Maryborough sugar industry and I assure the Deputy Premier that more than adequate land will be available, as will local industry assistance.

One bright spot on the Maryborough horizon is the building of the new correctional centre. The Minister, when challenged in this House about locating the prison at Maryborough, stated that it was located there because the community was supportive to the point of being insistent. I wish to advise the Minister and this House that the revised proposal which was successful was written and negotiated by a volunteer group of Maryborough citizens. Those people continue to work towards solving any remaining problems and are preparing to provide the necessary services to assist the smooth assimilation of the prison into our community.

The Maryborough Base Hospital has been a running sore within the Maryborough community for some years. Whilst no-one in the Maryborough community wants to deny excellent hospital services to Hervey Bay, we do not want our medical services decreased. This became such a turbulent issue that the Premier had to travel to Maryborough and defuse what he called a character building experience for the Minister for Health. The Premier asked Maryborough citizens to trust him and they did, and I think they still do. But they do not trust Queensland Health staff to deliver what the Premier promised. In fact,

they believe that the aim of management is to steadily downgrade Maryborough and upgrade Hervey Bay.

Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to tell the Premier that, in my opinion, unless there is a perceived change in the attitude of management, unfortunately he will have to intervene again. I ask him when he does, can he please bring his own glasses so that he does not have to borrow mine and I can also read what is being written!

The Minister frequently refers to the difficulty of acquiring skilled medical staff for provincial hospitals. Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I recommend to the Minister that she has a serious look at the strategy initiated by St Stephens Private Hospital. It identified a highly qualified, skilled orthopaedic surgeon who now works by arrangement at the Hervey Bay Hospital and at St Stephens Medical Centre for the benefit of both communities and at a minimal cost to Queensland Health.

In the time remaining I want to concentrate on the negative impacts of this Government on our primary industries and then identify what I and others with more experience see as a great opportunity for Maryborough to become a first-class provider of training to overseas students.

Firstly, I will deal with the RFA. The undertaking by Hynes to establish extensive softwood plantations helped the Premier and the Deputy Premier to broker the RFA agreement. Currently Hynes, a very respected, progressive and aggressive marketing company, is reducing shifts and staff at the Tuan pine mill as it cannot sell enough pine.

Dairy deregulation has shattered many second and third generation dairy farming families. Last week I watched four semitrailers of Holstein cattle selected for generations for milk production depart for the abattoir. The sight of the family standing watching is something I will not forget in a long time. The dairy farmers who have survived until the time of deregulation are the efficient operators. The ones who will go bankrupt first are the ones who followed Government and industry recommendations and borrowed to expand. The loss of their allocations is reflected as a write-off of capital in their balance sheets, yet their compensation payments are taxable. Obviously, the Australian Taxation Office knew what it was about, but the industry looters and the Government did not. The flow-on impacts of this legislation are being multiplied throughout regional communities.

The Dairy Industry Adjustment Package is targeted at regional problems. It does have a private enterprise component but that, too, is geared to encourage groups rather than individuals and it involves farmers providing 50% of the funding. I am afraid I find it hard to get excited about it and so do almost all displaced dairy farmers whom I know. Several dairy farmers I know are considering moving into the farm holiday industry, wherein visitors can live and work with the family and enjoy life on a dairy farm. I challenge the Minister and his advisers to be their first customers.

The vegetation legislation is causing confusion amongst graziers and silviculturists. That confusion increased during the past few weeks when some ecosystems were upgraded from "of concern" to "endangered". The recent article entitled "The Evergreen News" in the forestry publication *Between the Leaves* could be interpreted as saying that, whilst the forestry department practises silviculture—or assisted natural regeneration—there was no problem with sustainability of supply. If this is so, one must ask why did they stop? Was the funding withdrawn?

How can Maryborough, the multiskilled electorate, pull itself out of these Government created holes? We have a multitude of very skilled people across a whole range of skills, skills that are highly valued by the developing countries—practical skills, implementation skills and dirty hand skills. I know from experience that, given sufficient incentive following the creation of trust, developing countries will pay to acquire such skills. I know that the Maryborough electorate can provide the trainers, real hands-on trainers, and the facilities, real working facilities. But those trainers will need ongoing contracts to use as training materials. We also currently lack the organisation or institution capable of organising and reliably delivering the courses and winning the trust and confidence of the overseas market. That is our target for the future and we will welcome advice and assistance from all sources.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (10.17 p.m.), in reply: In concluding debate on the Appropriation Bills this evening, I want to thank honourable members for their wide-ranging—

Mr Hegarty: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr HAMILL: Sir, pardon me, but I had the call.

Mr HEGARTY: I rise to a point of order. We have the speaking list here. It is well documented.

Mr HAMILL: And the member for Redlands is not on it.

Mr HEGARTY: I am sorry, I am. If you look at the list, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! Member for Redlands, I did not see you stand up, and so the Treasurer has—

Mr HEGARTY: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have given you the list. You are digressing from protocol. If the Minister is not informed of the progression of the speaking list, that is his problem. But I was here ready to jump.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. I was given the call and I am concluding the second-reading debate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Could I just say that the member for Redlands did not stand up. I call the Treasurer.

Mr HAMILL: After quite a wide-ranging debate, which has now extended over some 12 or 13 hours—

Mr HEGARTY: I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that you did not call the Treasurer—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry, but I did call the Treasurer, and that is not a point of order. I call the Treasurer.

Mr HAMILL: As I was saying, the debate on the Appropriation Bills has been an interesting one and it has been very wide ranging. After listening intently to the offerings of honourable members, I am at a loss to find anyone who really addressed the point that the Appropriation Bills that are before the House actually relate to unforeseen expenditure from the last financial year. So much of the debate seemed to be prospective rather than retrospective. Nevertheless, I will make just a couple of brief points.

Last year Queensland recorded very strong growth of 4.9%—far in excess of our Budget forecast, and comparing that to 4.2% for the rest of Australia we find that Queensland performed quite admirably. It is noteworthy, however, that we are expecting that this year growth will ease somewhat. I note the comments made by the member for Moggill in relation to the QCCI Pulse survey. However, I draw his attention to the full findings of that particular survey. For the September quarter 2000 the QCCI stated that 49% of respondents experienced deterioration in their general business conditions, compared to 29% who reported improved activity.

According to the QCCI, major contributing factors in the significant deterioration include administration for the introduction of the GST,

higher interest rates, uncertainty over further rate hikes and increased fuel prices. All of those matters are outside of the capacity of the Queensland Government to respond. All of those issues relate to national economic policies and the deliberate policies of the Commonwealth Government which have resulted in a considerable burden being placed upon industry—and particularly the road transport industry—through the Commonwealth's greed in the extraction of increasing levels of excise on already inflated fuel prices.

This is a matter of concern to the Queensland Government. Notwithstanding these extraneous impacts, we certainly are not deviating from our prime purpose, and that is to generate employment and job opportunities in Queensland. I note that at a time when the overall labour force data indicates some deterioration in the labour market nationally, the trend unemployment rate in Queensland has remained steady on the figures which were released earlier today.

Nevertheless, the general slowing of the economy nationally is impacting upon the regional economy of Queensland, and that is a matter of concern. That is why our record capital works program this year of some \$5.3 billion is of great significance, particularly when one considers the dreadful impact that the GST and rising interest rates have had upon activity in the housing and construction sector, which has long been recognised as a barometer for the general health of the economy.

I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate. Let me assure honourable members that the Queensland Government will not take its eye off the ball. We are determined to continue to provide the fiscal framework which ensures that Queensland will have a leading role as the economic and job generating powerhouse in Australia. I commend the Bills to the House.

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP)
(Treasurer) in charge of the Bills.

Appropriation Bill (No. 2)

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr HEGARTY (10.22 p.m.): Lack of expenditure from the Appropriation Bill for the year 2000-01 could not be more greatly

highlighted than in the area of education. I bring to the attention of the House the sad and sorry saga—

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. Clause 2 of this Bill relates to expenditure in 1999-2000, not 2000-01, as the honourable member was addressing. In accordance with the Standing Orders, I ask that the honourable member restricts his comments relating to the Bill to the clause in question.

Mr HEGARTY: Before I was able to get to the point, the Honourable the Treasurer raised the very issue that I am referring to in the area of education. Sadly and unfortunately, it reflects on the unexpended revenue from the year 1999-2000. The area I am specifically referring to is the lack of a student centre being provided at the Victoria Point State High School in my electorate.

That particular matter of expenditure was scheduled in the 1999-2000 Budget but, because the current Government could not meet its financial commitments, it slipped back to the year 2000-01. Even worse, we are now well into the 2000-01 Budget year and the school's student centre has still not been commenced. We are now in the latter stages of the school year and not a sod has been turned for that particular learning establishment.

Additionally, next year the Year 12 students, and subsequent students who attend the institution, will be left short of eight general learning areas. The student centre should have been part of Stage 4 of the capital works program.

This is a damning indictment of this Government's inability to manage its financial program. We have a growing community in the Redlands area, which I represent. This is one very significant area where the Government has fallen down. The Government cannot maintain its capital works program because it does not have the money. The Government has not expended the money that was promised in the year 1999-2000 or in the year 2000-01 because it is short of funds. It is gross financial mismanagement. Children attending the high school are now missing out on vital education facilities which should be the very basis upon which this Government rests its credentials.

This is not the only area where expenditure has not been up to scratch. I could mention a couple of other areas, particularly in the transport and road areas, where we have problems. Under the coalition Government, the roads program—

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. There is no unforeseen expenditure in the Bill relating to transport.

Mr HEGARTY: I refer to the Roads Implementation Program. The particular area of concern is the Windemere Road/Vienna Road area in the electorate of Capalaba. More than \$2m has been planned to be spent on this area for over two years. However, here we are in the 2000-01 Budget year and nothing has been done. Not a shovel has been turned on that particular road. This is just another example where this Government has failed dismally in not expending the money which was allocated and which was projected to be expended not only in the 1999-2000 year but also in the 2000-01 year. It is only a relatively small section of road but it carries a great volume of traffic which is moving through the southern part of my electorate.

Another section of the road further south of the area to which I have just referred was completed at a cost of more than \$6m when the coalition was in Government. However, we are left with this small piece of road which needs to be built. However, it will not be done under this no-can-do Government.

The next section of road to which I refer is the continuation from Vienna Road to Redland Bay Road. This is a \$6m project that will never see the light of day while this Government has control of the Treasury benches. Going further south in my electorate, I refer to the Bryants Road and Cairns Street area. This section of road needs duplicating towards the Pacific Motorway. The Pacific Motorway is a magnificent road commenced under the coalition Government. It is almost a \$1 billion section of roadway. We now need these connection roads. However, this Government is falling down on the job; it cannot complete the connection roads which will enable the traffic flow to meet up with our major arterial roads.

I could mention another small piece of infrastructure on Redland Bay Road. I am referring to the provision of a right-turn arrow on Cleveland-Redland Bay Road at the intersection of Clay Gully Road. There is a retirement village at that particular location. The elderly residents in that area are concerned that there is an accident waiting to happen because this Government will not allocate \$11,000 to provide a right-turn arrow to allow the residents to negotiate that section of the road safely. It is a small amount of money in anyone's terms. Because of the lack of \$11,000 we cannot have a right-turn arrow because this Government cannot manage its finances.

As other honourable members will agree, every day we have people coming to our offices requiring small amounts of money to be expended on services. These matters could be attended to if this Government knew how to correctly manage its finances.

I will give honourable members an example. The Redland Bay community has been very proactive in providing funding for the local ambulance service. When the ambulance station was opened a year ago the local residents did a very good job of equipping the interior of the station. Yet what do we find? Just recently, one of the officers who was allocated to that station—a trained paramedic—was transferred to the Mount Gravatt station. That is just one example of how the whole system has been falling into a hole. Obviously, the paramedic has to fill a position elsewhere because the Government does not have the money to fund a replacement officer at that station. So the community that funded all of this wonderful equipment at the Redland Bay station has been duded by a Government that cannot manage its finances.

That is a shameful indictment on a Labor Government, which is supposed to look after the interests of the battlers, the people who cannot finance their own health requirements. In the lead-up to the last election, the Labor Party touted the fact that it was going to abolish ambulance fees for pensioners. The Labor Party is now going to dud those people of the very services that they were looking forward to receiving from a paramedic—someone who could do a little bit more than the average ambulance officer in a life-threatening situation.

I refer now to a situation that applies not only to the Health portfolio but also to the Education portfolio, and that is the provision of speech therapy. Recently, a couple came to see me about this issue. They had a young child under school age. They were vitally concerned that their child could not receive speech therapy from the health system, which would impede that child's progress in the future. In the same week I was asked to go to a school in my area. At that school, the work of the remedial teachers is being hampered by the fact that speech therapy is not being addressed by the Education Department.

The list goes on and on, because this Government cannot provide the funds that it touted it was going to provide in its massive Budgets. It does not have the money. The Government has lost it to other areas. It held back funding in the 1999-2000 financial year

and it is holding back funding this current financial year. I think that is a damning indictment of this Government.

Those are just a couple of issues that I wanted to raise in the short time that I had available to me to highlight the ineptitude and mismanagement that the Treasurer and this Labor Government have foisted on the electors of Queensland.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2)

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of Dissent

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP)
(10.34 p.m.): I move—

"That Mr Speaker's ruling that Mr Beanland's question without notice to the Premier was sub judice be dissented from."

In rising to speak to this motion, I want to say that the Opposition will not be taking its full length of time. Although on 5 October the Government used the guillotine to handle by way of cognate debate some 10 dissent motions in a one-hour period, we are very much aware of the time.

This Government is simply rotting the system. This Attorney-General and this Government know exactly where the bodies are buried. This whole exercise is a cover-up of the highest degree.

Mr Foley: You're embarrassing.

Mr BEANLAND: I want to go through the history of this matter and show just how embarrassed this Government is. I invite members to listen to this. I would suggest that, as the member opposite did a fine job of putting his foot in it, he should keep quiet.

We should not forget that the Government moved to guillotine the debate on the motions of dissent because it was running scared. The Premier rushed out of the Chamber with his tail between his legs. On that last occasion he did not want to debate the

dissent motions—no way, not all 10 of those dissent motions.

This issue is about protecting the AWU. The sub judice rulings come and go as the Speaker pleases. It is little wonder that the Opposition has been so appalled and shocked by his rulings. On so many occasions the Opposition has moved dissent motions to those rulings, because the Speaker moves that questions are sub judice willy-nilly to protect the AWU faction—a faction, I might say, of which he is a member. That is erratic decision making. It has nothing to do with any inquiry in another place.

I turn now to how this exercise panned out. Of course, the Beattie Labor Government is extremely sensitive when it comes to Mr Bermingham, and that is exactly what this issue is about. The question was simply asked in relation to Mr Bermingham. It was asked of the Premier—no-one else. Of course, on a number of occasions the Premier has indicated that he is extremely happy to answer all questions. He says, "I am always happy to answer these questions, being the generous soul that I am, a lovable person at heart." However, on this particular day a question was asked in relation to Mr Bermingham, and this time it was ruled sub judice.

I want to go through the list of questions that were asked in relation to Mr Bermingham that were ruled sub judice. That is very important, because it shows why the Opposition has moved dissent motions. On 4 October 2000, the member for Moggill asked the Deputy Premier whether he employed Mr Lee Bermingham. That question was ruled out of order on the grounds of sub judice. Yet on 17 October, the same question was asked of the Minister for Mines and Energy and was not ruled out of order. It was not ruled sub judice. The question was allowed.

Not only that, on 4 October, two questions after the question asked by the member for Moggill of the Deputy Premier, a Dorothy Dix question was asked of the Deputy Premier in which he was allowed to answer the member for Moggill's question. Accordingly, the Hansard shows that. Then we had the ludicrous situation in which a question was asked of the Minister for Tourism and Racing by the member for Caloundra. That was also ruled out of order, yet the Minister rose from her seat and said that she had a matter of privilege that she wanted to raise. Despite the Speaker ruling the question out of order, the Minister proceeded to answer that same question on a matter of privilege. The Minister

was not ruled out of order by the Speaker; she was allowed to answer the question.

Then on the same day the Parliament witnessed that shameful outburst by the member for Woodridge in which he went to great lengths to try to distance the Labor Party from distorting, cheating and corrupting the electoral rolls. I might add that, in answering the question, the Deputy Premier got the part about Mr Bermingham wrong and had to come back into the Parliament and correct the record. We had high farce in relation to the whole situation. Moreover, the member for Noosa had to then come back into the Chamber and correct the record, because the Deputy Premier still had it wrong. He had two goes, but he got it wrong twice.

The question to the Premier had nothing to do with any inquiry in another place or the Deputy Premier. In fact, my question simply asked the basic question—

"Can the Premier inform the House why his beloved ALP and the member for Woodridge were perfectly capable of investigating irregularities in union ballots but failed to show anything like the same expertise or enthusiasm for allegations of electoral corruption?"

I can well understand why the Premier wanted the Speaker's protection and this question was suddenly ruled out of order. He was suddenly unhappy to answer it, even though he had said he was happy to answer all of these questions. So we have the situation that questions are answered when it suits the faction and not answered when it does not. The Premier really has his tail between his legs when it comes to the issue and quite obviously he does not want to get further involved with Mr Bermingham.

The sub judice rulings handed out in this House have in fact been handed out in a very discriminatory fashion and, of course, Hansard is there for all and sundry to read. The Speaker is well aware of the erratic way in which these decisions are handed out. It is all about protection of the Government and protection of the AWU faction of the Labor party, the same faction that the Speaker is a member of. This is about, among other issues, protecting the Government in what is a very difficult time in relation to matters happening in another place. It is about protection of the AWU. I think I have shown that the rulings are not about sub judice but about protection of the Government, the cheating Government. It is about making decisions—

Mr SPEAKER: Would the member please keep to this dissent motion?

Mr BEANLAND: I certainly am. I am talking about this motion as I read it out—

Mr SPEAKER: You are not, really; you are talking about the history. If you would like to talk to this motion—

Mr BEANLAND: This is all about this particular question, a reference to Mr Bermingham which, Mr Speaker, you have ruled out of order on a number of occasions and allowed on a number of occasions.

Mr SPEAKER: I am asking you to refer to this motion of dissent.

Mr BEANLAND: I certainly am. I can understand the reason why you are very unhappy about this matter being raised—

Mr SPEAKER: I am not unhappy at all.

Mr BEANLAND:—because it calls into question your judgment. Mr Speaker, if you wish to come and join the debate you are welcome to do so, but you should not try to do that from the Speaker's chair. You are there to protect the members, as I have told you previously.

Mr SPEAKER: That is a reflection on the Chair and I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr BEANLAND: I do, Mr Speaker. I have indicated previously—

Mr SPEAKER: I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr BEANLAND: I have withdrawn. I have indicated previously—

Mr SPEAKER: And I ask you to keep to this dissent motion.

Mr BEANLAND: I am. Mr Speaker, I have indicated previously the reason why you should not be in the chair presiding over these debates. I think that is a fair comment which even you must take to heart, because you have participated on a number of occasions and you have done so again this evening. So it is quite clear what this is about. It is quite clear why the opposition has moved dissent from your ruling, Mr Speaker, because your rulings are most erratic; they do not follow a pattern. There is nothing sub judice about the question I asked. In fact, Mr Speaker, what you do continually is make things up as you go along. That is exactly what happens. In fact, there is an old saying in the Labor Party—if all else fails, laugh it off. Mr Speaker, we understand what you mean by laughing it off, because you have endeavoured to do that with this issue, but it simply will not wash.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.43 p.m.): I rise to second the motion and reiterate what the member for Indooroopilly has just mentioned, that there have been a number of inconsistent

rulings on this subject. Ministers have chosen to answer questions when in fact there has been no need to answer them. The issues that were at the heart of the question have been canvassed widely in newspapers and other media outlets, and for the matter to be ruled sub judice is inconsistent—

Mr SPEAKER: This is a motion of dissent against one ruling; that is the motion of dissent tonight. What you are doing is talking about other motions of dissent. I would ask you to keep to this motion.

Mr QUINN: Yes. The issues that were the subject of the question were canvassed in other media outlets. There is nothing in the question that should have been ruled sub judice because it was widely reported in the media outlets around the State. It is on that basis that the member for Indooroopilly has moved the dissent motion. In support of the member for Indooroopilly, I say that we on this side of the House are of the opinion that the ruling is inconsistent and it is for that reason we have moved this motion.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (10.46 p.m.): This is a frivolous and vexatious motion of dissent, utterly devoid of merit, calculated only to attack the lawful authority of the Speaker in a squalid political tactic of disruption. The member for Indooroopilly, Mr Beanland, has had an irony bypass. He comes into this Parliament to defend the institution of the Parliament and attack the Speaker. This is the same member who sat in this Chamber without the confidence of the Parliament. This was the man who brought disgrace to the high office of Attorney-General by clinging to the office, despite losing the confidence of the Parliament.

This motion tonight, which has been the subject of such a pathetic speech from the member for Indooroopilly and an equally pathetic speech from the member for Merrimac, shows that in fact there is nothing serious in the attack being made by the Opposition in this matter. It is simply a tactic of disruption, calculated to attack the lawful authority of the Speaker. Let us look at the ruling. This is the matter that both the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Merrimac were so careful to avoid. What was the question asked? The question asked, from which the dissent motion to the Speaker's ruling has been moved, related to a question as to whether the ALP and a particular member of the House had shown enthusiasm or expertise with regard to allegations of

electoral corruption. That is the very issue which is the subject of the terms of reference of the Shepherdson inquiry—the very issue!

What is the relevant ruling? The relevant ruling is that of 3 October made by this Speaker when he said this—

"Equally, the matters as outlined in the terms of reference for the Shepherdson inquiry into allegations of electoral fraud or any matters which come before the inquiry are now the subject of these rulings on sub judice and should not be referred to in the House."

That was the ruling. He applied that ruling to the fact of that question and ruled it out of order because it was sub judice.

In stating that rule the Speaker followed a line of authority based on Speaker Fouras's ruling of 19 February 1991 and Speaker Turner's ruling of 3 April 1996. In the debate in this House on 3 April 1996 I challenged that ruling in respect of Speaker Turner but, notwithstanding my arguments on that point, he made it in the same terms as Speaker Fouras, and the current Speaker has made it in exactly the same terms. He has applied that ruling to the facts of the question and ruled it out of order. Why? Because it is sub judice within the terms of that ruling—plain and simple! There could not be a more straightforward case.

The moving of this motion of dissent is a nonsense. It shows a lack of intellectual honesty on the part of the members of the Opposition. It shows at best a frivolousness, but at worst it shows that their tactic throughout this has not been to pursue the proper processes of the Parliament, their tactic has been otherwise—it has been one of political disruption. They hope that by engendering alarm and despondency they can inflame political discontent around this issue. They hope that by kicking up dust and by screaming, shouting and carrying on with frivolous and vexatious motions of dissent that they can somehow erode public confidence in the institution of the Parliament and, hence, the institution of the Government.

The appallingly shallow contributions that we have heard from the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Merrimac demonstrate that their tactic has backfired. It is simply not possible for them to keep coming into this Parliament with frivolous and vexatious motions utterly devoid of evidence, utterly devoid of lawful authority, utterly devoid of precedence and expect to be taken seriously.

Ms Bligh: Utterly devoid of conviction.

Mr FOLEY: And utterly devoid of conviction. I thank the Minister.

It was a sad thing that we have seen such a succession of attacks on the lawful authority of the Speaker. It is ironic that the members of the Opposition like to hold themselves out as the people who support lawful authority. They like to say that they support lawful authority. They like to hold themselves out in that regard. But let us judge not on their words but on their actions. What are their actions? Their actions are to move a frivolous and vexatious motion of dissent, to fail to address the specific issue, namely, whether or not the particular question was sub judice. It is a fairly simple question: is it or is it not within the terms of reference of the Shepherdson inquiry as to whether or not the ALP showed a capacity to investigate allegations of electoral corruption? That is what the question was about. It is the very issue in respect of a number of plebiscites that forms one of the terms of reference of the Shepherdson inquiry. It could not be plainer. That is what the sub judice rule is about, as has been determined in this Chamber.

In the course of this debate or in the course of any other of the debates I have not heard any rational attempt to define a different rule. It is not as if there was a shred of analysis in the arguments advanced by the members of the Opposition. It is not as if they were saying, "Well, the rules should be different. The rules should be more narrow. The rules should be expressed in a different way." No, they accept the rule. They accept it because it is the same rule that Speaker Turner adopted; it is the same rule that Speaker Fouras adopted. It is a rule which was articulated on 3 October. But when the rule is applied, we have this cosmetic protest of outrage on the part of the Opposition.

I think the people of Queensland are starting to wake up to the sorts of tactics that the Opposition has been adopting in this Chamber, the sorts of tactics of political disruption designed not to get at the truth but to create uncertainty and despondency.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr FOLEY: They can succeed for only so long—up until the moment when they have to defend their actions in rational debate in the Parliament. And what a paltry effort they have made at trying to substantiate this allegation!

During my time and practice as a barrister, I have defended people who have faced accusations of various kinds. I cannot think of a single time in which I have been called to defend a case where the prosecution has been so pathetically weak. I do not know of

one shred of evidence which has been put forward by the Opposition. I do not know of one precedent which it has cited. It is completely without substance in this matter. It deserves to be condemned on the basis of having made this attack frivolously and vexatiously.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.54 p.m.): I rise to participate in this debate. Before doing so, I consulted Associate Professor of Law at Bond University Gerard Carney. I sought Mr Carney's advice on this matter because of his special expertise in constitutional law. Mr Carney's special expertise in constitutional law matters has been acknowledged by the parliamentary Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which has briefed him on numerous occasions. Mr Carney's advice to me is contained in two letters, one dated 19 October 2000 and a further letter dated 6 November 2000. I thank Mr Carney for his advice. For the benefit of all members I will quote from Mr Carney's advice. The first letter states, in part—

"The essence of the sub judice rule is to prevent debate within the House which is likely to prejudice the trial of a matter the subject of criminal or civil proceedings in a court of law. A real and substantial danger of prejudice is required.

...

A trial may be 'prejudiced' where the judge or jury ... may be influenced in their judgment of the issues by what is said in the House."

Mr Horan: Is this a trial?

Mr WELLINGTON: Just bear with me. It goes on—

"However, the concern is not only with being actually influenced, but also with any appearance of being so influenced.

...

Each case therefore needs to be judged on its merits.

...

On the one hand, there is the need to not unduly restrict parliamentary freedom of speech on matters of public interest, while on the other, there is the need to protect the independence and integrity of the commission of inquiry. Balancing those competing factors is difficult where the inquiry is into matters of political controversy, and this difficulty is compounded if it is likely to impact on the reputation and liability of individuals.

In such a case, the sub judice rule is less likely to be applied broadly ... so as to ensure that parliamentary debate of important public issues is not unduly stifled. This means that a blanket prohibition on any questions which touch on the issue before the inquiry cannot be justified. The rule should be applied only to those questions which are clearly likely to embarrass the inquiry and prejudice public confidence in its independence and integrity.

Hence, questions which raise specific issues on which an inquiry will need to rule should be avoided. Similarly, questions which focus on the veracity of the specific testimony of a witness are likely to embarrass an inquiry, being a prejudgment of the matters for which it was established to report on.

...

In applying these principles to a CJC inquiry, the particular nature of that inquiry needs to be taken into account. The Speaker is faced with a difficult task in deciding how far the sub judice rule should be applied in the present circumstances. Rather than rule out of order every question or statement which relates to the terms of reference of such an inquiry, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the question or statement prejudices the issues before the inquiry and thereby undermines public confidence in its independence and integrity."

I now table those two letters for the benefit of all members, a letter dated 19 October 2000 and one dated 6 November 2000. I will not be supporting the motion moved by the Opposition.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.58 p.m.): I just wish to comment on what speakers on the other side of the House have said. Firstly, I point out that I support the dissent motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly and seconded by the member for Merrimac. It is not necessarily a question of how long we speak on an issue like this; the fact is that there are dissent motions, there have been dissent motions and there will be more dissent motions, I believe, based on the issue of inconsistency. That is the thing which has concerned us on this side of the House quite dramatically.

As far as the motion is concerned, it has been clearly explained by the member for Indooroopilly. Quite obviously, at the time of

moving it, he has that right to move a motion of dissent. I believe that even the Speaker sitting in the Chair tonight would agree that, if the member for Indooroopilly—or anyone on this side of the House—does not agree with the Speaker's ruling, he has the right to move a motion of dissent.

The previous speaker, the member for Nicklin, quoted Professor Carney. We are not arguing the fact that sub judice should not be respected; we believe that sub judice should be respected, and I would say that every single person in this House believes that it should be. We are arguing that inconsistency in the Speaker's rulings has brought about this dissent motion. The member for Nicklin went on to say that blanket prohibition cannot be justified, and we agree that blanket prohibition cannot be justified. Dissent motions can be brought about if the Speaker makes specific rulings. It is our right to disagree with the Speaker and move a dissent motion, and that is what we have done. There is nothing wrong with that.

As I have said, what we object to is the inconsistency. We realise that the Speaker has a difficult task. No matter who the Speaker has been over the years, it has always been a very difficult task, especially when the Speaker is political, and by that I mean that the Speaker is not independent. There is a very good case for having an independent Speaker. If that were the position, it would remove the need for a Speaker to defend the Government. We believe that the Speaker and his or her rulings should be bipartisan. A truly bipartisan Speaker would gain enormous respect from people from all walks of life.

The member for Yeronga carried on in his usual pompous way. I will admit that I have a soft spot for him, but in these debates—

Mr Foley: Is that above your shoulder?

Mr COOPER: The member opposite knows very well that that does not apply to me.

The member for Yeronga has attacked the member for Indooroopilly over his record, yet he criticises him for attacking the Speaker. He, too, has to be consistent in his judgments. Instead, he is being hysterical in attacking the member for Indooroopilly for obvious reasons. He has a thing about him; he is allowing his personal dislikes to enter this debate, and I do not think he should. He should stick to the facts. I do not think that Speaker Turner threw anyone out of this House except the member opposite.

Mr Laming: He was a long-suffering man, too.

Mr COOPER: I think the whole House was long suffering, as was Speaker Turner. However, he obtained and commanded—not demanded—the respect of members of this House. There are certain ways in which Speakers go about doing that, that is, to be consistent, fair and equitable to both sides of the House. I believe Speaker Turner achieved that. Those opposite know darn well that Speaker Turner had the respect of most members in this House.

The member for Yeronga said that the motion of dissent moved by the member for Indooroopilly is frivolous. I do not believe it is frivolous at all. It is not. That is his right. That is a member's right. If those opposite return to this side of the Parliament—which they have every chance of doing—under a different Speaker, I firmly believe that they will end up moving dissent motions. That is a member's right. We will defend that right absolutely.

There has been inconsistency in the Speaker's rulings in that a number of Ministers who have been asked various questions in relation to the sub judice rule in relation to this issue have answered the questions in spite of the sub judice ruling. That indicates a very strong inconsistency. We have been very patient so far and have put up with it for long enough. Therefore, it is our right—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to keep to this dissent motion.

Mr COOPER: I am, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: No, the member is not. He is going back into history.

Mr COOPER: I was speaking about this dissent motion.

Mr SPEAKER: We are debating this dissent motion.

Mr COOPER: I am speaking about this dissent motion.

Mr SPEAKER: The member is not.

Mr COOPER: It is a reflection on you that you will not allow me to speak on this dissent motion.

Mr SPEAKER: I am allowing the member to speak on this dissent motion.

Mr COOPER: That is all I ask. Thank you very much.

Mr SPEAKER: Return to it.

Mr COOPER: This place has become a farce. When we move dissent motions, be it on this particular issue or any other—and I do speak on this issue—we have the right to do so. I also point out the inconsistencies of your ruling, Mr Speaker. That is why the member for

Indooroopilly moved this dissent motion. I distinctly remember that it was because he was asking questions that had been asked on the same issue before. Some you rule in; some you rule out. How on earth are we to know what we are allowed to ask? When the question is asked and it is allowed, that is fine and Ministers are available to answer it, and so they should. However, in the next breath you rule that, no, we cannot ask it because it is sub judice. That results in a lot of confusion. Don't blame the Clerk of the Parliament. The dissent motion has been moved against your ruling, Mr Speaker. This is not about the Clerk of the Parliament; let us leave him out of it.

I believe that the Courier-Mail has it right. I do not want to go out on a personal note, because we have been through that in the first no confidence motion this Parliament has seen for a long time. Many of us made our points then in that regard. Without dragging it out, I simply reiterate that members have every right to move dissent motions. The dissent motion was moved because of the inconsistency in rulings in that you allowed some questions but not others. That is what has confused us, and that is what we are objecting to. We have every right to move this dissent motion, and I fully support it.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (11.06 p.m.): I have asked to speak in the debate on this dissent motion tonight to express my disgust at yet another cowardly attack—I believe the 11th—on the Speaker by the Opposition. I say this to the Opposition: your behaviour in moving this dissent motion and your behaviour over these past few weeks has been a disgrace from people elected to such high office in this great State. It brings this whole Parliament into disrepute and it reflects on every member of this House.

There are many good, honest, hardworking people in this Parliament who genuinely want to make a difference—men and women who work long hours, who give up most other aspects of their lives and forfeit valuable time with their families and friends to gain much-needed facilities in their electorates, to make Queensland a better State and to help build a better future for our children, our grandchildren and generations to come.

Yet with just two sitting weeks left before this House rises for Christmas and with some 25 Government Bills and seven private members' Bills waiting to be debated, here we are in the middle of the night wasting time on a senseless motion. It is just a part of the same old Opposition vendetta that we have been seeing in this House for weeks—day in,

day out. Apart from the fact that most of us do not want to hear any more of this vindictive nonsense, it is costing the taxpayers of Queensland around \$750 for every hour that this Parliament sits after the dinner break. This senseless motion is not only costing our taxpayers in the vicinity of \$1,000; it is taking up valuable time that should be used for debating Bills before the House, and it is a disgraceful abuse of parliamentary privilege.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: The members opposite have no manners, either. This motion tonight—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Mr Speaker, I would like to be heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs and the member for Crows Nest!

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: This motion tonight has nothing to do with the Speaker's ruling; it is just another cheap opportunistic attack on this Labor Government at the personal expense of the Speaker in the Opposition's obsessive and desperate quest to regain power in this State, not because it has the ability to govern Queensland but because it has never accepted the umpire's ruling. At the last election the people voted it out with the loss of 12 seats after just two years and four months in office. What an indictment! But the Opposition has not accepted that, and it will not accept the umpire's ruling in this House or show any respect for the Chair. If its behaviour in this House is any example of the calibre of the current Opposition, then it will be a sad day for Queensland if it ever regains Government in this State.

Mr Speaker, you can hold your head high for the dignified way in which you have sat through these vicious personal attacks. I do not believe that parliamentary privilege was ever intended for use in such cowardly attacks, and if it is going to continue to be used in this way then I believe it is time we looked at changes to that system as well. People inside and outside this House must be protected from such personal attacks.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (11.10 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion before the House.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SULLIVAN: The member for Callide encourages me even more to oppose this dissent motion. On 18 October the member for

Indooroopilly asked a question without notice, and the wording of the question is important. It states—

"I refer the Premier to the ALP's decision to sack Mr Lee Bermingham as a senior organiser because a party investigation found he was guilty of interfering in an internal ballot of an affiliated union."

The next part of the question is the important bit. It is a bit long, but it states—

"Can the Premier inform the House why his beloved ALP and the member for Woodridge were perfectly capable of investigating irregularities in union ballots but failed to show anything like the same expertise or enthusiasm for allegations of electoral corruption?"

The only way the Premier could have answered the second part of that long question would have been to actually refer to evidence before the Shepherdson inquiry. There is no other way the Premier could have answered as to why he believed the ALP or the member for Woodridge did not fail to do that. The only way he could have answered that would have been to refer to evidence before the Shepherdson inquiry. And that, as members opposite are well aware, would have been in direct contravention of the rulings of Speakers Fouras, Turner and Hollis, based on Crown Law advice.

This question was not a general question about Lee Bermingham. The member for Crows Nest a short time earlier said, "You let some questions in; you don't let some questions in." That is perfectly correct. If answering the question meant that the sub judice rule would be contravened, the question was ruled out. If an answer would not contravene the sub judice convention, the question was ruled in. It is simple.

As a former Premier, the member for Crows Nest would know that the questions worked out by the Opposition are not just randomly selected and randomly thrown on paper. The Opposition works out very carefully what its questions say and it would know, given the rulings of Speakers Fouras, Turner and Hollis, what would or would not be allowed.

Very conscious of the clear rulings by Speakers Fouras and Turner on sub judice, Speaker Hollis did what he should have done—that is, recognised that the question would have forced the Premier into addressing evidence before the CJC's inquiry. He then called the Clerk for further immediate and specific advice on the sub judice convention.

Acting on this advice, he ruled the question out of order. Indeed, Mr Speaker made this clear by stating—it is in Hansard—

"I have accepted the advice of the Clerk."

Without batting an eyelid, the Leader of Opposition Business, the member for Indooroopilly, moved dissent from the Speaker's ruling. In doing so, he unfortunately followed the example of his leader, the member for Surfers Paradise, who has continually displayed a lack of respect for Parliament and its practices. While parading himself as some master of parliamentary debate, the member for Surfers Paradise white-ants this place continually. At least the West Indian termite attacked only the physical fabric of this place. What the Opposition Leader is doing is taking the soul out of the Parliament.

Mr Nelson: You don't mean that.

Mr SULLIVAN: I do mean what I am saying. If the member for Tablelands had any respect for what this Parliament stood for, he would be voting against this dissent motion as well.

This House might be interested to learn that during the 49th Parliament the Speaker has had to call members to resume their seats on 293 occasions. On 94 of those occasions it was the Leader of the Opposition who defied the Chair. He would not accept the ruling from the Chair and had to be asked to resume his seat. On almost one third of all those occasions there was an attempt by the Speaker to maintain order in response to disruption from the Leader of the Opposition. The next worst offender, of course, is the mouth from the north, the member for Tablelands. The member was asked to resume his seat 28 times. But of course those occasions came in little bursts, because he gets a little bit of a rush to the head and then he goes back to sleep.

This dissent motion was born not of a genuine grievance at the Chair's ruling. The motion of the member for Indooroopilly is part of a culture of disrespect and disregard for the authority of the Speaker and this institution. It has started to become just part of the culture that Mr Borbidge will defy the Chair and Mr Beanland will move dissent. Here we have the member for Crows Nest also jumping to his feet in the same way.

The ruling from which those opposite tonight have moved dissent is expressly based on advice from the Clerk. It was on advice from the Clerk that the Speaker gave his ruling.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: The member for Western Downs can yell and shout all he wants, but all he has to do is refer to Hansard, or refer to the tape if he actually wants to hear it. If he does, he will find that the Speaker took advice from the Clerk.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: We are not talking about some days; we are talking about a dissent motion. I thought the member had been here long enough, but he has gotten lazier the longer he has been here. Maybe he did not even look up Hansard. For his benefit, I point out that this occurred on 18 October. The member for Western Downs should come back to earth. On the specific occasion about which the Opposition has moved dissent, the Clerk's advice was sought. Taking the Clerk's advice, the Speaker made a ruling.

The member for Crows Nest tried to worm a way out for the Opposition by saying, "We are not really saying anything about the Table Office staff or the Clerk." That is rubbish—a deliberate falsehood. The member for Crows Nest knows that this is a direct attack on the Clerk and the Table Office staff. The member for Crows Nest is so low that he attacks the staff of this place.

Mr COOPER: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find his remarks offensive and untrue, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chermside will withdraw.

Mr SULLIVAN: I withdraw. When the advice of the Clerk was expressly sought and the Speaker took that advice, the Opposition immediately moved a motion of dissent, without any reference back to the Speaker. What the member for Crows Nest said is an absolute farce. He has deliberately done it. He has deliberately attacked the Clerk. He has no respect for the Table Office staff here.

Mr COOPER: He has done it again, Mr Speaker. He has claimed that I have made a direct attack on the Clerk. I was defending the Clerk and, as such, I find his remarks offensive and false, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SULLIVAN: I withdraw. The Opposition's attack is a deliberate attack on the Clerk, because the advice was sought specifically from the Clerk, as is shown in Hansard. Those opposite can squirm and squeal all they want, but Hansard shows that that advice was sought. I will even let the member for Caloundra see it if she wants.

One would have thought that Opposition members might have learnt their lesson from

the last week's sitting and the infamous no confidence motion, but they are here again dragging down the institution of Parliament, clutching to the Speaker and the Clerk on their way down. Their behaviour is a disgrace. The motion is a disgrace. It needs to be defeated. I oppose the dissent motion.

Question—That Mr Beanland's motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 38—Beanland, Black, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 40—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

SUCCESSION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 1 June (see p. 1542).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.26 p.m.): The Opposition supports this Bill, but it is another telling indictment of the incompetence of this Government that we are debating retrospective legislation designed to remedy the unwitting abolition of statutory guardianship provisions effected by the passage of the Child Protection Act.

The essential principles enshrined in this Bill are designed to maintain the legal status quo as it existed prior to 23 March this year. While there are some marginal changes to the law, it is patently obvious that this is no exercise in law reform but another example of this Government fixing up a botched legislative program.

Queensland has had legislation allowing and facilitating parents to appoint guardians to look after their children in the event of their demise since 1891. In that year, this Parliament passed the Guardianship and Custody of Infants Act, which legislation remained in force until the Children's Services Act became operative in 1965. Part 9 of the Children's Services Act dealt at some length with the guardianship and custody of infants. The many sections in Part 9 were amended on

a regular basis and it is clear that they were used often by Queensland parents and without major problems.

It is a measure of the inherent soundness of the drafting and policy of Part 9 that it remained substantially unaltered until the passing of the Child Protection Act. Not once in the Minister's introductory speech did he point out that this Bill was a catch-up exercise designed to preserve existing rights. He made out as if this was another piece of proactive law reform rather than a rushed exercise designed to overcome the legislative incompetence of this Government.

I do not wish to be unduly critical of this Bill as far as it goes, but I am very critical of the fact that we have now to debate retrospective legislation. If this Minister were up to scratch, he would have introduced this Bill simultaneously with the Child Protection Bill or at least have secured its passage and proclamation to coincide with the commencement of the Child Protection Act on 23 March this year.

There seems to be a trend with this Government of presenting to Parliament retrospective legislation which is needed to paper over administrative failings, failings that seem to be symptomatic of a lazy and inattentive administration. I hope that we do not have to debate many more retrospective Bills during this Parliament because it is bad practice and sends out all the wrong signals to the wider community.

Mr Lucas: How is it retrospective? It applies to all wills.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If the member listened, he would understand.

In addition, I am concerned that since 23 March this year the parents of Queensland children have been deprived of the legislative underpinnings to appoint testamentary guardians for their children in their wills. We have had the quite unbelievable situation that, for the first time in more than a century, this basic statutory right has been taken away. Instead, there has been a legislative vacuum. At the end of the day, the public will pass judgment on Governments of whatever political persuasion on the basis of whether they can deliver the basics—not the glitz and glamour, just the bread and butter issues for the workers and other people of this State. This is yet another straw in the wind of how this Government has dropped the ball and displays that, when it comes to the crunch, it just simply does not deliver. Again, we are seeing catch-up public administration and this is not good enough.

The Minister could at least have explained why this unsatisfactory state of affairs came about, but as usual this Parliament was given no explanation. If the Minister thinks that ignoring the issue and hoping that it will go away without scrutiny will work, I hope that this is a salutary example of how that sort of approach only makes the situation worse.

I will turn to the substance of the Bill. It goes without saying that it is very important that there be a simple, cheap, non-litigious and effective legislative means for parents to appoint testamentary guardians for their children. In the absence of such a power, an application would have to be made to the Children's Court for a care and protection order, or to the Family Court, rather than leave this matter in the hands of a third party, and only after potentially traumatic and expensive legal proceedings have been instituted. It is obviously far better to leave the nomination to the persons who have the ultimate day-to-day care of the infants in question—namely, their parents.

Any adult who has children knows only too well the importance of having in place appropriate testamentary provisions for their children's care and protection. There are few things more important to a parent than the knowledge that their children will be looked after financially, emotionally and physically if a tragedy occurs and they predecease them. The question of who should look after a child in the event of the death of the parent who is the primary caregiver should lie with that parent.

A parent who is in that position should be allowed a private right, facilitated by clear and fair provisions passed by this Parliament, to make clear by whom and how their children or child will be raised. As I see it, the fundamental principle underpinning this Bill is one which would be supported by all thinking adults. It is a principle which has been the law of this State for over a century.

The first issue I raise concerns the preservation by the Bill of the appointment of any person to act as guardian of a child through the execution of a deed, if that deed was in force prior to 23 March 2000. I note that the Minister said in his speech—

"While it is not the policy of this Government to authorise the appointment of a guardian by deed, it is important that no children be disadvantaged by the repeal of that Act."

I have no quibble with the protection of deeds of appointments made prior to 23 March, but I do question why it is the policy of

this Government to prevent persons appointing guardians by deed and limiting such appointments to wills.

The ability of parents to appoint guardians by deed is recognised under the Children's Services Act 1965 and has been the law of both Queensland and the United Kingdom for many years. I draw the attention of the House to the following comments in Volume 21 of the 3rd Edition of Halsbury's Laws of England, which was published in 1957. It states—

"Both the father and the mother have power, if under age, by deed, and if of full age, by deed or will, to appoint persons to act as guardians of an infant after their respective deaths, if the child is then an infant. Where the appointment is made by deed, it is of a testamentary nature and is revocable by a subsequent will making a different appointment."

There is quite a deal more on that matter, but the point I want to make is that the power to appoint a guardian by deed seems to have worked fairly well for quite some time.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If not, presumably the Minister would not be going out of his way to uphold such appointments made prior to 23 March. The honourable member for Lytton, no doubt, professes or pretends to be learned in the law. He will have his opportunity as the debate goes on to outline his particular contentions in relation to what I am advocating in Parliament.

Obviously the preferable means of appointment of guardian is by will, and most people refer to guardians as testamentary guardians in recognition of that fact. However, I would like the Minister to explain why the Government is opposed to appointments by deed. I would like to know what problems have arisen and why this option is being taken away from Queensland parents. There may be a perfectly legitimate reason which the Minister would like to advance. There may well be sound policy reasons based either on changes in the law or specific problems that have arisen.

However, these were not spelt out by the Minister and I think it is only fair that, if we are changing the law by limiting options for Queensland parents, we are told why. As I said, I am not arguing the point, but I would suggest to the Minister that some clarification is warranted.

Another aspect of the Bill deserving comment is the extended definition of the term "parent" to include persons who, under

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custom, would be regarded as parents of the child. Fortunately, we have come quite a long way over the past few decades in recognising the importance of indigenous customs in the administration of the law in all of its facets.

In 1986, the Australian Law Reform Commission recommended that Governments and indigenous people should work together to decide on methods by which Aboriginal customary law could be recognised. Nevertheless, the ALRC itself pointed out that there were limits on how far this recognition could go, particularly in the areas of marriage and criminal law.

However, there is some scope for the legislatures of the various Parliaments in Australia to integrate indigenous customary law into the statute law of our nation. This is not just because it has been recognised by various law reform bodies as desirable and just, but basically if our system of law is to have relevance and be able to operate in a practical and sensible way, it must recognise the reality of what occurs in our indigenous communities. It is pleasing to be able to contribute to the debate on this aspect of the Bill in a bipartisan fashion.

I draw the attention of the House to the following comments which appear in the second edition of a book entitled *Indigenous Legal Issues* which was published in 1997. The authors make this point—

"Extended kin, especially grandparents and aunts, are regarded as primary caregivers with status equal to that of the biological parents. It is a common and accepted practice for mothers to leave young children with their grandparents for extended periods of time. Such a mother would be seen by non-aboriginal people as 'no good' or 'unworthy' but in fact she is acting in a culturally acceptable way given the rights and obligations that aboriginal families share."

The authors quote from a 1984 study of urban Aborigines in south-west Western Australia, which states—

"Most Noongar families add cousins or grandparents to the household as a matter of form. It is common for grandparents to become social parents to a child who calls them 'dad' and 'mum'. Birdsall relates how child-rearing in a Noongar household is a communal enterprise from the very first, with children learning to be looked after by their

grandmothers and aunts, in particular, and other relations from time to time. Such flexibility of filiation extends to aunts and cousins, in particular. A Noongar child is taught to regard an aunt as a mother, and her cousins as her sisters and her brothers. The classificatory kinship system apparent in more traditional communities is still strongly apparent among the Noongar today. 'Granny', for example, refers to any adult of either sex of one's grandparent's generation, who has the status and respected position of a grandparent ... this communalised method of child rearing is the very core of Noongar social structure and organisation. It is by this means that an individual forms close and lasting associations that will be of major importance through life."

There are a number of indigenous communities in Queensland that have their own traditional and accepted means of dealing with the rights and responsibilities of children and the wider family unit, including quite detailed and socially accepted procedures about the reallocation of care. This Bill touches only at the margins of this complex matter but insofar as it approaches it from an inclusive and understanding perspective, it is to be supported. Whether a child is indigenous or non-indigenous, the same principle governing their welfare should be upheld, namely, what is in the child's best interests. Nevertheless, it is right in certain contexts in assessing the best interests of an indigenous child to have regard to their Aboriginal background and to Aboriginal child-rearing practices.

I state specifically that it should be given appropriate weight because, as the Minister would be aware, there are numerous Family Court cases dealing with the guardianship rights of children of mixed race relationships. In these cases, the Family Court has held that a number of factors have to be considered in determining what is in the best interests of the child. As the Family Court has emphasised, it is critical not to favour one culture over another. We should not replace the mistakes of the past with new mistakes and we must be ever vigilant to ensure that the focus always remains on the best interests of the children.

This Bill simply recognises the relevance of Aboriginal culture in certain limited circumstances and is a positive move that deserves support. As I mentioned earlier, without legislation facilitating parents having guardianship provisions in their wills, the common law would prevail and recourse would have to be made to the courts. Nevertheless, there will continue to be a need for the courts

to have a supervisory jurisdiction and to be able to step in when the need arises.

Proposed section 61J ensures that the power of a Supreme Court is not limited by this Bill. The Supreme Court has the inherent jurisdiction to exercise parental power and can make orders that it considers are in the best interests of the child. The current Governor-General, when he was a High Court judge, made the following comments in 1992 about the inherent powers of courts such as the Queensland Supreme Court—

"The authority of parents with respect to a young person of less than eighteen years is limited, controlled and varying. It is limited to what is in the best interests of the welfare of the young person. That being so, it can, at least as regards really serious matters, be validly exercised only after due inquiry about, and adequate consideration of, what truly represents the welfare of the child. It is controlled in that, if it is exceeded or if it is exercised other than for the benefit and welfare of the child, a court invested with the welfare jurisdiction of the old Chancery Court has jurisdiction to intervene and prevent excess, abuse or neglect of authority. Such a court can, when its jurisdiction is invoked, make an order directed to ensuring what should, within the limits imposed by financial and other practical considerations, be done or not done in the interests of the welfare of an infant is done or not done."

So it is important to ensure that, while the Succession Act should contain provisions enabling the appointment of testamentary guardians, the general welfare supervisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is in no way diminished.

The Minister noted in his second-reading speech that the provisions dealing with the appointment of testamentary guardians would now be found in the Succession Act. I agree with this move. It really does not make much sense to spread provisions dealing with the will-making powers of persons throughout the statute law of this State. All provisions dealing with testamentary powers, responsibilities and ancillary matters should be located in the statute dealing with wills. I can readily understand that a case existed in the past, with the ability of parents to make non-testamentary deeds appointing guardians, for these provisions to be located in the general law governing the welfare of infants. But now that the Government is dispensing with non-testamentary guardian provisions, no such

rationale can be made. I recommend to the Minister that officers of his department should engage in a thorough review of other statutes to see whether similar rationalisation can occur. Surely one of the objectives of the plain English legal strategy is to ensure that the law is not only more accessible in terms of drafting but also more accessible in terms of location.

The Minister also pointed out that, under the Bill, unless the will shows a contrary intention, a testamentary guardian will exercise powers only after the death of the child's last surviving parent. However, if the will does have a contrary intention, then the guardianship will be activated on the death of the testator or testatrix. However, in such a case the guardian is limited to joint involvement in making decisions about the welfare of the child.

I would like the Minister to deal in his reply with a few queries that I have about the operation of the Bill. First, proposed section 61B provides that the power to appoint a testamentary guardian is not limited to a parent but also applies to a guardian of the child. In other words, as I read it, if a person is appointed as a guardian of a child under a will, then that person can, in turn, appoint another guardian under the person's will. Obviously, allowing a parent to appoint a testamentary guardian is essential, but has it always been the case that the power to appoint a testamentary guardian can be transferred down the line, so to speak?

There appear to be no guidelines or safeguards spelt out in the Bill in this regard. I wonder whether the Minister could explain the philosophy underpinning this provision. As I said earlier, the court has, and under this Bill continues to have, a general supervisory jurisdiction and I would have thought that, in the event of the death of a testamentary guardian, it had inherent powers to make guardianship orders. I just wonder whether allowing a guardian to appoint another guardian without any supervisory tick-off from the court is leaving the matter too open ended. I am not opposed to this provision but I can see some scope for problems to arise and I would appreciate the Minister dealing with it in his response.

The second issue that I would like to raise is the extent to which the law is being changed by the Bill so far as the authority of testamentary guardians compared with that of a surviving parent. As members of this House would be well aware, for a number of reasons, not the least being the high incidence of marriage break-ups, a very high proportion of families are headed by one parent. Under

section 89 of the Children's Services Act, when one parent died and provided in their will for a testamentary guardian, then that guardian acted jointly with the surviving parent in looking after the interests of the child or children. As I read section 89, the law as it stood up until last year ensured that the guardian automatically shared responsibility with the surviving parent. Nevertheless, under this Bill, that will occur only if—and I now quote from subsection (3) of proposed section 61D—"the will shows that the appointor intended the appointment to take effect on the appointor's death, the appointment takes effect on the appointor's death."

The first question I have for the Minister is what does that part of subsection (3) mean in practice? I presume that the mere nomination of a person to be a testamentary guardian on the death of a parent will not result in that person actually having any role to play if a parent remains alive, even if that parent played no role in the parenting of the child or children. If the fact of nomination is not enough, then does this section require that a parent must actually state in clear words that the guardian will share responsibility for the rearing of the child or children on the death of the will maker? Should that be the effect of this Bill, then it will be of utmost importance that this fact be made clear to the Queensland public. It would be a travesty of justice if a parent's heartfelt wish so far as the bringing up of their children is concerned was diluted by a change in the law which was not made clear to Queensland parents.

The second question relates to why the law has been changed. I would have thought that there was now a far greater case than there was in 1965 for ensuring that a guardian appointed by one parent was automatically entitled to be a joint guardian with the surviving parent, unless the will provided otherwise. As I said, with the rate of divorce now much higher than it was 35 years ago and with the number of de facto marriages continuing to rise, providing that a surviving parent has sole guardianship rights, even though a deceased parent has appointed a person other than the surviving parent as the guardian of a child, seems a little strange to me. It is all too often the case in the event of a break-up in a relationship that a parent may nominate one of their brothers or sisters or their parents to be the guardian of their children.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Pardon?

Mr Swarten: I was talking to them.

Ms Bligh: They are more interested. We are not saying anything.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I am sure the Minister for Families is not interested in these issues.

Mr Swarten: How long are you going to be?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I will be about another five minutes. After the problems the Minister had this morning, there may be some lessons in this for tomorrow morning.

Under this Bill, unless very clear and precise language is used the clear intention of a parent could be ignored, which would be very unfortunate. I fully realise that the Supreme Court has its supervisory powers and functions, but from my own experiences I know full well that it is critical that a child or children in these circumstances not be the subject of a tug of war, especially when it could involve a traumatic court case.

Moreover, I fail to see why this apparent change is being made, because section 61E(2) makes clear that the testamentary guardian will, in any event, only have daily care authority of the child if the child has no remaining parent. In other words, in the event of a dispute it will be the child's remaining parent who will have the day-to-day responsibility for the child. However, the testamentary guardian will have the general right to supervise the way that the child is being brought up and looked after. In other words, the testamentary guardian will not have responsibility for a child's daily care, but will have the legal right and ability to maintain a watching brief.

I ask the Attorney-General if my assumption about the change in the law is correct and, if it is, what was the policy underpinning it. I raise these questions because proposed sections 61G and 61I set out what occurs if a testamentary guardian whose appointment is not automatic wants it to be the case or in the event that a surviving parent does not want a testamentary guardian having any role.

These proposed sections give to the Supreme Court the power either to automatically commence the powers of a testamentary guardian, even though the will is silent, or to revoke or suspend the role of the testamentary guardian. My reading of the Bill is that the law is being changed, but in the event that a testamentary guardian wants his or her appointment to commence immediately that person can apply to the Supreme Court.

I also ask the Minister what his department will be doing about educating the

broader Queensland community about the law governing testamentary guardians. People do not think about the issue of guardianship until a tragedy occurs, and I can indicate from my own experience that there are a lot of misconceptions in the community about how the law operates. It would be helpful if some effort was made to produce pamphlets in plain English so that people making wills or people wanting to know what the law was could have access to a brief but authoritative explanation of what the Succession Act provides. Maybe the Attorney's department does something like that, but I am not aware of it.

Finally, I support the proposed amendments to the Commonwealth Powers (Family Law—Children) Act. It is important that the provisions relating to testamentary guardians be excluded from general referral by the State to the Commonwealth of legislative powers relating to children. The law governing testamentary guardianship is inextricably interconnected with the law governing succession and rightly belongs under State law and within the general supervisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

In conclusion, I note that the Attorney-General referred to the work of the Law Society succession law committee and in particular its chairman, Dr John De Groote. Dr John De Groote and Tony Lee, who is the author of numerous succession and trust text books for many years, have been regarded as the pre-eminent experts on succession law in this State, if not throughout Australia. When the Minister mentioned that John De Groote had been involved in this legislative exercise I was very pleased because I am sure any advice that he and his committee proffered would have been practical, expert and well intentioned.

I join with the Minister in thanking the Law Society for its assistance because since the enactment of the Succession Act 1981 Queensland has had the most progressive and best drafted code of succession law in Australia.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP)
(11.56 p.m.): I am very pleased to take part in the debate because my friend and colleague the member for Warwick and shadow Minister for Justice always presents to the House a very reasoned and intelligent contribution. Sometimes when members are confronted with numerous Bills which are essentially prepared by departments and read into Hansard by Ministers, there is a temptation to mouth a few platitudes when the Bill is non-controversial and let it go through with as little

debate as possible. This is the sort of Bill that would normally fall within that category. It is non-controversial, it is non-partisan and it is basically a very sound initiative. It is not the sort of Bill that will attract even one-tenth of a column inch in any newspaper. Yet it is a very important measure.

It is the very type of Bill that Parliament is supposed to debate and carefully scrutinise. It is the sort of bread and butter measure which can impact on many ordinary people and families, as the honourable member for Warwick has just intimated. This Bill is all about the very terrible scenario that none of us ever want to confront or experience. A parent wants to have some say over who will look after their children when they are gone. The death of a parent is an immensely personal and terribly traumatic situation, one which requires a careful weighing of various policy considerations.

As my friend the member for Warwick has just pointed out, the essence of this Bill is to duplicate the law that has been in place in this State for a century. It is not a Bill which breaks the mould and moves the State in a new law reform direction. Quite frankly, the law is in no need of major reform. It has served the families of Queensland well for as long as anyone can remember. That is not to say that this Bill does not introduce change, because it does, but it is not a major work of law reform, rather a tidying up exercise aimed at renovation at the margins.

The major problem with this Bill lies not with its content but with its timing. It is too late. It is a Bill that we should have been debating last year. It is a Bill that has been introduced long after it should have been. The fact of the matter is that since 23 March this year the parents of Queensland children have been let down by this Government. Since 23 March the capacity of parents to provide for the appointment of testamentary guardians in an effective and efficient manner has been denied. It is amazing that this Government has allowed a situation to arise whereby for the first time in more than 100 years Queensland has no legislation on the books that empowers a parent to appoint a testamentary guardian. This has not been a heartless act by the Beattie Government—far from it. Rather, it is just another example of the sloth, disorganisation and incapacity of this administration to produce the goods and in a timely fashion.

Even something as basic as repealing the Children's Services Act, which had been in place since 1965, and replacing it with a series

of statutory reforms designed to maintain the status quo has apparently been beyond this Government. I do not know whether the blame for this incompetence lies with the member for South Brisbane, who I acknowledge is in the Chamber here tonight, who was responsible for the repeal of the Children's Services Act and its replacement with the Child Protection Act 1999, or the Attorney-General, who is responsible for succession law. At the end of the day it does not really matter. The doctrine of ministerial responsibility applies and they and their colleagues must be held up as responsible for repealing an Act without putting in place replacement provisions.

It is a pretty sloppy effort, one which requires some explanation from the Minister. I say that because he did not even offer an apology in his second-reading speech. Instead he just gave another explanation of his bluff and bluster approach which he no doubt fine tuned when he was at the Bar doing Legal Aid funded motor vehicle accident claims in the Magistrates Court.

There is no doubt it is essential that parents be given the right, backed up by suitable legislation, to nominate in their will who will be their children's guardian should they pass away while their children are still infants. While the Supreme Court retains its general—

Mr Lucas: Where did you get that rot?

Mr SANTORO: I can give the honourable member some further explanation if that is necessary.

While the Supreme Court retains its general supervisory welfare jurisdiction over children and can make orders, it is far better for the decision to be made outside the court room by a parent and not by a third person, even if that third person is a judge.

The law governing guardianship is complex and covers a great deal of territory. However, parents are by natural right the guardians of their infant children. Parents, as the guardians of their infant children, must have the right to nominate someone who will take over the guardianship roles and duties should they not be able to do so. Under section 90 of the Children's Services Act, a parent was specifically empowered to appoint a guardian to look after their children by means of a deed in addition to being given the power to appoint a testamentary guardian by means of a will. Yet under this Bill that right is not recognised. Instead, clause 9 ensures that the Child Protection Act will be amended to protect guardians appointed by a deed under

the repealed Children's Services Act, provided that the deed was in force prior to 23 March this year.

The Minister said that it is not the policy of the Government to authorise the appointment of a guardian by a non-testamentary deed. To be honest, I am not sure why the Government is taking away the right of parents to appoint guardians by means of deeds. Certainly under this Bill—and quite rightly so—any children already being looked after by a guardian appointed by a deed will continue to have those arrangements legally backed up. So if there were significant problems, I would imagine that the saving provision contained in this Bill would have been drafted in a much narrower fashion than it has been.

My friend the member for Warwick raised this issue in his contribution, and I join him in seeking some advice from the Minister on the problems or drawbacks of section 90 of the Children's Services Act that might have arisen. I point out to the Minister that, under the Children's Services Act, specific explicit sections dealt with the appointment of guardians by will, deed and the Supreme Court. Under this Bill, and pursuant to the inherent jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the right to appoint guardians will still exist by will makers and by the court, but not by a parent who chooses to execute a deed.

I can well imagine circumstances in which a parent may not wish to reopen a will but by a separate legal document nominates a person to be a guardian. For the information of the House, section 90 limited that appointment until after the death of the parent. So there was no capacity for the appointment to commence at an earlier point in time. I really fail to appreciate what the problem is with allowing a parent to nominate a guardian in a will but not in a separate deed when, irrespective of whether the parent chooses to use a will or a deed, the appointment will not come into effect until the death of the parent. I hope that the real reason for this deletion is not that there is any real objection to appointing guardians by deed but the need by Government to justify a late amendment to the Succession Act to cover up the inadvertent repeal of the provision of Part 9 of the Children's Services Act.

In common with my colleague the member for Warwick, I also welcome the extended definition of the term "parent" to include indigenous customs. In 1994 Mick Dodson wrote—

"In indigenous societies, the extended family or kinship system

traditionally managed all areas of social, economic and cultural life."

There is no doubt that in many traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities customs regarding parenting and the welfare of children, which are far different from European values, are still practised. This Bill, like all other Bills dealing with children, has at its heart an intention to ensure that the paramount goal is ensuring that the best interests of the children are advanced. One of the ongoing problems Australia must deal with is the trauma that thousands of indigenous adults continue to face on a daily basis as a result of the separation they suffered from their natural families because of policies adopted by all Australian Governments over many decades. If we have learnt anything from the mistakes of the past, it is that we can never again impose an ethnocentric strategy on our indigenous citizens so far as child rearing is concerned. I hope that we have also learned quite a bit more, too. I hope that we have learned to recognise and respect traditional indigenous customs and practices and that, whenever it is possible and just to do so, we should ensure that these customs and practices are given appropriate, but not necessarily automatic, legal recognition.

The definition of "parent" in this Bill does no more than recognise that the parent of an indigenous child under indigenous custom may be a person other than the child's biological parent. The member for Warwick expanded on this point in his speech, and I simply acknowledge what he said and indicate that under the definition of "parent" some of these indigenous child-rearing practices will be recognised. As I mentioned earlier, the Supreme Court still retains its inherent jurisdiction to intervene and make orders in the interests of children, and child welfare authorities also have various powers to ensure that the wellbeing of children, whether they be indigenous or non-indigenous, is taken care of. So, in reality, the definition of "parent" will allow accepted Aboriginal child-rearing and kinship traditions to be incorporated within the framework of guardianship law but at the same time will in no way diminish the power of the court or the State to intervene when a child's welfare is at risk. This is then only a very tiny law reform, but it is a good one. In combination with many others it will go a long way towards healing the breach between Aboriginal customs and the law passed by various Australian Parliaments.

There are a number of other provisions in the Bill which I will briefly mention. The first is the application of the Bill as outlined in

proposed section 61B. The Bill provides that proposed Part 5A will apply to a child, whether the child was born in Queensland or elsewhere and whether the child was born before or after the commencement of these provisions. There is no doubt that this rather wide provision is necessary, because the power to appoint testamentary guardians has existed in this State for many years. On top of that, it would be strange if the law did not apply to children who happened to have been born outside of Queensland. So I am pleased that the application of this Part has been explicitly provided for and that it is beyond doubt that this Bill will apply to all children domiciled in this State, whether born here or elsewhere and whether they were born before or after this Act commences.

The second area that I think deserves some scrutiny concerns the operation of proposed Division 2 of Part 5A. In particular, I am curious, as was the member for Warwick, if my recollection serves me well, about the powers of a testamentary guardian in terms of when that guardian's role commences. Under this Bill, even though a person has nominated a guardian in their will, there is no guarantee that on the death of the testator the guardian will be able to ensure that the testator's wishes are given effect to. The reason for this is that section 61D provides that the appointment takes effect only on the death of the last surviving parent, unless the deceased parent's will—and I now quote from subsection (3)—"shows that the appointor intended to take effect on the appointor's death". My friend the member for Warwick has asked some questions about this and made a number of very telling observations. I also join him in seeking some advice from the Minister on whether this does, in fact, constitute a substantive change in the law.

Under section 89 of the Children's Services Act, on the death of a parent of an infant the surviving parent was jointly responsible for the child with the guardian nominated by the deceased parent. To my knowledge there was no provision in the repealed Act that provided that the guardianship did not commence unless there were specific words in the will. The simple fact of nomination was sufficient. Yet under the Bill we are considering, that will no longer be the case. A person making a will must do more than simply nominate a person to be the guardian of their child in the event of their demise. They must make it clear in the will that the guardian is to take up duties as a guardian immediately and not just upon the death of the surviving parent. There are a few points that should be made.

The first is that a person cannot give to another that which they do not have in the first place. In other words, if the deceased parent did not have custody of the child, then obviously a person nominated as guardian by the parent would have no greater rights. The second point that I wish to make is that this issue would almost certainly only arise when the biological parents of a child have separated, or have never married and lived together in the first place. Honourable members could well appreciate the situation where a mother who has looked after a child since birth nominates her mother, the grandmother, as guardian of the infant. Under this Bill, the father of the child, who has not previously cared for the infant, would be placed in the position of pre-eminence if the deceased parent did not specifically state that the nomination of guardianship was to be effective on her death. Proposed section 61G does allow a testamentary guardian in such a circumstance to make an application to the court for an order that the appointment take effect immediately. Likewise, section 61H gives a surviving parent the right to approach the court. In addition, the right to the daily care of a child, even when guardianship is effective, rests with the surviving parent. Nevertheless, I would have thought that, at a time when many families comprise only one parent, some special consideration should have been made in this Bill to accommodate changed social circumstances.

Just as this Bill has appropriately recognised indigenous family relationships, it should have been more sensitive to changed family relationships in the broader Australian community. In fact, this Bill actually represents a retreat from that which existed under the 1965 Act. At the end of the day, I recognise that the Supreme Court can step in and make an order about a child's welfare. Section 61J specifically makes it clear that the powers of the court are not limited by the Bill. However, this Bill could cause problems to unwary people who make a will nominating a close family member as a guardian and, by doing so, assume that if they pass away that family member can have some say immediately in looking after the child. In fact, this Bill would deny that parent that wish unless that parent had gone the extra mile and specifically made it clear in the will that the appointment is to take effect immediately.

There are two issues I want the Minister to deal with. First, why is the law being changed from that which existed under the 1965 Act? Second, what steps will be put in place, hopefully, in conjunction with the Law Society

to ensure that legal practitioners and the public are aware of their rights and obligations in this regard? I again support the call made by the honourable member for Warwick towards the end of his speech in terms of an education process to be put in place. As I said at the outset, this is not a controversial Bill. Nevertheless, it is a very important one. Some of my comments have been critical, but overall I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate on the Bill. I look forward also to the Minister's response.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (12.10 a.m.): I am pleased to make a short contribution to the debate on the Succession and Other Acts Amendment Bill, which replaces earlier legislation in the Children's Services Act 1965 with respect to the appointment of testamentary guardians. Not only does the Bill replace the old legislation but it also significantly improves it. As a former solicitor and one with a fairly extensive practice with respect to wills and probate, I am pleased to offer my thoughts on the legislation to the Parliament. By referring to my experience, I do not want to belittle the contribution of anyone else. That is the prerogative of people such as the member for Callide, who seems to think that only farmers can comment on primary producer Bills. We all represent electorates and we should all be entitled to comment. The shadow Attorney-General is a former farmer who brings experiences we should all value when commenting on legal Bills. The same applies for people like former lawyers when commenting on other legislation.

One of the most concerning issues for a parent is the provision for children after their death. Sometimes parents die before their children become adults. It is a truism to say that parents never want to bury their kids. In these circumstances, the real concern is who is to look after them and make those important decisions that parents agonise over. We all worry about our children while we are around. The concern is even greater if the tragic happened and we were not there to guide them and care for them in their growing years. A testamentary guardian is a person appointed by a testator in their will. The old Children's Services Act allowed for appointment of testamentary guardians and on its repeal the provision was deleted. There was a need to replace it. I commend the Attorney-General for replacing it in a better form than originally existed.

It specifically says that an appointment of a testamentary guardian applies only if there is no surviving parent. I note that the shadow Attorney-General and the member for Clayfield

questioned this. I say to them that the purpose of drafting wills and the purpose of legislation that assists with the drafting of wills is to provide for the cases that the majority of people find themselves in. In 10 years of drafting wills, I cannot recall any situation where I saw a guardian appointed by deed. I cannot recall any situation when I was taking instruction for wills where a parent did not want me to draft the clause to say, "If my spouse dies before I do, then I appoint X as my testamentary guardian." In other words, I know of no examples that came across my desk where someone wanted to appoint a testamentary guardian over their surviving spouse.

This legislation specifically provides, as do other parts of the Succession Act, that the accepted practice will apply. That is a smart way of doing it. If a person leaves their estate to their children and one of the children predeceases that person, in the absence of a provision in the will to the contrary, it goes to the children of that child. Say a person has three children and one of them dies before the parent. The grandchildren—the deceased's children—get the third share that their deceased parent would have taken. Proper drafting of succession law takes into account the ordinary circumstances of drafting. That is exactly what this does. That is why it is good law. I commend the Attorney-General for it.

There are a number of other provisions I want to note with respect to the legislation which apply to daily care and authority in relation to an appointment of a testamentary guardian, that is, if there is no surviving parent and there is a court order. That is very important. We do not want a situation where the surviving parent has their primary obligation and responsibility to their children unduly interfered with. Suitability is also very important. Circumstances can change dramatically after one does a will. People should do their wills regularly, but they often do not. People often do wills that last 20 or 30 years. The person whom they might consider to be a suitable person as a testamentary guardian when they are 25—when they start having a family—may not be considered as an appropriate person when they turn 35. They may have had a falling out. They may have noticed that their character has changed. They may have had a rethink about it or moved away.

It is important to remember that circumstances change. It is important that the court can very quickly provide access to people who want to alter arrangements with respect to the appointment of a testamentary guardian.

A parent can apply for a testamentary guardian to be removed. A testamentary guardian not immediately appointed because there is a surviving parent can apply to the court. That takes into account a situation that the member for Clayfield referred to where there is a family break-up and the deceased person has appointed their mother, brother or sister and they do not immediately take over. Ordinarily, one would expect that the surviving parent would take over, but if there is an outstanding issue they can apply to the court. It is appropriate that this provision should be in a Succession Act, because the Succession Act should be self-containing when it comes to succession law. It really is more an aspect of this part of law than it is children's legislation.

In closing, I pay tribute—the shadow Attorney-General mentioned it, as did the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech—to two fantastic practitioners and experts in the law in Queensland who took Queensland succession law to the forefront of succession law in Australia when it was enacted in 1981. It is smart, sensible law drafted by Tony Lee, who incidentally was my lecturer at university. I would not want to embarrass him by claiming that that gave me anything more than anyone else, but he was certainly an excellent lecturer and an excellent draftsman. I also refer to John De Groote from the Law Society. He made his efforts in relation to succession law a real labour of love. He has also written an excellent book in relation to probate law administration and practice in Queensland. We have been lucky to have two very good texts and good drafting. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—CCAQ) (12.16 a.m.): I rise to support the Government's Succession and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The wish of a parent to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their child in the event of their own death is one of the most natural and basic of all parental instincts. I am sure that the current inability of parents who may be in ill health to make and enforce this decision has the potential to cause great anguish to themselves and their families. I feel that it is particularly important in this day and age when so many marriages fail that there is the ability to make considered decisions in advance as to what situation is going to provide an orphaned child with the best prospects of growing into a happy, functional adult in a loving and caring environment.

The only point of concern with this Bill is that I feel that its provisions may be able to be used in a situation where the custodial parent in a failed relationship may, in the event of

their death, spitefully attempt to deny custody of a child to the surviving biological parent. The surviving parent should not be placed in a situation where they are forced to fight in the courts for the right to care for their child. The right to care for one's own child should be an absolute, provided that no court has ruled that parent to be unfit for the role. If the Minister can give a clear assurance that the rights of the surviving parent will be protected, City Country Alliance will be supporting the Bill.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.18 a.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contribution to the debate and for their support of this Bill. Let me turn to the contribution of the member for Warwick. The honourable member indicated that he was approaching the Bill in a bipartisan manner, for which I thank him. He then sought to make criticism of the manner in which the Child Protection Act repealed the relevant provision. Let me simply draw to the honourable member's attention that, in that regard, it was in exactly the same position as the Children and Families Bill 1997 tabled by Minister Lingard in this House on 28 October 1997. I draw that to his attention in the generous spirit of bipartisanship with which the honourable member sought to draw attention to that point. The simple point is this: there is a need for this area of the law to be clarified. It is also important that deeds in existence be given ongoing force. It is also important that it be in its proper place, which is in the Succession Act, rather than in child welfare legislation.

I now turn to other points raised by the honourable member. The honourable member raised the question: why is it done by way of will instead of by way of deed as well? I thank the honourable member for Lytton, who I think answered that point satisfactorily. Appointment by deed is somewhat anachronistic and somewhat inappropriate. The Bill provides in section 259A for the continuation of the validity of those, but in an age where we have the Family Court and other courts to deal with these matters it is appropriate to have testamentary guardianship but not to continue the practice of doing it by deed.

The provisions which pick up on Aboriginal and Islander customary parenting approaches are really designed to show respect for Aboriginal and Islander custom. I am aware that the honourable member for Warwick has spoken in support of Aboriginal customary law on other occasions. This applies it in the area of family law.

With respect to the issue of the authority of the testamentary guardian vis-a-vis the surviving parent, at the end of the day if there is a problem it is a matter for the courts to determine. This is about ensuring that a parent can make some provision for his or her child in the event of death. Why is such a provision also made where the guardian is not a parent? It is because people can become guardians not simply by testamentary means but more often by appointment by the court. They then carry out the roles, responsibilities and duties of a guardian, and in that respect they stand in the shoes of the parent—in loco parentis.

I turn my attention from the shadow Attorney-General to the shadow shadow Attorney-General, the honourable member for Clayfield. It is interesting that the Liberal Party has not yet given up hope of regaining the Justice portfolio, although pinning its hopes on the member for Clayfield shows the triumph of hope over experience that characterises the Liberal Party. The honourable member urged that there be steps to inform the public, and I concur with that view. Certainly we have worked with the Queensland Law Society on this matter and will continue to do so to ensure that members of the profession are fully and adequately informed and, hence, members of the public can be informed, particularly at the time they come to make their wills.

In the May 2000 edition of Proctor, the journal of the Queensland Law Society, Mr Bruce Doyle, President of the Family Law Practitioners Association of Queensland, wrote commending the Child Protection Act 1999. He also states—

"Under the Borbidge Government the Children and Families Bill was developed. The structure of the Bill was the same as the new Act but some of the philosophies were different. In 1996 Government consultation with the legal profession was limited. In 1998, the consultation process for the Child Protection Act 1999 was better, with wide consultation."

That is a glowing reference for the Minister for Families from the legal profession. The same edition of Proctor, which speaks positively of the Child Protection Act 1999, notes also the issue of the testamentary appointment of guardians. I thank the Law Society for its assistance. I thank the members for Lytton and Ipswich West for their contributions, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 9, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

The House adjourned at 12.26 a.m. (Friday).