

TUESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

The House met at 9.30 a.m.

ABSENCE OF MR SPEAKER

The Clerk informed the House that Mr Speaker was attending the 47th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Canberra.

The Chairman of Committees (Hon. J. Fouras) read prayers and took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Honourable members, I wish to note the presence in this chamber today of the member for Nicklin. I welcome him back to the parliament and join with all other members in wishing him a very, very quick recovery.

ASSENT TO BILLS**Appropriation (Parliament) Bill
Appropriation Bill**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have to report that on Thursday, 9 August 2001 Mr Speaker presented to His Excellency the Governor the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill and the Appropriation Bill for royal assent and that His Excellency was pleased, in Mr Speaker's presence, to subscribe his assent thereto in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I received from His Excellency the Governor letters in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the records of parliament—

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

9 August 2001

The Honourable R. K. Hollis, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 9 August 2001:

"A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and parliamentary service for the financial years starting 1 July 2001 and 1 July 2002"

"A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2001 and 1 July 2002".

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Peter Arnison

Governor

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

16 August 2001

The Honourable R. K. Hollis, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 16 August 2001:

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to make changes to the Consumer Credit Code"

"A Bill for an Act to facilitate the granting of a long-term lease over the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal by providing for the exclusion of certain leases from the application of the Property Law Act 1974, section 121"

"A Bill for an Act to approve, ratify and facilitate the Lake Eyre Basin intergovernmental agreement"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Gas Act 1965"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the New South Wales—Queensland Border Rivers Act 1946"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Forestry Act 1959 and Land Title Act 1994"

"A Bill for an Act to regulate the introduction agency industry, and for other purposes".

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(Sgd) Peter Arnison
Governor

PRIVILEGE

Mr D. J. Quinlivan

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (9.33 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. The matter I refer to arises from articles in the *Courier-Mail* and *Sunday Mail* of 8 and 9 September 2001. Issues of parliamentary privilege arise as my conduct as a member was questioned in relation to providing advice and making representations on behalf of any Queenslander.

The facts in relation to this matter are as follows. I met with Mr Quinlivan at my electorate office on 22 August for the first and only time after he had made an appointment. He provided me with a folder of documents which he explained. He raised two main issues with me: that he believed he had been defamed and misrepresented by the *Courier-Mail* and that he was concerned for the future health of the property, construction, marketing and sales industries in south-east Queensland. I advised Mr Quinlivan, as I would advise any individual in similar circumstances, that he should make his position known in the wider community if he was not intending to take legal action. I told him that he was welcome to provide any further information to me regarding this matter. I have made no judgment as to the validity or otherwise of the matters raised by Mr Quinlivan.

I am pleased to report that yesterday I fully supported new and stronger legislation that regulates this industry through the relevant legislative committee and through the Labor caucus. I met with the Premier and the Deputy Premier yesterday, and the Premier was happy with my explanation of what has occurred.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Oxley Secondary College

Mrs Liz Cunningham from 272 petitioners, requesting the House to (a) call upon the Minister for Natural Resources to investigate more suitable uses for the Oxley Secondary College and to conduct fair community consultation regarding its use and (b) call upon the Minister for Primary Industries to ensure that fire ant research is conducted in an appropriately secure laboratory and that chemical storage and distribution facilities are located in an industrial area within a fire ant infestation region.

Proposed Rezoning, Holland Park West/Tarragindi

Mr Fenlon from 825 petitioners, requesting the House to disallow the proposed rezoning of localities Nos 28 and 29, being Holland Park West and Tarragindi, from Low Density Residential (Res A) to Low Medium Residential (Res B).

Abortion

Ms Keech from 232 petitioners, requesting the House to (a) not decriminalise abortion, not amend Sections 224, 225, 226 and 283 of the Queensland Criminal Code and (b) take all steps to facilitate the enforcement of the Queensland Criminal Code on abortion.

A similar petition was presented by Mr Horan with 1,596 signatories.

Dog Obedience Training

Mr Palaszczuk from 6,384 petitioners, requesting the House to encourage the Canine Control Council of Queensland to create and implement a new registry system which would allow the owners of all dogs, pedigree or otherwise, to participate in dog obedience training and trialling under identical conditions.

St Stephen's Private Hospital

Miss Simpson from 217 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that specialists in the region of Maryborough are able to practise in the private system as well as in the public hospitals on the Fraser Coast to ensure the viability of St Stephen's Private Hospital and the service and jobs which that facility provides to the Fraser Coast region.

Abortion

Ms Struthers from 2,113 petitioners, requesting the House to repeal Sections 224, 225 and 226 of the Criminal Code, so that women have the right to choose.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

The Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—

14 August 2001—

Report to the Legislative Assembly by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

Trust Company of Australia—Annual Report for the year ended 28 February 2001

28 August 2001—

Rail Network Strategy for Queensland

3 September 2001—

Report prepared pursuant to section 3.6.9 of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 on a development application over land at South Deebing Creek Road, Deebing Heights (Ipswich City) called in by the former Minister for Local Government and Planning, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth MP, on 29 February 2000 and decided by the Minister for Local Government and Planning, the Honourable Nita Cunningham MP, on 6 June 2001

Information from the Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mrs J Cunningham) in response to a question asked during the Estimates Committee D Hearing held on 13 July 2001

4 September 2001—

Replacement pages to the Marine Safety Incidents Annual Report 2000 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 11 May 2001

6 September 2001—

Queensland Audit Office—Annual Report 2000-2001

Queensland Fisheries Joint Authority—Annual Report 1999-2000

South Johnstone Cane Protection and Productivity Board—Annual Report 2000

Late tabling statement by the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities (Mr Palaszczuk) regarding the South Johnstone Cane Protection and Productivity Board Annual Report 2000

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

Police Powers and Responsibilities Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 133

Agricultural Standards Act 1994, Stock Act 1915—

Stock and Agricultural Standards Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 134

Water Act 2000—

Water Management (Cooper Creek) Amendment Plan (No. 1) 2001, No. 135

Integrated Planning Act 1997—

Integrated Planning Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 136

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 137

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 138

Statistical Returns Act 1896—

Statistical Returns Regulation 2001, No. 139

Health Practitioners Legislation Amendment Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 140

Medical Act 1939—

Medical Board of Queensland Amendment By-law (No. 1) 2001, No. 141

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

Police Powers and Responsibilities (Goodwill Games) Regulation 2001, No. 142

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 143

Statutory Instruments Act 1992—

Statutory Instruments Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 144

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle Registration) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 145

Sawmills Licensing Act 1936—

Sawmills Licensing Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 146

Acquisition of Land Act 1967, Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980, Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988, Land Act 1994, Land Court Act 2000, Land Title Act 1994, Rural Lands Protection Act 1985, Surveyors Act 1977, Valuation of Land Act 1944, Valuers Registration Act 1992, Water Act 2000—

Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 147

Casino Control Act 1982—

Casino Gaming Amendment Rule (No. 2) 2001, No. 148

Criminal Justice Act 1989—

Criminal Justice Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 149

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

Police Powers and Responsibilities (CHOGM) Regulation 2001, No. 150

Fisheries Act 1994—

Fisheries Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 151

Public Trustee Act 1978—

Public Trustee Regulation 2001, No. 152

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 153

Architects Act 1985, Professional Engineers Act 1988—

Public Works Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 154

Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—

Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 155

Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994—

Motor Accident Insurance Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 156

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 157

Water Act 2000—

Water (Postponement) Regulation 2001, No. 158

City of Brisbane Act 1924—

City of Brisbane Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 159

Ambulance Service Act 1991—

Ambulance Service Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 160

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Finance Amendment Standard (No. 1) 2001, No. 161

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT

The following response to a parliamentary committee report, received during the recess, was tabled by The Clerk—

Interim response from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to report No. 55 of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee entitled Three Yearly Review of the Criminal Justice Commission—A report of a review of the activities of the Criminal Justice Commission pursuant to section 118(1)(f) of the Criminal Justice Act 1989

MINISTERIAL RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The following responses to petitions, received during the recess, were tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy (Mrs Edmond) to a petition presented by Miss Simpson from 3,511 petitioners, regarding the St Stephen's Private Hospital, Maryborough

20 AUG 2001

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

Dear Mr Doyle

Thank you for your letter dated 21 June 2001, forwarding a copy of a petition concerning the ability of specialists being able to practise in both the private and public sectors to ensure the viability of the St Stephen's Private Hospital, Maryborough.

The Fraser Coast Health Service District recognises the important role the St Stephen's Private Hospital plays in not only providing private sector services to the residents of the District, but also in providing an attraction for specialist staff to be recruited to the District.

I am advised that the Fraser Coast Health Service District has been negotiating with the St Stephen's Private Hospital for a number of months to address complex legal and industrial issues to enable Health Service specialist medical staff to provide service at the St Stephen's Hospital.

The support offered by the Fraser Coast Health Service District to the St Stephen's Private Hospital has been publicly recognised by the management of the private hospital.

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

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Wendy Edmond

Wendy Edmond

Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy

Response from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province (Mr McGrady) to a petition presented by Mrs Sheldon from 60 petitioners, regarding jet skis (personal water craft), houseboat waste disposal and the policing of these matters in the Pumicestone Passage area

13 AUG 2001

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

Dear Mr Doyle

I refer to your letter of 18 May 2001, to the Honourable Dean Wells MP, Minister for the Environment, regarding a petition tabled before Parliament concerning personal water craft jet skis), houseboat waste disposal and the policing of these matters in the area of Pumicestone Passage.

Mr Wells has referred this matter to me for consideration and provision of a further response to you in terms of the policing of the issues raised by the petitioners.

Policing responsibilities in the Pumicestone Passage in the terms of the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act, are shared by the Sunshine Coast Water Police and the Department of Primary Industries, Boating and Fisheries Patrol.

New subordinate legislation entitled Transport Infrastructure (Sunshine Coast Waterways) Management Plan 2000, came into force in January 2001. This legislation provides authorities with powers to address specific issues pertaining to Sunshine Coast Waterways including the matters raised by the petitioners, as it legislates the activity of personal watercraft usage and habitation aboard vessels.

The Sunshine Coast Water Police Unit is staffed by two officers who are responsible for servicing an area extending from Bribie Island Point in the south to Double Island Point in the north. Sunshine Coast Water Police perform regular patrols along Pumicestone Passage and carry out the dual roles of both enforcement and education of the community in relation to legislative obligations in the conduct of activities on the waterways. They are assisted by officers from the Brisbane Water Police who also service the southern end of Pumicestone Passage.

It may be of interest to the petitioners to know that two personal watercrafts have recently been acquired for the Sunshine Coast Water Police through a policing partnership with local government authorities on the Sunshine Coast. These craft will increase the versatility of the Water Police by providing another means of policing offences committed on the waterways, including those areas of complaint related to activities of personal watercraft.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Tony McGrady

TONY McGRADY

Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province

Response from the Minister for Environment (Mr Wells) to a petition presented by Mr Lucas from 29 petitioners, regarding relocation of the Lytton Quarantine Station Kitchen and Dining Hall to Fort Lytton National Park

4 SEP 2001

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

Dear Mr Doyle

I refer to your letter of 20 June 2001 forwarding a copy of a petition tabled in the Parliament on 19 June 2001 regarding relocation of the Lytton Quarantine Station Kitchen and Dining Hall to Fort Lytton National Park.

The new Port of Brisbane Road is forcing the removal of the building from the current Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QRFA) Training Centre at Lytton. The Wynnum Historical Society has been advocating, with the strong support of local member, the Honourable Paul Lucas MP, and other sectors of the community, to move the building back to nearby Fort Lytton National Park. The building was originally located within the Lytton Quarantine Station, part of which is now protected in the National Park.

In line with a commitment made by the previous Minister for Environment, the Honourable Rod Welford MP, officers of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prepared a feasibility study in March 2001 to examine options of relocating this heritage building to the National Park. Relocation of the building to the National Park would provide practical protection of this important building by avoiding the unacceptable options of demolition or inappropriate relocation.

Upon consideration of this report, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is prepared to support relocation of the building to the National Park. Negotiations are progressing between the EPA, Department of Main Roads and Department of Emergency Services to identify options for funding relocation estimated by Napier and Blakely Pty Ltd to be in the order of \$160,000.

Relocation of the former Quarantine Kitchen and Dining Hall to the National Park would provide enhanced opportunities for community use and enjoyment of this important heritage precinct.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Dean Wells

DEAN WELLS
Minister for Environment

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The Clerk tabled the following ministerial papers received during the recess—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)

Letter, dated 8 August 2001, from the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties of the Parliament of Australia to the Premier of Queensland inviting the Queensland Government to comment on various proposed international treaties

National Interest Analysis—Protocol to the Agreement between Australia and the Republic of Austria on Social Security, done at Vienna on 26 June 2001

National Interest Analysis—Exchange of Notes Constituting an Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America to amend the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America concerning Cooperation in Defense Logistic Support done at Sydney on 4 November 1989

National Interest Analysis—Agreement on Social Security between the Government of Australia and the Government of Canada, done at Ottawa on 26 July 2001

National Interest Analysis—Amendments to the Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific adopted by consensus at the Fifth Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Guam on 9 October 2000

National Interest Analysis—Agreement between Australia and Spain on Social Security

National Interest Analysis and Regulation Impact Statement—Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Social Security, done at The Hague on 2 July 2001

Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines (Mr Robertson)

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Member for Nicklin; Ansett Airlines; Virgin Airlines

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: Before I make my ministerial statement, I want to say on behalf of the government that it is great to see the member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, back in this chamber. I have to tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that when guts were handed out he got more than his share. He has been a

great member and we all wish him well. He seems to have a bit of an excuse to be sitting there side-saddle. Good luck. It is good to have him back.

The Queensland government is concerned about the current Ansett crisis as it directly threatens jobs and services in this state. Ansett services all major Queensland centres. I am advised that Ansett provides 60 per cent of seats to the Gold Coast and also exclusively services Hamilton Island. There are 1,400 Ansett employees in Queensland and thousands more in supporting industries. These Queenslanders do a great job for Ansett and they do not deserve to lose their jobs because of managerial incompetence.

More than any other state Queensland needs sustainable, competitive air services. Because Queensland is the state with the largest population living outside the capital city and because tourism is our second biggest industry employing 150,000 Queenslanders, we need competition in air services. There are great distances between important centres, making air travel critical to economic integration with the rest of the state and, indeed, the nation. It is vitally important to ensure maintenance and expansion of regional services into the future. It is also critical to maintain downward pressure on air fares. The future of our tourism industry depends on it. We need a solution that saves jobs and services but does not return us to the bad old days of expensive air fares.

Queenslanders and all Australians have responded strongly to the availability of cheaper air travel. In the last year the number of air travellers has increased by 34 per cent. Air travellers cannot afford to surrender the gains that have been made. The current situation is very fluid, but it appears possible that some amalgamation of domestic carriers might occur. If concentration of the market does eventuate, it is essential that effective safeguards are immediately put in place. This is the main point I wanted to make to the House today. Those safeguards should include strict prices oversight to control dominant players and keep fares down and maintenance of service networks to ensure continued access to air travel for regional Australians, particularly in Queensland. This may require a special aviation market regulator either within the ACCC or separately. It is important that any amalgamation is made conditional upon long-term commitments to the service network and employment.

Today I have written to the Acting Prime Minister to communicate the importance Queensland places on these issues. I seek to incorporate a copy of my letter to the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as a detailed statement in relation to some of the recent dealings with regard to Virgin Airlines. I have assured the Deputy Prime Minister that Queensland stands ready to work with the Commonwealth, other governments and the private sector to ensure that a sustainable and affordable aviation sector is maintained in this country. I seek leave to incorporate my letter to John Anderson and a further statement in relation to Virgin Airlines.

Leave granted.

Queensland Government
Premier of Queensland

11 September 2001

The Hon John Anderson MP
Acting Prime Minister
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear John

I am writing to you about the situation that currently confronts the Australian Airline Industry.

As you will no doubt be aware last week I wrote, in a different set of circumstances, to the Prime Minister expressing my concern about the prospect of the Australian airline industry reverting to a duopoly. In the event, that particular threat to fair competition in the airline market place did not ultimately eventuate. It is an unfortunate irony that less than a week later it appears almost certain that Australia's second domestic carrier seems likely to either vacate the market or be subsumed by QANTAS—or a combination of QANTAS and other smaller players in the airline industry.

I appreciate the difficult challenges that this set of conditions presents to your government. From the Queensland Government's perspective there are a range of issues that we would wish to see addressed in any resolution. Of paramount significance are the protection of the many jobs that are at risk and the maintenance of air services that are accessible to the people of regional and metropolitan Australia.

Queensland, perhaps more than any other state, relies upon the availability of sustainable and competitive air services. It is, as you know, the state with the largest population living outside the Capital City and tyrannical distances between key regional centres results in air travel being critical to the integration of isolated communities into the state and national economy and society. Prominent amongst the industries that rely upon the availability of

competitively priced airfares is, of course, the tourism industry which is the lifeblood of many of our provincial towns and cities.

All of us realise that there are no easy solutions to the dilemma that the nation confronts. I wish, however, to express to you my strong belief that it is not in the medium or long-term interests of Australia for any one player to assume an effective, unfettered monopoly position in the market. Nor can any effective solution involve the loss of the significant gains that have been achieved in recent times in making air travel accessible to a large proportion of the Australian community.

I am therefore proposing that if your government is to support an outcome that does result in a concentration of market-share in the hands of any one player that specific measures are taken to introduce effective safeguards to protect fair competition for smaller players. This could involve, for example, the introduction of a Special Regulator for the aviation market who would provide strict oversight of pricing to limit predatory behaviour of any dominant player, and to also ensure continued affordability of air travel. In addition, the Special Regulator would ensure that service networks for regional Australians are maintained. It is important that any amalgamation, if it is to occur, is conditional upon long-term commitments to the service network and the maintenance of the highest achievable level of employment.

I wish to assure you that provided these principles are protected my government stands ready to work with yours, my counterparts in other states and the private sector to ensure sustainable and affordable air services remain available to all Australians.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) P Beattie

Peter Beattie MP

Premier and Minister for Trade

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER ON VIRGIN

Mr Speaker, today I would like to say thank you to Richard Branson, for his decision to reject a quarter billion dollar offer for his airline, Virgin Blue.

Mr Branson's decision on September 4 to reject the offer from Air New Zealand is the best result for travellers and for Queensland tourism.

I met with and talked with Mr Branson throughout the preceding days—and I congratulate him.

Australia needs competition in the domestic air travel market.

Virgin Blue's entry into the domestic air market has seen airfares fall dramatically.

Virgin Blue has virtually halved the cost of air fares in Australia, enabling hundreds of thousands of Australians to visit friends and family by air for the first time in their lives.

Cheap fares have resulted in about four million extra airline seats being sold in Australia in the last 12 months.

And since Virgin Blue started its Adelaide-Brisbane route the number of passengers has more than doubled.

Mr Speaker, I also want to see the Commonwealth change competition regulations so that start-up companies entering the market place are given adequate protection against major players trying to keep the market to themselves.

I have written to Prime Minister John Howard urging him to take immediate action.

I am also writing to all other state and territory governments urging them to join the fight.

We should never forget that there have been three other attempts in the last 10 years to launch airlines with cheaper fares, and three times those attempts were defeated by aggressive and anti-competitive behaviour.

I want to emphasise that any company should be free to restructure its financial circumstances to enable it to compete successfully and governments should minimise interference in the market place.

However, the public interest should also be protected.

I am urging Australians to campaign for this change because unless they put pressure on the Federal Government to act, they risk losing cheap air fares for ever.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goodwill Games

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: In relation to other matters where we have demonstrated what a can-do government we are, I am delighted to say that for 12 days the world's sporting spotlight was on Queensland as we hosted and celebrated the 2001 Goodwill Games right here in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. The games were a spectacular success that have helped entrench Queensland as Australia's big events state. We invested \$30 million to bring the games to Brisbane and our decision has been repaid with interest. These games were great value for money. It was estimated that these games would inject about \$170 million into the Queensland economy, and the key indicators support that prediction. For the duration of these games major hotels in Brisbane reported a 94 per cent occupancy rate, a phenomenal result for that industry. The Goodwill Games has enabled Brisbane to upgrade its key sporting facilities. The new \$2.25 million

track at ANZ Stadium was just part of that investment and means Queenslanders, particularly young Queenslanders, now have the best athletics venue in Australia.

Over and above all of these direct and immediate benefits is Queensland's exposure to the world as a tourism destination and a place to do business. The 2001 Goodwill Games were marketed as the gods of sport coming to compete in our own backyard. The 1,300 athletes from 70 countries who competed in 14 sports were the best of the best. In the pool, our home-grown superstars like Ian Thorpe, Grant Hackett and Petria Thomas gave their all in a superb all-round performance by our gold medal winning men's and women's teams. At the track, we thrilled to the efforts of Marion Jones and Michael Johnson and the record-breaking performance of Russian Olimpiada Ivanova, who slashed more than two and a half minutes off the world record for the 20 kilometre walk. In fact, five world records were set in Brisbane during the Goodwill Games.

The games also provided a perfect stage for Gold Coast teenager Melissa Rollison to graduate from junior prospect to a genuine international champion with her brilliant run to win the 3,000 metre steeplechase. This is a young Queensland who is now an international star thanks to the Goodwill Games. Another highlight was Australian Sergo Chakhoyan's world record snatch in the 85 kilo class at the weight-lifting. As hosts, Queensland was able to nominate a sport for inclusion in the games. We chose surf-lifesaving and gave the sport a level of exposure to the world it has never experienced before. After 12 days of competition in 14 different sports, the Australian team pipped Russia to win the medal tally 74 to 73, with the United States third on 71. Australia finished with 29 gold, 25 silver and 30 bronze.

I want to say a little bit about the volunteers. A real feature of these games was the friendly and helpful volunteers who did so much to set the tone for the event and showed that Queenslanders really are some of the friendliest people on earth. I again want to thank—I have done this personally but want to thank them in this chamber on behalf of all members—the 3,700 volunteers who have contributed an estimated 115,000 hours of their time and done so much to make these games a great success. Their friendly approach added another notch of warmth to these games.

There has been a lot of hard work done by the Goodwill Games team over the past two to three years. It would be remiss of me as the minister for the Goodwill Games if I did not extend special thanks to a number of people, and I do so. In particular I thank the game's founder and AOL Time Warner Vice-Chairman, Ted Turner; the 2001 Goodwill Games Chairperson, Wayne Goss; the Chief Executive, Campbell Rose; and Mike Plant, who headed the American side of the games partnership. I thank them and all their hardworking teams. It was a terrific partnership and a great effort.

In terms of crowds and viewing audiences, the Goodwill Games attracted bigger than expected crowds and excellent television ratings in Brisbane, other Australian states and overseas. Our athletics sessions averaged crowds of 29,000 people. That compares well with the recent World Championships in Edmonton, Canada, which averaged 16,000 a day over the 10 days of competition. The price of public transport was included in the ticket cost and Brisbane people took advantage of the opportunity, using public transport to a greater extent than ever before. Our crowds were incredibly good humoured, fun loving and patient. Police reported excellent behaviour throughout, with barely a disturbance or a complaint during the entire games program.

Given the star-studded strength of Australian swimming and its popularity with Australian sports lovers, it is not surprising that it attracted peak viewing audiences around Australia. On Monday evening, 3 September, a peak national audience of 1,815,913 viewers watched Nine's coverage of the men's swimming gold medal final. The average viewing audience that night was more than 1.5 million people between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m., with a 40.2 per cent share of the viewing audience. In the United States, three minutes out of each and every 170 hours of telecast—that was the total—was devoted to highlighting Queensland, our physical beauty, our beaches, the reef and our people. That is almost eight and a half hours of free commercials for Queensland in the United States market. We have never, ever had that before. Of those 170 hours, 120 were on Turner Network Television and 50 hours were on CNN. That is a level of exposure that will provide positive results for our tourism industry for at least the next five years. It is a level of exposure that Queensland has never had before, and we are going to continue to build on this opportunity. It means that when these viewers think of a holiday in Australia they do not just think of Sydney; they will now think of Queensland. It means that we are now a potential destination for all those people.

The big events state is Queensland. The Goodwill Games is just the beginning of a run of big events coming to Queensland. Big events drive tourism and tourism drives job creation. Tourism is already our second biggest industry, employing some 150,000 Queenslanders. Boosting tourism is critical to our economic wellbeing and growth. Over the next 12 months Queensland will host a number of other events, including the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting from 6 to 9 October, the Honda Indy 300 from 25 to 28 October, top golf at the Australian PGA championships from 15 to 18 November and the Holden Australian Open from 22 to 25 November, the Conrad Jupiters Magic Millions Racing Carnival in January 2002, more golf at the ANZ Masters from 21 to 24 February, the Lightlce Australian Surf Lifesaving Championships from 20 to 24 March, the Gold Coast Marathon on 7 July, and the Asia Pacific Masters Games in September 2002. They are just some examples.

As well as big numbers at our sporting venues, it is estimated that more than 300,000 people visited South Bank, the venue for beach volleyball, the triathlon and the centre of our River Festival activities. To give the House some examples of how popular the river concerts were, an estimated 25,000 people turned out to watch Killing Heidi, up to 30,000 people watched the Whitlams perform and the closing ceremony on Sunday evening was simply packed out, with estimates of up to 100,000 people at South Bank. South Bank was packed, the north bank was packed, Victoria Bridge was packed and no-one was disappointed. The concerts, fireworks display and light show that concluded our 12 days of sport, fun and festivities were sensational.

As part of this program, we also ran a major \$2 million Where Else But Queensland campaign featuring ads in Victoria and New South Wales. The Treasurer referred to that in his budget speech. I want to table details of that campaign. Merri Rose, the Minister for Tourism, and I launched it. I want to incorporate in *Hansard* a short statement which confirms the details of it for the information of the House.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, the Goodwill Games were not only an opportunity to enjoy world-class sport and entertainment—the Games also offered an unprecedented marketing opportunity for Queensland.

The best of the best in the world competing in a finals-only format, before a world-wide audience of millions of people put Queensland firmly in the national spotlight.

My Government seized that opportunity to launch a major advertising campaign—pitched at businesspeople in New South Wales and Victoria.

The \$2 million "Where else but Queensland" campaign featured television and newspaper advertisements, basically using the Goodwill Games as a vehicle to sell the competitive advantages of doing business in Queensland or relocating business to Queensland.

Mr Speaker, I have brought one of the ads with me today so Members can appreciate the quality of the campaign.

Our message was this: the 2001 Goodwill Games is not the only kind of competition on offer in Queensland.

Queensland is better for business. It's cheaper for business and it has a forward-looking Government that wants to do business.

We have Australia's lowest payroll tax, the lowest workers' compensation premiums, low operating costs, a highly skilled workforce, highly competitive power costs and we are strategically located to take advantage of trade and market opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Combine these initiatives with Queensland's increasing "smart sector" trade with the United States and the Asia Pacific Rim and we have a State that takes competitiveness to a new level.

Tourism Minister Merri Rose and I took this message directly to business and tourist operators on their home turf in Melbourne—where we launched the campaign at the Aquarium on 16 August—and Sydney where we launched at Darling Harbour on 17 August.

Mr Speaker, this was the most aggressive advertising campaign we've ever undertaken.

It was important for us to showcase what Queensland offers to businesspeople while attention was focused on our State.

It was important to project a confident and stylish image to the business sector.

It was vital that we make the pitch personally.

In Sydney, the Minister and I were joined by that great swimming champion and Goodwill Games Ambassador and competitor Ian Thorpe and performer Christine Anu.

They lent their talent and support to the launch of the Aquashell, which has hosted 8 concerts while moored riverside at South Bank, during the Games.

It was a fantastic venue for these performances and added something special to the entertainment side of the Games.

Mr BEATTIE: I conclude on this point: we are delighted with the outcome of the Goodwill Games. But it is not just about sport. This is about a lifestyle. This is about encouraging young people into athletics and sport. We often debate and pass legislation in this chamber which deals

with drugs, homelessness and a loss of self-esteem for young people. These positive events have more than a sporting benefit; they have a social benefit.

This is about how we encourage young people into the community. This is how we build infrastructure to give our young people a great chance for the future. This is about the whole community. It is bigger than sport and bigger than athletics. This is about building a strong community for all Queenslanders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Integrity Commissioner

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: On 21 August this year I announced the appointment of Australia's first Integrity Commissioner, the honourable Alan Demack AO. Today I table the Integrity Commissioner's first annual report.

Under section 28 of the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 the Integrity Commissioner has three responsibilities: to give advice to designated persons about conflict of interest issues; to give advice to the Premier, if the Premier asks, on issues concerning ethics and integrity, including standards setting for issues concerning ethics and integrity; and to contribute to public understanding of public integrity standards by contributing to public discussion of policy and practice relevant to the Integrity Commissioner's functions—in other words, an educative role.

The annual report details requests for advice from the Integrity Commissioner in relation to the receipt of gifts and hospitality, the attendance of public officials at corporate functions, post-employment of public officials, and the declaration of prize winnings. Advice was also given to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on the proposed guidelines for the disposal of ministerial gifts. As outlined in the report, advice on conflict of interest issues has been given on 13 occasions—six in response to requests by my ministers or me, six in response to chief executive officers and one in response to another designated person. The Integrity Commissioner also has an educative role, as I said, which involves the allocation of time. This displays a commitment by my government to conduct business in a transparent and accountable manner by upholding the public trust that the government is open in its decision making.

Mr Demack, as Queensland's first Integrity Commissioner, has played an instrumental role in raising the profile of public sector ethics. This has been achieved through public forums to educate both public officials and private citizens about public sector ethics and through the establishment of a web site, which has contributed to the public's awareness about ethical issues and integrity. I lay upon the table a copy of the Integrity Commissioner's annual report for 2000–01.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, he is from regional Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sporting Schools Day

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to report to the House that more than 50,000 Queensland school students experienced the Goodwill Games via free tickets to events thanks to Project Goodwill. A further 89 students from far-north Queensland schools in Cape York, the gulf and the Torres Strait Islands travelled to Brisbane to see the world's best athletes in action thanks to Education Queensland, Queensland Rail and the 2001 Goodwill Games. This investment in our young people was in the true spirit of the Goodwill Games.

School students from all over Queensland gave gold medal performances as enthusiastic spectators, cheering on our competitors in a full range of events. But that was not their only role. Last week Goodwill Games track star Michael Johnson visited Sunnybank Hills State School for a special student sports clinic. The far-north Queensland students were also participants in this event. Michael Johnson took about 60 budding track stars through a series of activities, but undoubtedly the best outcome was the strong sense of belief he inspired in these students that they really could reach their full potential.

Michael Johnson's clinic at Sunnybank Hills State School was part of the countdown to Sporting Schools Day. I was there at the clinic, and the look of enthusiasm and the incredible commitment of these young athletes to see a sporting hero such as Michael Johnson on their school oval was really incredible.

Tomorrow is Sporting Schools Day—a day for schools to celebrate the benefits of sport, with the emphasis on participation rather than competition. It is not about winning or losing but about being involved, having fun and reaping the benefits of sport. From the gulf to the Gold Coast, schools across the state will be holding a range of activities that celebrate the benefits of physical activity and encourage children to take part in school sport.

To give a few examples, the students from Sunnybank Hills State School will hold a whole-of-school relay involving 1,100 students; Goondiwindi State School will hold fun runs for students, parents and teachers, from 500 metres to two kilometres; and Toowoomba East State School has organised every class—that is 700 students—to be involved in sporting activities throughout the day.

Members would be aware of the growing concerns that children are opting out of physical activity and that this may have serious long-term health implications for our young people. The government's commitment to the Smart State is not focused solely on academic achievement in schools, although this of course remains a high priority. We recognise that sport is also a valuable part of the broader school experience.

Sporting Schools Day is an initiative of the Queensland School Sports Foundation, which was very wisely established by my predecessor in January last year to raise funds to foster and develop sport for children in state and non-state schools. Education Queensland administers the foundation through an advisory committee. I am pleased to say that former cricket great Ian Healy chairs the foundation.

Students who take part in Sporting Schools Day activities tomorrow will be invited to make a gold coin donation, with the proceeds divided equally between the school and the foundation. The foundation gives financial assistance to children who would otherwise not be able to take part in representative school sports due to cost, isolation or other factors. Many of our most successful sports people can trace their careers back to school sport, and the funds raised tomorrow will go towards helping our future champions.

There can be no better example of the worth of school sport than Melissa Rollison, our international steeplechase champion, who is a local high school student on the Gold Coast. Regardless of financial circumstances, all kids deserve the chance to aspire to representative and elite sports, and this equitable program gives them that chance.

As the spirit of the Goodwill Games lingers in Queensland, I thank the many athletes who have given up their time to ensure that tomorrow's Sporting Schools Day is a success, in particular basketball great Brian Kerle, who will tomorrow be at the northern region secondary track and field trials, and swimming star Susie O'Neill, who will be guest speaker at a Sporting Schools Day breakfast tomorrow and will visit the Fig Tree Pocket State School. Other Olympians, such as Glynis Nunn-Cearns, and officers from state sporting organisations will also visit schools throughout the day to conduct sport clinics. Thank you to all of them. I encourage as many schools and students as possible to take part in tomorrow's inaugural Sporting Schools Day.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for State Development) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: Work on the \$118 million Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre is set to get under way shortly. The go-ahead follows the Gold Coast City Council's recent decision to approve the final planning process. For far too long the Gold Coast has been waiting for an international convention venue to be established, and the Gold Coast City Council's decision opens the way for earthworks to start early next year.

It is particularly heartening that the Gold Coast City Council in its vote overwhelmingly voted to proceed. In fact, the Gold Coast City Council decision was near unanimous, so the councillors have backed the project. For that they will have the thanks of all on the Gold Coast.

There were some suggestions that the Gold Coast City Council had been stood over by the coordinator-general. These were unfortunate comments and were not reflected in the Gold Coast

City Council vote. The Gold Coast City Council has always known that it has to approve conditions based on the coordinator-general's report. Before the council's decision the coordinator-general, initially with me, met with the Gold Coast City Council Deputy Mayor, Alan Rickard, who was the acting mayor at that time, and other councillors to discuss his report and councillors' concerns. It was explained to them that a number of the conditions raised by the councillors were inconsistent with the coordinator-general's report. Subsequently, the Gold Coast City Council has amended its conditions accordingly.

Jupiters, on hearing the Gold Coast City Council decision, has advised that it will now immediately begin with detailed design work, and earthworks are set to begin early next year. The convention centre process has been extremely open and there was lengthy consultation, and the Gold Coast City Council had significant involvement.

The Premier and I have been working hard to get this project under way because of what it will mean for the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast Tourism Bureau has estimated that convention business could jump to \$400 million a year once this purpose-built facility is completed. In 1999-2000, conventions on the Gold Coast were worth about \$150 million, so this new convention centre will consolidate the Gold Coast's position as a prime destination for conventions.

Finally, I would also like to note the successful completion of the indigenous land use agreement between traditional owners, Jupiters Ltd and the state government so that this project could proceed. The convention centre will be a win for the Gold Coast and a win for Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goodwill Games

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (10.00 a.m.), by leave: I want to take this opportunity to commend the police officers who were involved with the Goodwill Games for making an outstanding contribution to the event's success. Police report that crowd behaviour throughout the games was exemplary, and this is due in no small part to their efforts. Police completed a staggering total of 2,256 eight-hour shifts during the games and were stationed at eight venues. The police presence at games events exceeded attendance at similar events, such as last year's Olympic Games soccer tournament at the Gabba.

Despite the scale of the games, I am delighted to say that there were no major incidents reported at any of the venues. Additional traffic police were deployed to minimise delays and ensure that traffic proceeded without major hold-ups, and they also report that drivers were notably tolerant of the increase in traffic flow. From the gala opening to its spectacular closing ceremony, the behaviour of the public, coupled with the responsible use of extra powers by the police, showed beyond doubt that Queensland is capable of hosting major international events.

I am proud to say that the conduct of police did not go unnoticed by our overseas visitors, with one German tourist commenting that she was astounded at the friendly interaction between police and the general public. This certainly augurs well for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which will be held in Brisbane next month, when once again Brisbane will be in the international spotlight. The Goodwill Games has proven that police are capable of using extra special event powers in a responsible manner, and I am confident that this will again be the case at CHOGM.

During the Goodwill Games we saw world-class athletes performing at their best, and I would once again like to thank our world-class Police Service for helping to show that Queensland is capable of managing large-scale international events. I also commend the general public, who proved that we Queenslanders know how to enjoy a good and safe time when attending large-scale events such as this.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goodwill Games

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (10.02 a.m.), by leave: During the 2001 Goodwill Games, the people of south-east Queensland and visitors alike embraced public transport as the best way to get to and from games events. More than 40 per cent of ticket holders used Brisbane Transport buses and Queensland Rail systems. I am very pleased to table in the House patronage figures for the 12 days of Goodwill

Games competition and I note that, at its peak, over 51 per cent of people travelling to the games on Friday, 7 September used public transport. More than a quarter of a million people attended ticketed events and, of those, more than 113,000 people took advantage of free bus and rail transport. Moving this number of people during the 12 days of competition represented an enormous challenge for both QR and Brisbane Transport. The detailed joint planning and cooperation between the two organisations leading up to the games paid off with a highly successful integrated public transport plan in place. The new South East Busway played a prominent role and, together with the new bus/rail interchange facilities at Buranda and South Bank stations, was instrumental in ensuring seamless connections between bus and rail services.

A year ago on Thursday, on 13 September 2000, the first stage of the South East Busway was open for business. It carried commuters to another international sporting event, the Olympic soccer held at the Gabba. The South East Busway has indeed heralded the start of an exciting new era in public transport. It is one of the most important public transport projects ever built by the state government and follows five years of planning, community consultation and construction. Recently, Queensland Transport, Theiss Pty Ltd and SMEC Australia Pty Ltd were awarded an excellence award in the project management category at this year's 2001 Engineering Excellence Awards.

Since the South East Busway began operations on 30 April this year, there has been a 30 per cent increase in patronage on core busway services. On average, more than 12,000 passengers use the South East Busway every week. That is a quarter of a million—250,000—new passengers since it began operations. The South East Busway has changed the face of public transport in south-east Queensland. The Beattie government has created one of the most modern and efficient public transport systems in the world. Only last week, Queensland Transport was contacted by New Zealand's television station TV1 regarding the South East Busway. The busway and our integration of different modes of transport in particular were identified as future aims for Auckland.

I said at the outset that when people experience the efficiency, comfort and time savings of travel on the busway, public transport patronage will increase significantly. And it has, beyond our expectations. The South East Busway represents more than a multimillion-dollar investment in infrastructure; it is an investment in the people who live and work in south-east Queensland—young people and families—who rely on a safe, secure and efficient public transport system.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goodwill Games

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: I wish to outline the role played by the Department of Public Works in the success of the Goodwill Games. Since January, various sections of the department were called upon to contribute their expertise to the organisation of the games. Specifically, the department provided assistance with the fitout of office accommodation at the Thiess building at South Bank and a warehouse at Eagle Farm used to house sporting equipment and the American media contingent. Using the expertise of its SDS business unit, the department developed a warehousing operational plan for the games. Through Q-Fleet, a fleet operational plan managed the Goodwill Games fleet. The state government security service provided assistance and advice to games organisers in relation to public buildings. Q-Build supplied 25 sets of podiums for gold, silver and bronze medal presentations. It also sourced national flags for use at various venues.

I am pleased the Department of Public Works played its part in the outcome, and I congratulate all staff involved who worked extremely long hours to make the Goodwill Games the outstanding success they were.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: In 1999 Leneen Forde and her fellow commissioners delivered the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland report—the Forde report. It was tabled in the Legislative

Assembly on 8 June 1999. The report outlined 42 recommendations concerning contemporary child protection, youth justice, including youth detention, the Commission for Children and Young People, formerly known as the Children's Commission, and issues relating to former residents of institutions. The government committed itself to responding to the report's 42 recommendations. There were no illusions about the significance of the task ahead. There were no illusions that it would require a significant investment of time and financial resources to address the decades of neglect by successive governments. But the report highlighted a shameful legacy that we were determined to remedy.

The government appointed the independent Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee, chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor, to review the government's progress. The monitoring committee's terms of reference were, for a period of two years, to:

collect, monitor and analyse information from government and relevant stakeholders concerning progress in the implementation of the Forde inquiry recommendations; and report annually to parliament, through the Minister for Families, concerning progress in the implementation of the Forde inquiry recommendations.

The monitoring committee's first report was tabled in parliament in September 2000 and provided an interim assessment of the implementation of the Forde inquiry recommendations. Today I am pleased to table the committee's final report together with the government's progress report.

The committee's report is a combination of a detailed review of the progress made and suggestions where the government's response could be enhanced. We are grateful to the committee for its valuable work. In that time significant progress has been made and more is required to be done. I have also tabled the government's progress report. The report also takes into account the comments of the monitoring committee and provides the government's response to issues of significance raised by the committee.

The government has invested \$78.2 million in the past three budgets to implement the recommendations of the inquiry. There remains considerably more work to do in the area of child protection and issues relating to former residents. The government reaffirms its commitment to continued improvement in all these areas. The progress is outlined in detail in this report.

The monitoring committee has commented extensively on the government's progress. It has noted that progress has been made in many areas, including youth justice and the Commission for Children and Young People, and has raised issues where continued work will be required. The committee's views and advice is an invaluable resource that will be an important reference to assist in future planning and review.

With the benefit of experience and new information, the monitoring committee also made suggestions for enhancements to the government's response. Given that these are proposed extensions to the original response, they are dealt with separately. The monitoring committee has suggested that the government consider amendments to the Freedom of Information Act 1992 to allow access by former residents of institutions to information relating to deceased relatives. The matter is being referred to the Legal and Administrative Law Review Committee for inclusion in its current review of the Freedom of Information Act. The committee is due to report to the government at the end of this year.

The monitoring committee has expressed the opinion that the complaint power of the commission should be broadened to include services delivered to and in relation to children across other government departments. In its last report, the committee recommended that the commission be required by law to produce an annual report on the circumstances of children in Queensland—'The state of our children report'. Although the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000 does not obligate the commission to produce a 'State of our children report', the commission is empowered to do so under its broad functions.

In addition, the committee has suggested that the Community Visitors Scheme is extended to ensure the protection of the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people accommodated in:

foster care, boarding houses, including student hostels for children from remote communities;

certain subsidised unsupported accommodation for young people under funding provided by the Department of Housing; and

domestic violence shelters.

The government believes that there is merit in these suggestions. The Department of Families and the commission, in consultation with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, will jointly examine these issues and develop options for consideration by cabinet.

The monitoring committee has suggested that a range of activities currently carried out by the Department of Families in relation to the victims of historical abuse be transferred to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet under a new body referred to as the council for restoration and healing. The government is of the view that such an arrangement would have only symbolic value at best. Line agencies that have experience with the relevant issues and the operational supports to implement policy will produce better outcomes. The Department of Families will retain responsibility for the above activities. The department will, however, consider the concerns raised by the committee and identify options for improvement.

In relation to improved access to personal information, the department will undertake discussions with other government agencies, such as State Archives, to assume responsibility as a central repository for personal histories. The idea of priority access to state government services for former residents will also be considered in consultation with other government agencies and former residents.

The monitoring committee recommended that the government undertake an investigation into the issue of compensation to victims of institutional abuse. It particularly referred to the compensation processes adopted in Canada. The government considered the issue of compensation in depth when first recommended by the Forde inquiry in 1999. That position remains unchanged.

A fundamental principle then, as now, was the need to strike a balance between repairing the past and securing the future. The government established the Forde Foundation. This was modelled on the British Child Migrant Trust, established by the UK Blair government. The government established the foundation with an initial allocation of \$1 million and enhanced it in this year's budget by an additional \$1 million. The government will continue to support the foundation's efforts to raise donations from the churches and the business sector.

In addition to supporting former residents in the healing process, the government will continue to develop community-based counselling, support and advocacy services. A recent initiative is the establishment of a peer-based support service that will build upon the informal supports developed by former residents. Applications for grants have been invited from community agencies interested in providing this service and it is anticipated that the service will commence later this year.

The committee has proposed that, with its task over, ongoing responsibility for monitoring the government's implementation of the Forde inquiry's recommendations be assumed by the Commission for Children and Young People. The government agrees that government should be kept informed about progress and any relevant issues. As a number of recommendations relate to the commission as well as the Department of Families, it is considered appropriate that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet develop a process for reporting and coordinate an annual report to cabinet.

A number of ex-residents of Queensland institutions are in the gallery today. They have followed our progress of the Forde inquiry recommendations over the past two years and, undoubtedly, will continue to do so in the future. I extend my thanks to them for their commitment in ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in this state. Again, I thank the monitoring committee for their conscientious attention to this task over the past two years.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Feed Link

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.14 a.m.), by leave: August and September are traditionally two of Queensland's driest months, but for many producers there will be many more weeks without much-needed rain. Our primary producers have used long-range climate forecasts to manage the risks of such conditions on their business by forward ordering feed supplies, including molasses. Those producers have been able to secure feed supplies and obtain them at a contracted price. However, there are a number of producers who did not forward order and for many of them their usual sources of feed may already be committed.

I am very disappointed and concerned at the failure for a clear market signal between livestock producers and stock feed suppliers. I can announce today that the Department of Primary Industries will establish a pilot electronic stockfeed trading facility to broadcast that market signal. The facility, to be called Feed Link, aims to facilitate trade between registered producers and registered suppliers. It will give producers greater information about a full range of feed supply options. Alternatively, it will give feed suppliers a greater appreciation as to the demand from producers.

Feed Link will be open to any interested producers or suppliers. It is a service that will be free of charge. Under Feed Link, the government will not intervene or interfere in the market. The government will not buy or sell. The government will not negotiate the terms of trade on behalf of either party.

I will be writing to farm organisations and I will urge feed suppliers to signal their participation by registering with Feed Link, which the DPI plans to have up and running later this month. Interested producers and suppliers who are keen to participate in this government initiative should contact the DPI call centre on 13 2523.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr J. Penfold and Mr G. Smoothy

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: As members would be aware, two of this state's firefighters recently lost their lives in the line of duty. At 8 p.m. on 23 August, firefighters were called to an explosion at the port of Brisbane where a number of shipping containers and a forklift had caught fire. The events that followed can only be described as tragic. Wynnum firefighter Jeffrey Penfold was injured during the incident at the port of Brisbane. He passed away in hospital the next day. On 25 August—some two days later—Crows Nest firefighter Garnet Smoothy was struck by a vehicle while conducting a controlled burn on a property just outside the town. Mr Smoothy had been a rural firefighter for most of his life.

The tragic deaths of these two men highlight the inherent risk faced by all emergency services personnel each and every day of the year. There are not many of us in the community who leave for work each day and potentially say goodbye to our families for the last time. The valuable role played by our fireies, ambos and counter-disaster and rescue personnel places them on the front line protecting the lives and property of others while quite often risking their own.

Each day their job brings them into contact with human tragedy and life-threatening situations. The job is stressful and it is often emotional. Increasingly, they are threatened and face the possibility of being assaulted while responding to emergencies, particularly involving domestic violence, drugs or alcohol abuse. It is a tribute to their dedication and training that our fireies, ambos and counter-disaster and rescue personnel operate so professionally and calmly during such traumatic situations.

Our two fallen firefighters were both very well respected members among the ranks of the state's fire service. Firefighters came from far and wide to pay their last respects to their fallen colleagues. On behalf of the government, I want to again extend our sympathies and support to both families during this very difficult time. Jeffrey and Garnet will be sorely missed by their families, friends and colleagues, but they will never be forgotten.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

WorkCover

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.20 a.m.), by leave: WorkCover Queensland is the only fully solvent workers compensation scheme in the country and it is no coincidence that it is also Australia's only publicly owned and managed scheme. While other state schemes are in the red, Queensland's scheme not only is in excellent financial health but, to the envy of every other state, also offers the lowest average employer premiums in Australia and, at the same time, one of the highest benefit schemes to injured workers.

WorkCover has streamlined its claims investigation services in an effort to improve the quality, cost and, importantly, duration of its claims investigations. This process has been subject to the latest, most stringent Queensland government State Purchasing Policy guidelines. Instead

of an ad hoc system of using more than 40 investigation firms, four organisations have been chosen as contract managers that will coordinate an expected 50,000 hours of work a year provided by suitably qualified and licensed investigators throughout Queensland.

I can announce that four firms were unanimously chosen by a selection panel: PricewaterhouseCoopers, LKA Management Pty Ltd, Crowmont Investigative Consultants Pty Ltd and Maurice J Kerrigan & Associates. I am pleased to say that all four successful bidders are based and managed in Queensland, and that means jobs for Queenslanders. PricewaterhouseCoopers is renowned as an international services firm with more than 650 people employed at its Brisbane base. Crowmont is a privately held Queensland family business that was established in 1990. Kerrigans is also a family-owned business, based at Oxenford on the Gold Coast, and has been operating in Queensland since 1989. It has been providing services to WorkCover since 1994. Its principals live on the Gold Coast. LKA is based in Brisbane with local managers and has been providing investigation services to WorkCover Queensland for the past 11 years. The company operates out of Newstead.

There has been a comprehensive program to appoint these contract managers. WorkCover formed a selection panel consisting of two WorkCover employees and two external panel members—a leading Queensland barrister and business consultant—and an experienced lawyer from one of WorkCover's current panel law firms. Crown Law was engaged to ensure that the process followed the requirements of the State Purchasing Policy. WorkCover also appointed an external probity auditor, Deloitte, and a project manager, KPMG Consulting, to ensure the integrity of the process in line with the government's priorities, and to ensure a fair and ethical deal. The full process was managed by WorkCover's compliance group, which is now responsible for ensuring better performance, improved claim results and better value for money from service providers.

The four contract managers that WorkCover has appointed had to demonstrate that they are able to contract work to providers in regional Queensland to promote jobs in those areas, reduce travelling time for investigators and improve the quality of reports through local knowledge. They have had to prove, among many things:

- that their standards meet Australian best practice;
- that they have at least five years recent experience in managing business contractors;
- that they can provide a large number of experienced and licensed investigators around regional Queensland;
- that their investigations understand the needs of both Queensland businesses and their workers and families; and
- that they have the discipline to help WorkCover investigate accidents early.

These firms will provide 50,000 hours of investigation services a year, more than half of which will be provided outside Brisbane by regionally based operators. Under this new process, investigators will now be guaranteed a minimum rate of \$35 an hour, which is up from a reported minimum as low as \$21 an hour. This new rate is one of the best in the country. So not only will there be considerable regional work under this new process; WorkCover also wants to reward the best quality service providers with attractive rates of salary.

In return, WorkCover now requires its service providers to be licensed under the Security Providers Act so that Queensland businesses can be confident that local and qualified people are providing investigative services around the state. There has been considerable interest in how WorkCover's new process for claims investigations will work and how it will better benefit the state. I hope that this information helps answer those questions.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Absence from Parliament; Message of Thanks

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.23 a.m.), by leave: I was unable to attend the last session of parliament because I had a farm accident and as I will need further operations on my legs I may, unfortunately, be unable to attend some future sessions of parliament, and for this I apologise.

I also take this opportunity to thank the Premier and all honourable members, as well as the parliamentary staff, for their support for my family and me over recent weeks. Grateful thanks must also go to my dedicated electorate officers, Vicki O'Flynn and Wendy Smith. They have

given 120 per cent support to the running of the office. Also I acknowledge all the volunteers who have helped to run the office, man the telephones and keep things moving in the electorate.

I have been overwhelmed and deeply moved by the avalanche of cards, letters and flowers that I have received not only from my constituents but also from people across the state. Children's letters were particularly inspiring to me at times when I felt a little down. For those and the prayers that were said in many churches and homes, often by people whom I do not even know, I am deeply grateful. With that sort of encouragement and support from many people around the state—people who were fighting for me—how could I not recover?

My special thanks go to the doctors who saved my life and also my legs. In particular I publicly acknowledge Dr Daniel Lane from the Nambour General Hospital, and Doctors Peter Steadman and Tony Kane from the Wesley Private Hospital. Thanks also to the nurses, the paramedics, the crew of the emergency helicopter and all other people who have assisted.

One positive aspect that has come out of this accident is that I now have a better understanding of some of the difficulties and challenges faced by the disabled. I certainly would never have believed how difficult it is to negotiate a two-inch step when in a wheelchair. Again, I thank the Premier, all members of the government and the opposition for their support for my family, my wife and me over recent weeks.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 5 2001 and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): I present a report on my recent visit to East Timor. I wish to thank the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, for her excellent leadership of the delegation. I also thank officers from the Department of State Development for their professional approach to organising the delegation.

Three highlights of the visit for me were: being able to deliver, on behalf of my constituents in Kedron, a new 6kVA generator to the community in Balibo; meeting Joaquim da Silva who, under the codename of 'Akiu', assisted Australian commandos during World War II; and being extremely proud of the Australian Army personnel, Queensland volunteers and non-government organisations who were working with the people of East Timor to rebuild their emerging nation.

Two low points were: seeing the widespread destruction of the physical and organisational structures of East Timor; and the disappointment with myself at the realisation of how gullible and ignorant I had been in having blindly accepted the lies of successive Australian and Indonesian governments in the 25-year period when one-third of the East Timorese population—more than 200,000 people—were being systematically tortured and killed.

I would be happy to discuss my visit with any members of the House who may have an interest in East Timor. I table the report.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Amendments to Bills

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.27 a.m.): I move—

That if a minister introduces a bill into parliament and then moves amendments to the bill, then that minister must, unless there are extenuating circumstances, notify the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee of the contents of the amendments so that the committee can consider the implications of the amendment(s) and report to parliament in relation to the committee's terms of reference before the bill is debated.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Callide, I point out to the member that, as time is short, he may either move the bill tomorrow or, if he wishes to do it now, he can incorporate his speech.

Mr SEENEY: I prefer to do it now.

DRUGS MISUSE (AMPHETAMINE OFFENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (10.27 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 and the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987 in relation to amphetamine offences.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Seeney, read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

In recent times Queensland has earned the unenviable reputation as the amphetamines capital of Australia. In the words of one stakeholder yesterday, amphetamine use in this state has exploded over the last few years. There are now an estimated 85,000 amphetamine users in Queensland, a level of use that has reached epidemic proportions and that far overshadows the estimated 17,000 heroin addicts in this state.

Tied to the enormous increase in amphetamine use in recent years has been a 70 per cent increase in the demand for drug rehabilitation over the past three years. Yet only some 275 rehabilitation beds are available in Queensland for the treatment of illicit drug users. The amphetamines industry has been valued at \$400 million annually and the latest reports indicate that of the 150 illegal drug laboratories raided across the nation last year, 79 were located in south-east Queensland.

Illicit drug use and amphetamines are not a problem confined to Brisbane or south-east Queensland. It is a problem that has permeated every community in this state in one way or another. Amphetamines are relatively easy to manufacture and to transport and have perhaps not tended to be regarded as drugs that are just as destructive as the likes of heroin and cocaine. This has certainly added to their distribution and use throughout our society and certainly adds to the problem that law enforcement agencies, health services and families have in preventing their use.

But there can be no doubt amphetamines are equally as destructive as the so-called hard drugs. They are drugs of addiction that cause psychosis, aggressive behaviour and suicide. They can leave a legacy that requires ongoing rehabilitation treatment for years.

On 4 April this parliament passed a motion initiated by the state opposition supporting a comprehensive drug strategy focusing on the need to deliver—

- increased rehabilitation and detoxification facilities;
- reform to the justice system focusing on the rehabilitation of drug users; and
- enhanced drug education and prevention programs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It being question time, would the member for Callide like the rest of his speech to be incorporated in *Hansard*?

Mr SEENEY: I seek leave to have the rest of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

- properly resourced police and anti-crime agencies to pursue drug producers and suppliers, and
- tougher sentences for drug traffickers and dealers.

That motion was based on the National Party's 33-point Crackdown Policy on Drugs—the most comprehensive, compassionate, practical, toughest and common sense drug policy ever developed in this country.

This Bill is consistent with the motion passed by State Parliament on 4 April. It targets a crucial tool in the war against drugs, namely the need for tougher penalties for drug traffickers and dealers.

This Bill closes the legislative shortcoming that, irrespective of the increasing body of evidence to warrant the most serious treatment of this drug, currently classifies amphetamines as a Schedule 2 Dangerous Drug.

To address that shortcoming, this Bill proposes to upgrade amphetamines to a Schedule 1 Dangerous Drug under the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987—putting them in the same category as heroin and cocaine.

In doing so, the provisions, offences and higher penalties provided in the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 relating to Schedule 1 Dangerous Drugs would now also apply to amphetamines.

For example, if this Bill is supported by Honourable Members, the maximum penalty for amphetamine traffickers will be increased to 25 years jail.

By making this upgrade and increasing the penalties, the State of Queensland will be increasing the disincentive to traffic, supply, produce or possess amphetamines and will also be sending a powerful message to the peddlers of destruction that produce and distribute this drug that it, and they, will not be tolerated.

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey has previously supported the upgrade of amphetamines to a Schedule 1 Dangerous Drug in an address to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation Conference on 4 July 2001. That organisation's chief executive officer, Bob Aldred, has also supported the proposed move while highlighting the growing problem of amphetamine use and the inadequate rehabilitation services currently available.

Other groups such as Drug Arm have also indicated support for the need to get tough against amphetamines.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition offered bipartisan support to the Government to make this amendment back on the 5 th July. Since then, we have seen no action by the Government to act on the community's concerns until it was prompted to at least respond on the weekend.

Queensland cannot afford to sit back and wait for the Government to act.

The Opposition has proposed this Bill to provide the action that the judiciary, the rehabilitation agencies, the health services, the police and Queensland families expect. These are simple amendments with significant implications that will go some way towards tackling the amphetamine epidemic in this State.

This Bill is not proposed in isolation and nor should it be regarded in isolation.

This Bill is part of the wider, all encompassing strategy of the sort passed by Parliament on 4 April that is required to tackle the scourge of drugs in our community.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McGrady, adjourned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ansett Airlines

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the crisis facing Ansett Airlines and the potential impact that could have on air services and jobs in Queensland and in particular regional Queensland, and I ask: in the light of your government's \$12 million to \$15 million in assistance to Virgin Blue—a foreign airline—to set up in Queensland, are you prepared to outline what action you are able to take to provide assistance to whichever carrier steps into the breach to ensure that services to Queensland are maintained and jobs are not lost?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. Let me say at the outset that the figure he quoted in relation to Virgin is not correct. What we have simply done with Virgin is to give it—and there is a package—a significant incentive to come here by giving it a payroll tax holiday for a number of years. But the fact is that if it was not here it would not pay the payroll tax, anyway.

Mr Mackenroth: They would be in another state.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right.

Let me talk about Ansett. I had a meeting with the CEO of Ansett a few weeks ago. He came to see me. He was having incredible difficulty getting any commonsense out of the federal government. He believed that he was not being given a fair hearing and he believed that the federal government and John Anderson, the Federal Transport Minister, was not prepared to give a decent, proper hearing to Ansett's concerns. This was weeks before there was any public revelation to the extent that there is now of Ansett's problems.

I would have thought the Leader of the Opposition would be on the phone today to John Anderson. That is what he ought to be doing. That is one of the reasons why I have written to John Anderson today. In my ministerial statement I made it very clear what needs to be done to protect competition here.

The Leader of the Opposition comes in here and whinges about these issues. It is the federal government and John Anderson who should have done something about this weeks ago when Ansett came to see me. There are two reasons why Ansett is in this trouble today. The first is some internal management problems, which have nothing to do with competition. When Air New Zealand took over Ansett it sacked a large number of very competent Australian managers, and the resultant poor management of Ansett by Air New Zealand has put it in this position. But when the CEO of Ansett wanted help from the federal government, where was John Anderson? He was nowhere.

What has been said to me was that John Anderson was in the pocket of Qantas and he would not help Ansett; that the federal government was not prepared to help Ansett. Where are we today? Members opposite should talk to their mates in the federal government; they abandoned Ansett. If anybody is responsible for Ansett, it is John Anderson. John Anderson betrayed Ansett and Australia.

I had no intention of providing this information to the House, but I have now, because I am sick and tired of the political nonsense coming out of the National Party, which has betrayed the nation. John Anderson has to explain himself. When it comes to these issues, my government will stand firm in ensuring that there is competition in the airlines. That is why today I have written to John Anderson. We do not want to have a monopoly; we want competition and a fair go for Australians.

Freedom of Information

Mr HORAN: I ask the Premier: will he confirm that cabinet recently approved a secret cabinet submission to introduce significant amendments to the Freedom of Information Act which will include time-based charging at a rate in the vicinity of \$20 per hour for searching, retrieval, decision making and all other processes involved in processing applications; the extension of powers to refuse applications under section 28 of the act; and to centralise decision making in relation to certain aspects of non-personal applications in his departmental office. Does this secret decision by his cabinet further restrict the public's right to access information and render FOI under his government a privilege available only to those with the significant amount of money that will be needed to pay for them?

Mr BEATTIE: I hope nothing happens to this Leader of the Opposition. I want to make it clear that I am prepared to insist he gets 24-hour protection and an extra driver; I think he needs it.

If the *Courier-Mail* has become a secret document, that is news to me, because I got mine at home this morning. Did members get theirs at home this morning? I got mine at home this morning, too. I am prepared to increase the expenditure to the opposition to ensure that they can actually acquire a copy of the *Courier-Mail* every day. I made it clear at a number of news conferences that we were examining the issue of the cost of FOI. It is no secret at all. I also indicated that we were taking a matter to cabinet for detailed consideration.

The *Courier-Mail* even editorialised on this. I thank the *Courier-Mail*, because it supported what we were doing. I thank Chris Mitchell and the *Courier-Mail*, because while they have pursued the issue of FOI they were fair-minded enough to say that, if there is a cost issue, it should be addressed by government.

Let me make it clear what we are doing. For any private citizen who wants to acquire information in relation to themselves, it is free, and it should remain free. The difficulty we have is that at the moment FOI is costing somewhere between—and I do not have the figures with me—\$6 million to \$8 million. Neither I nor the government want that money pulled out of the Education, Police or Health budgets. All we are simply saying is that there needs to be a system where there is a cost recovery for the expense of FOI. We are not seeking to make any money out of it. We simply want it to be as much as possible a recovery of the expense of FOI. That is what is important.

Another part of the consideration by cabinet—and, yes, cabinet has considered it—is that we need to get a better negotiation between the FOI officer—the department, if you like—and the applicant. What happens now is that an application comes in which is often very broad and expensive. It is often not what the person wants. What we want to try to do is have some flexibility so that there can be some negotiation to establish what the person wants. If that can be done cheaper and the person gets what they want, everybody is a winner. It is cheaper, so the government wins; for example, there is no money out of the Health budget. It is a win because the applicant for FOI gets whatever he or she wants. This is about improving the FOI Act. There is a review of FOI by a committee before this parliament. We are not pre-empting that. All we are dealing with are these administrative issues.

FOI is working effectively in this state. If we look at the number of front-page stories that the *Courier-Mail* has produced based on FOI, we see that it is succeeding. I congratulate the *Courier-Mail* on using the FOI so successfully. To the *Courier-Mail*: well done.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Stafford, I would like to note the presence in the public gallery of parents, teachers and students from the Mansfield State School in the electorate of Mansfield.

Business Headquarters; Macquarie Bank

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the Queensland government's push to attract more business headquarters and centres to this state, and I ask: has there been any more success on this front?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is yes. As members would expect with a can-do government that can deliver major projects like the Goodwill Games, of course they would expect more, and there is more. On 30 August I was very pleased to attend the official opening of Macquarie Bank's new facility, the Macquarie National Adviser Contact Centre. The centre will inject more than \$10 million a year into the Queensland economy. More than 190 people will be employed there, which is up from 30 people employed at the centre in February. The overwhelming majority of these additional staff have been recruited locally. So it is jobs for local people.

The centre is expected to grow further in coming years, driven by the bank's own growth and by the further consolidation of Macquarie's Financial Services Group's operations in Brisbane. It will provide services to more than 15,000 independent financial advisers, with billions in funds under their management.

As many members would know, Macquarie Bank has conducted operations in Queensland for some years now as stockbrokers and financial advisers and as corporate advisers and financiers for major projects, such as the \$220 million rail link between Brisbane's domestic and international airports, Brisbane city and, of course, the Gold Coast. It also provides financial advice to electricity generator InterGen in relation to the \$1.4 billion Millmerran power project and also has an involvement in the Springfield Land Corporation's retail and golf course projects.

I am sure that Macquarie Bank will not be the last major corporation to base significant operations in Queensland. We have a lot to offer major corporations that choose to do business here. We have the lowest state taxation regime in Queensland. We also have a highly educated and skilled multicultural and multilingual work force.

On the back of the Goodwill Games, the Queensland government ran an effective \$2 million campaign in Sydney and Melbourne, backed up by further advertisements here in Queensland, to encourage investment in this state. One of the energies that comes out of those investment opportunities here and attracting interstate people is a lot of small businesspeople who are pursuing the development of those business opportunities. We are going to continue to encourage those major projects and major companies such as Macquarie. A lot is being done by the government, in the early stages admittedly, in public-private partnerships, and banks such as Macquarie will have a major role to play in that.

I want to come back to the issue of Ansett briefly because we have done a great deal in encouraging a competitive environment in the aviation industry. It is absolutely essential, if we are going to have a concentration of the aviation market, that there be effective safeguards put in place to protect the consumer, to protect the cheap air fares we have now. I restate my request to John Anderson that a special aviation market regulator may be required to be installed as part of the ACCC to guarantee competition. As a result of Virgin coming into the market, we now have people travelling on airlines who never travelled before. We have to protect those air fares for the future.

Property Marketeers

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask the Minister for Fair Trading: will she explain to the House why a representative from the renowned Gold Coast two-tier property marketing company, The Epic Group, was given a position on the Beattie government's working party which was established in 1999 to investigate the practices of property marketeers and to recommend ways of clamping down on their rip-off activities and, further, will she explain to the House why the government has not acted on the report of that working party which was delivered in July 1999?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question. That working party was put together as a group to work with us to try to find some solutions and to be a part of finding the solutions, not to be a part of the problem. I think it is very interesting that the member actually raised relationships

with marketeering because I remind the member about the relationship between the National and the Liberal Parties with Robb Resources and Dudley James Quinlivan on the Gold Coast.

Quinlivan, who is the state's biggest and most notorious property marketeer, just happens to be a key backer of the National Party. In fact, Robb Resources, a company controlled by Quinlivan, has been the major sponsor of the past two National Party state conferences, at the five-star Brisbane Hilton in July and last year at Jupiters on the Gold Coast. That is not all. Robb Resources also admits to donating \$16,500 to the National Party in 1999-2000. Former longstanding state director of the Nationals, Ken Crooke, says Robb Resources is—and these are his words, not mine—'a well-known supporter of conservative politics'.

Liberal Party aspirant Michael Yarwood, who was a recent player in the Surfers Paradise council by-election, delivered the opening address to the National Party conference on behalf of Robb Resources. The speech was followed by a vote of thanks by National Party State President, Terry Bolger. Yarwood's legal firm, Rapp Yarwood, acts on behalf of the king con in Queensland—none other than Mr Dudley James Quinlivan. These links prompt a number of very obvious questions.

Mr Seeney: What about answering the question you were asked?

Mrs ROSE: I answered it.

One is just how much has the National Party in particular benefited from Dudley Quinlivan's con of investors? Have the donations and sponsorships come from the pockets of battling Aussies—mum and dad investors—who have been taken for a ride and then shamelessly ripped off. The profits went straight into the marketeers' own pockets and apparently into the accounts of the National Party.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Bulimba, I am going to insist on silence while a member asks a question. It is fundamental for people in question time to actually hear the question.

Queensland Wine

Mr PURCELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. I refer the Premier to the success he has had in promoting Queensland wines to Canberra, and I ask: are there plans to promote our fine wines to the world?

Mr BEATTIE: You bet! You can bet on it. I thank the honourable member for the question. Wines from at least six Granite Belt winemakers will be on show to the world at the Commonwealth People's Day during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Brisbane in October—CHOGM, in other words. The Commonwealth People's Day at Roma Street Parkland—and I know the member will be there—on 7 October will feature an outdoor food and wine market to be called Queensland's Fine Fare. At that market will be wines from a number of Granite Belt wineries. They will include Kominos Wines, Catspaw Farm, Granite Ridge Wines, Jester Hill Wines, Mary Byrnes Wines and Golden Grove Estate. The market will showcase Queensland's finest wine and local produce to visitors of the major public event, which will also be attended, of course, by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as part of her royal tour of Queensland, and I will say a little bit more about that later this week. Visitors will be able to wander along the Parkland Boulevard tasting wine by the glass or ordering a bottle of wine to enjoy on the grass with their selection of gourmet food from the food market.

The Commonwealth People's Day is the pinnacle event of the Commonwealth People's Festival and is designed to celebrate the richness and diversity of the Commonwealth people. Roma Street Parkland will come alive with the sights, sounds and colour of the Commonwealth of nations when more than 500 performers converge on the parkland to entertain crowds in six designated entertainment precincts. Tony Comino from Kominos Wines has said that the Commonwealth People's Day will be the largest coordinated industry event his winery will be involved with. He says it is a fantastic opportunity to showcase Queensland wine to the community. He is right, and I invite all members to join me at Roma Street Parkland on 7 October to celebrate Queensland's fine wines and food.

I should add that some members may have seen media reports that I, in fact, hosted the senior organisers of the Goodwill Games here in the dining room last week. Ted Turner was here as our guest along with his partner, Rebecca, and of course Mike Plant and a series of key

business people, including some great entertainers, Slim Dusty and Lee Kernaghan. Lee Kernaghan would have to be one of the greatest Australians you could ever meet. He is a lovely guy and a great country and western and singer.

Mr Purcell: Don't forget Slim.

Mr BEATTIE: And Slim. I have not forgotten Slim Dusty.

Do members know what we served? We served Queensland wine. Ted Turner enjoyed Queensland wine. I sat next to him. He had a great night on Queensland wine, as did all the other invited guests, such as former Prime Minister Bob Hawke and key business leaders. They all had a great time on Queensland wine. I say to all wine connoisseurs around Australia, particularly non-Queenslanders: do not participate in this so-called social cringe of putting down Queensland wines. They are amongst the best in the world. I invite them to drink some.

Specialist Medical Titles

Mr BELL: I refer the Minister for Health to the fact that I have been informed that, as a response to a dispute between plastic surgeons and cosmetic surgeons, it is proposed to restrict to certain specialist medical practitioners use of the words 'physician' and 'surgeon'. Of course, for decades—in fact, centuries—general medical practitioners have described themselves as physicians and surgeons. I ask: is my information correct? If so, can the minister assure the House that general practitioners who have for a long time displayed plates saying they are physicians and surgeons will be able to continue to display their professional plates?

Mrs EDMOND: The information from the member is partly correct. There is currently a review of these issues. The use of specialist medical titles is currently restricted by the Medical Act 1939, which is under review. As part of the Medical Act review, the use of titles is being looked at. Only a medical practitioner with recognised specialist qualifications may use the relevant specialist title or a part of that title. Concerns have been raised about people calling themselves specialists where that specialty does not even exist, let alone the fact that there are no recognised qualifications in that specialty, and the implications of that. These restrictions are necessary to protect consumers. The public needs to be confident that a person who calls themselves, for instance, a urologist is qualified to practise urology.

The new Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001 will restrict the use of specialist titles in the same manner. The restricted specialist titles and recognised specialties will be prescribed in regulations. Over 40 specialties and the associated specialist titles and the qualifications will be prescribed in the new regulation. For example, I expect that titles such as anaesthetist, physician, obstetrician and gynaecologist, surgeon and psychiatrist will continue to be prescribed. People who call themselves a surgeon will be expected to have qualifications in that field. My department is currently developing the draft regulation, and there has certainly been a lot of discussion about this issue. I plan to release the draft to key medical, educational and consumer organisations for informed comment before it is finalised and before it comes to this House.

I have to say that considerable concern has been raised both in this House and in New South Wales about the use of titles such as 'cosmetic physician' and 'cosmetic surgeon'—terms which imply that the person who calls themselves that has actually received specialist medical training in those procedures. However, there is in fact no recognised training for a lot of those procedures. Many people who call themselves cosmetic surgeons may have done only a week's training in Florida, which may have involved only a couple of mornings during that week. The use of those titles is being considered.

Following the New South Wales inquiry into cosmetic surgery, a working party is examining aspects of the cosmetic surgery industry in relation to training needs to ensure that that surgery is safer and more effective. The Legislative Projects Unit in Queensland Health is also examining the outcome of the New South Wales inquiry to see what protection we can put in place for consumers around Queensland. The overall aim is to protect the people of Queensland.

Fair Go for Business Campaign

Mr REEVES: I ask the Minister for State Development: how are Queensland businesses responding to the state government's push to encourage the use of local manufacturers?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government is encouraging local industry and local manufacturers as much as we can principally through three

strategies. The first of those is the Local Industry Policy. The second is the State Purchasing Policy. The third is the Fair Go for Queensland Policy. These are projects which ensure that public infrastructure and private sector projects use as much local content as possible, principally through our work with the Local Industry Policy. We are seeking to ensure that local manufacturers get much of that work.

The State Purchasing Policy also importantly ensures that local sections of the Public Service have the flexibility to purchase locally, which is of great assistance to small businesses in the regions and in the towns and cities all over the state. The Fair Go for Queensland campaign, which is another arm of that three-pronged strategy, aims to ensure that those principles that we have already put in place of giving Queensland business a fair go through the government are extended to the private sector.

I have to report to the House that the Fair Go for Queensland strategy has more than 400 Queensland companies signed up and committed to it, which is far in excess of what we thought we would have achieved at this point in time. The companies that have committed to giving other local companies the full opportunity to purchase products off them locally or to supply to those companies locally have a combined annual turnover of \$12.75 billion. That is very significant purchasing power in the state of Queensland, and that is in addition to the government's own annual spend of around \$8 billion. The total investment of the committed companies and the state government contribution is \$20 billion worth of purchases that we are ensuring go to local companies as part of our Fair Go for Queensland campaign. That is of great support to small business in this state. Many of those companies are in regional Queensland, and that means that those local suppliers will create more jobs in regional Queensland. Of those committed companies, 130 are in regional Queensland and the other 270 are in the south-east corner.

In addition to that, since the implementation of the Local Industry Policy in December 1999, 379 bid packages for Queensland projects valued at \$290 million have been identified through the Industrial Supplies Office, which is principally funded through my Department of State Development. Of that \$290 million, \$102 million in contracts has already been awarded to Australian firms.

Time expired.

State Patrol Traffic Division

Mr LINGARD: I refer the Minister for Employment and Training to the fact that more than two weeks ago I advised the Minister for Corrective Services, the Minister for Fair Trading, the Minister for Industrial Relations and the Minister for Employment and Training about a group training agency called State Patrol Traffic Division which had asked a training organisation to supply 20 people to train as traffic control workers in the Beaudesert area. Six people eventually worked for this training division but received dud cheques for pay. One of the listed managers of the agency is reported to be in jail. There are allegations that one of the discussion sessions was done by this person by teleconference from jail. I ask: what has this government done about this?

Mr FOLEY: The supervision of training organisations is done in accordance with the provisions of the Training and Employment Act. From time to time a number of training organisations will be struck off as a result of not complying with the requirements of the act. The Training Recognition Council has that function, and it is assisted in that respect by officers of my department. It would be quite inappropriate to reflect upon any specific investigations that it may be undertaking. However, it is important to note that there are certain rules, there are certain laws and there are certain processes of investigation. People who undertake training are entitled to rely on proper accreditation. That is why we have a Training Recognition Council. It is why the Training and Employment Act empowers them with certain powers. I can assure the honourable member that the law and the provisions of that legislation will be enforced.

Community Policing

Mr ENGLISH: Can the Minister for Police and Corrective Services inform the parliament of the importance of community policing and, in particular, how it could prove valuable in areas of my electorate such as the southern bay islands?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for Redlands for the question. Recently he issued an invitation to the Commissioner for Police and me to visit Macleay and Russell Islands, which we did. We accepted the invitation and indeed we played to packed houses. The halls in which the

public meetings were held were literally packed and people were standing outside. The comments made and the questions asked were sensible, constructive and productive. There was no whingeing and whining from these people. And, I have to say, I was quite amazed at the popularity of the member for Redlands amongst his constituents.

The member has spoken about community policing, which is something very dear to my heart. As I have mentioned in this parliament before, recently the Commissioner for Police and I went to New York to try to find out the reasons the crime statistics in that city have come tumbling down. Many people have various reasons for it, but the deputy commissioner of the New York Police Department made it quite clear to us the reason the numbers have come down was community policing. He gave an example whereby late one evening he was sitting outside a huge apartment block in which a murder had just taken place. A young woman came by and asked the police officer on duty what was happening and what it was all about. She was quickly told to mind her own business and move on. The deputy commissioner pointed out that within half an hour the New York Police Department would in fact be asking the public to cooperate with it to try to find the identity of the perpetrators of that crime. That brought home to him the need for community policing. It is the same situation the commissioner and I are trying to promote in Queensland.

As a result of those meetings on those two islands, I understand that community meetings have been held with a view to setting up a neighbourhood watch. I also understand that consideration is being given to securing lights in the public car parks. The commissioner and I promised the crowds that we would be back. And like MacArthur we will return in the very near future to see once again the contribution which the member for Redlands and his constituents are making to policing on those two bay islands.

TAFE Queensland

Mr QUINN: I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth to a memorandum dated 6 September circulated by the chair of TAFE Queensland and the director-general in which they indicated they would be meeting with TAFE human resource managers yesterday, 10 September, to discuss staffing issues. I ask: is it still the government's intention to downsize TAFE staffing levels by 300 full-time equivalent positions over this financial year? Is the minister now in a better position, as a result of the meeting yesterday, to indicate which positions will be cut from each individual institution and which courses will be affected?

Mr FOLEY: In answer to the first question, no. In answer to the second question, the allocation of budgets to each of the TAFE institutes means that each of them have to determine their budgets in accordance with the amount provided to them on an annual basis. The government has boosted funds to TAFE this year, up to some \$538 million. The sad fact of life is that a number of the TAFE institutes have exceeded their budgets and have to make budgetary adjustments. They have to live within their budgets.

The government has made extra funds available in order to ensure that we boost skills training for Queensland. I do not expect that the net loss of positions would be anything remotely of the order to which the honourable member referred, but I can assure the House that it will be nothing like what the Liberal Party did to TAFE when it was in office. It is an extraordinary thing that the Liberal Party would even mention TAFE in this House, having removed \$125 million from the TAFE budget. After removing 900 jobs from TAFE, it is extraordinary that a member of the Liberal Party would make bold to mention it.

This government is committed to a strong future for TAFE. Each of those institutes has to manage its own budget. The government, for its part, continues to boost funds for TAFE. We also drove a hard bargain with the Commonwealth to ensure that we got maximum funds there.

What is important, though, is that those TAFE institutes do manage their budgets. Let us take for example the TAFE institute in the area from which the honourable member himself comes, the Gold Coast institute. It managed to balance its budget and indeed had a surplus of over \$1 million. As a result of that, it can do the very things it is important to do—namely, for example, reach out to young people at risk on the Gold Coast and provide those sorts of services. If a TAFE institute is choked with a budget deficit, it is not able properly to respond to the changing needs of industry or to the changing needs of the community.

These are not easy matters for management. Government does what it can to help, but at the end of the day TAFE institutes have to live within their budgets. We need to ensure that TAFE

institutes such as on the Gold Coast—ones that do live within their budgets and do produce effective and efficient results—are properly supported.

Regional Housing

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to the recent release of the federal government's policy on regional Australia entitled *Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia*. Is the minister aware of the document? What benefits does it hold for the housing sector?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for her question and note her great contribution to housing in her electorate, especially in areas such as Aramac, where she is pushing for houses to be relocated from the electorate of Fitzroy. She is also pushing for a lot of seniors housing in Charters Towers.

It is a pity that the federal government does not listen to honourable members such as the member for Charters Towers. If it did, it would not put claptrap like this together and call it *Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia*. Quite frankly, I am appalled that there is not one mention of housing in this document. One would have thought that one of the key factors of any community would be housing, but there is not one mention of it in this document. Quite truthfully, from any perspective the whole thing is not worth two dobs of custard.

The reality is that just two years ago I put to the now Deputy Prime Minister of Australia a plan which would see regional Australia benefit from a project called Abbeyfield, which would have involved some \$20 million being made available. Members might recall that the federal government was boasting about its surplus at the time and I did not think \$20 million was a lot to ask, especially when we had support from people such as the member for Gregory, who saw the need for those sorts of facilities in his electorate. It got as far as Costello's door and that was the end of it.

The truth is that we cannot take seriously any government that neglects to include in a document such as this the very basic keystone of our community which is housing. We will see a continuation of the dilapidation of regional communities unless something is done about keeping seniors in those communities and stopping the great drift to the coast.

We hear a lot from Bob 'Chatter'—Katter, I mean. Actually, I got it right the first time. The fact is—now he has ratted on the National Party, I suppose—that he has never once stood up for housing in regional Queensland. He occupies an office not far from that of the honourable member, and I suggest that he goes and takes a leaf out of her book in order to understand about the communities in far-north Queensland and far-west Queensland and understand the need to provide housing. He should go and talk to the people who put this nonsense together and urge them to take a greater and broader view of what housing means in our community. The fact is that if we do not have housing in communities we do not have communities. Everybody deserves to have a decent house to come home to. Unfortunately, seniors in regional Queensland do not have that very basic necessity.

World Firefighter Games

Mr MALONE: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: in regard to the collapse of Queensland's bid for the World Firefighter Games, can he definitely rule out that the liability for the Queensland government does not exceed the initial budget allocation of \$1.2 million and whether there could be further liability from the world body in respect to Queensland's no-go in this event? Also, if the media reports are correct and the budget has blown out, will the minister give this parliament an assurance today that funding will not come from the operational budgets of firefighters right across Queensland?

Mr REYNOLDS: The first thing I would say in answer to the first part of the member's question is: do not believe what you read in the media in regard to budget blow-outs. On 8 August I announced that three new directors had been appointed to the World Firefighter Games 2002 board. The challenge of that new board was to enlist the support of the United Firefighters Union, which had refused to support the games until former games manager and member of the UFU executive, Shane Barker, was reinstated. Mr Barker, as we know, is currently before the Industrial Relations Commission following his dismissal on charges of disloyalty and sexual harassment.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority tribunal found Mr Barker guilty of these charges, and it is very important for me to state today that the charge of sexual harassment has never been withdrawn—contrary to what has been reported in the media. I reiterate that the complainant has never withdrawn her charges and has, in fact, travelled back from the United Kingdom to give evidence at the Industrial Relations Commission hearing.

The mere fact that the UFU had opted to link an industrial matter with a world-class event that would have allowed our firefighters to showcase their talents on home soil, I believe, was irresponsible. The Industrial Relations Commission is the independent umpire and should be allowed to do its job independent of the government and the union.

Following numerous approaches by the new board chairman, Des Power, the UFU indicated that it would not under any circumstances support the games until Mr Barker was reinstated—with evidence that, just a few days earlier, the UFU was still actively lobbying overseas firefighters to back its position and not attend the games. I today table some correspondence to that effect.

The board made the prudent decision not to proceed with the games. As minister, I accepted that decision. That decision was not made lightly; it was made in the best interests of Queensland taxpayers, sponsors and competitors. It was always critical to firefighters around the world that the event had the clear support of the UFU in Queensland. I note that, in a bid to separate itself from this disgraceful linking of an industrial matter with an event that was to benefit its own membership, the UFU has tried to blame the cancellation of the games on a lack of sponsorship. The sponsorship for this event was first-class.

This weekend's press claims of a \$5 million blow-out of the games are absolute nonsense. The cost of the games to the government to date is \$1.154 million, including \$400,000 in-kind support. I am awaiting information from the board, which will be reporting to me about the winding up of the company. One of the first things the new board did was to commission the firm of chartered accountants KPMG to conduct an immediate review of the financial status of the games company. It also contracted a law firm to review the situation legally.

I say to the member for Mirani that my first priority must be fighting fires. I was not going to let this issue run on, and that will be my continued position.

Time expired.

Australia Meat Holdings, Dinmore

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I direct a question to the Minister for Environment. Recently, concerns have been raised in the media by some residents living near Australia Meat Holdings as to that company's environmental performance. Can the minister assure the parliament as to this government's commitment to resolving these problems?

Mr WELLS: Yes. The honourable member for Ipswich West has played a very constructive role in representing his constituents and in the resolution of these issues, as have the honourable members for Ipswich and Bundamba.

There were three issues of an environmental nature relating to Australia Meat Holdings. These were odour and noise, the quality of the treated water and the composting issue. These have been addressed in a way that has given a triple bottom line, positive outcome: 1,500 jobs, the biggest abattoir in the southern hemisphere and an improved environmental performance.

The odour and noise issue was addressed by the establishment of a new rendering plant. The old rendering plant was indeed the cause of a great deal of the odour and noise. \$23 million has been invested by AMH, and 15 per cent of that total sum has been spent on ensuring the improvement of air quality and the diminution of noise. The construction of this rendering plant is ahead of schedule, and that is an even better outcome for the people of the Ipswich area.

With respect to the quality of the treated water—the construction of the ponds that are necessary in order to treat that water effectively has been commenced. The construction of two of them is going ahead, and the third one will be completed. The end result of that will be that the water that is going to be released into the river will be of a quality which can be released with environmental safety. Overflows which could constitute a danger will not go in that direction; they will go in the other direction because of the manner of the construction of the ponds.

Finally, the composting was a source of considerable odour. Composting has stopped at that plant. The compost that has accumulated already is progressively being taken away. This is a big win. It is a win for jobs, it is a win for prosperity, and it is a win for the environment.

Water Supply, Irvinebank

Ms LEE LONG: I refer the Premier to the town of Irvinebank, one of only two towns in Queensland listed as historical townscapes and part of the Heritage Trails Network. The townspeople desperately want to know when this government, after being in power for 12 years—except for a brief stint by the coalition—will resolve its problems with the Hilla family over a parcel of land situated in the centre of town which includes and controls the seriously inadequate town water supply and the heritage listed buildings which are falling into disrepair. They want to know if the Premier and his government are committed to resolving these problems.

Mr BEATTIE: I do not remember the details now, but I can recall being made aware of some of these facts in the past. I know that Tom Gilmore tried to resolve these matters when he was the local member. I know that Tony McGrady also has tried to resolve these matters.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There were quite a lot. I understand the details.

In 1983, Mr Frank Hilla entered into an agreement with the state for the purchase of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works under which he agreed to continue to provide a bulk water supply to the town of Irvinebank. I also understand that the purchase has not been settled. Apparently, the Irvinebank State Treatment Works is a tin processing facility dating from 1884 within the town of Irvinebank. Bulk water for the town is drawn from the Ibis Dam, approximately two kilometres from the treatment works, at no cost to the residents of Irvinebank.

The government subsequently decided to withdraw the Ibis Dam and pipeline from the sale agreement with Mr Hilla and offered them to the Mareeba Shire Council. I am advised that this matter has not been finalised. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines has obtained consultants' assessments of the structural integrity and serviceability of the tin treatment works and the levels of contamination associated with the tailings.

With this information to hand, the government has now set about dealing with the unresolved issues, including the rights and obligations of the state and Mr Hilla under the various agreements and the Irvinebank State Treatment Works (Sale and Operation) Act of 1990; ownership of and responsibility for the Ibis Dam and bulk water supply pipeline; provision of and responsibility for domestic reticulation facilities; the future ownership, development and use of the tin treatment works, possibly as a mining heritage site; and management of the tailings and containment of contamination.

The achievement of an affordable, reliable water supply for the residents of Irvinebank is obviously quite urgent. So as members would realise, this issue has been a matter of consideration over a period. I know that the Minister for Natural Resources, Stephen Robertson, is a fair-minded, intelligent human being—a man of enormous potential—and he will do his best. But I do want to say in a very serious and genuine way, because I know the member has raised this matter on behalf of her constituents—and that is an appropriate thing for her to do—obviously Stephen Robertson, the minister, will work this issue through. If there can be any advancement, there will. There is a long history to this matter. It is very difficult. I do not want to give the member great cause for optimism, but I urge her to stay in contact with the minister and his office. If we can facilitate some outcome, then we obviously will. But I just want to highlight the magnitude of the difficulty of the task.

Gene Technology

Mrs LAVARCH: My question is to the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. Could he let the House know of any important developments in the regulation of gene technology in this state and in this country?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that she has a strong interest in Smart State strategies from the school level to the university and research level and to the business level.

It is a great time to be in Queensland. We have had the state government's \$270 million investment in biotechnology in this state. Also in recent weeks we have seen the Premier participate in the opening of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research—there was a \$20 million contribution from the state government towards that—and the Centre for Drug Design at Griffith University, where world-class scientist, Professor Mark von Itzstein, part-inventor of Relenza, has been spinning his magic on the Gold Coast.

However, today a few interesting things are happening. One of those relates to an act that the Premier will do in an hour or so's time. That will be the signing of the intergovernmental gene technology agreement. The act of signing that agreement by the Premier will bring all states into line with the intergovernmental agreement and commence its operation, representing a national cooperative approach among all the jurisdictions in Australia.

Queensland has always sought to be at the forefront of scientific advances, but one thing that we have always said is that, in terms of the cutting-edge science that we are doing in this state, we believe in best practice when it comes to ethical involvement and also informing the community as to what we are doing. Naturally, people in the community have concerns that we ensure that we have the best possible regulatory regime in place. Further, they also have legitimate concerns that biotechnology organisations and organisations dealing with genetic modifications are telling the community exactly what they are doing.

Today, the Premier will not only sign the intergovernmental agreement on gene technology but also I will seek leave to introduce legislation in relation to a code of ethics—a Gene Technology Bill—which, again, will be part of that national regulatory regime and will fill in the gaps in the Commonwealth jurisdiction. Hopefully, with the leave of the parliament, that will be introduced shortly.

This government makes no apologies for pursuing a tough regime in terms of the science involved in gene technology. There will be significant penalties for those people who deal with genetically modified organisms in an unlicensed fashion. We make no apologies for that. We are at the forefront of science, but we also want the community to be assured that we have the best ethical practice.

We not only have the intergovernmental gene technology agreement and the legislation to be introduced but also we are the only state in Australia with a code of ethical practice for biotechnology. It is passing strange that recently the New Zealand government adopted a code that bears a striking similarity to ours in Queensland.

As well, this document is about organisations operating in this area in Queensland informing the community about what they are doing. For example, we will endeavour to ensure that new discoveries by Queensland researchers are developed, that there are ways to provide appropriate returns to the state and, as far as practicable, we retain control of the intellectual property within Queensland. So we are not just talking about a regulatory regime; we are talking about a regime that will benefit the people of Queensland.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Warrego, I would like to note the presence in the gallery of students, parents and teachers from the Morayfield East State School in the electorate of Kallangur.

Toowoomba Turf Club; Mr N. Stewart

Mr HOBBS: I refer the Minister for Racing to the independent audit of the expenses of the Toowoomba Turf Club and its chairman, Neville Stewart, by KPMG, the findings of which were reported to the minister. I ask: why has the minister allowed the situation to degenerate to the point where the Toowoomba Turf Club has reportedly been threatened with deregistration? Why has the minister refused to carry out her responsibilities as minister to intervene to assure the future of the Toowoomba racing industry? Who is the minister protecting—herself or Mr Stewart?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question and welcome the opportunity to respond. Firstly, the handling of this issue by the Queensland Principal Club has been absolutely dismal and appalling. It has shown a complete lack of professionalism. The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. The CEO of the QPC comes out and makes a statement that the Toowoomba Turf Club is going to be closed. Then the chair of the QPC comes out and says, 'No, it is not'—and I am very pleased to hear that.

It is completely inappropriate for the Minister for Racing to become involved in directing the QPC about the operations of any club. The member should know that. There is no power for the Minister for Racing to direct the QPC in relation to the deregistering of a club or even the investigation of a club. I can request a report. They notified me that there was to be an audit of

the Toowoomba Turf Club, the same as they would notify me if there is going to be an audit of any other turf club in Queensland.

However, in today's paper there is a statement by Sandy Bredhauer, the chair of the QPC—and I was very pleased to see it, because a lot of owners and trainers are unsettled because of the adverse publicity that the Toowoomba Turf Club has received and the belief of some that the QPC was, in fact, going to stop racing—saying that racing will continue at the Toowoomba Turf Club. Yesterday there was a lengthy meeting of the Queensland Principal Club. They have not contacted my office to advise of the outcome of that meeting. I understand from press reports this morning that they have yet to make a determination. But that is their call. They are the controlling body for racing in Queensland.

Mr Hobbs: What did you reply when they asked you for advice?

Mrs ROSE: They asked me for clarification about section 134 of the act. I have written them two lengthy responses with a legal opinion on section 134 of the act and have suggested to them that perhaps they would like to seek their own independent legal advice about section 134. But it is up to the Queensland Principal Club, which is the controlling body for racing, to determine whether or not a club has, in fact, breached section 134.

Landfill Remediation Assessment Program

Mr MULHERIN: I direct a question to the Minister for Local Government and Planning. Can she inform the House whether the Beattie Labor government has responded to council requests to extend the Landfill Remediation Assessment Program?

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I thank the honourable member for Mackay for the question and, in answer, yes, we have. One of the issues that I like to highlight when I talk to councillors around the state is that it is important for councils to remember that the core local government responsibilities of roads, rubbish and rates should always remain their top priority. The way in which councils deal with core responsibilities has, of course, changed over the years. These days, councils must find the most efficient and environmentally sustainable ways of dealing with one of those core responsibilities, that is, waste disposal.

The state government is working with councils in a number of ways to achieve that aim. An important scheme offered by my department is the Landfill Remediation Assessment Program. Recently I invited local governments to apply for funding under the fourth round of that program, with applications closing on 26 October. The Landfill Remediation Assessment Program provides funding for councils to investigate their closed dump sites. The program was introduced to determine the statewide landfill remediation needs and the potential costs involved in carrying out that remediation work. Having that information would enable the state government to make an informed decision on future cost sharing with local governments.

Until this latest round of funding, the Landfill Remediation Assessment Program provided funding only for the investigation of those dumps that were closed prior to 1 July 1998. In response to requests from Queensland councils, I have extended that program to cover all closed landfill sites rather than only those closed prior to that date.

This program has a \$7.5 million budget. However, so far only 48 councils have taken up \$1.8 million to undertake mostly preliminary investigations on some 200 landfill sites. My department and I are now strongly encouraging councils to undertake detailed risk and remediation cost assessments.

Future generations of Queenslanders will reap the benefit of this program, which ultimately safeguards our natural resources. There are some 2,000 closed landfill sites in Queensland, the great majority of which may not need any remediation depending on what has been dumped there. But each site needs to be looked at individually to see if there are any risks involved. It is a question of protecting the environment and protecting the health of the community.

While most dumps that councils have looked at so far have shown that they pose minimal risks, the Landfill Remediation Assessment Program is now providing councils with assistance to investigate the level of risk of any closed landfill sites in their areas. I encourage all councils with closed landfill sites in their areas to apply for funding under this program.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Visit to Chinchilla/Condamine, Border Districts and Burdekin

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): I take this opportunity, on behalf of the opposition, to give our kind regards to the member for Nicklin. We wish him a speedy recovery.

During the parliamentary recess, I had the opportunity to tour a number of districts of the state with various members of the Queensland National Party parliamentary team. We met with various communities in the Chinchilla, Condamine, Goondiwindi, Mungindi, Talwood, Texas, Yelarbon, Townsville, Ayr and Home Hill districts.

It was quite tragic to see the effects of the drought on the Chinchilla/Condamine area, where many properties have been destocked for some time. A number of families reported that their young people have moved to the city, rather than remaining on the property or in the district. I thank the people of those communities for the wonderful hospitality that they offered us on our trip.

The serious issue encountered in Condamine and Chinchilla is the worsening drought. It is a problem that has also gripped much of the Darling Downs, particularly the eastern Darling Downs. Not only does this problem impact on farmers and their families, it also affects everyone in the communities. Ultimately, it affects the state in terms of lost income and jobs. As we walked the streets and talked to small business operators in some of those areas, we could really see the flow-on effects of the drought.

While only rain will bring a long-term solution, there are practical and valuable measures that government can take to help relieve the hardship and to help families in those areas survive the wait for drought-breaking rains. For that reason I welcome the federal government's acknowledgment of the drought conditions on the Darling Downs, and Federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss's efforts to secure an exceptional circumstances declaration and assistance for those communities.

This experience has highlighted the inherent flaws in the current exceptional circumstances criteria that was agreed to by the state and federal governments. There are problems with sourcing the information to support an EC application, delays in the process and, all too often, politicking between the state and federal government to the enormous frustration of those people who are in desperate need. Everyone in those communities knows that the exceptional circumstances scheme needs fixing and they want it fixed. Farm groups like the National Farmers Federation and Agforce, and the federal Agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, want to see exceptional circumstances criteria improved. Even Labor's federal agriculture spokesman Gavan O'Connor agrees that it needs fixing.

Therefore, it is tragic that state agriculture ministers failed to agree on funding and an improved exceptional circumstances or EC scheme at the ARMCANZ meeting in August. It is despicable that Primary Industries Minister Henry Palaszczuk sought to torpedo any chance of an agreement even before getting to the meeting. The minister should hang his head in shame for abandoning Queensland farmers when they needed him most. The people in those areas are resilient, but they cannot soldier on forever and they desperately need some help. The Beattie government contributes next to nothing to the EC scheme and its own drought relief scheme offers nothing to grain growers. Mr Palaszczuk should look at the hardship being experienced in the drought areas, he should look at the money that his government has wasted on the Brisbane footbridge, and then he should have a long, hard think about his government's priorities.

During our visit to the Chinchilla area, we took the opportunity to inspect the site of an exciting project that has great potential for the energy sector of the state. Over the relatively small area of a local farm, the Brisbane-based company Linc Energy is undertaking a pilot project to prove up the process of underground coal gasification, or UCG. Put simply, UCG is the process by which coal is converted into a combustible gas that can be used as a fuel or a chemical feed stock. UCG has been used in commercial-sized projects in the former Soviet Union for more than 40 years and significant research programs have been undertaken in the United States and Europe.

Linc Energy was formed in 1996 to bring together the best expertise and research results available with the object of producing UCG as a cheap fuel for power generation. In June 1999, Linc Energy entered into a joint venture agreement with CS Energy to undertake a pilot burn on one of Linc Energy's coal leases in the Chinchilla district. The operation has been carried out on a

mining development licence under the Mines Act with appropriate environmental approvals. Not only have all their test objectives been achieved, but the company has been producing UCG gas continuously for more than 20 months. That makes the operation by far the longest test burn in the history of the Western World. In the first 12 months of the operation, approximately 7,000 tonnes of coal were gasified, producing 20 million cubic metres of gas. I understand that Linc Energy is now planning the design and construction phase of a demonstration power plant based upon the Chinchilla operation and will soon be going to market to raise funds for this stage of the project.

Clearly if this technology can be developed for power generation in Queensland, it can deliver a new environmentally sound and very economical operation for power generation in the state other than existing coal fired and other forms of gas fired plants, or in addition to those. In addition, it also produces some three by-products, including phenols and hydrocarbons.

I bring this to the attention of the government and business sectors because I believe that the project shows great initiative and promise, yet it has received little public attention to date. If Linc Energy's confidence in the technology is proven, it could have a very positive impact on Queensland. That would assist the Chinchilla district, which is also putting a lot of hope on other coalmining operations in the area, particularly those at Wilkie Creek.

The major issues confronting the communities of the border districts and the Burdekin are water and the current government's mismanagement of that resource. In the border districts, in communities from Dirranbandi in the west through to the Granite Belt, there is an all-pervading and oppressive feeling of uncertainty about future water availability and security. This uncertainty is generated by the Beattie government's bungled handling and underresourcing of the important water resource planning process.

I can report that the recent Land Court case that the Department of Natural Resources was forced to surrender to avoid completely discrediting its WAMP process has only confirmed what those communities have been saying for three years. They have been saying that this government has not based the WAMP on accurate science and that this government has not had any regard for the social and economic impacts of any decisions that are made.

I can also report that those communities cannot understand why the government has still not released the socioeconomic report for its draft WAMP and why they have been forced to mount their own defence of the jobs and income that they generate for Queensland. The Premier is continually talking about jobs and trying to take credit for jobs generated in Queensland. If the Premier is serious and genuine about safeguarding existing jobs and small business operations in Queensland, as well as generating new jobs, he should guarantee the security of the water allocations that entire communities depend upon. He should put an end to the uncertainty that, like a cancer, is eating away at the prosperity of those areas.

In the Burdekin, the deep concerns over the administration of the water portfolio relate to the Beattie government's water pricing policies and the implementation of those policies by SunWater. In defiance of the principles of the 1995 COAG agreement and with complete disregard for the impact on the community, the Beattie government is seeking to use the Burdekin irrigation industries to help pay for its declining community service obligation contributions elsewhere in the state. While COAG requires that agricultural water schemes should return the costs of operation, the costs of maintenance and the costs of refurbishment—the so-called lower bound cost—Burdekin irrigators are being charged a return on the capital infrastructure and, no doubt, are contributing to other financial needs of SunWater and the Beattie government. Where the actual cost of supplying Burdekin River Irrigation Area irrigators is \$28 per megalitre, the Beattie government, through SunWater, is trying to charge \$36 per megalitre.

As a last ditch and desperate effort to bring the government to the negotiating table, the irrigators have been withholding that \$8 portion of their payment that is in excess of the agreed COAG requirements. These are decent, law-abiding, peaceful families who simply want to make ends meet, pay the required and accurate amount for water, but who will not be used so as to pay this extra amount, which they should not be called upon to pay at all.

These irrigators, their communities and the others like them in places such as the Atherton Tableland, Proserpine and Emerald cannot afford to be a soft touch for the government to lean on to bolster its budget. There is no capacity to pay the government's exorbitant demands, particularly the way the sugar industry is during this season and was in the previous season. Once again, we ask the Premier: what price does he put on jobs in this state and on the ongoing security of small businesses that rely on important irrigation projects and the sugar industry? What

price does he put on communities that are actually producing food, export income and opportunities for so many Queenslanders?

I call on the Premier to honour the spirit of the COAG agreement, to sit down at the negotiating table with these decent communities and to stop fobbing them backwards and forwards to SunWater. I call on the Premier to restore water prices to a fair and justified level.

In each of these regions there are wonderful opportunities as well as challenges that communities are pursuing. I would also like to mention the exclusion of the Mungindi Hospital from the town's levee bank. Local member Howard Hobbs is working on that. I mention the need for affordable and government housing in rural centres to attract professionals and government staff to these areas. I congratulate the Goondiwindi State High School on enhancing its facilities and highlight the need for support in that area.

Time expired.

Mining, Rosewood District

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (11.41 a.m.): I rise in relation to a matter concerning the Rosewood district in my electorate, where there has been ongoing mining since 1920. Open-cut mining started in 1973—16 years before I was in the parliament and 19 years before Rosewood was in the electorate of Ipswich West. A lot of media attention has been given to one group there. This group has accused me of all sorts of things.

A government member: Unfair.

Mr LIVINGSTONE: Yes, I agree.

Today I inform the parliament that I do not have a set agenda. My job is to represent people who are both in favour and opposed to mining, and I will continue to do that. If there are some members in the local community who do not like that, that is too bad. One particular gentleman, Mr Rob Burton, is a real estate agent in Rosewood. He is the President of the Rosewood District Protection Organisation. I will quote parts of newspaper articles and I will table them later. Were I to try to read them all, I would run out of time.

An article dated 18 August that appeared in the *Queensland Times* started by stating that, 'Firstly, the idea of a summit on the subject is a great one'—in relation to discussing mining. It continued—

I don't believe Mr Livingstone is independent in this matter. He has ulterior motives.

Maybe The *Queensland Times* could act to coordinate such a summit.

...

We have invited Mr Livingstone, the various Ministers and the mining companies concerned to come and meet with us and to visit the area with us. With the exception of the Ebenezer mining company, the lack of response has been overwhelming.

That simply is not true. For starters, let me say that I attended one of the very early meetings. I was not invited and I was not acknowledged as being there. Nor was I invited to speak. But that is fine; I intended to continue the relationship with them. They stated that New Hope Collieries did not go. That simply is not true, either; they did attend. At their next meeting they mucked up their own paperwork and got notice to us, basically, only hours before the meeting, which we certainly were not able to attend. At the very next meeting they had, I was away, as Chairman of the Parliamentary Public Works Committee, in Cairns and Rockhampton. But I wrote back to them stating —

I would like to be kept informed of the outcome of this evening's meetings, and would be willing to meet with members of your organisation at a time that is convenient to you.

I never got a response. In relation to the last meeting, when parliament was sitting, I sent a letter to them. I do not go to meetings when parliament is sitting because my role as a government member is to be here. In that letter I stated in part—

These are issues that need to be identified and discussed in a formal and constructive environment, and I propose calling a meeting, ideally within the next two weeks, for representatives of such groups as:

- RDPO
- Rosewood Lions Club
- Rosewood revitalisation committee
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- Ipswich City Council
- Ministerial Policy Advisers
- New Hope Coal
- Environmental Protection Agency

I will not go on with all of it; I would not get through it.

Interestingly, a couple of days ago another letter appeared stating how wrong we were to worry about the 174 homes that were directly affected in the next stage.

I now report on a letter that this same Mr Burton—this same real estate agent—wrote to the mining company. It stated—

Since purchasing my business in May last year, I have learnt a great deal about mining and the influence that the mining industry has on properties in this region. It has been a sharp learning curve for me, but I have tried where possible to find the positives in every situation.

...

I now believe that I understand more about the impacts of these buffer zones on property sales than any other agent in this region. Until now, I haven't seen any great opportunity available to me, but now I believe I can see a way for both your organisation, and myself, to benefit from the work I have been doing.

...

I would imagine that you will soon set about acquiring some of the properties in this district. Although I will have a few of these properties already listed for sale, I imagine that your normal practice would be to approach landholders yourself, with an offer to purchase. That is where I believe I can offer my services to obtain a better result.

Does he mean that he is going to be able to buy them more cheaply? He went on, and I will table these documents simply because we are running out of time.

Leave granted.

Mr LIVINGSTONE: This good samaritan, who wants to look after everybody's property and stop mining, wrote to the companies because he wanted to do the buying and selling for the mining companies.

Mr Purcell: He is a shyster.

Mr LIVINGSTONE: He would be the greatest shyster who ever lived in Rosewood. There are additional letters from the mining company back to him and again letters from him back to the mining company as late as 5 February this year—four days after the group was incorporated to stop mining. I wish I had more time.

Time expired.

Wwild SVP; Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome Foundation

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (11.46 a.m.): Today I seek to bring to the attention of the House an organisation within the electorate of Clayfield whose work is helping to break down the barriers of abuse and violence towards women. Wwild SVP—the Women with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities Sexual Violence Prevention Program—is an organisation committed to supporting education and caring for the most vulnerable women in our society. It is a harsh reality that women with a disability are four times more likely to suffer sexual assault than women without a disability. What makes Wwild special is that it does not offer only counselling. While it is committed to supporting women who are the victims of assault, it is also dedicated to sexual violence education and prevention.

Wwild offers group training on issues of protective behaviours, self-defence, personal liberties and sexual abuse recognition. Moreover, it is also active in community education. The research and information on dealing with victims of assault, women and barriers to the legal processes, the many faces of sexual assault and sexual assault prevention go a long way to beginning the process of the breaking down of the barriers of ignorance, discrimination and fear that all too often dominate the issue of people with a disability.

Importantly, Wwild is about empowerment. Wwild places the women before the disability. It is an organisation committed to engaging proactively in activities that aim to empower women with intellectual and learning disabilities and to resourcing them to take control of their lives. They are amazing women and they are supporting amazing women. I wholeheartedly commend the services of Wwild SVP.

I would also now like to draw attention to yet another extraordinary organisation within the electorate of Clayfield, of which there are many, as we know; one that works tirelessly to help a very special group of people—another special group of people. This is the Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome Foundation. It is a relatively new genetic disorder. VCFS is characterised by speech difficulties, a cleft palate, elongated facial features, learning difficulties and behavioural problems—and complicated by discrimination and ignorance. The Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome

Foundation was established in 1997 after parents of a child diagnosed with VCFS grew frustrated at the lack of information and support for the sufferers and carers, despite one in 3,000 people suffering from the disorder.

Determined to be educated as a means of helping their daughter, Stephen and Kathy Russell of Eagle Junction went searching for the many others trying to cope with this disorder in silence, and so the foundation began. Today the Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome Foundation is the peak body in Queensland for education, support and advocacy for people with VCFS. As a relatively new disorder, public awareness is poor and the difficulty children suffer in schooling is often ignored. The VCFS Foundation aims not only to support sufferers of VCFS but also to establish links with other foundations worldwide. By forging these international links, the group is seeking to foster, to lead and to encourage research into Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome and to network tutorials, seminars and conventions to discuss and disseminate information worldwide.

Without the tireless work of the VCFS Foundation, the many sufferers of this disorder would continue to live without the hope and opportunity that the foundation provides. Their work to support and educate is ensuring that future sufferers of VCF Syndrome will no longer have to suffer in silence. The foundation held its inaugural Faces of Sunshine charity ball last month. It is my sincere hope that this was a great success. Indeed, it is the Velo Cardio Facial Syndrome Foundation that is working to ensure a little sunshine in the lives of these very special people.

TAFE Resourcing

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (11.50 a.m.): This morning I raised with the Minister for Employment and Training the issue of TAFE colleges and what impact a financial deficit in the previous 12 months would have on the training system in Queensland over the next 12 months. The minister disputed the fact that there may be some 300 equivalent full-time positions under threat within the training institutes across this state. What the minister did not say was that for the year 2000-01 there was a financial deficit in TAFE colleges of approximately \$17 million.

That deficit is spread across 13 of the 16 institutes across the state and there has been a requirement this year for the TAFE system to come in on budget, in other words, to bring down a balanced budget. It does say that over the past 12 months there has not been sufficient oversight of the TAFE colleges and their financial positions across the state, and that has led to the deficit of the \$17 million and has caused the current position within the TAFE system.

The minister also said that funding over the next 12 months, that is this financial year, will increase by some seven per cent. Whilst that may be right, the fact of the matter is that those funds will be insufficient for the current or the expected level of training, and that is why the TAFE institutes themselves have to bring in balanced budgets and that is why there will be some staffing cuts throughout the next 12 months.

How do they intend to bring about those staffing cuts? They have a range of options. They are reviewing casual and temporary staff. If you have a budget overrun, of course they are the first ones who will be looked at in order to try to make some savings. At the same time, of course, they have put a requirement on staff that there be no diminution of training output. In other words, the number of students going through the system will be the same with fewer staff. So the existing teachers will be certainly working somewhat harder.

As I understand, consolidation and possibly amalgamation options will be looked at as well. Whether we are talking about amalgamation or consolidation of sites, institutes or courses, I am yet to find out. That is also cause for concern when we are looking at trying to wind back some \$17 million in recurrent expenditure within this system.

One of the medium-term strategies offered by the TAFE system itself is the exploration of voluntary early retirements once reskilling options are exhausted. If there are staff who cannot take on other courses because of their lack of skills and expertise in those areas, then a range of VERs will be offered in order to reduce the staffing numbers. Overall, one would imagine that hopefully in the longer term additional staff will be employed to conduct those courses where training is needed as the profile of the employment sector in Queensland changes.

As I said before, training through the TAFE system is a critical issue in this state, particularly if this government is going to bring its Smart State initiatives to fruition. We do need to change our training profile in the TAFE system—that is understood—as we go through a period of restructure, particularly in relation to our industries and if we want to become a Smart State. However, we need a government that better manages the financial outcomes of this sector, not one that takes

its eye off the ball, allows our TAFE sector to go into deficit around the state and then tries to recover in the next financial year. There needs to be ongoing oversight of the sector to make sure that it comes in on budget each and every year rather than what we see with this government taking its eye off the ball, getting the sector into trouble and then inflicting pain on the sector to try to recover 12 months down the track. That is where this government falls down. It is lax in terms of its financial management and then it tries to recover and the pain comes later on.

As I said, the minister involved has a long record in this House of trying to look at issues and then recover. Who will ever forget the great disaster visited upon this state in terms of the workers compensation scheme? When he took his eye off the ball, that scheme slid right into the red and had to be rescued over a long period, and a great deal of pain was felt by both workers and employers around this state. Here is another example of a minister—the same minister—taking his eye off the ball again and the system this time slipping into the red and more pain being visited upon those who least deserve it. The staff and the students in the training sector around this state do not deserve this sort of treatment from a government, and particularly this minister, that have a long record in these sorts of activities.

Time expired.

Peter Slipper, MP

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (11.56 a.m.): Terry Sweetman observed in last Sunday's *Sunday Mail* that the federal member for Fisher, Peter Slipper, is a man of many beliefs. When he was a National he believed that Joh should be PM and not John Howard. I assume that now that he is a Liberal he believes that John Howard should be the Prime Minister.

Mr Slipper is fairly fluid in his beliefs. The one belief he has been consistently dedicated to is his belief in political self-preservation. Members may not be aware that, when Mr Slipper rose without trace to the exalted office of Parliamentary Secretary of the Finance Minister, he had his office sign completely redone at a cost of thousands of dollars to the taxpayer so that the title of honourable could be put in front of his name. According to internal Liberal Party letters, branch motions and emails that I have obtained, that is about as honourable as many Liberal Party branch members on the Sunshine Coast think that Mr Slipper is.

For example, the Caloundra branch of the party is so concerned about his tactics that a branch meeting carried the following motion—

The Caloundra Branch of the Liberal Party is disturbed by the methods used by Mr Peter Slipper MP and his staff in the election of office bearers prior to the Fisher F.E.C. AGM on 26th May 2001. The branch registers its strongest protest to Mr. Slipper regarding this matter and also the manner in which he subsequently contacted members of the Caloundra Branch who have chosen to personally express their concerns.

The same meeting also censured Mr Slipper's successful candidate for chairman, Maroochydhore shire councillor Andrew Champion, on his behaviour—

Mr Cummins: Caloundra.

Mr MICKEL: I am sorry, the Caloundra shire councillor Andrew Champion was censured for his behaviour at the meeting. Champion is painted by Liberal Party members as little more than a puffed up standover merchant for Peter Slipper and the Brisbane-based Santoro faction. A letter of complaint, which I have with me, was sent to members of the Liberal Party management and reform committee. It cited political interference in the democratic process of election, a total disregard for the independence of the members of the parliament and flagrant manipulation of the constitution as the basis of complaint against Slipper.

Bussing is a tactic used by the Santoro faction. In fact, it was used in the recent plebiscite in the federal division of Ryan when voters were not just bussed in, but flown in from other states. Thank goodness for Richard Branson and Virgin Blue! It made the exercise of flying in so much cheaper. Virgin Blue, however, does not fly into the Sunshine Coast. So, as part (d) of this document of complaint showed, Slipper bussed them in—another about-face in Slipper's belief.

On 22 May this year two Liberal Party branch members sent a letter outlining Slipper's actions to the then president of the party, Con Galtos, with a copy marked for the attention of none other than the Honourable the Primer Minister. It said—

What I and fellow members of the F.E.C. witnessed during the election of a new chairman would have to be the most blatant example of stacking a meeting to get Peter Slipper's preferred candidate into office that we have ever witnessed.

An email from the branch members to Slipper ended with this withering observation—

Please give us credit for having some intelligence. You know what you did and we know what you did. We need to move on now. Just for once, try working with us instead of treating us with such contempt.

The whole ordeal was to remove incumbent branch president, Mark McArdle, for a Santoro spear thrower like Andrew Champion to position him to undermine the respected member for Caloundra. It also gives the Santoro faction one more vote on the state executive so that it can begin the undermining process of the member for Robina, who has stood up to them.

Slipper's heavy-handed tactics are similar to those he used to rot his own preselection last year when he faced a serious challenge. In what must rank as a unique event even by the shabby Queensland Liberal Party's preselection standards, Slipper convened his own preselection with just 24 hours notice and stacked it with his supporters to head off the challenge. The internal report on the Liberal Party's loss at the recent state election prepared by Lynton Crosby—which I must say I have had the pleasure of reading—says on page 6 under the heading 'Internal Disputation'—

If there was a common thread to the submissions to the inquiry it was a sense that the Queensland Liberal Party often suffered from those more interested in advancing their own interests than the Party's.

The big question is this: what has the Prime Minister done to bring his parliamentary secretary into line, or have Slipper's actions been swept under the carpet just like the GST tax avoidance scam engulfing most of the Queensland Liberal Party? It is little wonder that Liberal Party membership has dropped by 20 per cent this year. As we saw in Ryan and have evidence of in Fisher, the new constitution of the Liberal Party designed by the Santoro faction not only enables rotting, branch stacking and standover tactics but actually encourages them.

Time expired.

State Patrol Traffic Division

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.01 p.m.): It is disappointing that two weeks after notifying four ministers of a very serious problem in employment and training I have not received an answer from two of those ministers. In relation to the two from whom I did receive an answer, one said that it was not his but someone else's responsibility while the Minister for Fair Trading said that she would look into the problem. This is a very serious problem which I brought up in a question this morning. Let me outline to members exactly what has happened. In July Mission Employment, a training organisation in the Beaudesert area, received a phone call from the director of a company called State Patrol Traffic Division stating that it was looking for a number of people to undertake traffic control work within the Beaudesert shire. Mission Employment did its job and sought long-term unemployed people who wanted to undertake this type of work. These people were set up as traffic controllers operating the stop and go signs on roadwork sites around the shire.

When training and employment groups conduct these sorts of conferences—in this particular case, 20 people attended—\$180 per person is paid by the government. In this case, the money came from federal money. It spent \$3,600 for a supposedly three-hour session, which ended up going for only 40 minutes. Because many people did not have transport, only six were selected. Later, five or six other people went to Nerang and the same organisation conducted other conferences at \$180 per person. All was going well until payday came for the first six people. State Patrol Traffic Division said that it was having difficulty in setting up its electronic pay system through some banking institutions. It was arranged for the employees to be paid by cheque, which was fine. However, the first cheque bounced, as did the next cheque. By this stage, about six weeks of work had been completed which my constituents had not been paid for.

Further investigations reveal that one of the managers of the company is currently serving time in a Queensland prison. That in itself is extraordinary. But what is even more extraordinary is the fact that the manager held a teleconference from inside the prison to all of the staff working for the company. One person states that he was threatened with violence during this teleconference when he voiced his concerns about not getting paid. This is of grave concern to me and is simply not good enough. It is hard to understand how this could ever have happened. Someone inside the prison would have had to have set this up. Aside from that, my constituents are in dire straits. They received no money for six weeks of work and cannot claim benefits from Centrelink because they had already filled out the fortnightly forms stating that they had undertaken paid work.

Although I am appalled that a company could neglect to pay its employees, the more important issue here is why such a company is still breaking the law. I would have thought that,

after notifying four ministers when parliament was not sitting—because parliament has not sat for five weeks—at least one would have been able to do something, because they received more specific details in relation to these teleconferences and phone calls than I have mentioned in this parliament. The name of the person in jail was given to those ministers, but I have not used that person's name in this parliament. That would not be fair, but it certainly would be fair to my constituents if ministers did their job. I have asked for conferences from the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth so he can tell us what is going on with these training programs.

During the estimates process the Employment Minister said that 10,500 positions have been put in place, yet 5,200 have pulled out. Something is going wrong. As happened today, the minister stands up and says that we have systems in place. The last time he stood up and spoke on this issue he talked about an ombudsman in the training and employment area to look at all of these problems. However, I wrote a letter to the minister and two weeks later I have not even received an acknowledgment of that letter. Two weeks later nothing is being done while this company at Nerang is still employing people. The manager, who puts his name to the company, is in jail and is running teleconferences in jail. I do not know whether he received any money, but someone received the money for running these conferences at \$180 per person. As I said, 20 people attended the first conference. That amounts to \$3,600.

Time expired.

Women's Participation in Sport

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.06 p.m.): Recently I had the pleasure of representing the Treasurer and Minister for Sport at a celebration of women and sport in Toowoomba. The Leader of the Opposition was also present. Womensport Toowoomba's work in advancing the cause of women at all levels of sport is to be commended and is certainly something that greatly supports what the government is doing in this area. I think members will agree that sport is, unfortunately, still very much a man's world despite the fact that some of Australia's greatest athletes have been women. Dawn Fraser, Betty Cuthbert and, more recently, Susie O'Neill and Cathy Freeman are firmly entrenched in Australia's sporting culture and stand as a testament to what women can achieve in spite of the many obstacles that even today can prevent them from participating in the same way as men.

I was personally delighted to see Australia's women up there with the men in winning gold at the recent World Swimming Championships in Japan and of course at last week's Goodwill Games, not to mention the brilliant performances of our women at last year's Sydney Olympics. Women have always represented Australia with distinction at the Olympics. From 1948 to 1996 women have won 30 of the 89 gold medals whilst only comprising 21 per cent of the Australian teams. In Sydney, women could only compete in 40 per cent of events but won seven gold, only one less than the men. But the unfortunate reality is that women in general still have lower participation rates than men. Female athletes, particularly women's teams, also lack the media coverage they deserve. How often do we see our female athletes headlining the news? Yes, Karrie Webb winning a major or the Hockeyroos winning Olympic gold will get a run on the press and on TV, but how much coverage does week-to-week women's sport receive? I think members know the answer.

If you read the major papers on a regular basis, you can expect to see football, football and more football in the winter and cricket, cricket, cricket in the summer, which does not leave much space for women's sports. The media might have us believe that this is simply a reflection of what people want to read. But it clearly goes deeper than that. We know that sport holds a significant place in our society. It affects how people think, it shapes ideas, and it creates emotion and creates heroes. The media reflects this and so communicates the importance of sport in our lives. But just as sport is critical to the media, the media is critically important to sport. With that in mind, it is greatly concerning that more than six times more newspaper space is devoted to men's sport than women's sport. Television coverage is even more one-sided, with studies revealing only two per cent of all sport coverage features women. When the public broadcasters are excluded, the figures are even worse, falling to only 0.2 per cent.

It is frustrating that, despite the hard work of government agencies, sporting organisations and the athletes themselves, the amount of coverage for female athletes remains static or goes backwards. For its part, the government has produced resources to help sporting organisations manage and promote themselves. Ultimately, the media can have a huge impact in encouraging women's participation in sport. This takes on added importance when we consider that only

47 per cent of girls aged between five and 14 play sport outside of school hours compared with 64 per cent of boys. It is vital to the health and wellbeing of our female population that the gap closes rather than widens, so I call on the media to re-examine its priorities.

The Queensland government is working to address the many issues affecting women in sport by helping sporting organisations identify why girls and women leave their sport, assisting sport development initiatives to increase female participation in all areas, developing programs and policy which support the important contribution women and girls make to sport, encouraging networking among women in the industry, helping women access the training they need to develop their skills in all areas of the industry, and working with the Australian Sports Commission and other peak industry bodies.

The government also provides funding to state organisations and local grassroots clubs for initiatives aimed at increasing participation in sport and recreation across the board. More than \$67,000 was distributed to 27 organisations across Toowoomba, the Darling Downs and Southern Downs through this year's community sport and recreation development program. We need more organisations to undertake projects that encourage women and girls to become involved, not just as players but also as coaches, officials, managers and administrators. The government is also working to raise the profile of volunteers within the sport and recreation industry. Women continue to play vital roles in making sport possible, particularly for our young people.

Despite the fact that women's participation is still comparatively low, rates have risen dramatically in recent decades to the point where more than half of Queensland women aged over 18 now do some form of exercise, recreation or sport. Female athletes continue to excel at the international level and women's sport is starting to secure more sponsors for individual athletes and teams. We are also starting to see more female sports journalists and television presenters, which can only help to improve the quantity and quality of women's sports coverage in the media.

Multiculturalism

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (12.11 p.m.): Though the content of my short address may sound more like a personal statement and refers initially to events within my electorate of Lockyer, I have chosen to include it at this point as it affects a much broader area of public interest.

For some time now I have been associated with a multicultural association named Kabalikat, incorporating Australian citizens together with Filipinos now naturalised. Bearing in mind the often harsh words used in connection with our stance on multiculturalism, I was pleased to be invited to the association's Lockyer branch AGM this year, during which I was privileged to present this group with a Queensland flag and explain its significance. I was able at that time to expand upon my opinion of the possible effects of a multi-racial Australia. Despite some initial surprise by the members, they did not take issue with my words. Indeed, after a very pleasant day I was being taught Filipino dancing.

At Esk I attended a display of art from not only peoples of Australia but Asian people in general, with an emphasis on traditional Filipino clothing and painted art. On reviewing the brightly coloured and exciting outfits, which are designed for many occasions including field work, I was convinced that I do not want them to catch on here for the reason that the materials employed are so fine they would, in Australia anyway, be beyond our pockets.

Last weekend at Laidley my wife attended on my behalf the 60th birthday celebration for the Filipino wife of a leading figure of the association, Mrs Lita Crane. My wife attended due to my commitments elsewhere. She was made most welcome at this event and was treated to a display of traditional dances and children taking part in a game involving blindfolded attempts to break open a model fish to win the lollies inside. The assaults are made with a mini baseball bat. Lucky it was not a real fish!

I have a number of points to make in identifying areas of essential cooperation with our immigrants—legal ones, that is. I have formed the opinion that all public representatives at all levels should make it their business to be involved closely with multi-racial community groups. This particular association, together with other things, clearly fosters harmony between two races and cultures. They manage with apparent ease to enjoy the memories of and sometimes practise the cultural activities of the country of their birth whilst at the same time acknowledging and practising the necessary predominant cultural practices of their adopted country. They have shown me that they are dedicated Australian citizens, and I am very proud to be associated with them.

The dangers of unbalanced immigration are shown when sometimes there are some groups who appear to be little prepared for the quantum leap into Australian society, and resentment therefore is sometimes shown towards Australians who have identified a possible resulting social conflict and unrest. This group has proved that these difficulties can be overcome with effort on both sides. Finally, on a lighter note, I recommend that anybody attending any of these events who is asked to take part in the Filipino bamboo dance take ankle guards with them.

Policing, Sunshine Coast

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): I rise to address the House on the issue of Sunshine Coast policing. As the House would be aware, since taking up my position as member for Noosa I have had a keen interest in policing issues. Policing remains a major issue for people on the Sunshine Coast and particularly for my constituents in the electorate of Noosa. My office consistently receives stories from victims of crimes from all walks of life, from our senior citizens through to business owners.

There is a perception amongst some in the community that the Sunshine Coast is lacking in law and order. Having said this, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the positive steps the Beattie government and Police Minister McGrady are taking to address this issue. Already in the government's short term significant announcements have been made.

Hooning is one problem that is a mainstay of our local press. The establishment of the Traffic Response Team, an integral part of the State Traffic Task Force, is a clear example of how seriously these issues are being taken. While the task force will be based in Boondall it will work throughout the state, and its first priority areas will be the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Ipswich.

My electorate has also welcomed the Beattie government's commitment to develop 16 new Tactical Crime Squads during this term, especially as one of the first five, consisting of 14 officers, will be based on the Sunshine Coast. The Tactical Crime Squads will investigate all crime, with an emphasis placed on property crime and possession-supply of drug offences—a huge issue in our electorate. They will provide assistance to the local CIB detectives and, depending on the needs of the community, could also conduct district-based special operations into problems such as breaking and entering or hooning. Closer to home, my constituents living in Eumundi are certainly looking forward to the construction of their new police station.

It is also pleasing to note that the government is listening to my representations on behalf of the people of Coolum, who have been calling for an increased police presence in their beachside community. At present, police numbers at the Coolum station are at an all-time high, with an allocation of nine full-time officers and two first-year constables in training. A second police vehicle has also been made available to this station. Despite such attention, I will continue to lobby for an increased police presence in Coolum.

This community has a growing population that practically bursts to overflowing during the tourist season. While such an influx of people is great for the local economy, it is often also an invitation to criminals. When I spoke last of this issue I referred to an elderly couple who had their family heirlooms stolen from their home in a street in which five out of nine homes had been burgled. I would like now to offer an example of the problems that tourist accommodation managers are facing. One manager has experienced burglaries of his office and a unit, and it appears that his car park is under constant attack as 12 vehicles have been broken into. I might add that his complex does not stand alone on this issue.

The people of Coolum, however, are also taking steps to address this crime within their community. Bill Mathews, area coordinator of Coolum No. 3 Neighbourhood Watch, is currently trying to secure extra equipment for the local station. I will be working closely with Mr Williams and local community groups over the next weeks to achieve their goal. I would also like to thank the member for Kawana, Chris Cummins, for his offer of assistance on this matter. This is evidence that the people of Coolum recognise that if criminal activity is perceived as having the upper hand in this beautiful tourist destination it will surely have a detrimental impact on the town's image and its economy. So while I thank the Beattie government and Minister McGrady for their efforts to date, there is still work to be done, and I look forward to more positive outcomes in the future.

I would also like to add that this should be a bipartisan issue but that there are people in our community who are grandstanding and making mischief over it. I call on that community

group—all groups within that community—to join with me to work together on what is a bipartisan issue.

Freedom of Information

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (12.20 p.m.): This morning in parliament we heard the Premier scoff at a suggestion from the Leader of the Opposition that the government was winding back on the principles of transparency currently contained in the Freedom of Information Act in Queensland. He also scoffed at the suggestion that cabinet had already secretly considered a range of changes which are going to be brought before this parliament which will wind back access to information that people have enjoyed under the Freedom of Information Act.

I think it is fair to say that it is important for members of parliament to realise that, in the post-Fitzgerald era, we have adopted the principle of freedom of information, that is, we have adopted a principle which clearly indicates that people should have access generally to information about government decisions and information which may not have been available to them previously. It does not apply only to the state; it applies to local government, as well.

It also concerns me greatly that we now have the Premier and his ministers standing in this place and indicating that the cost of providing access to information is becoming prohibitive and that it is something which needs to be wound back. One thing we need to do is consider that freedom of information, once advanced and once given, is something that should not be wound back. It is very false if members are prepared to stand in this place and indicate that it is costing too much to provide access to information to the people of Queensland.

We have also heard the Premier advance a range of propositions here today. He has indicated that the application fee for people's access to personal information will be free. But at the end of the day, the information which causes problems for government and other agencies is not the information which generally is being requested personally; it is the other information which government will not come forward with in a forthright way. It is that information which we need as an opposition—as do a range of community groups and the media in Queensland.

The Premier is trying to mitigate this by saying that we will have a capacity, through the CEO of the Premier's Department, to waive the \$31 application fee on the grounds of hardship. Does that mean that the FOI officers who currently make the decisions in the departments now have to defer to a central agency in Queensland? Can members imagine how much manpower that is going to tie up? How do we define financial hardship? And under the new timing arrangements which the Premier is talking about—with his government colleagues being complicit—it is not the \$31 fee which is the issue. It is the \$20 per hour fee for sorting and accessing that information to find out what is available that will be the absolute killer, because if it is going to take 10 hours to access that information, it will cost \$200. And if it is going to take 20 hours, it will cost \$400. The \$31 is the absolute sop. The *Courier-Mail* and maybe some others in Queensland may be able to afford to pay that, but there are many people who are justifiably seeking access to information who will not be able to and, quite frankly, many backbenchers who will not be able to, either. Also, in many cases, members of the opposition might not be able to seek the information that they so desire. Currently in Queensland the opposition has a range of FOI applications with which it has had and is having some difficulty, including the footbridge, dingo culling, the collapse of Flight West, ministerial briefings for the estimates committee hearing, and accountability measures of senior bureaucrats in government.

The other day the Minister for Local Government and Planning rocked into cabinet with about 700 documents regarding the Lang Park redevelopment, and all those documents were made exempt under section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act. That is completely wrong. During the election campaign, I made a request of the government for access to information about transition to government documents—something which the Premier himself, when he was Opposition Leader, said he would introduce legislation in relation to so that his ministers would not be able to use these broad opportunities through cabinet. They have done it. And I am not talking only about 6,000 documents from the Premier's Department. I have been advised that every single transition to government document that was used to brief the government when it was coming to power will be made exempt.

We have absolutely unmitigated abuse of freedom of information exemption provisions in Queensland. As well, the Premier stood in this place this morning and said that, under section 28 of the act, there will be greater discretion for FOI officers to cull out vexatious issues and a greater

discretion to help the applicant target. They already do that particular process. The Information Commissioner is the only person in the state who has the capacity to cull vexatious applications, and that is the way it should remain.

Time expired.

Fisherman Islands Container Terminal

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): I rise to alert the House to ongoing intimidation at the Fisherman Islands Container Terminal by the employer P & O Ports. In March this year, P & O Ports issued a safety alert which brought to the attention of its workers problems that had been experienced with cranes and loads. Included in the safety alert was the fact that two fatalities have occurred in the last 12 months whereby 30-tonne containers have fallen on people and crushed them. P & O's response to this was the preventive action—

You must never allow yourself to be in a position where you could be struck by a suspended or swinging load.

So basically, it is the workers' fault if they get hit.

A very, very competent worker on that work site became aware of this and took it up with management. It should be noted that, when lowering 30-tonne containers onto trucks, drivers are required to sit in the cab. The distance between where the load is placed and the cab of the truck is about a metre. So if a 30-tonne container falls from 60 feet, a one-metre error of judgment is quite likely to result in that driver being killed. Greg Cook, the worker concerned, went to management with two proposals—

Why don't we allow the driver to leave the cab while the container is being lowered? Or how about we drop the load to about 10 feet and then allow the driver to back up so there is a smaller margin of error?

Greg Cook was told by P & O Ports to pull his head in and observe standard operating procedures. So Greg, being an enthusiastic worker, had a look at the SOPs under which P & O's employees are required to work. One part of P & O's own SOPs states—

Align the ITV—

which is the truck—

... with crane marks and activate green flashing overhead light.

So Greg had a look at the ITVs that were working on the dock that morning, and he noticed that the majority of the vehicles either were not fitted with a green flashing light or that the green flashing light that was fitted was not operating.

Greg brought these SOPs to the attention of the drivers, and the drivers did what they are required to do by law, that is, ensure a safe operating environment. They pulled the trucks off the wharf down to the workshop and said, 'Please fit these green lights, or get them working, so we can comply with the SOPs.' If the workers do not do that, they are negligent. It is important to note that the instructions of P & O Ports could not be complied with due to the company's own negligence and its own poor maintenance program.

Mr Cook then acted in compliance with his requirements under both the Workplace Health and Safety Act and P & O Ports' own operating procedures, whereby workers are required to take corrective action to eliminate hazards within the workplace. He did that by bringing it to the drivers' attention. But was Greg rewarded for being a conscientious worker and bringing an urgent safety issue to the attention of the workers concerned? No. He was carpeted by management.

Mr Purcell: Shame!

Mr ENGLISH: It is a big shame. Why was he carpeted for undertaking a duty that he is legally required to do under section 36 of the Workplace Health and Safety Act? Because P & O Ports is lazy, incompetent, and it does not care about workers.

Having carpeted Greg Cook for his enthusiasm and his diligence towards workplace health and safety and towards the safety of his fellow workers, P & O Ports then issued Greg with a final warning order. If a worker transgresses in the workplace, he is entitled to one final warning before he is out of a job. However, P & O issued Greg Cook a final warning order for taking action that he is legally bound to take—for action that he is obligated to take. That is disgusting!

Greg has spoken to me about this issue, as have members of the MUA. What is P & O Ports response to this? They have issued a direction to all workers that, under fear of risking their job, they do not talk to anyone outside the company—they do not talk to the media, they do not talk to anyone outside the company.

I have a message for Duncan Sadler, the Manager, Port Services Queensland: workers in Queensland will not be silenced. All residents of Queensland have the right to talk to workplace health and safety officers and to their members of parliament. I will continue to vigorously represent my constituents. I will not be intimidated by P & O Ports. Neither should the workers.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! The time for matters of public importance has expired.

PROPERTY AGENTS AND MOTOR DEALERS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mrs Rose, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to address a serious problem facing the Queensland property market, that is, the activities of unscrupulous marketeers. Their activities detract from the activities of reputable operators in the Queensland property industry and have the potential to fleece innocent purchasers of their life savings and dreams of a secure future. Publicity surrounding their activities also has the potential to erode national and international confidence in the integrity of our property market.

The government's multifaceted offensive includes:

- introducing a five-day cooling-off period to all residential property sales, other than those occurring at auctions;
- strengthening the existing warning statement by including a recommendation that buyers obtain an independent valuation;
- adding broader warning statements on the approved forms;
- including more extensive disclosure requirements for real estate agents and property developers to make transparent the very high fees and commissions being incorporated into inflated sale prices;
- extension of certification provisions to provide that a lawyer's certificate must state that the lawyer has not and will not receive any financial or other benefit in relation to the sale, marketing or promotion of the property;
- introducing a new requirement for lawyers engaged by buyers, or potential buyers, to disclose any relationships, commissions, or benefits they have, are, or expect to receive from the sale of the property other than professional costs and disbursements.
 - introducing new prohibitions on unconscionable and misleading conduct by anyone in the sales process;
 - providing the Office of Fair Trading with the necessary powers to take enforcement action against marketeers;
 - penalties of up to \$250,000 for each breach to deter unscrupulous conduct; and
 - introducing new powers for the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Tribunal to deal with marketeers.

The Office of Fair Trading has received numerous complaints relating to property marketing involving the sale of residential properties at inflated prices to unsuspecting consumers through a process of high-pressure and unfair sales tactics. The tactics are utilised by a network including real estate agents, property developers, marketing companies, valuers, solicitors, financiers,

marketeers and any number of other professional and lay people. However, what is important to note is that there is no one set of tactics that is common to all schemes adopted by marketeers to trap unsuspecting buyers.

The Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, which commenced operation on 1 July 2001, introduced a number of initiatives to protect consumers from unfair conduct of operators in the Queensland property market. Those initiatives included, for example, competency based licensing, mandatory codes of practice, cooling-off provisions for some contracts of sale, warning statements for potential buyers, and increased disclosure requirements on sellers of property. However, marketeers altered their operating tactics to avoid the provisions of the act. Currently, the act does not cover the behaviour of people who are not registered under the act. The current penalties are insufficient to deter the big operators, and the jurisdiction of the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Tribunal and the District Court is currently insufficient to appropriately respond to the type of practices being adopted.

This bill is a legislative response focused on addressing marketplace behaviour and conduct rather than further regulation of specific occupations in the property sales process. In the past, unethical property marketeers engaging in two-tiered marketing have worked around attempts to clean up the industry. This broader response will attack operators who continue to operate unethically.

The amendments to the act are part of the government's strategy to stamp out inappropriate behaviour of marketeers and others involved in Queensland's residential property market. The amendments proposed fall into two broad categories: those affecting all residential property sales in Queensland, and those specifically targeting the conduct of marketeers.

Contracts of sale for all residential properties—except sales by auction—not just residential properties sold as a result of an unsolicited invitation to attend a property information session will have a five-day cooling-off period. A solicitor approached by a potential purchaser will be required to certify that they are not receiving any benefit from the sale apart from professional costs and disbursements and that they are not involved in any way in the marketing or promotion of the property. A solicitor engaged by the buyer or a potential buyer in relation to the purchase of the property will also be required to certify their independence by disclosing to the buyer or potential buyer any relationships they have to the seller and any benefits they have received, are receiving, or are likely to receive from the sale, promotion or marketing of the property.

New more strongly worded warning statements will be required to be attached to all contracts for the sale of residential land, excluding auction sales. These will advise potential purchasers of their cooling-off period and warn them of the need to obtain independent legal advice and independent valuations prior to signing any contracts. The warning statements offer contact details for the Valuers Registration Board and the Office of Fair Trading for assistance in obtaining those.

Improved disclosure requirements will also apply to the sellers of all residential property in Queensland. This will require all sellers to disclose the amount of commission or other consideration included in the sale price of the property. The provisions directed specifically at the conduct of marketeers are hard hitting and draw on powers included in consumer protection legislation such as the Fair Trading Act, the Queensland Building Tribunal Act and the Trade Practices Act.

The Property Agents and Motor Dealers Tribunal, an existing specialist tribunal in this area, will have increased jurisdiction to deal with inappropriate conduct of anyone involved in sales, promotion or marketing of residential property. Anyone involved in conduct to be prohibited by the amending act will be subject to very severe civil penalties and the possibility of having to compensate victims for financial loss they have suffered because of the actions. Prohibited conduct includes unconscionable and misleading conduct and false representations in relation to residential property.

The tribunal will be able to issue injunctions or stop orders to prevent inappropriate conduct from continuing and may hold public examinations of marketeers to determine if they have been involved in such conduct. The tribunal will be able to issue a range of orders, including the suspension of licenses, the imposition of civil penalties and the award of compensation. Penalties for breaches of these tough new laws may be up to \$15,000 per breach with the possibility of up to \$50,000 compensation to the purchaser.

The District Court will have all the powers of the tribunal but will be able to make monetary orders up to the limit of the civil jurisdiction of that court, that is, \$250,000 per contravention. If a

company has insufficient resources to pay an award of compensation or a penalty, directors will be liable.

The most effective ways to improve standards in the property marketing industry are to make it unwise to associate with an unscrupulous operator in the industry, and to have the ability to disqualify them by reference to certain, fair trading standards. This bill is an example of strong consumer protection legislation in an industry where some consumers are vulnerable. In the long term I believe it will have benefits for consumers and industry alike by raising standards and fostering confidence in an industry which provides important investment opportunities in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

GENE TECHNOLOGY BILL

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (12.40 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for regulating activities involving gene technology, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Liddy Clark) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Lucas, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (12.41 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

A key component of the Beattie government's Smart State initiative is to encourage the growth of knowledge intensive industries in this state. In May 1999, the Beattie government announced a \$270 million, 10-year Queensland bioindustries strategy to encourage the development of internationally competitive biotechnology industries in Queensland to assist in setting Queensland up as the hub of biotechnology in the Asia-Pacific region.

My department is taking a lead role in facilitating the development of these industries. Key biotechnology infrastructure investments made by the Queensland government to date include—

- \$15 million to support the construction of the \$100 million Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland, with an additional \$77.5 million over 10 years for operational funding of the institute;
- \$8 million towards the \$13 million Centre for Biomolecular Science and Drug Discovery at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus, which the Premier recently opened;
- The commitment of \$20 million towards the recently opened Comprehensive Cancer Research Centre at the Queensland Institute for Medical Research (QIMR), to build on the institute's unique expertise in cancer research; and
- \$500,000 to assist with the fit-out of new facilities at the Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research. This complements a \$1 million grant from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation to Professor Ian Frazer to further his research work on epithelial or ovarian cancer.

As part of the recent budget, the Queensland government announced the creation of the Smart State Research Facility Fund to drive the development of world-class innovation, science and technology infrastructure in Queensland. The fund will provide \$100 million over five years to facilitate and leverage further investment in world-class science and technology R&D infrastructure for the benefit of the industry and all Queenslanders. The Premier has already announced three areas of research focus that will draw assistance from the Smart State Research Facility Fund—

- The establishment of a \$15 million Queensland Biodiscovery Fund, to facilitate investment in key research infrastructure which will enable value adding, development and

commercialisation of bioproducts and discoveries in Queensland. Biodiscovery has many applications including health, food production, pollution controls, material science and the environment. My department is also developing a comprehensive whole-of-government policy on biodiscovery to facilitate access to and use of the state's biological resources.

- The establishment of an Institute for Nano Applications and Biomaterials to build on the State's substantial array of research, development and commercialisation strengths and to position Queensland at the forefront of new Nanotechnology discoveries. The state will contribute up to \$20 million of the total cost of this institute, which will provide world-class facilities and bring together key players in the state's R&D and commercialisation groups to generate powerful new industry opportunities and applications.
- The establishment of a \$40 million Food for Life Centre of Excellence that will combine the skills and expertise of existing food technology players with those in companion fields of functional genomics, the medical and health industries and the food industry. The centre will be a unique facility aimed at the discovery of new products and opportunities, enabling Queensland to take advantage of changing global markets and trends.

Three million dollars has also been made available over three years to establish an early stage funding scheme called BioStart. This involves participation by a private sector partner, and is a funding and support program to assist in the commercialisation of the intellectual property developed during the proof of concept stage of biotechnology research.

The government is keen to ensure that biotechnology is nurtured within a strong and transparent ethical framework that addresses community issues and expectations about the biotechnology revolution. My department is progressing several legislative and policy frameworks that seek to address community concerns and that will enable biotechnology to operate in a safe and ethical environment.

Last year the government established the Queensland Biotechnology Advisory Council to advise it on industry, social, environmental and ethical issues associated with biotechnology; provide an insight into community attitudes regarding biotechnology that will assist strategic planning; and link with expert working groups that may be established to explore biotech issues, consumer rights, safety and business opportunities. More recently, the government has developed and released Australia's first Code of Ethical Practice for Biotechnology, which became effective from 1 September. I table a copy of that. The code articulates the basic ethical principles that should guide biotechnology research and development in all major sectors of the industry—agriculture, food, the environment and health care.

The Gene Technology Bill 2001 is another important initiative in the Beattie government's efforts to ensure the safe, ethical and moral development of bioindustries in this state. The bill establishes Queensland's legislative component of a nationally consistent scheme for regulating dealings with genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

The term 'gene technology' refers to scientific techniques for manipulating DNA. It includes techniques for controlling or modifying one or more genes to change certain characteristics of a living organism. The term 'dealings' in relation to gene technology and GMOs is broad, covering the entire life cycle of GMOs from laboratory experiments, growth, development, production, manufacture and use of GMOs to manufacture of GM products, possession, transport and disposal of trash and importing of GMOs.

The regulatory scheme will protect the public health and safety of people and the environment from risks associated with gene technology. It will also impose heavy penalties for non-compliance with these regulatory requirements.

This is a national regulatory scheme involving three key elements: a gene technology intergovernmental agreement, a ministerial council and legislation. The Premier will shortly sign the gene technology intergovernmental agreement, and has nominated myself to act as his representative on the ministerial council. The role of the ministerial council is to oversee the operation of the scheme, to issue policy principles and policy guidelines and to advise on codes of practice and standards for persons conducting dealings with GMOs.

The scheme requires both state and Commonwealth legislation to ensure maximum regulatory coverage of gene technology. The Commonwealth's Gene Technology Act 2000 commenced on 21 June 2001. While the Commonwealth relied on a range of constitutional powers to enable it to regulate in this area, there are some gaps and uncertainties in its constitutional coverage. These include research conducted by state government agencies and

research of GMOs conducted by individuals, partnerships and higher education organisations. In combination, consistent Commonwealth and state legislation will enable consistent application of the scheme to all individuals and organisations in Australia.

The Commonwealth act has established the Gene Technology Regulator as a statutory office holder to administer the legislation. The regulator is responsible for advising the states and the public about GMOs and GM products and promoting harmonised risk assessments for GMOs and GM products, as well as monitoring and enforcing the legislation, and reporting quarterly and annually to the federal parliament and the responsible minister in each state, who will, in turn, advise their respective parliaments. The Commonwealth act also established the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee, the Gene Technology Ethics Committee and the Gene Technology Community Consultative Committee to provide scientific, ethical and policy-related advice to the regulator and the ministerial council on gene technology.

The regulatory scheme prohibits all dealings with GMOs unless the dealing is:

- an exempt dealing—meaning a dealing assessed over time as presenting no significant risks to humans (including occupational health and safety risks) or the environment and does not involve intentional release into the environment;
- a notifiable low risk dealing—meaning a dealing assessed over time as presenting minimal risk to humans or the environment and all risks can be managed through containment in a certified laboratory. These dealings do not involve intentional release into the environment;
- a registered dealing—meaning a dealing that has previously been licensed and poses no threat to humans or the environment so that no management conditions are required—currently there are no registered GMOs, but in time this may, for example, include flowers that have been altered to improve shelf life; or
- a licensed dealing—this category includes all dealings that are not exempt and includes laboratory research involving GMOs and GMOs that will be released into the environment. Conditions of use will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to risk assessment (of possible risks to human health and safety or the environment), including public consultation, and risk management frameworks.

In line with the Commonwealth Act, the Gene Technology Bill 2001 establishes a criminal law regime to ensure compliance with the decisions of the regulator. The legislation imposes heavy penalties for non-compliance with the directions of the regulator. Unlicensed dealings with a GMO or breach of licence conditions that cause, or are likely to cause, significant damage to public health and safety or the environment will be punishable by up to five years' imprisonment or fines of up to \$219,975 for an individual. This fine elevates to \$1,099,875 for a corporation.

In any other case, unlicensed dealings with a GMO or breach of licence conditions, whether or not those actions cause—or are likely to cause—significant damage to public health and safety or the environment will be punishable by fines of up to \$21,975. This fine elevates to \$109,875 for a corporation. Dealings with GMOs in breach of the GMO register or in breach of conditions specified for notifiable low risk dealings are punishable by fines of up to \$5,475. These offences will apply, for example, when reporting and monitoring specifications are not complied with.

The bill also establishes as an offence interference with approved GMO dealings. This clause, which deals with the risk of eco-terrorism, has been inserted to protect the property rights of those who have applied to, and gained from the regulator, authority to conduct specified dealings with GMOs. Imprisonment of up to two years or fines of up to \$13,200 will deter the damage or destruction of work carried out in a legal manner.

In providing a regulatory framework for the scientific assessment of the risks to people and the environment posed by GMOs, the regulatory scheme will be heavily reliant on both scientific expertise and public input. Applications for licences to deal with GMOs involving release into the environment will entail two rounds of public consultation, firstly, at the application stage and then again when the regulator has completed a draft risk assessment. The scheme also provides for a centralised, publicly available database of all GMOs and GM products approved in Australia—the record of GMO and GM product dealings.

It is the responsibility of the Gene Technology Ministerial Council to ensure the regulatory scheme appropriately reflects current community attitudes. Policy principles may be issued by the ministerial council to deal with ethical issues or to recognise GM or GM-free areas established under a state law for marketing purposes. The Gene Technology Regulator cannot issue a GMO licence where this would be inconsistent with a policy principle. Policy guidelines may deal with

matters relevant to the regulator's functions. The regulator must have regard to these guidelines in deciding whether or not to issue a GMO licence but is not bound to follow them.

Codes of practice are developed by the regulator after consultation and issued by the ministerial council. They will be of key importance in setting best practice and outlining measures to be taken to minimise risks. Some products derived from GMOs will be regulated, but only where they are not already regulated by an existing regulatory scheme. Many products will be regulated by existing agencies such as the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Australia New Zealand Food Authority. GM products which are not already regulated through an existing regulatory scheme will be regulated by the regulator under the new legislation. An example is animal feed derived from a GM crop such as cotton.

The national gene technology regulatory scheme was developed through a Commonwealth-state consultative process in which Queensland played a major role. The result of that consultative approach is a bill that demonstrates a cautious approach. The bill recognises the great diversity of applications of gene technology and is tailored so that for each application, the level of regulation is commensurate with the risk. This legislation, together with the Code of Ethical Practice for Biotechnology in Queensland and the forthcoming Cloning of Humans Bill, will create certainty by providing a clear regulatory path for industry whilst ensuring tight regulation of gene technology within a transparent and inclusive process.

The Gene Technology Bill 2001 (Queensland) is an important part of the Beattie government's Smart State agenda. It demonstrates that it is possible to effectively regulate risks associated with emerging technologies. I commend the bill to the House and present the explanatory notes to the bill.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (12.55 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend acts administered by the Minister for Health.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mrs Edmond, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (12.56 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to bring this bill to the House. The bill amends 20 separate acts—the Food Act 1981, the Health Act 1937, the Mental Health Act 2000, the Private Health Facilities Act 1999, the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999, the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945 and the 13 new Health Practitioner Registration Acts.

In May this year, when the Health Practitioner Registration Acts were passed, I foreshadowed amendments to make these acts consistent with the Commission for Children and Young People Act. As members may recall, the registration acts effectively set the ground rules about the quality of professional services to health consumers. The amendments in this bill confirm the government's unequivocal commitment to the protection of health consumers. The bill amends the acts to give the registration boards the capacity to access an applicant's full criminal history, which is ordinarily limited through the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986.

The boards will be able to obtain information about all convictions and charges, regardless of when they occurred. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of those applicants for registration do have the best interests of their patients at heart. However, the boards should be able to prevent from practising the small minority of applicants whose past actions indicate that they are not fit to practise.

Many registered health practitioners have professional relationships with particularly vulnerable patients, such as children. I am sure that all members will agree that the protection of patients is paramount. These amendments further assist in ensuring that all registrants are fit to practise as health practitioners. The government has been mindful of the need to strike a balance between protecting the public while not infringing on the privacy of applicants for registration. Safeguards have been incorporated into the legislation to protect the confidentiality of information about a person's past, and ensure it is used only for the purposes in the acts.

I also wish to advise the House that the government proposes to introduce similar amendments to the Nursing Act 1992 in the near future.

I now turn to the amendments of the Food Act contained in the bill. The government is committed to introducing nationally consistent legislation, which provides safe food controls for the protection of public health. This has been demonstrated by the government's active involvement in the development of an intergovernmental agreement on food regulation. The agreement includes implementation of a National Model Food Act. The amendments to the Food Act contained in this bill are the first step in fulfilling our commitment.

As the incidence of food-borne illness in Australia increases, maintaining the safety of food is vital to protecting public health and safety. A number of serious food-borne illness outbreaks in recent times has highlighted the need for increased vigilance.

Amendments to the Food Act assist in protecting public health and the established reputation of Queensland producers for supplying safe food. They are consistent with the core provisions of the National Model Food Act and include new offences and a nationally consistent approach to the recall and disposal of unsafe food. The new offences under the act include penalties of more than \$500,000 for a corporation. Amendments to the Food Act contained in this bill will reinforce the importance of safe food handling and manufacturing practices, providing greater protection to the community.

I now turn to the amendments to the Mental Health Act 2000 contained in the bill.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mrs EDMOND: As I indicated prior to the luncheon adjournment, I now turn to the amendments to the Mental Health Act 2000 contained within the bill. As honourable members will recall, new mental health legislation was passed last year following an extensive seven-year review and consultation process. The new legislation has been designed to reflect contemporary clinical practice as well as international, national and state policy directions and community expectations. As I indicated during the debate on the new legislation, the act is scheduled to commence in early December this year, following an 18-month implementation that includes a comprehensive recruitment and training process.

The bill contains a number of technical amendments to the new act to address issues that have arisen during the implementation process. It also makes amendments regarding decisions about forensic patients detained for involuntary treatment, that is, people who have been found of unsound mind or unfit for trial. Contrary to the intention of the new provisions, the Court of Appeal recently suggested that the new act may be interpreted as making it easier for a forensic patient to be released into the community. While the view of the Court of Appeal is arguable, it is important to ensure that these provisions are not open to unintended interpretations.

As I informed the House in June this year, the act will be amended to clarify the original policy intention of the test for release of forensic patients. This test provides that the tribunal must not revoke a forensic order, or place a forensic patient on limited community treatment, if the patient represents an unacceptable risk to anyone's safety.

Following representations from victims, their families and support groups, the government has decided to provide protection through the Mental Health Act for those people who believe they could be at risk when decisions are made to release a forensic patient. These enhance the significant improvements for victims already made by the new Mental Health Act. The new act already provides for victims to submit information to the Mental Health Court. This bill clarifies the range of material which could be considered by the court to include the risk the family believes the alleged offender represents to the victim or their family. Victims' views will be on the public record.

The bill requires the Mental Health Court and the Mental Health Review Tribunal to consider whether to require, as a condition of any approval for limited community treatment, that a patient must not have contact with a victim or another specified person. Processes are in place to ensure

that, if a patient breaches a condition of limited community treatment, they are returned immediately to the mental health service.

The bill also empowers the Mental Health Review Tribunal to make non-contact orders. If a forensic patient was originally charged with a serious personal offence, the tribunal can make a non-contact order on discharging the patient from involuntary treatment. The Mental Health Court will have similar powers in cases where it decides not to make a forensic order after finding a person of unsound mind or permanently unfit for trial. If a person intentionally breaches a non-contact order, a Magistrates Court can impose a penalty or vary the order. A person named in the order is also able to apply for the order to be varied or revoked.

This government is committed to preserving the rights of the individual, but not at the expense of jeopardising the safety of the community. With these amendments, the public can be confident that strict safeguards are in place to ensure that decisions about forensic patients are based on this principle.

The new act provides that electroconvulsive therapy—or ECT—may be given only if strict requirements are met. The amendments ensure that a voluntary patient, who is unable to give consent, would not be prevented from being given ECT for their illness. For example, a person with severe depression, treatable with ECT, and with an intellectual disability that affected their decision-making capacity, could be given ECT in certain circumstances. As a safeguard, the treatment could only be given if approved by the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The amendments ensure that ECT could not be given to a voluntary patient if the patient objects to the treatment, even though their decision-making capacity is impaired.

The bill also enables the appointment of appropriately qualified and experienced mental health practitioners to perform the role of taking a person involuntarily to a mental health service. While the act empowers a doctor, nurse, occupational therapist, social worker or psychologist to perform this role, it will now be possible for other professionals to be appointed. They may include social work associates and indigenous health workers. The bill makes other minor technical amendments.

The bill also amends the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999. The professional standards act has established a very effective mechanism to deal with health practitioners who may have an impairment affecting their ability to practise safely. It includes assessment by a health assessment committee. The amendments to the professional standards act will enable the health assessment committee to require a health practitioner to undergo an external health assessment by an appropriately qualified person. This may be necessary, for example, if the committee decides that a specialised neurological assessment is appropriate and the health assessment committee does not have that specialist expertise.

The bill also clarifies that the powers of the Health Practitioners Tribunal to decide on disciplinary action includes decisions about practitioners whose registration has been suspended. The amendment makes it clear that the tribunal has the power to make a decision about disciplinary action against a practitioner who, for example, has been immediately suspended by a registration board.

I will now explain some significant reforms in respect of the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979. First, the bill overhauls the arrangements for consent to retain tissues and organs after death. These amendments deal with consent arrangements for organ and tissue donation, the conduct of non-coronial autopsies and the donation of bodies for anatomical purposes, and gives legislative authority to the practices that we have implemented administratively.

In the wake of events in the United Kingdom, the state and Commonwealth Health Ministers commissioned a range of activities to determine the prevalence of unacceptable autopsy practices in Australia and to respond to contemporary community expectations that utmost respect must be held for the wishes of a deceased person or his or her next of kin in relation to these matters. The amendments contained in this bill should ensure that public confidence is maintained in tissue and organ donation, the conduct of non-coronial autopsies and the donation of bodies in Queensland. The bill amends the act to tighten the existing consent regimes and to incorporate new accountability measures designed to ensure that there is a clear record of the chain of events leading to an authorisation under the act. These amendments formalise policy changes already implemented by Queensland Health. They reflect the very strong community expectation that non-coronial autopsies, tissue and organ donation and the use of bodies for anatomical purposes should only occur with either the express consent of the deceased person or the fully informed consent of the deceased's next of kin.

These important reforms are further strengthened by an increase in the maximum penalties for offences related to the removal of tissues and organs. The new penalties recognise the inherent sensitivity of the practices governed by the act and that current penalty levels are substantially less than in most other Australian jurisdictions. In addition, the bill contains 'whistleblower' protection for people who provide information, assistance or evidence about an alleged offence.

I am confident that these measures appropriately reflect the community's expectations about consent and the dignified and respectful treatment of deceased persons. The amendments will ensure that the practices of hospitals and forensic institutions are in line with contemporary community standards and expectations.

The second issue addressed by the amendments is the application of the act. The bill inserts a clear statement that the act binds all persons, including the state. This addresses an anomaly whereby certain provisions of the act—for example, those prohibiting trading in tissue—do not bind public sector health facilities. Finally, the bill addresses cost recovery in relation to tissue and organ donation. There are currently five tissue bank facilities operating in Queensland. Of these, the Queensland Heart Valve Bank, the Queensland Eye Bank and the Queensland Bone Bank operate out of Queensland Health. Until now these tissue bank facilities have been able to recover costs because the state has not been bound by the act. Private sector organisations such as the Australian Red Cross Blood Service and Skin Bank are bound by the act and prevented from levying a charge for the processing of tissue supplied by them.

Corresponding legislation in all but one other Australian jurisdiction also allows cost recovery for processing donated tissue. It is consistent with the recommendation of the Australian Law Reform Commission in its 1977 report, *Human tissue transplants*, which states that—

... the reimbursement of expenses incurred in any activity involved in the gift of tissue should not be forbidden if the tissue itself was obtained without payment.

The bill creates an exemption from the sale and purchase offence provisions that will allow prescribed tissue bank facilities to recover the reasonable costs, including direct and indirect costs, associated with retrieval, evaluation, processing, storage and distribution of donated tissue. The exemption provides additional flexibility for the regulation to limit the capacity of a prescribed tissue bank to engage in cost recovery under the new provision, if necessary. Once the bill is passed, I will invite each of the five Queensland tissue bank facilities to make a submission outlining why they should be prescribed under the new provision. Provided that they satisfy me that their operations are efficient and cost effective and that their cost-recovery charges are reasonable, it is my intention to recommend that they be prescribed for the purpose of this new exemption.

The bill contains amendments to the Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001. The amendments are necessary to facilitate a proposed national scheme for the assessment of overseas trained specialists seeking registration to practise in an area of need. Under the scheme, overseas trained specialists who are granted special purpose registration by the Medical Board of Queensland to practise in an area of need would be subject to periodic assessment by the relevant specialist college. The scheme envisages that the board will change the conditions of registration if the results of a college's assessment indicate this action is necessary.

However, the current provisions of the act only allow the board to change the conditions of registration on renewal of registration, which could be up to one year after a college's assessment. The bill overcomes this difficulty by enabling the conditions on special purpose registration to be changed during the term of registration if this is necessary for the registrant to practise safely and competently. The bill also provides that area-of-need specialists, who have special purpose registration, are deemed to also have specialist registration. Deemed specialist registration will be necessary for appointment to public sector specialist positions and for specialist recognition under the Health Insurance Act 1973.

I turn to amendments that the bill makes to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945. The bill restructures the council of the QIMR. Instead of a council of 15 members, the bill provides for a council of 11 members appointed by Governor in Council. It will have strong expertise in health research, in management and, for the first time, expertise in health ethics. The significant growth of biotechnology and health research in Queensland means it is not possible for all health and medical research organisations to nominate members for the council. The amendments provide for a council with expertise in health research, medicine, business and financial management, and health ethics. Nominees of the National Health and Medical Research

Council and the University of Queensland are retained in recognition of the important partnerships between QIMR and these bodies. I am confident that the new council will be able to effectively manage the QIMR and meet community expectations about the ethical conduct of research. The bill also makes other minor amendments to modernise the act.

I will now deal with amendments to the Health Act 1937. The bill corrects a deficiency in the transitional provisions of the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996, which failed to address the status of those as-of-right authorities cancelled under the Poisons Regulation 1973 at the time that regulation was repealed. It should be stressed that the amendments are to remove any doubt about the status of the cancelled authorities. Practitioners whose as-of-right authorities were cancelled under the old Poisons Regulation have not presumed that their authorities were revived by the repeal of that regulation and the introduction of the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996. However, I am sure that members will concur that Queensland Health needs to be able to act with certainty when dealing with practitioners who may have presented a danger to themselves or others.

The bill also amends the Health Act to provide new monitoring, investigation and enforcement powers in relation to drugs and poisons. The current powers in the act are out of date. The new provisions will allow more effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with requirements in relation to drugs and poisons whilst ensuring that the monitoring and enforcement powers comply with fundamental legislative principles. The amendments provide for the appointment of inspectors and state analysts, powers of entry, search and seizure, and the analysis of samples. These revised powers do not apply to other parts of the Health Act as they are being addressed separately in a new public health bill, which is currently being drafted. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (2.46 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Wells, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (2.46 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Environmental Protection Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2001 represents a significant step forward to further extend the cooperative relationship between the Environmental Protection Agency and local governments in relation to appropriate management of waste. The bill also amends the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to facilitate reuse and recycling of waste. Some stakeholders are of the view that the existing definition of waste contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1994 restricts the ability for waste materials, particularly those designated as regulated wastes, to be recycled, reprocessed or reused. Under this definition, a thing is defined as a waste, whether it is of value or not. Industry has expressed concerns about the inability to recycle its waste because of the undesirable connotations associated with the incorporation of 'waste' into new products.

This bill provides for a mechanism that will facilitate reuse and recycling of waste without compromising the desired high standards of environmental protection for Queenslanders. The bill also contains some minor amendments to the environmental impact statement process of the Environmental Protection Act 1994. The first amendment is to allow regulations to specify publication requirements for notices published during the assessment process. These regulations will ensure the environmental impact statement process meets the requirements for accredited assessment processes under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Accreditation of the environmental impact statement process in the

Environmental Protection Act 1994 through a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth will avoid duplication of state and Commonwealth approvals. This will minimise costs, delays and uncertainties for proponents. It will also promote holistic assessment of environmental impacts. Other minor amendments in this bill will provide increased clarity about the environmental impact statement process.

Local governments currently use section 369 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to control waste management works at a local level. Some of the waste management works are also environmentally relevant activities requiring environmental authority from the Environmental Protection Agency under the Environmental Protection Regulation 1998. Industry sectors have raised concern that this system is unworkable. In an attempt to resolve this issue, some amendments were undertaken in 1997 with the agreement of all stakeholders. However, local governments subsequently found these amendments needed further consideration and consultation, with the result that commencement of those amendments was deferred until 31 January 2002 to enable further discussions.

The Environmental Protection Agency has been consulting with stakeholders to establish a policy position acceptable to all. Comprehensive consultation with stakeholders including the Local Government Association of Queensland, industry and community has been undertaken. This bill represents the policy position that is acceptable to all the stakeholders and provides for responsible waste management.

In addition to reducing the burden of regulation, this bill provides for procedural fairness. It supports the partnership between local governments and the Environmental Protection Agency in delivering sound environmental management in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Before I call the Honourable the Minister for Primary Industries, could I ask all honourable members to welcome to this House the year 7 students, teachers and parents from the Allenstown State School in the electorate of Fitzroy.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr PALASZCZUK: Mr Deputy Speaker, before I seek leave of the House to move a motion without notice, I must say that when I was a teacher at Frenchville State School a long, long time ago, when I was coaching the different sports there, unfortunately Allenstown State School always had the knack of beating us at those sports. It is nice to see the students here. It is nice to see them outfitted in their uniforms. Their behaviour has been exemplary during the day.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (2.51 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend legislation about primary industries.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Palaszczuk, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (2.52 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 is to amend a number of pieces of legislation within the Primary Industries portfolio, as well as to repeal three other primary industry acts that are no longer relevant. For the benefit of honourable members, I will briefly outline the various amendments and then comment on the three acts to be repealed.

It is proposed to amend the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 in a number of respects to expedite the efficient operation of the act. This act imposes a prohibition on any person using a chemical product unless it is a product registered by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals. The act aims to ensure that

chemicals are used in compliance with the approved label for containers of the registered chemical product, or in accordance with the conditions of a permit issued by the authority.

Experience in enforcing offence provisions has identified implications for the continued effective operation of the act in controlling the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Queensland. Through an amendment to the act it is sought to remedy any potential deficiency by making it clear that a person must use a registered chemical product in a way stated in the instructions on the approved label for containers of the product, unless particular exemptions from this obligation apply.

Another reason for the bill is to amend certain definitions under the act. It is intended to incorporate definitions of terms under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994, also referred to as the agvet code. Incorporation into the act of these agvet code definitions will promote consistency across national legislation and the Queensland statute book.

Amendments are proposed to the Chicken Meat Industry Committee Act 1976 to substitute annual contract registration fees in lieu of statutory levy funding for the Chicken Meat Industry Committee as agreed to by chicken meat growers and processors. The statutory levy funding arrangements for the committee had to be withdrawn last year with the repeal of the Chicken Meat Industry Committee Regulation 1989 due to doubts as to its constitutional validity. The amendment allows the CMIC to make a fee on the registration and renewal of processor-grower agreements—in other words, a contract registration fee, which will be a 'flat rate' fee as agreed with the committee on which growers and processors are represented.

An amendment is required to the Grain Research Foundation Act 1976 to replace reference to the Queensland Grain Growers Association in the section dealing with membership of the Grain Research Foundation. The QGGA no longer exists, having been absorbed into Agforce. There is currently an interim board for the foundation in place. To allow a board to be appointed for a full three-year term, the act is to be amended to allow the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities to nominate persons to the foundation from an entity that represents the interests of grain producers. This will be Agforce Grains as the successor body to QGGA.

The Meat Industry Act 1993 is to be amended to insert provisions to allow the Queensland Abattoir Corporation to be formally wound up by the administrator who is running the affairs of the corporation. The corporation is no longer competing as a state-owned business against the private sector. An orderly divestment strategy, as approved by the government in its first term, is under way. The act does not presently contain formal winding up provisions, and the provisions I propose to insert are usual for a statutory body of this type. It is also necessary to extend the life of the act, which currently 'sunset' on 1 January 2002, for a further 12 months to allow the administrator to complete the tasks required before winding up, as well as to complete the actual winding up process.

The purpose of the amendment to the Plant Protection Act 1989 is to clarify a definition for the purposes of certification under the Interstate Certification Assurance Scheme. To ensure that an offence provision will achieve its intended purpose, it is proposed to amend the definition of 'acceptable assurance certificate' to remove any doubt that an acceptable assurance certificate is one given by an accredited person in accordance with the conditions of the person's accreditation.

Amendments are proposed in respect of the Sugar Industry Act 1999 to expedite the process of decision making of cane production boards. The issue here relates to the time that can be taken by CPBs to make decisions on matters within their legislative responsibility. Under the act as it now stands, growers are unable to exercise appeal rights under the act until a CPB decision is made. To address this situation, the act is to be amended to enable a grower to appeal against a failure by a CPB to make a decision.

Amendments are proposed to the Timber Utilisation and Marketing Act 1987 to extend the period within which proceedings may be commenced for prosecuting breaches of the act. The extension of time is necessary as a number of potential prosecutions under the act in the past have not been able to proceed due to the present requirement that proceedings must be commenced within one year of the offence being committed or six months of the offence coming to the knowledge of the complainant. Often, the six-month time limit did not allow sufficient tests to be completed to assess whether timber infestation had occurred. The extension of time to one year will remedy that situation to allow better enforcement of the act. The amendments will provide better protection for consumers with regard to controlling marketing and use of termite susceptible timbers.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 is to be amended to take account of a review of the act conducted under the requirements of the national competition policy. The Veterinary Surgeons Act Review Committee conducted the required public benefit test and came up with a unanimous set of recommendations, which are to:

- retain the provision for registration of veterinary surgeons with acceptable qualifications;
- maintain an amended list of prohibited practices and review the list of exempted procedures;
- remove the restriction on ownership of veterinary practices;
- remove the restriction on advertising from the legislation; and
- retain the controls on veterinary premises in the legislation but relinquish control on the use of business names.

The amendments in the bill give effect to the review committee's recommendations. By removing the restriction on advertising, veterinary surgeons will be able to advertise fees for veterinary services. By removing the restriction on ownership of practices, non-veterinarians and welfare organisations will be able to own veterinary practices in their own right and joint ownership ventures will, for example, allow non-veterinarians to provide capital to veterinarians to assist in the expense of setting up veterinary practices.

To ensure that the operation of veterinary premises remains of the highest standards, the amendments also provide that a veterinary practice can only operate from veterinary premises approved by the board. The current provisions relating to the approval process have been modernised to incorporate procedural fairness and a better board decision making model. To ensure that non-veterinarian owners respect the professional ethics of the veterinary surgeons they employ, it will be an offence for a person in control of a veterinary premises to direct a veterinary surgeon to practise veterinary science in a manner that constitutes professional misconduct. The prohibited practices provisions have been reviewed and redrafted as separate offence provisions.

During the review, welfare and veterinary organisations provided a valid argument against the removal of restrictions on prohibited practices, especially on animal welfare grounds. The prohibited practice offences that have been maintained include the prohibition of any person without recognised qualifications performing acts of veterinary science or holding themselves out to be veterinary surgeons.

The term 'veterinary science' will replace the existing definition of 'veterinary surgery'. This amendment reflects current academic thought on describing the body of knowledge and procedures relating to veterinary surgery and medicine. The provision also provides that a regulation may declare some animal husbandry and dentistry procedures not to be veterinary science so that such procedures may be performed by lay providers.

The review committee considered that the current exempted procedures should be reviewed. The regulation containing exempted procedures is to be amended to reflect the results of this review. Several other procedural amendments are to be made, including amending the constitution of the board, incorporating the trans-Tasman mutual recognition principles. In addition, the act has been amended to increase the membership of the board from five to six. This allows for the appointment of a lay person to the board to give the board a consumer perspective. Other amendments provide the board with powers to improve and modernise meeting procedure.

Also, at the request of the Auditor-General, the act is to be amended to clarify the status of the Veterinary Surgeons Board. The board has traditionally been seen, in an accounting sense, as part of the Department of Primary Industries, and hence its accounts have been consolidated within the department's accounts and included in the department's annual report. Up until now, the act has been silent as to whether the board was to be regarded as a separate statutory body for the purposes of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. The amendment will make it clear that the board is not a separate body so that the board's accounts will continue to be consolidated within the DPI's accounts for auditing purposes. If the board was required to operate separately from the department, annual registration fees on veterinary surgeons would need to increase. Fortunately, that has been avoided.

I turn now to the three acts to be repealed. It is proposed to repeal the Wheat Marketing (Facilitation) Act 1989, which is no longer required due to the privatisation, at Commonwealth level, of the Australian Wheat Board, which is now AWB Limited. The act was originally put in place because the AWB, when it was a statutory body, needed authority under state legislation to

underpin intrastate grain trading activities by the board. Interstate and export activities were covered in a constitutional sense by the Commonwealth act which established the AWB. Now that the organisation has been incorporated as the corporations law company, AWB Limited, it does not need state facilitating legislation, and the Wheat Marketing (Facilitation) Act 1989 no longer fills a purpose. I must stress that the repeal of this act does not in any way affect the status of Queensland's important 'reserve powers' for wheat marketing which are set out in another act, namely, the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991. That act is not being touched in this bill.

Finally, it is proposed to repeal the redundant Dairy Adjustment Program Act 1976 and the Dairy Adjustment Program Agreement Act 1977. These acts relate to dairy adjustment measures of the 1970s which have been completed and have nothing whatsoever to do with the Commonwealth-induced deregulation of the dairy industry which happened on 1 July last year.

This bill certainly covers a lot of ground. However, none of the amendments or repeals are controversial, and they all deserve the support of both sides of the parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (3.05 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend certain acts administered by the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Robertson, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (3.06 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill proposes to make amendments to a number of acts in my portfolio and allied local government and land tax legislation to improve their operation. These acts include the Valuation of Land Act 1944, the City of Brisbane Act 1924, the Local Government Act 1993, the Land Tax Act 1915, the Land Act 1994, and the Land Title Act 1994.

The principal amendment to the Valuation of Land Act 1944 streamlines the valuation and rating provisions in section 25, which deals with subdivided land. In 1997, when the current section 25 was included in the act, it contained a sunset clause of 30 June in the year immediately following the rating year in which the land was subdivided. As background information, section 25 provides a 40 per cent discount in the valuation of land for local government rates whilst the subdivided land is vacant and still held by the original subdivider. In effect, it recognises that lands being held in subdivision for sale should not be subject to the full rate based on the individual value of each lot. In other words, it gives an incentive to subdividers developing land for sale, which is a matter of policy that has been entrenched in the act for many years.

Because of the sunset clause and the application of section 34 of the act, on 30 June each year, for valuation purposes, my department is required to amalgamate lots still held by the original subdivider that remain undeveloped. These amalgamated valuations include an allowance for bulk holding of the lots. Administrative difficulties have been experienced when changing both the valuation and local government rating records and then having to adjust the valuations and rates is quite tedious for both my Department of Natural Resources and Mines and local government staff.

This amendment has been suggested following submissions by the Local Government Association of Queensland and staff of my department. It will extend the 40 per cent discount in rating on the individual values of these lots, instead of reverting to the bulk valuation system after one year. The Urban Development Institute of Australia agrees with this proposal, not because of

any individual effect on rating, but because it will streamline the valuation and rating of these lands.

The valuation discount will apply for land tax purposes if at least six subdivided lots are held. This condition recognises that, with only a small number of lots, there is little difference between the sum of the individual values and the value of all lots as a whole. Also, the concession will not apply to balance lots, as these lots are already valued on a broadacre basis, that is, land suitable for subdivision. Therefore, the further application of a 40 per cent discount to the valuation of such land delivers an unnecessary further concession in land tax.

Transitional provisions are also to be inserted in both the Valuation of Land Act 1944 and the Land Tax Act 1915, which preserve the existing amalgamated valuations that were effected prior to commencement of the proposed changes. These will save further administration in valuation, rating and taxing, as without the transitional provision the already amalgamated valuation records would again have to be split and separately valued, with adjusted individual rating and taxing records. I propose that the amendments dealing with the valuation, rating and taxing of subdivided land commence on 30 June 2002 to coincide with the 2002-03 financial year.

Other amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1944, the City of Brisbane Act 1924 and the Local Government Act 1993 propose changes to reinstate the power of the chief executive to fix the date of an annual valuation, currently 1 October. This power was inadvertently removed from the Valuation of Land Act in an earlier amendment.

The amendments also propose to remove the service currently provided by the chief executive of my department in identifying land for rating categorisation for local governments, as this is clearly a local government responsibility. A survey of local governments indicates that only eight of the 124 local governments in Queensland would utilise such a service if it were again provided. The powers for differential rating and identifying land for rating categorisation remains in the City of Brisbane Act 1924 and the Local Government Act 1993. The Local Government Association of Queensland supports the proposal. The amendments also update, clarify and correct references in a number of sections.

Finally, the amendments to the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 clarify that, in relation to explanatory format plans, it is the interest in land which is being described and that an interest in land such as a lease may be defined by a sketch plan in addition to a survey plan. These amendments will assist in the operation of these acts under my portfolio and the associated local government and land tax areas. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

EDUCATION (ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 August (see p. 2252).

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (3.12 p.m.): I would like to indicate the opposition's support for the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2001. This bill has been a long time in coming and is much needed. It is vital that Queensland has a quality educational system that embraces diversity.

The National Party believes strongly that all children in Queensland should be entitled to quality education at the school of their parents' choice. Queensland has a very strong state school system that is and must continue to be the central core of the provision of education. We strongly believe in the integrity of public schools and support the state government's role of ensuring that they continue to be excellent educational institutions.

However, it must be recognised that parents are increasingly choosing to send their children to alternative education providers in the non-state school sector. There are as many reasons for this choice as there are children in non-state schools. We as the parliament must respect those choices by encouraging this diversity and not demonising the non-government sector. We must work together to ensure that there is a consistently high educational standard for all pupils. This bill is an important step in guaranteeing this aim.

Unfortunately, the present system does not always provide quality instruction for Queensland children. Under the present system, the funding and accreditation of schools are interdependent. Therefore, a non-funded school does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. Schools can operate without accreditation from the government. The minister cannot

close these schools and cannot carry out inspections into the quality of their instruction. It is dangerous for such a situation to be allowed to continue.

It is important that, just because a school does not receive government funding, it does not necessarily follow that the institution be prohibited from functioning. As long as the school meets a set of criteria that ensures that all schoolchildren receive a minimum level and quality of schooling, it should be able to operate. This issue was identified by the Webb review committee in its *Report of the review of accreditation and accountability arrangements for Queensland non-state schools*. The Webb review also identified other serious problems with the current system of accreditation. It found that the scheme had serious deficiencies.

The arrangement was originally designed to restrict the building of new schools and control their enrolment levels through funding. This meant that some schools, which met necessary quality standards, were not approved due to demographic and planning issues. Yet a school that was refused approval could still open without breaking the law. As a result, a series of schools that are beyond the reach and control of the Minister for Education have opened. As a result, there is no regulatory oversight of those schools. That is understandably worrying, as we cannot guarantee the pupils of those schools a quality educational environment or syllabus.

The Webb review also found that there are no automatic, ongoing checks, even of approved schools, to ensure that institutions deliver the standard expected and responsibly carry out proper financial practices. Owing to that, unless the minister ordered an inspection, there is no surety that the funds allocated to the school were being used suitably and in the manner for which they were granted.

Just as worrying is that, once a school is approved, there is no mechanism for cancelling its registration. There is clearly a need for this reform. Webb suggested that funding issues and quality issues be addressed separately. It is good to see that this bill addresses that issue.

Under this bill, accreditation is a formal quality process that all non-state schools must undertake on a five-year basis, thereby addressing the shortcomings of the present system that were identified by the Webb review. The National Party feels strongly that if a prospective school can meet the standards that are set, they should not be denied accreditation on the grounds of religious or philosophical convictions.

Under the proposed regulation, members of the governing body of the school will be subject to checks by the Children's Commissioner. I have always believed that the Children's Commissioner has had the ability to oversee any educational institution. We have argued about that before. I understand that the minister has disagreed, but I welcome and support the right to regulate and check governing body members. While it is worrying that an additional level of Big Brother oversight of personal lives is being proposed, the safety of children must be prioritised. It is important that these proposed checks be used properly and not mischievously abused. This system must be tightly controlled.

Other requirements will include financial capacity, a quality educational program, the provision of adequate resources and a commitment to renewing the school program. The opposition supports the implementation of these criteria. The accreditation of non-state schools is an important step towards quality education for our children and will be supported by the opposition.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (3.17 p.m.): The consultation process resulting in the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill began in 1993 when the then Minister for Education commissioned a review of the registration and accountability arrangements applying to non-state schools. A review committee, with representation from the non-state school sector, was established. The committee developed a series of recommendations based on consultations with schools and school communities and finalised its report in 1995.

During the process of drafting legislation to implement the recommendations of the report, a range of legal and administrative complexities arose, which led the government to decide not to implement the report's recommendations at that time. In 1998 the state Auditor-General also identified a number of weaknesses in the Department of Education's processes for managing both the approval for non-state schools to operate and the allocation of funds. In light of those concerns, the former Education Minister, the Honourable Dean Wells, commissioned a further review of accreditation and accountability arrangements for non-state schools with a view to resolving those issues. Professor Roy Webb was appointed to lead the review.

Professor Webb initially met with representatives of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Department of Education. On the basis of these discussions, an issues paper was developed and agreed as a framework for the review committee's work. The committee developed an options paper as a basis for consultation with non-state schools, applicants seeking to establish new schools, and the education community more widely.

In November 1999, the Review of Accreditation and Accountability Arrangements for Non-state Schools, known as the Webb review, was distributed to stakeholders to inform the non-state school community and the education community more widely of the changes proposed to the current system and to provide them with an opportunity to comment on the draft proposal. The options paper was circulated to 457 stakeholders throughout Queensland, including all non-state schools, school systems authorities, parent and teacher organisations and a number of members of this House. Survey forms were distributed with the options paper and feedback on the proposals contained in the review of accreditation and accountability arrangements for non-state schools was invited.

Public consultations were held in Brisbane and other regional areas involving over 80 representatives of the stakeholders, including non-state schools, school systems authorities and parent and teacher organisations, and a number of honourable members also attended. Additionally, discussions were held with interested parliamentary representatives including the member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham, and the then shadow Minister for Education, the honourable Bob Quinn. There was widespread support for the development of comprehensive legislation that provided for accreditation and accountability of non-state schools and criteria on which that accreditation can take place.

During the drafting of the bill, consultation continued with all of the stakeholders and the non-state school community. An implementation committee with representatives from the department and the independent and Catholic sectors was formed to ensure that the bill reflected the recommendations of the Webb report. Additionally, during the drafting of the bill, relevant government agencies were also consulted. There is no doubt that the consultation process has been a thorough and comprehensive exercise resulting in this bill.

I have a number of highly regarded non-state schools within my electorate. St Francis Xavier Primary School in Goodna has educated generations of our local school students. I know a number of parents and students at St Francis Xavier, and they all speak highly of the educational experience at the school.

St Peter Claver College in Dinmore, my home suburb, is a great Catholic college. I was honoured to be asked by the college to present awards to their students at awards evenings. Most recently, I had the pleasure of officially opening extensions to their campus. St Peter Claver College is a caring Catholic school.

I hope that the Westside Christian College in Goodna has plans for future expansion. The school has a wonderful Christian tradition of caring, nurturing, learning and being connected to the community. I have attended awards nights at the college and have been impressed with their music program and their academic achievements. The Springfield Anglican College is a new school. It sits high on the hill in Springfield and its young students are eager to learn in a new and active community.

I am also aware of the wonderful work of non-state schools in the greater Ipswich area. Ipswich Girls Grammar School, under the leadership of Susan Just, is breaking new ground in the education of girls. I have attended numerous functions at the school, but the Anzac Day service that was organised by Steve Donovan, which I understand was a first at the school, was a deeply moving and memorable experience. I was also a guest of the school when Eric Abrahams, a World War I hero, unveiled the Anzac plaque and gave an inspirational talk about his war experiences to the students.

I had the privilege of opening the extensions of the Sacred Heart School at Booval. I was very proud, on behalf of the school community, to represent them at the Ipswich City Council award ceremony later that day when the school won the architectural award for its extension program.

The West Moreton Anglican College is a very big school. It is a school that was built on the sheer determination of local people who wanted their sons and daughters to be educated in a strong Christian environment. Last year I was honoured to open the extensions to their school campus and view the facilities of the school.

Non-state schools have an important place in our community. I suppose in some ways it can be summed up by a retired major of the Salvation Army, whom I spoke to at the Bundamba church. Mavis once told me that not only did she want active and reflective citizens on earth; her goal was to also have active Christian citizens in heaven. What a great goal and what a great vision. Mavis' vision is shared by numerous non-state schools throughout our state. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (3.24 p.m.): Parents and guardians of children need to feel secure in the knowledge not only that their children are receiving the best standards of education at school but also that they are free from harm. In Queensland we enjoy a very high standard of teaching and support in our public schools and schools in the independent sector. There are many former teachers in the House and they can attest to that.

Public schools have been subject to a strong government regulatory system for many years. The non-state schooling sector has primarily been self-regulating and given that weaknesses have emerged in the accountability and accreditation systems for the non-government school sector, it is time to strengthen these processes.

I support this bill and commend the minister and officers, including those from the non-state school sector, who have been involved in its development. When passed, this bill will primarily establish new arrangements for the accreditation of non-state schools and access to and accountability for government funding.

There are more than 430 non-government schools in Queensland. A large sector of those are part of the Catholic system and there are many other smaller systems. It is important that all of those schools meet contemporary standards in teaching and care of students.

I am particularly encouraged to see that this bill sets up processes that will ensure greater protection of children from harm. Shocking abuses of teacher-student relationships have emerged in the past decade in both school sectors. It is simply not good enough to leave independent schools to deal with this themselves. The state has a responsibility to set guidelines for the screening of teaching and administration staff, to keep predators as far away as possible from kids and to set guidelines for the management of abuse in both school sectors.

This bill introduces strict provisions with respect to child protection—the most stringent of its kind in Australia. Last year, the Beattie government introduced mandatory screening in all schools of teachers and other staff by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. This bill widens the net to screen directors or prospective directors of non-state school governing bodies, as well as prospective assessors and auditors employed to assess school applications or compliance. This step is being taken because directors will have extensive contact with children. They are, in fact, influential in setting the standards within a school and ought to be subject to the same scrutiny as teachers and ancillary staff in order to minimise harm to children. The Commissioner for Children and Young People will conduct the screening process. She will then decide whether to issue positive suitability for child-related employment notices to members.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has referred this matter to the parliament for a determination on whether the bill has sufficient regard to the rights of those directors and proposed authorised persons. I urge members to accept the importance of these screening provisions, particularly given that safeguards to protect the rights of individuals will be in place. These safeguards include providing that written notice of a rejection is accompanied by reasons and information provided about the person's right to a review; protecting the privacy of a person with a criminal history by not disclosing the history to other members of the board; and requiring the commission to take into account the circumstances surrounding a person's criminal history in each case.

Non-government schools will be required to have written policies and processes that address inappropriate behaviour of staff towards students and the reporting of suspected or actual harm to a student to the appropriate authorities. They will also be required to show how they are implementing these policies. If they are not doing the right thing, they may be hit with a show-cause notice from the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

With the passing of this bill non-government schools will be more accountable for the government funds that they receive. Government funding to the non-state school sector has grown substantially in the past decade. On the issue of funding, I cannot miss this opportunity to again expose the blatant bias to elite private schools in the new federal government arrangements. In 1982, state and non-state schools shared a 50-50 split of federal government funding. In 1996 this share was a 43-57 split in favour of private schools. Now it has gone totally

out of whack to a 35-65 split in favour of private schools. It is only fair and reasonable that non-government schools become more accountable for their share of state funds and the growing share of federal public funds that they are receiving. The state is taking the lead with this bill.

In the past in Queensland it has not mattered if one is rich or poor; one will have access to quality education. Sadly, through the actions of a mean-spirited federal government, personal wealth does matter. Personal wealth is increasingly becoming a positive determinant of educational outcomes. Over \$3.2 billion is spent on private schools. I do not have an issue with private schools. I have very good private schools in my area, such as the Forest Lake College—

Mr Mickel: Hear, hear!

Ms STRUTHERS:—which the children of the member for Logan, John Mickel, have attended. The issue is about lack of fairness in the system. It is more and more important as both state and federal funds are going to the independent sector that they are more accountable for those funds. Queensland is particularly a big loser out of the federal government's new funding formulas.

I am a proud advocate of our public education system, as a proud graduate of the former Salisbury High School. There are tremendous public schools in my area. The new Calamvale college will be coming on stream next year and also the new Forest Lake High School. I also, though, advocate choice in the right of parents to seek additional spiritual or educational support from the independent system. I do not, however, support a system of federal government funding that will render the public system a very poor cousin to the non-government system.

While speaking on this bill today, I want to say that it is hypocrisy of the highest order for the federal member in my local patch, the member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, to state publicly that as a parent with two children attending a local state school 'I appreciate how much a quality education means to local parents and teachers', when in his publicly funded promotional flyer defending the increased federal funding to private schools he states that if this funding were taken away 'parents would be forced to put their children back into the state school system'. Take note of the language Mr Hardgrave uses—parents would be forced to put their children 'back'. It is easy to assume that he believes that going to a state school is a backward step.

As elected members of parliament at state and federal levels, we have a duty to support both systems of schooling and make sure that the funding arrangements are fair. We also have a responsibility to make sure that both systems of schooling are as accountable as possible to ensure the best care and best educational outcomes for our children.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (3.31 p.m.): I rise to support the bill before the House and, in doing so, am very aware of the long process that has led to the House debating it today. A previous speaker mentioned that the bill had its beginnings in about 1993. I remember that when I came to the position of Minister for Education that was one of the issues on the table.

The process and the approach by the department over that period—probably since 1993—has been to involve all of the key stakeholder groups in consultation right throughout that period. No doubt the minister, in bringing this piece of legislation into the House, continued in that vein over the past couple of years. I am quite sure that both the officers within the department engaged in the consultation process and in the drafting of the legislation and also the major stakeholders are glad to see the bill in the House at present. I think they would breathe a huge sigh of relief about the fact that finally this legislation has reached this point.

From my experience, I know there will always be debates about the appropriateness of the legislation, whether it impinges upon the independence of the non-government schools sector, whether it in fact still promotes choice, and what level of accountability needs to be in place within the non-government schools. Because of the diversity in the range of schools in that sector, I think they sometimes had a difficult task in bringing a common view to the table. As I said before, I am glad to see that finally we have reached the stage at which this bill is in the House and it enjoys substantial overwhelming support amongst the non-government schools sector.

In conclusion, from my point of view, there needs to be a minimum standard of education available to parents no matter which school they send their children to. They ought to be confident that if they choose a school there is a minimum standard. I think the legislation in tackling that issue is a positive step forward.

Can I say also that the legislation does not impinge upon choice. Parents still have the right to send their children to the school of choice. I think that has been one of the fundamental principles that the non-government sector has made sure has not been impinged upon. A plus in

the legislation is the section governing the screening of people on school governing bodies. I can recount from my experience as the minister that there was at least one occasion when we had insufficient legislative power to look at the behaviour of some people on school governing bodies. I am glad to see that this legislation overcomes that and governments and ministers from now on will not be hamstrung in that regard. There was then and still is a growing issue amongst parents about the suitability of people not only teaching in schools but also those who are part of the school community, whether it be in a volunteer capacity or serving on government bodies, boards and so on. That remains, and will always be, a major concern to parents. From my perspective, at last the legislation is in the House. It deserves the support of all honourable members.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (3.34 p.m.): I rise to support the bill before the House. In doing so, I recognise that this process has been going on for about seven years. I have been involved as a member of the minister's or shadow minister's education committee for all of that period. The Webb report was completed from August 1999 to February 2000 and was pleased to be with the then Minister for Education, Dean Wells, at Somerville House in October last year when the Webb report was presented and accepted publicly.

I pay tribute to those on the committee—Mr Alan Druery, the Executive Director of the QCEC; Di Goosem, the Assistant Director, Brisbane Catholic Education Centre; Geoff Gay, the Executive Officer, Christian Schools Association of Queensland; Barry Arnison, the Principal, Somerset College; Brian Rout, Assistant Director-General, Portfolio Programs, of Education Queensland; and Laurie Vogler, Director, Office of Non-State Schooling.

We in this chamber are used to admiring the skills of politicians. On that group was one of Queensland's most capable politicians or political operators, and that was Mr Alan Druery. I would like to affirm to the House, as was said by the Premier recently as people farewelled Alan at his retirement, that Alan's contribution to education in Queensland has been significant. When one looks at the possible minefield of bringing this bill to fruition, one recognises the skill that it took with someone like Alan Druery working patiently and quietly over a period of years to bring the diverse elements from the Catholic sector together to have this bill reach the House.

Mr Reeves: A great resident of the Mansfield electorate.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: As my fellow whip says, he is a great resident of the Mansfield electorate. Alan's contribution in a number of ways has been recognised. This is another occasion where I would like to acknowledge his contribution formally and publicly in *Hansard*.

The bill enjoys the support of both the AISQ and the QCEC and is broadly acceptable to parent and teacher organisations and employee groups. I have spoken with Terry Burke, the General Secretary of the Queensland Independent Education Union, who has indicated that the QIEU has support for the process and principles behind this bill. The minister would be aware that the independent teachers union would like a different make-up of the council; they would want union and parent representation on board. But I believe that the people who will be appointed by the minister could accommodate some of the union's wishes. They would feel more at ease if this were done, and I would support that move.

I believe also, without having spoken directly to the Queensland Teachers Union, that they accept the principles and process as well and that they have no serious objections to this bill. I can confirm that the AISQ in a memo to its members stated that 'the AISQ and the QCEC have worked tirelessly to ensure that all aspects of this Bill are acceptable to the non-government sector and the introduction of the legislation is for positive reasons only'. I note also that the QCEC, in a report to the Bishops and Congressional Leaders of Teaching Institutes, advised that 'the Minister is determined to ensure Catholic Education authorities are comfortable with this proposed legislation. QCEC has continually accepted the need for accountability to government and at this stage such legislation is acceptable to the commission'.

We see that this legislation has broad support. I am proud to stand here with the background of having attended a Catholic school for my primary and secondary schooling and having taught in non-government schools for two decades. My children go to Catholic schools. I was involved in the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools—QATIS—which is now the Queensland Independent Education Union, for a number of years. I was a union rep with QATIS when I was teaching and was their nominee on the Board of Teacher Education for six years—now the Board of Teacher Registration.

I have also been privileged to be on the minister's or shadow minister's caucus education committee for over a decade. I want to support comments that I heard from one of my colleagues earlier with reference to government and non-government schools. This is not a tussle or an

argument or a competition between government and non-government schools. This bill is a quality control for parents who send their children to non-government schools. People such as me and others choose to send our children to Catholic or other schools often for religious or philosophical reasons. In doing so, we often sacrifice certain things that the local state schools have. When choosing a primary school I envied the facilities for the children at the local state school, who had a much better phys. ed., music and learning support program than did the Catholic school. There are other advantages and disadvantages within each sector.

I state emphatically that, although my background both personally and professionally has been with the non-government sector, I totally support having the strongest possible state education system. Free, high quality education for all our children must be available. That is why last night at a function for Rosemary Hume, the Labor candidate for the seat of Petrie, which had as its guest speakers the Honourable Kim Beazley and the Honourable Peter Beattie, I was pleased to hear from the leader of the Australian Labor Party his absolute support for the Knowledge Nation and for the strengthening of education within Australia. I would hate anyone within the education sector to fall into the trap that Dr Kemp wants us to fall into. He wants to see sector against sector, school against school, group against group. He wants us to fight each other, fight over the crumbs, and turn on each other. We must resist that at all costs.

In what will probably be an increasingly acrimonious debate as we come towards the federal election, I hope that all within the education sector realise that we are after a bigger educational pie from which the government schools in particular will receive extra funding to bring them up to the highest possible standard. I was proud to hear my own parliamentary leader, Peter Beattie, say that he does not want one cent taken from the non-government sector; he wants to see all schools, particularly the government schools, funded to the appropriate level. That, I believe, is what we should be aiming for, not falling for Dr Kemp's trap of arguing with each other and becoming victims of divisive and wedge politics.

A government member: Unity is strength.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: Unity is strength. That is the basis of the union movement on which our party is based. That is the basis of our forming a party. That is the basis of our coming together in any organisational group. I believe that if all parents come together from government and non-government schools and say that education is the foundation of the future for our children, for our nation, and that we must fund that to the best possible level, then the unity of all those parents will ensure that the funding for education will be satisfactory and that we will not be fighting each other and squabbling over who gets what particular piece of funding.

I congratulate the current minister, Anna Bligh, on bringing this legislation to the chamber. I acknowledge that in previous years the coalition also helped progress it. I believe it is a step forward for all the schoolchildren of Queensland. I support the bill.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.43 p.m.): It is a pleasure to say a few words in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2001. One of the principal aims of this bill is to maintain public confidence and the high standards already existing in our non-government school sector. At the outset, I want to congratulate the minister and the department, firstly, on the standard and the comprehensive nature of the explanatory notes. I have taken the time to look at the explanatory notes of a number of bills in recent years and I would say that these are an example that other departments and ministers should follow. They do provide a very comprehensive explanation of each aspect of the bill, which is not always the case with some other bills.

The bill is based on recommendations arising out of the Webb review, as a number of speakers have mentioned. That followed an extensive program of consultation with stakeholders in the non-government school sector and government departments and agencies. That ongoing consultation has occurred since the Webb report was produced and the quality of the consultation has resulted in a high level of agreement on the content of this bill.

Again, I want to place on record my congratulations to the minister, her parliamentary secretary and their staff and, indeed, the department and its officers on a great effort in producing a quality bill. Also, as has been acknowledged, we are grateful for the very constructive contributions of the many stakeholders. The member for Stafford mentioned Alan Druery. I also place on record my appreciation and recognition of the wonderful job and contributions that Alan made to the education sector during his many years of involvement in it.

A critical element of the Webb review was that the question of access to state government funding be treated separately from approval to operate a school. Although each issue was

treated separately in the bill, in most cases decisions about accreditation will be tied to accessing government funding because one of the key accreditation criteria for non-government schools will be financial viability.

Two new bodies will oversee the implementation of accreditation and funding: the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, which will have nominees from both the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools, and the Eligibility for Government Funding Committee. One of the new provisions in the bill makes it an offence to operate a school without some form of accreditation. For the first time fines will be able to be imposed on schools operating outside that framework. That is an important provision which protects children and parents by ensuring that a school can operate only if its administration and governance arrangements, its education program, its financial capacity to deliver and sustain its education program and its basic facilities are sufficient and meet the standards set by the accreditation board. Accreditation can also be cancelled if schools fail to maintain the standard set by the board.

Under the transitional arrangements of the bill, a school that is operating under the old act—and that applies to all of the non-government schools in my electorate—will be deemed to be accredited under the new bill for the same kind of education that the school is currently offering. All in all, this is a sensible bill which protects children, parents and schools in the non-government sector.

In common with every other member, I make an effort to support all of my local schools whenever the opportunity arises. I am blessed with having a wonderful range of both government and non-government schools in my electorate. As this bill deals with the non-government education sector, I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight the excellent job that the local Catholic schools in my electorate are doing in providing quality and caring education for their students. All of these schools without exception have wonderfully supportive parents and friends associations and have an incredibly high level of community support for school-based activities.

Today I want to take the opportunity to place on the public record a snapshot of the status of each of the five Catholic schools in my electorate. Firstly, St Dymphna's School, which is in Robinson Road in the Aspley-Zillmere area, is a school newly acquired to my electorate since the February election and the recent redistribution. The principal there is Peter Stark. I acknowledge the excellent work of the P&F association, the current president, Mark Wilcox; the Treasurer, Tony Woodbridge; and the secretary, Wendy Reyno.

St Dymphna's caters for students from preschool through to year 7 and currently has an enrolment of about 630 students and about 50 staff. It is situated in a prime position on one of the Aspley hills and is surrounded by beautifully maintained gardens, playing areas and sacred spaces for children and their families to enjoy. In addition to its classroom teachers, the school employs teachers from music, physical education, learning enhancement, LOTE and English as a second language programs. The school enjoys the services of a speech pathologist and also a school-home liaison officer. It has a well equipped and computerised library and classrooms equipped with at least one computer. Culturally, the school has two choirs, an instrumental music program and a speech and drama teacher, and children also have the opportunity to learn the piano. The school also offers a very good outside school care program, both before and after school, and also vacation care. All of the classrooms in this particular school are airconditioned, which makes it quite an attractive feature, particularly in the summer months.

St Flannan's School is in Beams Road at Zillmere under the stewardship of principal Doreen Bazzo. I again acknowledge the P&F executive—President, Sharnie Georgey; Treasurer, Melissa Conway; and Secretary, Melissa Brennan. St Flannan's caters for boys and girls from years 1 to 7 and is hopefully proposing to extend to preschool in the near future. The school is proud of its spacious grounds and picturesque surroundings. Along with newly refurbished classrooms, of which I had the opportunity to participate in the opening a short while ago, it creates a wonderful environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The school places a heavy emphasis on broad curriculum delivery, as well as providing instrumental music, Irish dancing and tennis which are offered as optional extras. Teachers are continually undergoing professional development to keep up to date with every aspect of curriculum in order to ensure that a high standard of education is delivered at the school.

St Kevin's School is located in Geebung under the stewardship of principal Peter Stower. I again acknowledge the P&F executive—President, Gary Kelley; Treasurer, Scott Wilson; and Secretary, Vince Moynihan. The school caters for boys and girls from years 1 to 7. Its motto is

'Laborare est Orare', 'To work is to pray'. The school considers that that applies well to the many features that make it the great place that it is. There has always been a very strong community spirit at St Kevin's associated with both the school and the local parish. The school community is always very welcoming to visitors. I always receive a very warm welcome when I go there and it is very actively involved in assisting the school to offer the best possible education to its children. St Kevin's offers a broad curriculum covering the nine key learning areas. Japanese is offered in all classes from years 1 to 7. The school has specialist music teachers and physical education teachers. Children are encouraged to strive for the best in all of their endeavours, whether in the classroom, on the sporting field or on the stage. A year or so ago I was proud to be at the school when it opened a new classroom block which was partially funded by the state government in the presence of the current Prime Minister.

St Pius School is in Apperley Street in Banyo. I acknowledge the principal, Terry Grogan, and the current P&F executive—President, Maria Egan; Treasurer, Madonna Hoelscher; and Secretary, Carmel Spargo. Again, the school offers a broad range of impressive resources and opportunities for its students. It is situated right next door to the Holy Trinity Catholic Church. The school has an assistant principal for religious education who supports the teachers and the principal in the delivery of the school's program. It has a physical education specialist taking weekly lessons, Language Other than English taught by a specialist teacher in years 6 and 7 and a teacher librarian. The children have access during the day to private tuition in instrumental music. It has a wonderful six-lane 22 metre swimming pool, two grass play areas with an adventure playground and a parish hall which is used for weekly assembly, school activities, and of course is available for community use.

St Pius also has a number of other sporting facilities such as tennis and basketball courts, which are also used by the wider community. Every classroom has a computer which is attached to a network with Internet access. It has a spacious library with a bank of computers for research. In 1998 a number of renovated classrooms and other buildings were officially opened by the Premier. Once again, I was very proud to be in his presence when that great event took place. The school also provides an out-of-school care facility which currently provides after-school care and vacation care at reasonable rates. Above all, the school rates its teachers as its greatest asset. They are all caring professionals committed to offering the best Catholic education opportunity possible to students in their care.

The only private secondary school in my electorate is St Joseph's Nudgee College. I acknowledge the current acting principal, Michael Senior, and the P&F executive—President, Mike Denning; Treasurer, Judy Hermant; and Secretary, Anne Hardy. Nudgee College was established by the Christian Brothers as a Catholic boarding school and took its first intake of boarders in 1891, with just 41 boarders on the roll. Some 108 years later, it now caters for 550 boarders and, in total, 1,400 students. The college is very well equipped with facilities. It has 14 playing fields, two swimming pools, two indoor basketball courts, a nine-hole golf course and an international standard athletics track which the state government provided half a million dollars towards a couple of years before the Olympics. That was quite a significant investment which was approved by former sports minister Mick Veivers with my full support.

As a result of that half a million dollar investment, the north side of Brisbane received an international standard athletics facility that children not just from Nudgee College but from all of the surrounding communities, including the local state schools, now get access to. It is absolutely wonderful to see kids from local state schools, Catholic and independent schools and sporting clubs accessing that world-class facility that, if it were not built at Nudgee College, would have cost at least \$2 million to \$3 million to establish on the north side. We are very grateful for that facility.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS: As the member for Mansfield points out, both the Australian Olympic team and the American Olympic team trained there prior to the Olympics. Students at Nudgee College have access to the most up-to-date educational facilities which provide a great learning experience. One of the key features of the school is a special and well-resourced advancement unit which has three full-time staff to cater for the needs of the children with special learning needs and also for students who are recognised as gifted and talented.

Members would be aware that the Nudgee College community has recently experienced a terrible tragedy following the death of two of its students from meningococcal disease. The tragic loss of Daniel Laherty and Chris D'Arcy inflicted much pain and grief on families, friends and fellow students and staff—a loss that tested but at the same time strengthened the faith of many in the

school community. On behalf of the parliament, I take this opportunity to publicly express our condolences to the families of Daniel and Chris and to the entire Nudgee College school community. I particularly acknowledge the heartfelt support offered to the college during its time of need from many thousands of Queenslanders. I acknowledge the leadership and compassion provided by acting Principal Michael Senior and Father John Gillen and their support teams. I also acknowledge and thank the officers of Queensland Health who, with compassion and professionalism, gave necessary support to the school community throughout this terrible crisis. May no other school community have to endure the pain and grief suffered by Nudgee College over the past few months.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.56 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill, I pass on my appreciation to the minister for the briefing that her officers afforded and also for early access to amendments to ensure we had an opportunity to understand them. I thank the minister very much for that. One reason that non-state government school educational offerings has occurred is because parents have asked for choice. As previous speakers have said, they either make the choice to go to a non-state school because of their faith and their beliefs or because they have other reasons to choose that type of education. It is important not only to ensure that that choice continues but also to ensure that that choice continues in a sound and viable way.

The issue of distance education is one that is covered in this bill and is one of the first issues I want to touch on. For many parents, opportunities to choose the style of schooling for their child, that is, that it is appropriate to not only the child's make-up and personality but also the family belief system, includes a choice with regard to distance education. I again thank the minister, because the briefing I received from the officers yesterday in relation to my questions on distance education indicated that the matter of the definition of distance education may be reviewed at a subsequent time and that at this point in time the two peak bodies governing non-state schools have agreed with the bill in its current form.

As other speakers have said, I place on the record my appreciation to Alan Druery for the many times he visited my office to speak about educational matters, particularly Catholic educational matters. He was not only a very articulate man but also forthright in the views he held. He in no way said less or more than he needed to say in pursuing the goals and the best interests of the group he represented. I also put on the record my appreciation to Geoff Gay for the work that he does on behalf of independent schools. However, there is one issue in relation to distance education which is not covered in this bill but one which I want to put on the table. While the bill recognises that distance education is a facility in this bill, there are a couple of elements that still have not been dealt with but which need to be dealt with.

The definition of distance education that will apply to this particular piece of legislation has been lifted from the Education Act. It deals with the distance a person lives from an existing educational facility and the distance they are from transport to that educational facility. Whilst these definitions in themselves have stood the test of time, changes in family structure and changes in families' desire for educational choice have meant that for some families—it is not just a few; it is quite a number of families—those definitions do not serve to ensure that they get the best choice for their children.

There is a significant growth in home-schooling in Queensland. Home-schooling is done not just by families that are living a significant distance from an educational facility. Some families are choosing home-schooling as an option preferable for their children for a number of reasons—as I said, not only the health and psychology of their children but also that family's individual belief system.

Whilst the program that is offered to those children must be educationally sound—it must have all of the elements that are required for a rounded education for the child or children in that home—there must also be an opportunity for parents of children who home-school to access material already available through distance education providers.

Because of the nature of distance education, material is usually in modular form or in a form that is transportable and it is able to be learnt by a child in a sequential fashion. For parents who choose home-schooling, distance education material is often the preferred choice to ensure a sound education for their children in a way they can fairly and appropriately administer.

I highlight for the minister that small area of concern that remains. While this bill recognises distance education in the non-state school sector, parents who choose distance education as an option for their children, even though they are not covered by the criteria of living outside access

to a school or outside access to transport to a school, still would like to be able to source their education material from a distance education facility.

As other speakers have done, I commend the minister for the accreditation criteria. In particular, officers of her department were very supportive and very positive in their explanation of the student welfare process, which is one of the subsets of the accreditation criteria. Whilst it is a new area of consideration for non-state schools and one that is certainly very necessary, I will put on the public record a couple of concerns I have which perhaps the minister could respond to.

There will be a requirement that non-state schools develop policies and processes to deal with inappropriate behaviour reported by a child and with battered children's syndrome, which is an observation by the teachers. An obligation will be placed on teachers and other staff of the school to report those suspicions to individuals outside the structure. I note from the explanation that there is no obligation on the school to report inappropriate behaviour that is reported by a child to either the teacher or some other person in that school set-up to a person or group external to the school. I may have misunderstood the explanation. I would be interested to know if I have misunderstood that. I understand that there is a requirement—it is a quantum leap in the obligations of the accreditation—on the school to develop policies and processes to deal with that report.

My concern with there being no obligation to report an allegation to someone outside the school structure is that over the last few years we have seen a number of incidents whereby a child has reported inappropriate behaviour by staff in a school to the school structure—the hierarchy—and the hierarchy, for whatever reasons, has chosen not to progress that report or allegation of inappropriate behaviour. I would be interested to know how the minister will ensure that that problem of the past is not replicated in the future if in non-government schools the behaviour that is reported by a child can remain internalised in that school structure. I am not for one minute casting aspersions on any of the existing private schools or future new schools, but historically it has occurred and I would be interested in the steps that the minister sees as appropriate to ensure that inappropriate behaviour is independently investigated.

I refer to funding from government sources. I know of a couple of small independent schools that started 17 or 18 years ago, and at the time and for quite a number of years they did not intend to seek government funding. In fact, the philosophy of the schools was that they wished to remain independent, not only in their teaching curriculum but also in their funding sources, to ensure that they remained completely independent in terms of the rules, regulations and governing conditions for their schools and their students. Their desire to do that was in no way inappropriate or unseemly. There was a very strong Christian basis for the school's formation and they wanted to ensure that that in no way would be undermined. The departmental officers did explain this to me, but I would be interested in having an explanation from the minister placed on the public record.

There are minimum attendance requirements for government funding for a school that is in operation. Those were cited as: for the primary department, 25; for years 8 to 10, 20 in each year; and for years 11 and 12, 10 in each year. The bill states that the ability to reach those thresholds is only one of the tests. It is not an obligatory test, but it is one of the things that has to be considered by the committee.

With some of the systems that are set up—I am most familiar with the ACE system—those schools can be established very quickly because the print material is available and they buy it per student. The schools can operate on quite small numbers with very close ratios of parents to students. Some of the schools that would have started under the ACE system may have had 25 students in total. I seek the minister's confirmation that the smaller schools will not be precluded from starting, providing they are financially viable and they provide a sound educational curriculum. As I said, a lot of them start without seeking government funding. I seek the minister's clarification on that point.

Another issue relates to the development time for the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board. There are lead times of, notionally, three years—one to two years for development and the third year for enrolment, and the third term of the third year is used for assessment. With those schools that I cited earlier, the developmental time line can be quite short, providing they meet the criteria for an appropriate learning centre and there are appropriate teaching qualifications and appropriate teacher-student ratios. I seek the minister's clarification in relation to whether those time lines can be shortened and shortened significantly if the other criteria are adhered to.

The only other issue I wish to raise—again, I thank the minister for circulating the amendments early enough for us to get some understanding of their impact—relates to the transitional provisions for the guidelines and the retrospectivity. I am assuming that the retrospectivity is curative in nature. Perhaps my question is almost superfluous, but I seek the minister's assurance that no schools will be disadvantaged in any way by the retrospectivity and that it is, as was explained to me, just a reinforcement of the head of power for the approval of schools in the past under the guidelines that are being, if you like, retrospectively updated. I seek the minister's clarification of that.

I think most people would agree that recognition of the non-state schools via the accreditation process is a positive step forward. I thank the minister for the opportunity to receive those briefings and for her attention to this legislation.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.10 p.m.): I rise to support this education bill, which is all about quality—quality in education. It will uphold the standards of education of non-state schools in Queensland and maintain public confidence in the operation of these schools. There has been wide consultation about the issues confronting this accreditation process. As there is a wide diversity of schooling types in the non-state school sector, this bill will be in keeping with the growing needs of communities with varied aspirations, needs, beliefs and religious affiliations. This new policy will uphold the standards of education of non-state schools in Queensland and maintain public confidence in the operation of these schools.

The new legislation seeks to carry out the government's duty to promote the overall quality of education in this state and to ensure accountability for public funding. Non-state schools will be able to demonstrate the capacity to meet the prescribed accreditation criteria, which is a process for determining eligibility for state government funding. Under the present arrangements, a school which is not granted planning approval cannot be authorised to operate and cannot receive public funds. It is proposed in this bill that it will be possible for a school which satisfies the criteria relating to quality to operate without government funding if it can demonstrate that it will be financially viable.

New applicants for non-state schools will be able to apply for government funding. Applications will be considered by a special committee, the membership of which will be approved by the Governor in Council. This committee will be a sub-committee of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board and will be established under legislation. The criteria for determining whether a school is eligible for government funding are the likely impact the operation of the school will have on other schools within the school's catchment area within the next five years; the extent of religious, philosophical or educational delivery choice offered by the school; whether the school meets the minimum enrolment numbers prescribed; the projected population of school-age children in the school's catchment area; and the extent of unfilled enrolment capacity of any other school in the catchment area. The main purpose of these criteria is to ensure that the use made of public investment in school infrastructure is maximised and that public funds for schools are used efficiently.

I have a number of non-state schools in my electorate which will be very pleased with the introduction of these processes. I have a very close relationship with this education sector, in particular some of the Catholic schools. Holy Spirit and St Josephs at Mundingburra are a couple of schools with which I have a very strong relationship. These schools believe that they have to honour their heritage and to teach the Catholic way of being religious. All students who leave the schools know what the Catholic Church stands for and how the Catholic tradition expresses itself, whether or not they accept its beliefs. The mission in these schools is to provide opportunities to explore their faith in a friendly but challenging way. Rites of passage, such as baptism and confirmation, are offered to students interested in discovering more about the religious journey. Counsellors, chaplains and other staff are available for counselling, pastoral care, spiritual advice and help.

The adults in the schools attempt to provide models of religious life and community by demonstrating care and compassion, celebrating a living liturgy and exhibiting a genuine desire to keep learning about religion by continuing to ask questions themselves. They believe that their model is invaluable. Young people can see that the religious approach is authentic and a genuinely valuable way to live. They also believe that if we as a community are to gain recognition as a new knowledge nation, then all groups within the community need to accept their responsibilities. Education is about establishing a fair and just society in which there is equality of opportunity, where all students can develop to their full potential. It is about looking after the common good whereby we can all share in the benefits provided by modern society.

This government accepts the responsibility to collaborate and to cooperate in educational planning and financing, and this bill provides leadership to re-establish education as the major priority for the future of this nation, which translates to a fair and adequate level of support to every Australian student. The schools of which I speak realise the benefits of an educated and motivated community. The future will see them accepting more responsibility for the establishment, development and management of their educational institutions.

As a former teacher—and a parent, as well—I know how important education is for all our young people, and I love my involvement in all educational institutions, including the Catholic education sector. I know how many families there are who send their children to Catholic schools for religious and spiritual reasons and the many, many families who cannot afford the fees. The Catholics do not turn them away but, rather, support and nurture them, providing an inclusive curriculum for all. Many of the Catholic schools in my electorate support up to 70 per cent of their students who cannot afford to pay, so it is important that we do not denigrate the challenges that these schools continue to face. In fact, the value of independent schools, and Catholic education in particular, must be presented in a way that does not compete against government schools but, rather, looks at ways to work together to provide better outcomes for all our students in the education sector per se. I believe this accreditation process goes a long way to addressing these issues. I know that the non-state schools in my electorate will be extremely pleased with these processes, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KEECH (Albert—ALP) (4.16 p.m.): The Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill is an important step in strengthening the accreditation and accountability procedures of the non-state school sector. As previous members have stated today, a review of current processes led to a review initiated by the former Education Minister Dean Wells which was headed by Professor Roy Webb and assisted by a committee comprising representatives from the Catholic and independent school sectors.

I note that due to lengthy consultation, the Webb report has led to new processes and criteria for (a) the accreditation of non-state schools; (b) the determination of their access to government funding; (c) arrangements for monitoring the compliance of existing schools with approved accreditation standards; and (d) new mechanisms for schools to account for their use of government funding. I am pleased that criteria for determining whether a school is eligible for funding are stated in this bill.

In common with all members, I have experienced the difficulty of working hard on behalf of schools and other community services to submit applications to attract funding for a particular very worthy local project. It is therefore very important that such funding or its subsequent rejection and denial is clearly accountable. The use made of such public investment must be effective, and maximum use must be made of the precious funding dollar. Parents, therefore, have a right to feel confident in the choice they make when they enrol their children in non-state schools. This bill will certainly lead to a strengthening of this confidence.

Although not often given its due acknowledgment, the state government funds to a substantial and significant level non-state schools in Queensland. In fact, the total state allocation to non-state schools in this financial year is \$266 million, with \$241.5 million of this being for recurrent funding and \$24.5 million for capital assistance. It is important to note that that recurrent funding is a 10.4 per cent increase on last year's recurrent allocation. Recurrent funding includes assistance for superannuation guarantee, students with disabilities, enterprise bargaining wage increases, networked learning communities and New Basics curriculum trials. Capital assistance includes \$21 million for capital and interest assistance, \$2.3 million towards external infrastructure—including a very important concern in my electorate, namely, pick-up and set-down areas—and \$1.2 million for airconditioning.

I am fortunate to have three non-state schools in my electorate of Albert. Each one of them is an independent school. Rivermount College has been located on a beautiful reach of the Albert River at Yatala for 10 years. It is an excellent school. I know this from personal experience, having had three children attend the school. In fact, my daughter Helen is in year 12, and I wish her and all her friends the very best for their year 12 exams.

The college, under the headship of Mr Colin Young and more recently Mr Richard Young, has grown quickly to meet the needs of families and their children in the northern Albert region. Up until his death, Neville Bonner played an important and unique role as the patron of Rivermount College. In this chamber I would like to pay tribute to the personal effort that Dr Bonner contributed to the college and to the warmth and graciousness with which he carried out

his responsibilities. In fact, one of the strengths of the college is its indigenous program, which has attracted a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These students are encouraged by a hardworking parent group, which liaises with parents and administration staff to ensure that the students are able to achieve their best.

Rivermount College encourages its students to not only seek to develop their own skills and knowledge through extracurricular activities but also to develop an awareness that serving their community is an obligation rather than an option. To this extent, the college has been extremely successful in its Duke of Edinburgh Awards program. This year, James Stokes from the college received his gold award—a major achievement for a young man. At the college's recent Foundation Day, I was honoured to present silver awards to Jordan McCallum, Catherine Hilder and Sarah Middleditch. In addition, at a recent senior school assembly I presented Richard Middleditch, Jonathan Amos, Tom Aitchison, Michelle Schultz and Amanda Kipniak their bronze Duke of Edinburgh awards. At the ceremony, I congratulated not only the students on their achievement but also their parents and teachers on encouraging and supporting these students to achieve to that very high level.

St Stephen's College of Coomera is another non-state school in the Albert area. This is a young school, led by its headmaster, Mr Brian Rowe, which has already gained a strong reputation for its academic, sporting and extracurricular activities. In fact, I have already spoken in this chamber about my enjoyment in watching the primary school's *Man of Steel* musical drama—and what a brilliant job they did, too. In fact, such has been the popularity of St Stephen's College that an additional campus has been established at adjacent Pimpama. Here the campus is led very ably by Mrs Kathryn Barry and her fine and dedicated teaching and administrative staff.

Coomera Anglican College, owned and operated by the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, was established in 1997 in the fast-growing northern end of the Gold Coast. Under the guidance of the principal, Mr Mark Sly, the college fosters a caring community founded on the Christian faith in the tradition of the Anglican Church. Although only a relatively new school, Coomera Anglican College is already highly respected in the local community for the quality and innovation of its programs and for its hardworking and professional teachers. In fact, such has been the growth of the college that next month their new child-care centre will be officially opened.

Although these three colleges seek to offer a distinct product in the Albert region, they have several factors in common. Firstly, they have a commitment to providing the highest possible quality learning experience for the local community. These colleges and their boards of directors are clearly focused on providing a learning environment that encourages their students to achieve their very best. Secondly, these colleges have an inclusive philosophy that strongly encourages a community approach to teaching and learning. In addition, the colleges lead curriculum based on the recognition of Christian education and values in developing their students' spiritual awareness. The pastoral care programs are an important part of such development. All three colleges have strong and active parents and friends associations that work hard on fete days, in tuckshops and during sporting and cultural activities, not to mention school excursions and camps. Thirdly, these colleges all work hard to offer their students the widest possible extracurricular activities, being aware that such experiences lead to enhanced learning and development. Whether those extracurricular activities are the usual sporting activities of football, soccer and swimming or the more unusual activities such as horse riding, motorbike riding, fencing or martial arts, or musical, science, language or mathematics enhancement activities, parents can be assured that the teachers at those colleges are working hard to provide the very best learning opportunities.

That is why I strongly support this bill. Parents have the right to know that the non-state school at which they have chosen to enrol their child meets the highest standards in staff and facilities. Paying school fees is certainly not a safeguard for parents that a particular school meets those standards. This bill ensures that all new non-state schools meet the same high standards of Rivermount College, St Stephen's and the Coomera Anglican College—schools of which I am very proud. I congratulate the minister and her hardworking staff on the bill's introduction and it has my strongest support.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (4.25 p.m.): I am happy to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill, because it is a good bill and because it gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the excellent non-state schools in my electorate of Ipswich. Over the past year or so I have been very disappointed to see an increasingly divisive debate about the private-public school divide being fanned by one of the Howard government's foremost Right Wing ideologues, the Education Minister, David Kemp. In inciting a debate between the

private and the public school systems, the federal government has quite deliberately hit on an historical sore spot in the Australian community. They have done so just as they have quite deliberately hit on sore spots when trumpeting issues regarding refugees, single mothers and work, and Aboriginal people and practical as opposed to spiritual reconciliation.

In those cases, just as with the debate concerning funding for private and public schools, there are legitimate policy issues, but the federal government's approach has been to ramp up the rhetoric, to swing by the polls, and to revel in the politics at the expense of responsibly dealing with the policy issues. This approach belies any claim of decency on part of the Howard government.

The fact is that both private and state schools are doing a very good job. This bill moves to further protect the foundation of private schools and to ensure that public faith in those schools is maintained.

I want to speak about the accreditation provisions of the bill and particularly the changes from provisional to permanent accreditation. The bill supports a comprehensive regulatory environment that applies to all non-state schools. Under this bill, it is proposed that assessment and accreditation provisions will be enhanced. The Non-State Schools Accreditation Board must assess a provisionally accredited school to determine whether or not it should be fully accredited. This has to take place within six months of the expiry of the school's provisional accreditation.

The bill proposes that provisional accreditation can be extended for 12 months provided the board is satisfied that the school will be assessed as compliant within that term. Under the present provisions, once a school is accredited, there is no requirement to demonstrate compliance with accreditation criteria. The bill proposes that the board be empowered to request documents from a school once every five years for the purpose of assisting the board to decide whether the school is complying with the accreditation criteria. That is, once a school is accredited, the board can check to make sure that it qualifies to stay that way. The governing body of the school must supply the requested documents within six months of the request.

The bill establishes a system of accountability that addresses the verification of data on which funding levels are based and certification by the school that the expenditure of state government funds are in accordance with the purpose for which they were granted. Under the present legislation, schools that fail to get authorisation could reapply in another location or establish themselves without authorisation or without state funds. Previously, the minister had no power to close or take action against an operator who chose to operate outside government regulations. This bill quite rightly proposes that it be illegal for a school to operate unless accredited or provisionally accredited under the legislation.

This bill protects against shonky private schools. The bill ensures that the community can have confidence that all non-state schools have minimum standards of operation. It protects the public interests in the standard of schooling and safety of children whilst being minimally intrusive.

The private schools in Ipswich are doing an excellent job. With a strong accreditation system, they will be protected from the damage that could be done to public faith in the system by unregulated shonky operators. I believe that they will strongly support the bill.

Ipswich has a leading reputation of providing quality private education. The state's first secondary school was established in Ipswich in 1863. The Ipswich Grammar School led the way for excellent private schools, including Ipswich Girls Grammar, which was established in 1892; St Mary's College; St Edmund's and the three private primary schools of St Mary's; Sacred Heart; and Bethany Lutheran. Each school operates on a different ethos, but all are well established and provide a high quality of education and a loving community environment for their students.

Ipswich's biggest private school, Ipswich Grammar, has a reputation for achieving excellent results from its boys. Last year, 30 per cent of IGS students achieved an OP of between 1 and 7. The boys are given opportunities to find their talents in a range of fields. The school is excellent at GPS sport and runs a regular and successful arts festival, Grammar Arts. While Ipswich Grammar certainly competes with the most elite private schools in Queensland, it is very much a part of the Ipswich community.

My old school, the Ipswich Girls Grammar School, was established in 1892 when it came to the attention of the Queensland pioneers that it could be appropriate to actually educate their daughters. I am a believer in single-sex education, especially for girls. I believe that my education at Ipswich Girls Grammar nurtured me, encouraged me to do my best and gave me the

confidence to make my own way in the world, both through the years of independent travel I took on after school and even now representing the people of Ipswich.

I believe that, during the formative years when girls are developing their opinions, the encouragement that I was given to believe that I could do or be whatever I wanted to be was tremendously important. In a way, I was fortunate that it was not until well after I left school and was working that, for the first time, I encountered what I identified as sexism, and I nearly died! For girls to be able to grow up and grow their confidence in an environment where there is no sexism and where they can be whoever they want to be provides them with a tremendous opportunity. That confidence and opportunity is something for which I am extremely thankful. I am happy that the Ipswich Girls Grammar School continues to provide those opportunities for young women.

I also have close relationships with the two Catholic high schools in Ipswich, St Mary's and St Edmund's. My father is a St Edmund's old boy and my mother is the deputy principal at St Mary's. Both are school communities of which I feel a part. St Mary's and St Edmund's provide an excellent quality education and instil a strong ethos of tolerance and social justice in their students, which I believe is a tremendously important part of education. The schools develop rounded individuals and prepare them for a range of opportunities in life. Whilst St Mary's and St Edmund's students have certainly gone on to excel in professions and sport, each student is equally valued regardless of their measurable abilities.

St Mary's and St Edmund's cooperate in an excellent vocational education program called Ipswich Youth Enterprises, which gives students real-life work enterprises. Recently, IYE organised a major Centenary of Federation program that brought all Ipswich schools together to publish a supplement in the local paper, the *Queensland Times*. IYE runs a retail shop in conjunction with St Vincent de Paul and is currently planning to move into hospitality.

St Mary's and St Edmund's provide a healthy and balanced environment for their students. When I spoke to St Edmund's Principal Jim Lucey earlier today, he talked about the lengths that the school was going to provide good IT infrastructure. However, he pointed out that while the technology was good, the school environment was better because, at school, knowledge is encouraged not just information and it is at school that there are real relationships. I strongly agree.

Ipswich also has three excellent private primary schools, Bethany Lutheran, Sacred Heart and St Mary's. I recently attended the Bethany fete, which was a huge occasion with events happening all day, a number of stalls and a lot of happy kids. For a school of only a couple of hundred students, to organise such a comprehensive event says volumes about the level of school spirit and community support. One parent told me about the strong support that there is for kids at Bethany. There are opportunities for kids to play sport, achieve academically and to get into art. More than that, being a small school, there is real individual attention given to the students.

The Sacred Heart School is another school with a big and active community. Recently, Sacred Heart finished a major project to build a new administration block and substantially do up the grounds to really improve the appearance of the school. The project was a success because of the huge effort of Tony Skippington and the active P&F.

St Mary's is also a lovely school with a caring atmosphere for its 550 kids. In recent years, St Mary's Primary, along with St Edmund's, has been developing links with China. Any opportunities to expand kids' horizons by teaching them about another country, teaching them another language—Chinese is the language other than English at St Edmund's—and bringing foreign people to a school are very positive moves. To alert children to the rest of the world and to have them think about being in someone's shoes are really healthy things. I strongly support what St Mary's is doing.

The private schools in Ipswich are all unique environments with strong traditions and progressive ideas. They are a very important part of the Ipswich community. It saddens me that the Howard government is, for its own political and ideological reasons, emphasising the differences between state and private schools. It is clear that both state and private schools need to be properly funded. I want the Ipswich private schools to understand my strong support for them and for the excellent work that they do.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (4.36 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill. This bill gives the people of Queensland an opportunity to compare and contrast the Beattie Labor government and the Howard conservative

government. Our government identified a need to differentiate between funding and accreditation programs. We need to ensure the quality of the education of our children. This bill seeks to guarantee the quality of that educational experience.

Our government identified a need and reacted. Compare that to the negligence of the Howard government, especially the Minister for Aged Care Bronwyn Bishop. If the Commonwealth does not provide funding for an aged care facility, they do not require any minimum accreditation. Howard says, 'If we're not paying, we don't care.' Bronwyn Bishop does not care if they are using kerosene baths, eating dog food or being oversedated. If they do not pay, they do not care. The Beattie government seeks to protect our children, while Howard neglects the elderly.

This bill has widespread bipartisan support because it protects both the children and the reputation of non-state schools. The non-state schools in my electorate provide a high quality educational experience for the children. Sheldon College is a great institution, led by the famous Dr Lyn Bishop. Her efforts are well known in the electorate.

The Calvary Christian College, under the strong leadership of Mike Millard, is doing a wonderful job in Carbrook. I recently attended the celebration of Chisholm Catholic College's 10-year—

Ms Keech: Chisholm is a very good school.

Mr ENGLISH: It is a great school. I recently attended the 10-year anniversary of Chisholm Catholic College. They had a dinner to celebrate, followed by an open day the following day. It was great to see the educational experiences that are being offered to the children there. I saw some students preparing for a robotics competition and was quite impressed with their efforts.

Carmel College, a Catholic secondary college, is under the strong leadership of Faye Conley. I attended an art exhibition put on by the students of Carmel College. I walked away amazed at the ability of the students and their enthusiasm for art, which is being passed on to the students by an obviously very caring and concerned staff.

Faith Lutheran Primary School in my electorate is led by Lois Pfitzner. This school currently has an application pending that the bill will impact on. I have been working with Faith Lutheran School in relation to its application for a secondary college.

I am related closely to two Catholic colleges, one of which is St Rita's Catholic School, under the leadership currently of Rhonda Thornton, who will be transferred next year. St Rita's is my parish church. The school is certainly noted for its caring nature. It is a small school but it has very much a community feel to it. There are also a number of parents sending their children to St Matthew's Catholic Primary School in the electorate of Springwood. There is another secondary college, Kimberley College. I have had a lot of dealings with Kimberley College over the last few months and have attended its centre at Mount Cotton and have also been to look at the proposed new centre at Carbrook.

It should be noted that this bill puts criteria for accreditation on new non-state schools. The accreditation's focus is on the quality of that school. The criteria were developed over a two-year period in extensive consultation with representatives in the non-state sector. Arguably, they are the most comprehensive set of standards for non-state school accreditation anywhere in Australia. The detailed criteria will be specified in subsequent regulations that will be made pursuant to this bill.

The Webb review, which has been spoken about previously, recommended the separation of the process of approval to operate a school from the process of determining eligibility for government funding—something that the Queensland government has been enlightened enough to pick up on but on which the Howard government has been dragging the chain. This bill proposes that separation of the process protects public interest in having access to as wide a range of providers and types of educational offerings as possible. Variety is the spice of life.

To achieve accreditation, applicants will be assessed on a number of points—their administration and governance arrangements; their financial viability; their educational and student welfare program; their school resources, including staffing, land and buildings and educational facilities and materials; and their process for improving their school. The assessment made against these criteria will ensure that all schools will meet acceptable minimum standards and will be engaged in a process of ongoing review and reporting to their own communities as well as by oversight by the new Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

I need to hark back to Kimberley College, as it is a very important issue in my electorate. I have had a number of matters relating to this bill raised with me by Kimberley College. They have

raised concerns about the status of their existing application under the previous planning guidelines. I have been advised that during the course of preparing to process this year's planning approvals certain legal technicalities emerged that had made it inappropriate to assess these applications until amending legislation could be passed by parliament.

I recently attended a meeting of 400 staff, students and parents at Loganholme to discuss the matter and to learn first-hand of their concerns. I have raised these matters with the minister and passed on their concerns. I understand that amendments will be introduced into the House at this sitting to address this issue for all current applicants and I commend the minister for acting so swiftly.

To remove any doubt about the reliability of previous decisions, the amendments will also retrospectively validate the earlier use of the guidelines and also the decisions that were based on those guidelines. The guidelines and the assessment processes have not changed and will not change because of the passage of these amendments—exactly the same criteria will be used to assess the applications as were used when those applicants prepared their applications earlier this year.

I have received an assurance that once this bill is passed all current applications, including Kimberley College's, will be processed as a matter of urgency. This bill is good for our children, good for responsible non-state schools and good for Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (4.43 p.m.): It is an absolute pleasure, as a member of the minister's education legislative committee, to rise in support of such an important bill. However, from the outset, let me say that it is my belief that we should see education issues in this country not in terms simply of public versus private. Our concern with education should be aimed at providing all of our children with the best quality and most suitable education. In short, we need to make sure that all of our children have the best opportunity to learn.

Sadly, the federal government has devoted a great deal of the past 18 months to creating disunity and discord within the education sector. Dr Kemp wants to cast the education debate in this country as one where public schools are pitted in a struggle with private schools; at the same time his government is working to make sure that federal spending on education is cut, then cut some more and then cut a bit further.

These days a child who is denied a decent and appropriate education is a child who is realistically being denied a fair start in life. With technology changing at the rate it is, it is absolutely crucial that all of our children are given the best opportunity to have a good education. This is not something that is new; in fact a compatriot of mine from Ireland, albeit in the 18th century, discovered this at that time.

Edmund Rice realised that the poor of Ireland were being denied an education and, as a result, were being denied a future. I did a bit of research just to make sure that I got my facts right and thought that I would highlight some points about Blessed Edmund Rice to the House. He was born in Callan, County Kilkenny, in 1762 and he died in Waterford in 1844. He worked for his uncle, a Michael Rice, a merchant and ship chandler. Edmund was a very good businessman and soon was running the family business.

Sadly, his wife died in an accident in 1789 and from this time onwards Edmund devoted a considerable amount of his life to prayer and charitable work, particularly with the poor and marginalised. He was drawn to the plight of the poor children whose parents could not afford to send them to Ireland's schools at the time, schools that people had to pay to attend. Later he opened a school—in 1802—and over the next 20 years a large number of people from many different walks of life joined him. Edmund Rice eventually formed the new religious congregation, as I am sure we all know, of the Christian Brothers. This was formally approved in 1820.

The provincial head of the Christian Brothers for Queensland and the Northern Territory is situated on Kate Street in the suburb of Indooroopilly, as is a wonderful Christian Brothers School, Nudgee Junior College. Nudgee is a school that has a commitment to values that I know a lot of members in this House share. Its full name is St Joseph's Nudgee Junior College—St Joseph being the patron saint of workers. I know that the principal, Mr Sean Gordon, and the assistant principal, Patrick Colley, are doing a great job, because I was there last Friday to present the school with the Queensland flag and to attend a year 7 assembly. I am continually amazed at how able and capable our primary school children are. I think back to the days when I was in primary school and cannot imagine being as capable of doing the amazing sorts of things that they are doing now.

I was very fortunate to be able to join the year 7 parents and the year 7s for a mass which was celebrated by Father Ray Brain, and afterwards for a morning tea. It was great to catch up with some of the students who performed the previous week at the school's spring concert, which I thought was absolutely fantastic. Nudgee Junior has an absolutely fantastic choir at the moment and recently won the Catholic schools choir competition, which is an amazing achievement for a school that does not pick its choristers based on their voices. It is a 'roll up and join in' sort of show, which I think says a great deal about the quality of the teaching and training that the children get when they join that choir.

The spring concert was absolutely fantastic. It was compered exceptionally well by the school captain, Douglas Cowley, and the vice captain, Jo Walsh. We were entertained by not only the senior concert band but also the junior concert band, both conducted by Ms Eleana Gillespie. The instrumentalists really made the evening for me. We had Jonathan Williams, a year 6 student, on the piano. We then had a piano duet by Alex Robson and Thomas Peters from year 7 followed by a fantastic tuba duet which involved Matthew Hendry, and Mrs Gillespie also lent a hand.

When I went to school—and I have to say it was a Christian Brothers school—tap dance was not something that we would expect to find at a spring concert, but that is not the way these days. Nudgee Junior has an absolutely outstanding tap dancer in Nethaniel Hancock from year 6. He danced to the tune *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. It was a truly remarkable experience. I think what was best was the fantastic rendition of *Danny Boy* by the Nudgee choir conducted by Barbara Robinson. Coming from that part of Ireland, a tear always comes to my eye when I hear *Danny Boy* performed particularly well.

The evening was concluded by the percussion ensemble of Nicholas Howes, Daniel North, David Wijeyakulasuriya, Lorcan Rae and Joseph Hammer. They were followed by a clarinet ensemble with Sean Geer, Luke Johnston, Nick Lavan and Anthony McMonagle. Dylan Nagle played *Sunset Blues* on the piano and Chris Leaman and Max Rankine both played the saxophone for us before Lachlan Cook very ably played on the piano *The Entertainer*, which is an exceptionally difficult piece for a year 7 student and he should be congratulated. Before we walked to the next building and had a look at the art show, year 6 blue performed a drama called *Scream and Run Away*. What makes their drama even more outstanding is the fact that they had only seven days to prepare and rehearse.

But Nudgee Junior is not the only fantastic school that I have in my electorate. Holy Family, which is just up the road, also has a great tradition in the arts. Last Wednesday night they had their annual arts show. I should congratulate John Fitz-Walter, a teacher at the school, who did a tremendous job coordinating a large number of students on the night. They had a fantastic static display in the resource centre. They had fantastic music, but I think the best thing about the night for me was the amazingly decorated love seat.

All members would be familiar with the tree that we often find in a village on which people etch the name of someone. There is a bit of a tradition at Holy Family that has been going on for a long time. There is a particular tree on which names are etched. The school decided that they would create a piece of sculpted art involving the tree, which they have named *The Love Seat*. Every individual student in the school decorated their own tile and each tile was put onto this seat, which has been glazed and is absolutely beautiful. There are then three separate seats, each dedicated to a different aspect of love: family, friends and God. The children who contributed to that and also the teachers and parents certainly ought to be congratulated.

The liturgy that was held on the night was special for a number of reasons. Not only were the children in fine voice, but also it was the first liturgy for the school community that involved Indooroopilly's new Catholic priest, Father Leo Burke. Leo is now the new priest in residence on Fairley Street, Indooroopilly. He is formerly from the hospital. I have to tell honourable members that he is a lovely bloke and the community is very lucky to have him.

I would like to pay some special congratulations on another achievement of Holy Family, and that is for Laura Bittner, who came second in the Queensland Irish Dance Championships. Laura is off to Adelaide in October to compete in the national titles, and I am very confident that she will do very well.

The school also had some excellent results in the local regional athletics carnival. Grace O'Connell did very well in the sprints. Emily Lewis performed admirably in the 200 metres. Katherine Johnson and Gabrielle Wikman did particularly well in the shot-put. We wish them well at the regional carnival, which is coming up in October.

Holy Family is a school that has a great tradition of culture and sport. Honourable members might ask: what more could a school have? But they have more: they also have an excellent academic record. I had very great pleasure to be at the Tournament of Minds in Indooroopilly about two weeks ago. The Holy Family's Team 4 received an honour award for their presentation and their solution. Congratulations should go to them. For the information of members, the Tournament of Minds is not just for students from one year level; they have students from a number of year levels and they get no parental help at all. Kimberley Budgen from year 7, Priyali Wijeratne from year 6, Elliane Varghese from year 6, Hannah Pedrolini from year 5, Annabelle Paxton-Hall from year 4, Becky Rhodes from year 5 and Sharrula Ginige from year 7 deserve special congratulations.

While we are on the subject of Holy Family, I would like to invite all members to their annual jazz night on 27 October. The jazz night is a fantastic evening and one that I am sure all honourable members would like to attend. Tickets are available by calling the school office on 3870 9600.

Next door to Holy Family is another wonderful non-state school, Brigidine College, which recently had a very successful open day. They, too, performed very well in the Tournament of Minds. They also have a very active St Vincent de Paul group. They had students performing at the opening of the Goodwill Games. I would like to make special mention today of the opening and blessing of the Brigidine College refurbishment by Ms Leneen Forde on 12 August. It is always great to see a school like Brigidine that not only works so hard to provide their students with a great education but also is so much a part of the local community.

I would also like to mention the four entries by students from Brigidine College that were selected for inclusion in the 2002 desk calendar. They produced posters to commemorate Refugee Sunday and will find their artwork in next year's calendar. Petrina Hetherington and Bridget Preeo produced the picture for April; Rachel Milford for May; Carly Collins, Clare Nelson and Julia Carroll for August; and Tara Blackmore for November.

Across the road yet again we have another wonderful school, St Peter's Lutheran College, where I attended a trivia night last Friday. My team did not do as well as we had hoped, but that is only an incentive for us to come back next year and try even harder. The money raised from the trivia night is going to help pay for St Peter's performing arts centre. St Peter's has a great tradition in the performing arts. Earlier this year it put on a fantastic play, *Medea* which I think is a particularly great achievement for high school students.

St Peter's also had a delegation of year 7s visit Parliament House in the last sitting, and they were very impressed by the architecture of the building and also by the welcome that they received. St Peter's is a school that has been serving the Indooroopilly community since 1945 when it started with 56 students. Now there are around 1,700 students in its care. Its motto is 'plus ultra', which means 'ever higher'. The school believes that there are four things which would encourage parents to choose it: it is Christian, it is coeducational, it has a great curriculum and because of its commitment to its core values.

The Brisbane Montessori School is a school that is not regularly spoken of in parliament, but its idyllic setting alongside the river in Fig Tree Pocket creates a unique setting. It is also appropriate, because it has a fairly unique educational system. I attended a tree planting ceremony at the school a number of weeks ago which was organised entirely by the cycle 3 children. That is not something that happens at schools every day. The school, under the stewardship of Allen Kloeden, ought to be congratulated. The Brisbane Montessori School has 290 children and is always happy to talk to potential enrollees. It is growing all the time. It is a great place.

I also make mention of the non-state school that is most local to where I live, that is, Christ the King School. I thought it was appropriate to mention this school, because on NAIDOC Day the primary school organised a very special presentation. It held an all-day event where Aboriginal elders and Torres Strait Islander elders taught the children things like basket weaving. Uncle Ces Fisher told the children the story of why koalas live in trees and how the brolga got its name. There was also an excellent Aboriginal dance workshop, Aboriginal painting and Torres Strait Islander songs. The children could look at artefacts. This event was organised not only by the teachers but also by members of the community in the Indigenous Friendship Group, which involves a large number of parents.

I thank all of the local non-state schools for making me so welcome in the six months since I was elected as the member for Indooroopilly. I thank Sean Gordon from Nudgee Junior; Margaret

Gallen, the principal of Holy Family; Madeline Sayer from Brigidine College; Sally Chandler from St Peter's; Allen Kloeden from Montessori; and, of course, John Wilson from Christ the King School. Each have unique schools. I think they all handle them particularly well.

I am very pleased to support this bill because it removes some of the uncertainty that non-state schools have had in the past. It also ensures that there will be a continuing high standard of education in non-state schools. The bill will maintain public confidence in the operation of non-state schools. It will foster educational choices. Importantly, it will enable non-state school governing bodies to become eligible for government funding, which we all know is very important. The bill is also significant in that it allows us to fulfil our international obligations under the UN covenant and the rights of parents to have a choice of schools for their children other than state schools. It is important that non-state schools conform to minimum education standards laid down by the state. This will provide parents with a great deal of peace of mind.

In concluding on such an important bill as this in relation to non-state education, it is worth noting that there is not one single member of the Liberal Party in the chamber. I would think that that is a crying shame.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (5.04 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill. There is no doubt that education means success in life. The skills and behaviours needed for adult life are acquired in our schools. The public expects quality education. People choose between public and private schools with the expectation of their children receiving the best education opportunities available. Teachers in many schools are doing great things for our children.

High-quality education experiences matched with a flexible teaching style, an environment that adapts to learning experiences and an education system that recognises the developmental stages of students—these are the things that parents tell me they want from their schools. This bill will certainly ensure that schools meet community needs and expectations by providing a framework of acceptable operational standards. Schools should be able to develop distinctive approaches within the framework that are innovative responses to identified needs—needs identified by the students, families and the local community. Once again, this bill will support diversity of schools.

A school in my electorate with a very distinctive approach is the Kimberley Park State School. Kimberley Park State School has a strong record of success in multi-aged teaching and learning, innovative teaching based on the future needs of children and systematic development of thinking skills. The school is providing a wide range of co-curricular cultural and sporting activities. It is also providing co-curricular academic activities which challenge children's abilities. Maintaining a supportive school environment that fosters cooperation with all community stakeholders is very important to Kimberley Park State School. The school has implemented a number of initiatives that provide for greater opportunities for shared decision making. Each class has parent contact officers. The school council has built strong relationships with the parents and citizens association while the student council has built strong relationships with all community stakeholders and plays a vital role in the school's decisions—decisions that will directly affect students, a decision-making process that involves the people directly affected. Nothing gives a better outcome than to involve the people directly affected.

This school believes in fostering a leadership role for all students. It focuses on the best educational outcomes for every student. It is a great school and its strength lies in the school community. The professional teaching staff and the students are achieving fantastic results. I take this opportunity to congratulate the principal, Ms Annette Murray, for fostering this cooperative approach and ensuring that the school is meeting the expectations of the community. I also pay tribute to the parents and citizens association. In particular, I thank Mr Ross Bowering and other committee members for their tireless efforts in assisting to create this impressive educational environment.

Parents of this school believe it is unique. They tell me that they do not wish to send their children to any other school for higher education but would very much like to see a P-12 campus established at the school. They believe it is so unique, as did the previous principal, that they set up Kimberley College in the electorate of Redlands. Today some parents of Kimberley Park State School students and parents of Kimberley College students are in limbo. The future of the college is up in the air. The college is located on a temporary site and is awaiting permission to move. I know the member for Redlands has met with the principal and the school community regarding

this issue. Both the member for Redlands and I have contacted the minister outlining concerns that parents are raising.

I take this opportunity to say to the minister that many of my constituents now have to rethink their decisions about their child's first year of high school and future years of high school. This is not easy for parents, as they are making a very important decision in their child's life. I believe that this issue needs to be resolved quickly in the best interests of the students. I bring this to the minister's attention. I commend the minister for introducing this bill, as it will give the community confidence in all schools meeting an acceptable standard while protecting the public's interest in the standard of schooling and the safety of children.

Non-state schools which currently have approved non-state school status and are in receipt of public subsidy under the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 will, as a consequence of the transitional provisions in the bill, be declared to be accredited under the new regime. These schools will be included on the register of accredited schools and will continue to receive public funds on the same basis as has previously applied. All schools will also be required to return census data to the board and to provide a formal acquittal of their use of state government funds. Any schools currently operating which are not appropriately authorised will have six months in which to apply for accreditation.

An extremely important part of this bill is the safety of children. For the first time, non-state schoolteachers will be required to report suspected child abuse to authorities. I am pleased to see this being implemented, as child protection is of significant concern to everyone in the community. All members of the community need to play a vital role in protecting our children. This is not just a government issue; it is an issue for the whole community. I believe that all citizens need to be vigilant in this role. Another very important part of the bill is protecting children's educational opportunities. Previously, schools that chose to operate entirely outside of the regulatory framework could become established. The minister had no power either to close a school or to take action against an operator who chose to work outside government regulation.

Under this legislation it will be illegal for a school to operate unless it is accredited or provisionally accredited. Stiff penalties will apply for offenders, and the board has the power to make public notifications. Following accreditation, all schools will be subject to five-yearly reviews of their compliance with accreditation standards. These reviews will be managed by the board and, in the case of schools which form part of school systems, may be managed jointly by the board and the school system. The accreditation criteria as prescribed in the regulation and the review process ensure that the community can have confidence in all schools.

This bill has been based on the recommendations of the report of the review of accreditation and accountability arrangements for non-state schools, also known as the Webb review. The review process involved wide-ranging consultation with educational stakeholders, the public, state government departments and agencies, parent and teacher organisations and state parliamentary representatives. This certainly is a comprehensive list of all stakeholders, who have had the opportunity to comment on the bill. Of course, the accreditation criteria are of extreme importance in ensuring that the best educational opportunities are there for our young people.

The five broad areas of accreditation demonstrate how it is possible for schools to account to parents and communities as well as provide education services to students and professional development to teachers. Those five criteria are: the administration and governance arrangements of the school; the financial capacity of the provider to deliver and sustain the school's proposed program; the education program, including the school philosophy and aims, the curriculum and student welfare practices and policies; the resources available to enable the school to achieve its aims, including staffing, land and buildings and other educational resources and support arrangements; and evidence of a systematic approach to school renewal or improvement processes. Those five criteria certainly support the diversity of schools and will assure the public that all schools have to meet adequate standards in all areas of education. They certainly are extensive and cover all major issues for education curriculum and facilities.

In my electorate there are three great private schools: St Matthew's, St Edward's and John Paul College. I have previously spoken in the House about some of the great initiatives being performed by John Paul College. The college has gained international recognition for providing education excellence. I acknowledge the principal, Stephen Paul, and his team for their efforts.

St Matthew's and St Edward's are both small schools achieving great results. I recently visited St Edward's to see how its new car park and drop-off facility is working. The school community is extremely pleased, and I am pleased to report that the drop-off zone is working

satisfactorily. St Edward's is doing great things for our young people. They certainly get involved in the local community. I acknowledge the hard work done by the principal, Mike Norris, the teaching staff and the parents and friends association.

St Matthew's is in the planning stages for its new car park, kiss and drop-off zone and bus zone facility. All the stakeholders have held meetings to make sure that in the planning stages all safety aspects and traffic flow issues are fully discussed and that the end result will be the best possible.

I know how important the safety of the children coming into and leaving the school grounds is to the principal, Peter Blundell, the deputy principal, Carmel Flynn, the parents and friends association and the local community. I am pleased that the school safety and traffic issues will be resolved. I take the opportunity to thank Clarks buses, Queensland Transport school safety officers and the school community for participating in these meetings and ensuring we get it right the first time.

It is important for a healthy democracy to debate issues regarding education and to give people choices. Both the public and private school education systems are doing this. I congratulate the minister for her dedication and hard work in relation to education in our state. I also acknowledge the hard work done by the parliamentary secretary, the member for Bundamba, and her staff member Mr Don Wilson. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (5.13 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill. As has already been noted by my colleagues, this bill acts to ensure only comprehensive, positive outcomes for the children of Queensland. Accountability is a commitment all schools will welcome, I am sure.

Provisional accreditation will be used in cases where applications for accreditation relate to intended schools or intended modifications to schools. They will be made on the basis of plans and the accreditation considerations will be made on the same basis—that is, on paper. This will give the school the opportunity to showcase its intention to aspire to excellence, which this government encourages. Again, any school worth its salt will welcome this opportunity.

To ensure that the final accreditation decision takes account of the reality of the school's development, facilities and actual compliance with the accreditation standards, the accreditation process includes a period of provisional accreditation, which is granted on the basis of the application. This process gives the school the opportunity to strive for and achieve the outcomes necessary to become fully operational. Again, in order to guarantee that the needs of the children are met, the criteria for achieving best outcomes are in the public interest.

Our children are the future. This Labor government is committed to ensuring the best education for all Queenslanders. A school which has achieved provisional accreditation has up to three years to achieve accreditation. This period will allow for unforeseen difficulties in the timetable for school construction or development, such as unexpected delays to building schedules because of the weather, et cetera. A school may operate for only 12 months as a provisionally accredited school. Through this measure the minister is again exacting accountability of service providers—in a fair way, I might add. Following this, a review of the school's facilities and compliance is undertaken as a basis for granting full accreditation.

I would like to reflect on the way non-government schools in my electorate are operating. Before I do that, I would like to reflect on my own education. I was taught by Catholic nuns in Melbourne, the Faithful Companions of Jesus. I spent my formative years in a small Catholic primary school, Our Lady of Good Counsel, and then went on to Genazzano Convent in Kew. My parents went without to pay for the fees. I had a great education and will treasure those memories. My brothers were educated by Marist Brothers. All members of my family have made choices for their family, with enrolling their children in both non-government and government schools. We have all been rewarded by the choices we were able to make.

I believe that the non-government schools in my electorate are also offering quality education to our kids, as are our government schools. I have had the pleasure of talking with Brother Daniel Hollamby, the principal of St Thomas More school. This is a delightful school of 535 children. I know many families whose children attend St Thomas More, because we are a close community. St Thomas More has a dedicated parents and friends association. The president, Michael Phipps, works tirelessly for the school with all the other dedicated P&F members. This bill will showcase the commitment of this community, and I wish them well.

I also have other friends and acquaintances whose children attend the Good Shepherd Lutheran school. Drs Michael and Debra Harker, parents of Amy, speak highly of this wonderful school. Earlier this year a group of children from the Lutheran school attended parliament and met with me. From the intelligent interaction I enjoyed with them, I could tell that they were receiving high-quality education.

Our good fortune continues with the quality non-government facilities in the Noosa electorate. We have a Steiner school. If members know of the Steiner schools throughout Australia they will be aware of the quality education they provide. Our Steiner school has no principal but has a college of teachers who meet weekly to make decisions and also has a business manager, Kathleen Rundall. There are 165 students there. I know the commitment of Steiner schoolteachers, bursars and families, having had a long association with the Armidale Steiner school in New South Wales. I have seen the struggle of these smaller schools and I have witnessed what lovely young students they turn out. The commitment of families there is second to none.

The Noosa electorate non-government schools are very much part of the rich fabric of our community, in much the same way as were the schools which I attended many years ago. I remember government-imposed teaching accreditation back in those days. Yes, there was a little unease purely as a result of change, and perhaps there will be unease with the implementation of this bill. However, I am confident that the schools in the Noosa electorate will continue in their levels of excellence and will welcome this accreditation process to show everyone just how terrific they are.

I have educated my children in state schools for philosophical reasons. My eldest daughter is doing well at university. My next daughter is also doing well, as is my youngest, at local state schools. Both the state and non-government schools in my electorate reflect the broader caring community—a community that will not be divided by Kemp's elitist, user pays, punish the poor tactics.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the National Party) (5.20 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill, I want to raise a series of issues that I believe should be canvassed, and I will be canvassing them in this House this afternoon. Like the member for Noosa, I am a product of the Catholic school system. And whether it be the Catholic school system or any other private school system, we have to give credit where credit is due to the private sector.

Members come in here and lambaste what the federal government is doing without looking at their own backyards. When talking about the accreditation of non-state schools, it is important that we look for equality of education regardless of where we live. And that equality of education should be made available to children right throughout this state. I do represent what could be described as an isolated and remote electorate. And in many ways, because of the tyranny of distance and the cost factors to which parents are subjected, it is also a geographically disadvantaged electorate.

The honourable member for Noosa spoke about the cost to which her parents were subjected in trying to educate her and her brothers in the Catholic school system in Melbourne. There are plenty of parents in Queensland today who are still in that situation. Private schools cater for some 27 per cent to 30 per cent of the education needs of this state. And I think that about 20 per cent of the educational needs of children in this state—and the minister might correct me if I am wrong—is carried out by the Catholic system.

When we talk about accreditation we have to look right across the spectrum. Of course, it is all very well to talk about the curriculum, but one of the things that the Premier has been pushing is the concept of a Smart State. Last week, I visited one of the schools in my electorate which is very, very concerned about its English curriculum because of the difficulty it is experiencing in attracting suitably qualified teachers. This is a very serious issue. I know for a fact that many of the young people who are entering tertiary institutions are experiencing problems with the English language—whether it be a reading problem, a spelling problem or whatever. That is unfortunate.

I do not say this lightly, but many teachers are under great stress and pressure to perform. And because they are subjected to great stresses and pressures, they are breaking down. In many cases, teachers are wanting to leave our more remote schools and go to areas where there is not a shortage of qualified professionals. My heart goes out to those people. My wife is a schoolteacher. She has worked in the western areas of the state, and she takes great pride and

care in helping those children who are less fortunate and have learning difficulties. She is someone who cares for those sorts of people, whose numbers are increasing.

I say to the minister—and I do not say this lightly—that there is a shortage of teachers in the core subjects. We need young, new teachers in our schools but, at the same time, we need teachers who can carry the curriculum through so that we ensure that, at the end of the day, our students have the basic philosophies of maths, English and other core subjects. We must make sure that they are able to enter any profession or labour-oriented occupation that they want to pursue. So we must have equality of education.

The member for Noosa spoke about the showcase that we will have as a result of this piece of legislation being passed in this chamber. I hope that it is a showcase. I know that, at the end of the week, the minister's director-general is going to make some important announcements about some educational issues at the isolated children's and parents association annual state conference in Cloncurry. I will not mention it here, because I know that the director-general is going to make that announcement, but I know that it will be very advantageous to children in rural and remote areas, especially those who are able to access the P-10 schools. I will be saying publicly that I applaud what the minister is going to do there, because it is fair; it is the decent and right thing to do.

However, many people are gravely concerned about the plight of their children in some of these more remote area schools because of the difficulties they are experiencing in attracting permanent teachers, especially to the one-teacher schools. I have said before in this chamber, and I will say it again today, that it is vital to have teachers with partners in our single-teacher schools, not only for the stability of the people in question but also so that they are able to perform in a truly professional manner within those schools. Those teachers need somebody to bounce their problems off when they come home. They need somebody to talk to. And if they have their husband, wife or a partner with them, this will make them more secure and create a better environment for those teachers who have to teach children in remote areas. I have witnessed this. I know that teachers who are part of a couple are teaching the good, sound basics to children in those areas, and those are the schools that are really going forward.

In relation to the accreditation of non-state schools, I believe that—and I say this to the minister and the other government members—we have to look across the spectrum of all schools to make sure that children are understanding the curriculum and that they are receiving the best possible teaching in the schools in question. I plead with the minister to please take a personal interest in the plight of some of our more remote or more distant high schools or P-10 schools because many of those areas are disadvantaged. It is not easy to get people to live in those areas, and I think the minister knows that. I believe that it is absolutely paramount to revisit the remote area allowance and perhaps consider the demarcation line in some places by way of tax breaks.

I know that a fair bit of innuendo has been levelled at the federal government in relation to some of its policies. However, we certainly have to look at all government departments—not just the Education Department—in relation to attracting professional people to some of those remote areas. And whereas there are problems in some of our schools, such as learning disabilities and literacy and numeracy problems, I urge the minister to take a personal interest in this matter.

I have spoken to many teachers and executives throughout Education Queensland. They are very competent, very understanding people, and they want to see this outcome reversed. I know that the minister wants this. But at the end of the day, we can do this only by identifying where the real problem is and working closely with the principals and the teachers in question. And in relation to those subjects I mentioned, such as English and maths, if we can give our students a good, basic education in maths and English, they will be well and truly on the way to being able to manage themselves as they pursue their future in society.

I think we are all in this chamber for one reason, that is, to get a better deal for all the people we represent. I urge the minister to pay particular attention to the literacy and numeracy problems in this state, and I will do everything I can to make things better in my electorate. I do not believe this is an issue whereby we run off to the media and say, 'This is the problem.' We can fix this problem by talking it through together in a proper and constructive manner, and I trust that we will achieve that outcome here.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.30 p.m.): The object of this bill is to establish a system of accountability and regulation applying to all non-state organisations offering schooling that protects the public interest, the standard of schooling, the safety of children and the provision

of formal certification by the school with respect to the expenditure of state funds whilst at the same time ensuring state support for diversity and choice and a framework that ensures public confidence that minimum standards are met. Under the current requirements with respect to new non-state schools, there is a two-part procedure prior to the appropriate status being obtained, thus leading to funding. Firstly, new non-state schools need to obtain a planning approval that demonstrates that it is being established in an area of population growth and/or that it offers a significant element of choice to the community. Thereafter, such schools could apply for approved non-state school status.

Under section 3(2) of the 1989 act, for a new non-state school to obtain approval, the minister must be satisfied of things such as adequate facilities and efficient and regular instruction. In order to satisfy the minister, new non-state schools had to supply details of educational programs, facilities, financial and staffing resources, proposed enrolments and legal and organisational arrangements.

It transpired that a significant number of applicants were refused planning approval. But of those schools that obtained planning approval, under the legislation none had failed to gain non-state school status. The effect of the legislation was to combine an assortment of criteria with respect to standards and quality with considerations relevant to demography, choices and viability. As well, there existed schools that either did not make the grade or alternatively chose to remain outside the system undergoing no government control whatsoever other than being subject to the power of inspection.

As a result of the Auditor-General's concerns in 1998, which related particularly to the absence of a mechanism for monitoring state expenditure in non-state schools, the government established a commission under Professor Webb, Vice-Chancellor of Griffith University, to review the accreditation and accountability arrangements for non-state schools. The bill before the House reflects the recommendations of the Webb review and it seeks to implement them by establishing a statutory board to assess the capacity of a school to meet appropriate criteria, a five-yearly review mechanism to ensure that standards are maintained, the formation of a subcommittee of that board to determine eligibility for government funding, and, importantly, it will be illegal for a school to operate at all unless it is accredited.

The bill reflects the present awareness of the duty to protect children from harm. To that end, the bill provides that a director of a school's governing body is deemed to be carrying on a regulated business under part 6 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000. In effect, that means that considerable employment screening procedures need to be undertaken to ensure protection for the child and to promote the child's wellbeing.

However, honourable members should be aware that under that act the commissioner, when deciding whether a suitability notice should be issued, may have regard to complaints, investigations and charges not resulting in a conviction, thus curtailing severely the rights of the individual. I note that that provision contrasts with provisions contained in division 4 of part 2 of the bill, which refer to actual convictions as opposed to mere charges. It will always be difficult to balance the rights of the child to be protected from harm as against, for example, the rights of a teacher who may be the victim of unproven malicious allegations made by a bitter ex-spouse or a student malcontent.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the non-state schools in Toowoomba, particularly those in my electorate. Before doing so, firstly I make mention of the only state high school in my electorate, which is Toowoomba State High School.

Ms Bligh: A great school.

Mr SHINE: I take that interjection from the minister. It is indeed a great school and is led by an outstanding principal, Mr Murray Wright. Recently this school, which operates on two campuses, Mount Lofty and Wilsonton, was recognised for exceptional parts of its curriculum. The music education program has received numerous accolades at eisteddfods and in the community. Their vocational education program has enjoyed similar success, being embraced by students and the community as a worthwhile program in which to participate. However, most importantly, the school is renowned for its special education unit. This unit provides opportunities for students who might otherwise be lost within a normal classroom. Those students are learning skills and becoming better equipped to work in the wider community. Two weeks ago the minister, the Honourable Anna Bligh, delighted these young people by meeting with them and inspecting their work.

Might I also mention two primary schools in my electorate: Harlaxton, which celebrated its 100 years on 1 September—and which, in fact, is the alma mater of the honourable member for Beaudesert—and Meringandan, which this week will be 125 years old. May I also express the gratitude of the people of Toowoomba North to the minister for paying personal attention to the schools of their electorate. Since becoming the minister, she has visited Rockville State School, Toowoomba State High School, Wilsonton Campus, Wilsonton State School, Toowoomba Grammar School and Mater Dei Convent. Of course, in June this year the Premier visited Rangeville State School in Toowoomba south.

Toowoomba is unique in that its proportion of private schools vis-a-vis state schools is the reverse of the state's proportion. Approximately 60 per cent of children in Toowoomba attend private schools, and I would like to mention some of them. Downlands College is an independent Catholic coeducational day and boarding college owned and conducted by the missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It is renowned for the musical talents of its students. The college musical always proves to be an extremely professional yet fun production. This year's musical was called *In Your Dreams*, and 15 per cent of the school participated in its production. Downlands is also fiercely proud of its sporting history, in particular its principal sports for male students, rugby and cricket, and for female students, netball, softball, hockey and touch football. Members of this House who attended Downlands College include the Honourable the Minister for Transport and the members for Keppel and Warrego.

Fairholme College was founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1917. It is one of Queensland's leading independent girls schools. The school consistently enjoys remarkable academic success. For example, in 1999, 92 per cent of year 12 students proceeded to tertiary studies, with the rest either going on international exchanges or entering full-time employment. Forty-two per cent of 1999's year 12s finished in the top 20 per cent of the state with their OPs. The school also is remarkably talented on the sporting field. Recently, for the ninth year running, they won the Chronicle Cup at the Toowoomba Secondary Schools Athletics Carnival by a considerable margin. This school also has a primary school.

St Ursula's College is also situated in the electorate of Toowoomba North. It is a Catholic girls day and boarding school and it will celebrate its 70th anniversary in October. Its achievements and activities in all areas of curriculum are endless. For example, a maths scholarship at the University of Southern Queensland was offered to a year 12 student; several students have been selected for a Swiss exchange program; students have implemented the yellow ribbon program—a program designed to develop a personal safety and support structure in the school—and August's cultural expo showcased the amazing and diverse cultural talent of the students. In its 70th year, St Ursula's has developed a strong community spirit around its school motto 'Serviam—I will serve'.

In recent years the Toowoomba Christian College was established on a campus near Highfields. It professes a strong spiritual ethos that has created a close-knit community. In particular, all students within years 10, 11 and 12 participate in vocational education training to prepare them to work in the wider community. Within this group, 15 per cent of the year 11 and 12 students are undertaking traineeships that provide on-the-job training.

Toowoomba North also has a number of Catholic primary schools or convents. The first that I will mention is Mater Dei Catholic Primary School, a coeducational primary school that is especially proud of its new 'No school captains' policy. Instead of having school captains, all of the year 7 students assume a leadership role. Recently six students received awards, which was personally given to them by the Education Minister, the honourable Anna Bligh, for the Save the Children essay competition. Students were asked to write about the rights of children. Two students read their essays to a school assembly, which I attended. The intellect and passion behind their words was inspirational and a credit to the school.

The Toowoomba Preparatory School is Australia's only independent coeducational primary boarding and day school. It is conducted under the auspices of the Anglican Church of Australia. The school has a wonderful music program and places emphasis on providing students with an inspiring cultural life. For example, the older students of the school put together a musical each year. Currently, some 200 students are preparing to hit the stage next week for this year's musical, *Absolutely Everybody*.

Sacred Heart Primary School is a Catholic coeducational school catering for students from preschool to year 7. The emphasis of the school is on providing a rounded education for all grades. Its fun runs, eisteddfods, school concerts and the annual school fete are some of the

extra curricula events that the students participate in. Invaluable teacher aides work within the school, providing strong support for both students and teachers.

Finally, the Holy Name Primary School is one of the oldest primary schools in Toowoomba. It caters for students from kindergarten to year 7. It prides itself on its good staff-to-pupil ratio, its successful instrumental music program and its computer education programs. It realises that the responsibilities of a school extend beyond 8.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and, therefore, has established an after school care program.

Situated just outside the Toowoomba North electorate, literally across the road, are two significant secondary schools that I will mention. The first is Toowoomba Grammar School, a non-denominational boys day and boarding school for years 8 to 12, and Grammar Junior, which caters for years 5 to 7. It is one of the oldest high schools in the state. The school is justifiably proud of its long sports tradition. It is a respected competitor in GPS fixtures and Toowoomba interschool competitions, including Rugby, cricket, soccer, chess, volleyball, tennis, track and field, swimming, gymnastics and cross country. It is one of Toowoomba's and Queensland's top performing schools for year 12 OP results. Recently, the Education Minister opened the Hugh Rose Centre, which provides an example of Grammar's commitment to providing staff and students with top facilities to work and learn in. The Hugh Rose Centre houses work areas for staff, music teaching and practice areas, tutoring rooms and improved facilities for boarders. Clearly, the \$260,000 in funding provided by the state government—in addition to the \$528,000 that was provided for continual renovations to other main school buildings—was well spent.

Finally, I refer to St Mary's College in Toowoomba, which is of significance to members of the Australian Labor Party. An old boy of that school, Frank Forde, was one of two Queensland Labor Prime Ministers. It is an all-boys Catholic school, catering for years 5 to 12. It was established in 1899 by the Christian Brothers. It has adopted a mentor program for the entire school to participate in. A mixture of students from years 5 to 7 meet in small groups each morning for prayer, discussion, counselling and the calling of the roll. Each mentor group is assigned a school house. The school is committed to giving boys as many opportunities as possible. On Friday of this week, the blessing and opening of the refurbished art block, which the Queensland government has contributed to, will take place. I will be pleased to attend that opening to represent the Minister for Education.

We have come a long way in terms of state aid for non-government schools. A change took place in the 1960s. Prior to that, governments of all complexions refused to recognise any responsibility for non-state schools. Although I cannot be certain, I think I am correct in saying that in the last Labor government prior to the 1960s, in the Gair government, of the 11-man cabinet 10 were Catholics. It has been said that it was no accident that the education portfolio was inevitably given to the non-Catholic member in order to avoid pressure with respect to state aid. Thankfully, those days are gone and the focus of this government is to ensure that all Queensland children receive the best possible education.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (5.45 p.m.): I rise to support the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2001. As we have heard, it has two important aspects. The first is the creation of a comprehensive regulatory environment that will apply to all non-state schools requiring them to meet and continue to meet prescribed accreditation criteria. When this was announced in Cairns, it was widely welcomed. Discussions have shown that it has continued to be welcomed. Not only is there a recognition that it is necessary but there is also some surprise expressed that it was not already in place. Nobody in the electorate of Cairns has complained to me about our direction. Instead, it is welcomed as wise because, as members of parliament, we have a tremendous responsibility to ensure proper standards of education for students not only in the public system but also in the non-state system.

The bill is timely for Cairns and, I suspect, for other electorates around the state as there is a growth in the number of non-state schools and the kinds of non-state educational institutions on offer. Presently, I understand that about 70 per cent of Queensland students attend state schools. Therefore, nearly 30 per cent attend non-state schools. Only time will tell whether or not the growth in alternative non-state schools will lead to some changes in those proportions.

The electorate of Cairns has a large network of Catholic schools which have a long and proud history. They have produced some of the leaders of the Cairns community and other communities around Australia. They all have their own specialty and style. While they remain true to their faith, they have literacy, numeracy and other academic standards and social programs that nobody would call into question. Cairns has a variety of religious based schools, mostly of

Christian denominations although there are some from other religions. Over the years, those schools have become established and they have been welcomed, although they may not be as well known as the Catholic schools which have such long histories within the Cairns region.

Other schools are developing that focus on alternative teaching styles and methods. Those schools are harder to assess. Therefore, it is appropriate that they should be accredited and monitored, as they will be through this bill. Some students need a different style of education. It is a fact that, for one reason or another, some students do not work well within our existing school network, state or non-state. We have certainly seen this in Cairns with the establishment last year of the state financed alternative campus school. Here, students mostly aged between 11 and 15, who have not been successful in standard teaching facilities, are achieving significant successes.

It is important, too, to recognise that there is pressure on schools of all kinds these days not just to achieve success in literacy and numeracy programs but also in the delivery of computers and information technology education. The pressure is also on to teach children values and behaviour, how to be members of the community and how to develop leadership skills. It is sometimes said that too much is expected of our schools in terms of that kind of values and behaviour education, and yet at the same time we recognise that too many of our children are not receiving that kind of education within their family and, therefore, that it does fall too often to schools.

Therefore, in striking the balance between academic and sporting standard forms of education and the social forms of education, it is important that we have proper scrutiny of these standards and proper regulatory environments to monitor them. With the growth of these alternative schools in particular it is indeed timely that the responsibility falls to us to enact this legislation to ensure that appropriate standards are met and kept.

I am hopeful that a side effect of this legislation will be to raise awareness of the importance of this issue in the minds of parents right across the state and to raise their expectations of examining the schools that their children attend towards ensuring that they are appropriately accredited and that the standards so far as they can assess are being continually met.

A second important aspect of the bill is the provision for state government recurrent funding. This flows from the appropriate accreditation process, mindful of the standards that must be met before recurrent funding can be agreed to and mindful also of the geographic situation in which the new school that may be applying for accreditation and funding is situated, mindful of the number of choices and the access for children in those areas already to education and therefore mindful of not spreading our education dollar unnecessarily too far while at the same time maintaining the freedom of choice and access that is essential for a healthy society and a good education. I commend the bill for its accountability, fairness, transparency and timeliness.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.52 p.m.): I thank the minister for her help in ensuring the accreditation of the Parklands Christian College, which opened in my electorate earlier this year. The school made application last year and, as I understand it, the school was caught in a no-man's-land when the state election was called earlier this year. I praise the professionalism of the school principal, Mr David Baskerville, in his dealings with the department. He and the school pastor, Rodney Job, understood the bind the government was in when it was in caretaker mode, ensured all of the documentation was ready for the new government and the new minister—and I congratulate her on this—and was able to make sure that the school was up and running and that the procedures were all in place.

I want also to mention in tonight's debate the Catholic schools of St Bernardines at Regents Park and St Francis College at Crestmead for the very caring and highly professional way they care for the students but importantly reach out to a wider community, particularly with the St Bernardines community, through the employment programs their social justice group is running. It has been of enormous benefit to the parish, to the school and, as I said, to the wider community. St Bernardines as a school is undergoing expansion with the grant it received from the state government, while St Francis College benefited about two or three years ago from a joint state-federal initiative. These are very important schools in that they provide a choice for parents but they also provide the diversity that makes education in my electorate so exciting.

With that, I do urge caution on the Teachers Union in the strident way it wants to debate the non-government schools issue with the current funding issues. As I told the school principals forum a few weeks ago, they need to be aware that none—not one—of the non-government schools in my electorate would consider themselves elitist or well-heeled. They simply offer a

choice for parents who want their children to attend a religious school. These are not private schools, they are Catholic schools, and they want to be seen in that way.

I also want to acknowledge the important contribution that a school like St Philomena's at Park Ridge is playing, and I wish to praise the work of father Gerard Hogan and the parents and friends association for reviving parts of what was the old Southport State School on the Park Ridge site. Father Hogan has been transferred to Melbourne, but his work as a founding principal should be acknowledged.

A school in my electorate which was the scene of a dramatic revival in fortunes was the old Kingston Infants School, which is now well represented in the electorate of Woodridge by my colleague the member for Woodridge. That school, after it ceased to be the infant school, was left derelict and was the scene oftentimes of wanton destruction until the Mueller College purchased it and set it up now as the Groves Christian College. I understand from the member for Woodridge that it is now a thriving school and one that provides opportunities for students and parents throughout central and western Logan City, north Beaudesert and certainly southern Brisbane for the excellent range of educational opportunities it is providing.

None of these schools objects to a proper and thorough accreditation process, which I understand this bill provides. But at the same time I want to acknowledge the dedication, the diversity and the freedom of choice that that non-government sector provides very importantly for the electorate of Logan.

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (5.56 p.m.): Today I am grateful for having the privilege of speaking to this bill and I wish to commend it to the House for several reasons. While I am a great believer in the public school system—I came through it and I think that I turned out okay—in a universal, free education system I also respect the right to choose—the right to choose your own path, education and, hopefully, the best way for each and every student to reach up and achieve their full potential. For some, they believe this to be through a private education system. Some families wish their children to receive their schooling in a religious education system, and whatever our personal opinions and predilections we must respect that right.

In our increasingly diverse community, whose needs are constantly evolving and changing, we must ensure that the government is able to ensure the provision of a strong education for all students. What this bill does is recognise that, for those who choose the private education system, our non-state schools provide an amazingly strong environment for these families. They ensure that opting out of the public school system will not disadvantage any student. This bill seeks to ensure that whatever the future of our schooling system we are able to ensure that all students are receiving access to the best education system possible.

The groundbreaking work done by the Webb review represents a sea change in our attitude towards the accreditation and funding of non-state schools. It represents a reality check for all governments in their attitudes towards non-state schools. It is a recognition that with our ever-expanding diversity and diverging needs there is no homogeneity of needs and that, for some, non-state schools will provide the most appropriate educational environment.

Accordingly, the state must ensure that the standard of education is acceptable and that no child is disadvantaged. The old process did not allow this; the new one does. By allowing a review process and preventing schools from operating outside the jurisdiction of the government, this bill will allow the government to ensure acceptable educational standards. The formation of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board will provide both an independent, impartial assessor and an avenue for enforcement of standards, and both are an essential and timely development. This bill will also bring into practice a more realistic approach to funding for non-state schools. By recognising the role that non-state schools play we also tacitly recognise our responsibility to ensure their viability and prosperity.

Again, while I record my support for a universal education system, I also welcome the move to rationalise the approach to funding for non-state schools. These schools are suffering the same increased demands for infrastructure and facilities. If we recognise the essential services they provide, we must also assist with funding to ensure that they are able to maintain standards and educational quality and equality.

I am fortunate enough to have some amazing non-state schools in my area that epitomise the great diversity and quality of education that this bill recognises. In particular, I would like to note the service, opportunity and spirit of the staff and students at St Margaret's—all women, honourable members will note. St Margaret's has a very special learning environment. The philosophy of all at St Margaret's is that each and every student has the potential to achieve; that

each skill, each talent, each dream is worthy; and that no aim or goal is more important, desirable or deserving of plaudits than any other. St Margaret's philosophy is one of 'come as you are', teaching assistance for all. That students from preschool to senior are taught in an environment that embraces these notions bodes well for their futures.

It is also a place of great achievement. The philosophy that allows each student to pursue personal dreams without the pressure of what is right or acceptable has created an environment of excellence in a diverse range of skills. The arts department at St Margaret's is comparable to any in the state and the enthusiasm of the students and the love for their craft is evidence enough that the St Margaret's approach works.

St Margaret's is also one of the leading non-state schools for business achievements. Their annual business week is all about women, teaching the young women who will soon be young workers that there is no achievement that is unattainable; that the bar is never set too high, but also that they do have to conform to the norms of business; and that achievement in this field embraces women of many backgrounds, attitudes, opinions and styles, all of whom have been able to embrace their position as women and use their own skills, talents and uniqueness to carry them towards their goals. Furthermore, their intraschool organisations that promote associations between parents and students and parents and the broader school community have helped to create a school where the ties of community are strong and the interaction and support groups that exist help to build the confidence of parents and students. Their 'big sister' programs help to ensure that the school experience is promoted as positive and safe from the immediate start.

I would like to publicly commend the work of St Margaret's because I believe they do an excellent job in skilling up young women. They provide them with opportunity, encouragement and faith in their own ability and skills. St Margaret's is an excellent example of a school which caters for the diversity in the Clayfield electorate and upholds the high standards of education that are set out by our terrific state schools. In doing so, I would also like to commend this bill to the House.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (6.02 p.m.): I rise to support this bill, the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill. There should be no doubt that I firmly believe that state schools are great schools. The electorate of Aspley is home to 13 excellent state preschool, primary and high schools. They are schools that are at the cutting edge of quality education and leaders in the care and nurturing of students within their community.

However, Aspley is also an electorate in which significant numbers of children and young people attend non-government schools. Many of those students attend state schools during their primary years and then move to the non-government sector for their secondary years. The state school system within the Aspley electorate does have an excellent overall retention rate of students to the public high school system. However, it is recognised that in some suburbs considerable numbers of students move to non-government schools in year 8.

The Aspley electorate is home to only one non-government school, St Paul's Anglican School at Bald Hills, and many of our children within the electorate attend this school. This is a school that is committed to their students and is committed to ensuring that their welfare, education and future is of the highest quality and standard. I know that this school is achieving its goals. One of the strongest recommendations of any organisation is word-of-mouth praise. I can tell honourable members that, as I move about the electorate of Aspley, praise is certainly the sentiment expressed by the students and families who attend St Paul's Anglican School.

Many of the families within the Aspley electorate also attend the schools in neighbouring electorates. The Holy Spirit Primary School at Bray Park, St Dymphna's at Aspley, St Joseph's in Bracken Ridge, St Flannan's in Zillmere, St Patrick's in Shorncliffe, Nudgee College as well as the many large and small independent schools within Brisbane and the Caboolture and Pine Rivers shires.

The great advantage of living in the Aspley electorate is that the choice for schooling options is large and that the distance required for travel to those schools is relatively short, given our prime real estate position within our city and our state. Members will recall that I have always said that Aspley is the jewel in the crown. But this plethora of choice means that our parents and guardians are very discerning. They are faced with a diverse choice and they want to know which school is the best school for their children. They insist on being confident that non-government schools will provide an acceptable educational standard and that their children's wellbeing and health and safety is assured. In addition, the people of the Aspley electorate, in common with the public at large, wish to be assured that government funding received by non-government schools

is allocated based on accurate census data and that it is used for the purpose for which it was intended. This bill will provide for the people of my electorate a regulatory framework which will ensure that non-government schools meet those expectations.

Accreditation will enable accredited non-government schools to show that they are committed to a philosophy of continuous improvement. It will demonstrate that standards have been met and that the accredited school looks both inwards and outwards at ways to ensure quality education and that a safe and secure social interaction is being achieved for their students. It will ensure that parents and guardians can compare schools with the greatest certainty and security. Our quality non-government schools can continue to deliver 100 per cent to their students in both Aspley and throughout the state.

This bill will give much-needed confidence to our families, parents and students. It will deliver accountability and transparency to the public and will enhance the pursuit of excellence and service delivered by our quality non-government schools. I will continue to work closely with all school communities and families within my electorate to ensure that all of our children and young people are accessing an education that they and we can be proud of. I congratulate the minister, her committee and all of the stakeholders on their work. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (6.06 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2001. The objectives of the bill are to support a regulatory environment which applies to all non-government state organisations offering schooling to young people; to see that the community can have confidence that all schools meet the criteria and minimum standards that parents these days require and demand that their children receive; to protect the public's interest in the standard of schooling and the safety of the children who attend those schools; to establish a five-yearly renewal process to make sure that the accredited school continues to meet that criteria; and also to establish a system of accountability so that the state funds expended in those schools are expended in accordance with the purpose for which they were granted. In addition, the bill contains an amendment to the Education (Work Experience) Act 1996 seeking consistency with the insurance requirements relating to work experience.

I will just reiterate the arrangements that this bill will be replacing. Under the previous arrangements in Queensland, the Commonwealth new schools policy operated to restrict the number of new schools established with a view to achieving efficient use of public funding. When the Commonwealth policy was abolished in 1997, a more flexible process also aimed at ensuring efficient use of public funds was established in Queensland by a ministerial decision with the support of non-state schools' authorities. The planning approval component required a proposed school to demonstrate that it would not have a significant impact on state or non-state schools in its catchment area in the next five years. To meet this requirement, a proposed school had to be located in an area of population growth or offer a significant element of choice to the community.

Applications were processed by a planning assessment committee from both the Department of Education and representative bodies from the non-state school sector. Proposed schools receiving planning approval could then apply for approved non-state school status. Applications were assessed by qualified assessors who reported to the Office of Non-State Schooling in the Department of Education. Proponents of schools which were unsuccessful in achieving authorisation to operate could apply again in another location or establish themselves without authorisation and without state funds.

The minister had no power to either close a school or to take action against an operator who simply chose to operate outside the realms of government regulation. This bill will rectify those weaknesses in the education process; that is, the fact that different approaches to approval processes has evolved in different districts and the absence of clear criteria for the assessment of schools seeking approval to operate. The government had no mechanism for monitoring state expenditure of non-state government schools and no formal requirement for non-state schools to account to the government for the expenditure of state funds. With a view to resolving these issues, the review of the accreditation accountability arrangements for non-state schools was conducted in 1999. The review committee was led by Professor Roy Webb and, after extensive consultation, published its recommendations for regulating the non-state school sector. These recommendations form the foundation of this bill.

After the consultation that has been undertaken by the Education Department with non-state schools, I believe that the result is one that will please all parties except for a very few. On that note, there are a number of non-state schools in my electorate, including three Catholic primary

schools. St Peter and Paul's is located a block from where I live and is the school which my five children attended. That school certainly afforded my children a very good start in life by providing a good education in a loving and caring environment. St Peter and Paul's has just embarked on the first stage of a two-stage building program. I am sure the minister would remember approving over \$700,000 for the first stage, which the school community was delighted with. There will be another application to the Catholic Education Commission and to the minister in the not-too-distant future for stage 2, which I am sure will be supported because of its need and merit.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr PURCELL: Yes. This school will go from two streams to three streams, that is, from kindergarten to grade 5. As we know, many schools in the Catholic education system lose their boys to the boys' colleges in the area. St Peter and Paul's caters well for those people who want to send their children to non-state schools in the Bulimba district.

St Oliver Plunkett Catholic School at Cannon Hill services that area very well. I attended its fete last Sunday and, by the way, took along some of my relish to be sold. Fetes invite the community into the schools to participate, and Catholic schools do it very well. Fetes sell sweets and home preserves, or even hold jumble sales which enable the community to support the children and the school by partaking in the fete and taking a few goodies home. I bought some homemade cakes and biscuits at the fete last Sunday. You could not make the goodies for the price they were sold at. I can assure the House that it was very well done.

Mr Lingard: What clause is that that are you referring to?

Mr PURCELL: That clause refers to non-state schools, as the member for Beaudesert would know.

Another non-state Catholic school in my electorate is St Thomas at Camp Hill whose principal is Stephen Dunn. This school has just completed a fairly large building program which has certainly enhanced the school for those looking for a non-state school environment. I should say that Trish McMahon is the principal at St Oliver Plunkett and John Power is the principal at St Peter and Paul's.

Cannon Hill also boasts another independent school, the Cannon Hill Anglican College, with Greg Wain as its principal. That college has only been established in the last eight-odd years. It is a high school and a primary school. It is very well patronised not only by the Cannon Hill area but also attracts students from further afield. It has a very nice bush setting. A lot of thought was put into the design of that school and the buildings for students to study in.

One of the longer established high schools in my electorate is Lourdes Hill at Hawthorne on the river with Kay Herse as its principal. I think she is the first non-systemic principal to hold that position at Lourdes Hill. It is an all-girls school. It is also a boarding school which caters for girls from the country who do not have the chance for a secondary education in their own district. It is also the school my wife attended, as did my three daughters. So I have a fair few ties there. That school certainly did a great job with my girls. With those few words, I support the minister and the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2001.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (6.17 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill. I start my contribution to tonight's debate by mentioning that last Tuesday morning I had the privilege of addressing Bokarina State School students. When I went to speak to the students about the various levels of government and the Centenary of Federation, two young girls mentioned that they were off to the Goodwill Games that evening. I, too, mentioned that I was off to the Goodwill Games. I had purchased two tickets—one for my wife and one for myself—to be seated in row P, seat 166 of the western stand at a total price of \$125.50, including GST of course—money very well spent indeed. The reason I refer to this is because of some of the goodwill gestures that have come back from various schools across my electorate, and I will make mention of them.

My wife and I are by no means overly keen on athletics. We do enjoy the sport, but we are not the proverbial athletic nuts. Realising I did not take the opportunity of attending the Commonwealth Games when they were held in Brisbane in the 1980s nor the Olympic Games in Sydney last year, I thought with a world-class competition like this on our own doorstep I too must go and witness this once-in-a-lifetime event. The reason I mention the Bokarina State School students is because I have recently received 17 thank-you letters stating what they enjoyed on the night. With the permission of the chamber, at the conclusion of my speech I will hopefully

table those 17 thank-you letters. I will also forward them to both the honourable minister and Premier, because the students also wish to thank them and, in fact, the entire government.

Some of the comments in the 17 letters I have read are very interesting. Many of the letters mentioned the men's 20-kilometre walk. Many of the students said how much they enjoyed it. Of course, we now know that Nathan Deakes was the eventual winner. The *Courier-Mail* of the following day, Wednesday, 5 September, stated—

Victorian Nathan Deakes netted the biggest scalps ... in international walking in the 20km walk ... [He] set a games record after surviving a duel with Poland's Olympic champion Robert Korzeniowski around 50 laps of the 400m track at ANZ Stadium.

Deakes pulled away with 500m remaining to complete a revenge mission four weeks in the making.

He remains perplexed at his disqualification from the 50 kilometre walk at last month's world championships in Edmonton and still agonises about his near miss in the 20km event, eventually finishing fourth.

He toppled the three Edmonton medallists last night, crossing the line in one hour, 19 minutes, 49 seconds ... a games record by almost four minutes.

'This would have to be the biggest thing I've won.

'I've placed at world juniors and Commonwealth Games before and had a few top eight finishes but to actually win a major meet is a big bonus,' Victorian Nathan Deakes said.

The prize money is a huge bonus which he wishes to put down on his first home.

Hopefully great athletes such as Nathan would be welcomed into our state if he did want to migrate north along with the numerous other Victorians who move here. This is yet another great news story from the Goodwill Games.

I return to the letters from the Bokarina students. A letter from Byron Bailey states—

The atmosphere was electric with excitement and anticipation of the next thrilling challenge to the wonderful athletes who were participating at their best and we were loving it.

This young fellow has a future in speech writing, I believe. The letter continues—

We travelled back to school by coach, tired and weary after experiencing a once in a lifetime event. We were all very grateful and pleased to have been able to have had this opportunity. Our school would like to thank you and the government.

The students were also very impressed with the women's high jump, which we realised was part of the heptathlon, along with the 100-metre hurdles, the shot-put and the 200 metres. The students also mentioned the women's hammer throw, which I must mention at this point because it was a first for me to see live. I found it quite interesting and in fact quite thrilling. The men's triple jump and the women's javelin also rated a mention. While I was there, there was quite a bit of clapping for the men's triple jump to work up the competitors. Also, in the women's javelin, while the javelins were in the air there were oohs and aahs all evening.

Of course, it appears that the most popular was undoubtedly Marion Jones, the world's fastest woman. Marion raced over 100 metres at ANZ Stadium in what I believe in the old days was called the dash. This, in my opinion, was worth the entry fee alone. This lady is well recognised across the world as having a friendly disposition and she makes great efforts to be a positive role model and influence. The race itself will go down as one of the best sporting events I have ever witnessed. Not getting a good start, Marion proceeded to stride through and win reasonably comfortably in what I believe was one of the fastest times recorded this year. She won the race in 10.84 seconds, only 0.4 of a second outside the games record. Marion Jones thanked the crowd and blew kisses before taking her shoes off and throwing them into the stand, which was well documented.

Out of the mouths of youths often comes how they really feel, and the only negative, I say in jest, was that one young person mentioned that they found the walking a bit boring. Well, with 50 laps of the 400-metre track at ANZ I can probably understand why some of them lost a bit of concentration, although my wife and I thoroughly enjoy it.

There was also a complaint by these students from Bokarina primary school about a food mix-up, which was disappointing for those affected, although credit should be given to the teachers and parents involved, who thought to get some pizza, chocolates, drinks and so on to ensure that these hungry little mouths were fed. Great initiative was taken by those concerned.

The only setback on the night was on the catering side of things. The beer and wine seemed to be quite presentable and consumable, but a question does need to be asked of the caterers who supply ANZ Stadium. The food I paid good money for was not of good or average standard, which was disappointing. Possibly the children were better off that they were not made to eat the

fast food that other patrons were. Maybe it was a blessing that they received pizzas from outside sources.

One of the final events of the night was the steeplechase, which I found to be thoroughly enthralling when a 17 year old Gold Coast schoolgirl, Melissa Rollison, won the 3,000-metre steeplechase in games record time at her first international competition. Those who remained to see the event were treated to a simply incredible race. We saw Gold Coast schoolgirl Melissa pull well away and win convincingly. That topped a great night for me and those who remained till the end.

At this point I wish to commend the government for what I believe to have been an excellent event. The *Courier-Mail* reported that we had fantastic crowds. The TV ratings took the Channel 9 people by total surprise, with ratings in excess of 30 per cent more than what they expected. The transport system worked exceedingly well. Something like 40 per cent of people used public transport to get to and from events, and that is unheard of in this state. It is normally around 11 per cent to 13 per cent for events such as Broncos football matches. Private buses ferried in excess of 8,000 schoolchildren into ANZ Stadium each and every night.

I caught the bus along the much talked about and mentioned busway, and it actually won me over. I am a former doubter in relation to the proposed busway for the Sunshine Coast—that is, prior to us getting our rail link. I note that the good minister is in the House. I am now fully supportive of the busway implementation over coming decades, prior to us getting a rail link, because I witnessed first hand how smooth and efficient this popular fine transport mode is. The state government, along with Brisbane city councillors, should be commended.

As we well realise, governments allocate taxpayer funds, and I gratefully accept and acknowledge the letters of appreciation from the schoolchildren of numerous schools in my electorate. The initiative to supply tickets to the Goodwill Games was a positive, very well-received and appreciated one that ensured that our future, our schoolchildren, received tickets to what I believe was a sporting event of a lifetime. We should never forget that the future is at school with open ears, minds and eyes. It is quite a pleasurable job of mine—in fact, of probably all members of the House—to attend schools and address students. I continue to say that I find it one of the best parts of my new position of state member for Kawana.

I also mention the Chancellor State School students who attended the Goodwill Games on Tuesday, 4 September. I also received letters from the Chancellor State School, a vibrant and positive school. I have the utmost confidence in its future, its teaching staff and the P&C. A letter from Trent Wagenmakers and Patrick Pound, who are in year 7, states—

We would like to thank the Minister for Education for giving us the opportunity of a lifetime. We would like to thank Premier Beattie and the government for giving us the tickets. Altogether the night was fantastic.

A letter from the vice-captain of the school, Greg Hughes, states—

I was amazed when we were told that we were going to the Goodwill Games. I was so excited just before going through the gate. I was speechless when I walked up and saw the grounds for the first time. I would like to thank the Minister for Education and the Premier. I was watching every event very closely. I saw an event that I had never heard of before—the steeplechase. So it was a great educational event for my classmates and I, and if it happens again I hope you do the same thing for all other schools. I have never been to an event like this: the closest I have ever been to is an AFL football match. So thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.

Other numerous students have also written along similar lines—that they would like to thank the Queensland government, Premier Beattie and Minister Anna Bligh for their initiative regarding this event. That is marvellous news from the future of our state and, indeed, our great country.

I would also like to mention another fine primary school in my electorate, that is, Mountain Creek State School. On Monday last week, 3 September, I attended the Mountain Creek State School and met with year 7s, whom I addressed following their visit at the previous sitting of parliament on the Monday and Tuesday. The various students attended parliament in this the Centenary of Federation celebration year. The students obviously had numerous questions to ask of me which, as I have stated earlier, is always a positive part of my job—to look into the eyes of the future and realise that Australia has a good future because these students are willing to learn. They are smart and, I believe, overwhelmingly well behaved and articulate, and I hope they do the right thing by their parents, teachers and themselves in trying to achieve the best education that we can supply them with.

The Mountain Creek Primary School and high school are well-recognised learning institutions in my area. And while I am mentioning the Mountain Creek Primary School, I will also mention and table a thank you that Jodie Wiseman sent me on behalf of the students of Mountain Creek

State Primary School. I seek leave to table the numerous thank you letters from students across my electorate and the Goodwill Games tickets that I purchased.

Leave granted.

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (6.32 p.m.): I rise to support this bill which relates to the quality of non-government schools. It is important to have quality schools for all our children. I can vouch for the quality of the independent schools in my electorate, and none of them are rich schools. As the product of a state school, I am very proud of our state schools and, at the same time, a strong supporter of our independent schools because in my area, if you want an education at all past year 10 and you happen to live in Richmond, Aramac, Jericho or a host of other small towns, then a boarding school is the only way you can receive an education, and the state does not yet have any boarding schools.

The independent schools do not always have an easy road to travel, and I would like to mention to the House one example of difficulties experienced and overcome. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you were to ask me about the industries in my electorate I would tell you they are mainly mining, grazing and education. Education is vital to maintaining jobs in our city and is one of our major employers.

Today I would like to tell parliament about the fighting spirit of All Souls' St Gabriel's School in Charters Towers—a school that exists today only because the people of our community said, 'No, we are not going to lose this community asset' and demonstrated how people power can work to achieve outcomes previously thought unlikely. Two days before Christmas in 1999 the Anglican diocese of north Queensland announced the closure of All Souls & St Gabriel's School in Charters Towers. They cited declining enrolments and increasing debt levels as reasons for this drastic action. In making these decisions, what was not appreciated by the hierarchy was that in closing this particular school they were not taking on just the school and its community but indeed the city, the state, the nation and our links across the world. Shoulder to shoulder with many people of differing beliefs, I fought to help save the school, and I pay tribute particularly to my colleague the Honourable Dean Wells, the then Minister for Education, who travelled to our city to sign a new licence in time to allow All Souls' St Gabriel's reopening for the 2000 school year.

In an example of what can be achieved if the will of the people is strong enough, the land and buildings were purchased by the Dalrymple Shire Council and the Charters Towers City Council and then leased back to the reborn school. At the commencement of the 2000 academic year, the school reopened virtually debt free, but with a major task ahead to halt declining enrolments, restore community confidence and re-establish the school in the hearts and minds of their clientele. I am absolutely thrilled to be able to tell parliament that the decline in enrolments has been halted, with forward enrolments for 2002 showing an increase.

We have seen many changes to the school, including the establishment of a junior dormitory to provide a halfway house between home and senior boarding for new male students. With a new and invigorated school council, management and staff have seen fit to invest heavily in computing facilities, the employment of a sports and recreational officer and a complete reorganisation of the operations of the boys and girls boarding houses to make them quieter, better organised and more pleasant places to live. New subjects have been added to the curriculum. Traineeships in areas such as horticulture, veterinary nursing and engineering have been introduced. Horse and cattle clubs with detailed learning programs have been reintroduced, instrumental music extended and the swimming pool revamped. Indeed, I know exactly what their horse club is all about, having been its voluntary coordinator for over five years.

An extensive refurbishment program of boarding, kitchen and classroom facilities is scheduled for the near future. All of this has been possible only because of the wonderful efforts of so many people working together—staff, parents and students, both past and present, the local community and all levels of government. I am very proud of my community and the way it has worked together to save a valuable part of the educational history and economy of Charters Towers. There is still much to be done, but I have faith in what my community can achieve and knowing the people involved as I do, the future for All Souls & St Gabriel's School looks bright.

I ask the parliament today to honour the fighting spirit of All Souls & St Gabriel's School in Charters Towers and others like it across the state that have also risen from the ashes like the phoenix—the phoenix which indeed is the symbol of this great rural school which has been doing a fine job educating students since 1921. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (6.36 p.m.): This bill is a significant milestone in education in Queensland. As has been noted by members during this

debate, it sets new standards and establishes an accreditation framework to ensure the quality of education in Queensland's non-government schools. It establishes an independent statutory authority to consider and accredit non-government schools.

As has been noted by a number of members, this bill has been a very long time coming. It is the result of extensive consultation and the commitment of a great number of people. It has required the willingness of the diverse sector of non-government schools to submit themselves to a regime of government regulation—not an easy or simple matter, nor one to be taken for granted. I pay tribute to all in the non-government sector for their willingness to participate in the process and to accept this new legislative framework.

This legislation is motivated by the desire to maintain the high standards already established by our non-government schools to ensure that all newcomers to the sector meet high-quality expectations and, ultimately, to ensure that Queensland's children receive the best education possible in every classroom and in every school in this state. I will address some of the issues raised by some honourable members. I start by thanking the shadow minister for his support of the bill. It is pleasing to see that, on these sorts of occasions, we can achieve bipartisanship. I am delighted that, after all of the efforts of so many people, there will be cross-parliamentary support for what I believe is a very important bill.

I note, however, once again the comments by the member for Beaudesert about the Children's Commission legislation. As I recall it, he stated that he has always believed that the Children's Commission had the ability to oversee schools. In this business it is not a matter of belief but a matter of law, and the member has always been wrong on that one.

The member for Robina, Mr Quinn, acknowledged the length of time taken in the preparation of this bill. I also recognise the work that he put in during the early stages of deliberations.

The member for Gladstone has raised a number of questions which I will address briefly. Firstly, she raised the issue of whether or not the bill would have an effect on the ability of non-government providers to provide a program of distance education. At present, access to distance education is regulated under the Education (General Provisions) Act, sections 114 to 117. This bill does not deal with that matter specifically, but it does open a new opportunity for the establishment of new non-state schools of distance education, which I know is welcomed by a number of players in the sector.

The member raised the issue of the importance of requiring that inappropriate behaviour between staff and students is reported to an authority external to the school. I share the member's concerns in this regard. That is why I was so keen to ensure that these sorts of provisions were put into this regulatory framework.

To clarify for the member and for other members, the requirements in relation to the protection of children will be contained in the regulation to the act. At this stage, that regulation is available in draft form, and that is the form in which the member was briefed. It is the very clear intention that where a child has been harmed, or the staff member suspects that there has been harm, there will be a process in place that puts an obligation on the principal of the school to report that harm or suspected harm to the relevant external authorities; for example, the police or the Department of Families. I will undertake to the member for Gladstone to ensure, when the drafting is finalised, that that is as clear as it can be.

The member raised some concerns about minimum enrolments. Can I allay those concerns and say that the size of a school is not a criteria for accreditation. Quality is the only issue that requires assessment. However, size is a criteria for the assessment in relation to eligibility for government funding. Minimum enrolments are only one of the factors that will be considered when assessment for eligibility for government funding is being undertaken. The criteria are flexible and can take account of the particular needs of small schools. Just to put it beyond doubt for the member, a small school that is financially viable and meets the accreditation criteria is in no danger from this legislation.

The member was concerned about whether it was possible to accelerate the process. In relation to the lead time for accreditation to take place, it is open to a school to nominate its own student intake day and to achieve a shorter lead time to its final approval if it is able to do so—provided, of course, there is time for the board to make a decision. There is no formal impediment to this happening in the bill. But the member for Gladstone, along with others, will surely appreciate that it often takes some time for this process to be properly and rigorously assessed. As well, post the decision being made, a school may well have significant capital works, et cetera, that have to be undertaken before they will be open to students.

The member sought some clarification in relation to the retrospective provisions in some foreshadowed amendments. I will speak to those later, but I am happy to take the opportunity now to assure the member that no school will be disadvantaged by the confirmation of the validity of decisions made in the past. For schools with applications affected by the transitional provisions, they will be assessed using exactly the same guidelines as would have applied if this amendment had not been necessary. So in my view the question of any disadvantage does not arise.

The member for Gregory raised a number of concerns in relation to education in some of the most remote parts of Queensland, which the member for Gregory represents. He has a very good understanding of some of the difficulties. He alluded to the difficulty faced by at least one school in his electorate in relation to the retention of quality teachers of English. I say to the member that the issue of recruitment and retention in the remote parts of Queensland is an ongoing issue of which I am very well aware. I share his concerns and share his commitment to working with the relevant schools, communities and the unions that represent staff to continually improve our ability in this area.

The member also spoke about the upcoming conference on rural and isolated children, at which, unfortunately, I will not be able to be present but will be represented by the director-general. I am pleased to hear in advance that the member for Gregory will be supporting some of the proposals that I intend having discussed at that conference and look forward to talking to him in more detail about them. He sought for me to take a personal interest in this area of education. I assure the member for Gregory that I have a deep personal commitment and interest to education in every part of Queensland, whether it is the remote part of Cape York, his electorate, or one of the inner urban schools of Brisbane.

The member for Toowoomba North, along with many other members, talked about the very high quality education that is occurring in the schools in his electorate. One that I particularly wanted to mention was the Toowoomba State High School Special Education Unit, which I had the pleasure of visiting along with the member for Toowoomba North a couple of weeks ago. Most members probably will not be able to see the earrings that I am wearing tonight, but they are a very fine piece of jewellery that was made by the students of the Toowoomba North State High School Special Education Unit. This program is providing real-life employment skills for these young people. They have been producing very high-quality jewellery, which they have been selling in the local area, and have raised literally thousands of dollars on behalf of their school. That has given those young people a real interest, real work skills and real-life experiences. It is clear that this school is absolutely committed to ensuring that the students of its special education unit have the ability to move from school to work. I commend them for that. I am very pleased to report to the member for Toowoomba North that I have had a number of compliments on the jewellery. I encourage other members to talk to him about that project.

Finally, as I said at the outset, this bill has been the culmination of work undertaken by a great many people over a number of years. Like every significant shift in policy, it is one that has required dedication and rigour. Tonight, I would like to take the opportunity to put on record my thanks and recognition for the work of a number of people. Firstly, I recognise the work of a number of senior officers of Education Queensland: the director-general, Jim Varghese, and his predecessors in that role, and Mr Brian Rout, Laurie Vogler and Leigh Tabrett from the Office of Non-State Schooling and the other staff of that unit. I also recognise the work of Bronwyn Storey, the cabinet legislation and liaison officer and the legal advice of Catherine Mahoney, Jo Hughes and Patrick McDermott, who have been the drafting officers on this along with Parliamentary Counsel.

Representatives of non-state schools have been active players in this process. I would like to again place on record my thanks for the work of Alan Druery when he was Director of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission; to Joe McCorley, who has now taken over that role and played an active role subsequent to Alan's work; and to Dianne Goose and Vic Lorenz, who represented the commission on the Webb review. I recognise the work of John Ralston, the Director of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, and representatives of that organisation, Barry Arnison, President Murray Evans and Geoff Gay, who represents Christian schools as part of AISQ.

Can I also thank Professor Roy Webb. This has been an area that has attracted a lot of work for a number of years, but it was really the work of Professor Roy Webb that drew together a lot of disparate strands of thinking and really focused a number of players on the task ahead of us and got us moving to the position where we are now. I thank Professor Webb for the wisdom and

rigour that he brought to the process of the review and the policy development in what has been a very complex area of work.

Finally, I thank officers of my own ministerial office, particularly my senior policy adviser, Bronwen Griffiths and John Graham, who is acting in her position while she is currently on leave. This bill has taxed all of us at times, as all bills do, and I would like to thank all of those people for the work that they have put in.

I think that this bill is a very significant step forward for the quality of education in Queensland. As I said earlier, it ensures that the current high standards are maintained, but, most importantly, it ensures that all newcomers to this growing field of employment and education will see the same high standards applied. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Ms Bligh, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.47 p.m.), in reply: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Year of the Volunteer, Medallions and Certificates

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (6.48 p.m.): At the end of April this year, the Minister for Families wrote to all members of this parliament regarding medallions and certificates to be issued to constituents to celebrate the International Year of the Volunteer. I took up the opportunity, along with, I am sure, every other member of this House to start that process. I did so, first of all, by writing to all of my constituents through a newsletter in May and June of this year inviting them to nominate individuals in the electorate for the medallion and certificates. I also took the opportunity to write to all of my community groups urging that they nominate people, or consider their own group for a medallion or a certificate.

I asked for those nominations to be in by the end of July. I then called together five constituents, all of whom have made major contributions of their own over the years and who are considered to be leading people in the community, to help evaluate the nominations. I express publicly my appreciation for the effort that they put into that evaluation process. We met last Tuesday and made the decisions. Next Tuesday at Parliament House I will present the medallions.

Three things really struck me about the volunteer work that is done in my electorate. Firstly, it was interesting to note the number of people who contribute their time to the community, often in areas that one does not normally think of. That made it difficult to make a decision about the recipients of the medallions.

The second thing that struck me was the amount of time that some people put in—not only hours per week but the length of service. Staff from my office arranged the people on the list in alphabetical order, and the first person on the list is a lady who has been contributing to the community for some 37 years. She is still contributing to the community and she is in her eighties. That set the benchmark for the contributions that people are making. To some, voluntary work is a passion. They spend every available hour outside of normal working hours doing volunteer work.

Thirdly, I was struck by the diversity of volunteer community work which ranges from involvement in sporting clubs to school P&Cs and so on. I table a copy of the names of individuals and groups that will be receiving medallions next week. I have the permission of the Speaker to include that list in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Name of Individual or Group—Mrs Esther Ball; Brookfield Branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association; Dr Ian Cameron; Mr Kevin Crisp; Mr Steve and Mrs Janelle Csurhes; Mr Paul Daly; Mr Frank Dimasi; Mr Alan Donovan; Mr Damien Egan; Mrs Doris Gradwell; Mr Ken Hawkins; Mr David Kearney; Mr Steve Kruger; Mrs Marcia Maker; Mr Don Mansfield; Mrs Di McCosker; Mrs Norma Roobottom; Dr Francis Ryan; Mrs Jo Smyth; Mr Druce Webb

Crystal Waters Permaculture Village

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (6.52 p.m.): I rise to talk about a fantastic milestone that has occurred at the Crystal Waters Permaculture Village, a tiny area outside of Conondale in my electorate of Glass House. This is a very innovative village where the people involved are very committed to sustainable development and sustainable living.

In August, the honourable Rod Welford opened the village's ecocentre which has been designed for education. It is a conference venue that enhances what is happening at Crystal Waters. The centre was built by Global Ecovillage Network Oceania and Asia Incorporated and is situated on Crystal Waters' cooperative land. The people at Crystal Waters are very dedicated to an environmental way of life that, possibly, we should all be incorporating in our lives.

Crystal Waters is a village of about 200 people. The people from the village work in a variety of jobs, including those that promote a natural and healthy lifestyle, such as massage, natural therapies and organic farming. Indeed, they range through the whole spectrum, including building. They make their own rammed earth buildings and other types of construction. Often the people get together on a Sunday to celebrate life and the environment that they live in. It is very much an old-style village that promotes a new way of doing things.

The ecocentre is a venture that the government has supported in a variety of ways. The EPA helped them to fund the photovoltaic panels that have been installed on the roof of the centre. As the village promotes a sustainable environment, the education centre was built using rammed earth walls and untreated timber. They incorporated rooftop solar panels which generate power for the whole village and feed back into the Energex grid system as a way of encouraging people to use green energy.

The people from the village harvest rainwater for use in the restaurant. They use a non-sewered, wet composting waste treatment system and a biolytic toilet system. They have a natural cooling system and they use the natural ventilation and lighting in the best way that they can. The whole system revolves around a sustainable environment.

Congratulations must go to Max Lindegger and Val Oliver for their foresight and for the hard work and planning that they have done. Congratulations also to all of the volunteers who work together to make sure that they build those particular systems. The fantastic food that they produce—

Time expired.

Mr S. Pilcher

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—ONP) (6.56 p.m.): I take the opportunity tonight to speak about my renewed faith in humanity and of how lucky my constituents and I are to have a gentleman by the name of Scott Pilcher living in our electorate. I am sure that many of my fellow members have heard about the incident of a Gympie cab driver who was accosted by four men, and of a young man who, after witnessing this, offered assistance as the cabbie was obviously distressed, outnumbered and in possible danger. Mr Pilcher proceeded to drive slowly towards the four men in an attempt to scare them away from the cab driver. The car that Mr Pilcher was driving did not pin any of the perpetrators against the cab. He simply gave them a nudge.

I have met this young man and I can vouch for his genuineness and decency. This is a man who simply wanted to go to the aid of another human being who was in trouble. What did this good samaritan get in return? A conviction, a \$900 fine, the loss of his licence and, subsequently, the loss of his job! What happened to the four youths who were harassing the elderly cab driver who, I might add, is a Vietnam veteran? Absolutely nothing!

What sort of society have we turned into when the guilty are set free by our magistrates and the innocent are punished? The four assailants lost any rights they had the moment they chose to gang up on an innocent man. I find it sad to think that if Scott Pilcher had just kept on driving, like many other people would have done, his behaviour would have been deemed more acceptable—the view of not getting involved being so prevalent in our society.

I can tell a story of a girl who was being assaulted by a male and, whilst this was occurring, was begging passersby to please help, but they kept on walking and pretended that they did not see. Where were the Scott Pilchers of the world for that girl? Also, is it not a shame that Scott Pilcher was not one of those people who heard Anita Cobby's screams the night she was

murdered? If he had been, she may be alive today. I bet that there is not one parent in this chamber who would not want a Scott Pilcher around if their child was ever in trouble.

Scott Pilcher is a caring and compassionate human being. He is a heroic individual—the type of person many in this world could only ever aspire to emulate. I ask the Attorney-General, on behalf of every grateful citizen of Queensland, to reopen this case and have this man's conviction squashed. Please do this, Mr Welford, as a matter of justice. The Attorney-General can prove to all of Australia that his government is tough on crime, not on decent citizens.

In my office I have a saying pinned to a noticeboard: 'Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not.' Scott asked me who said that. I told him, 'It was a man who cared about humanity, a man who was prepared to fight for what he believed in—a man like you.' On his way out of my office Scott said to me, 'Elisa, I am not a hero, you know. I just did what I had to do.' Oh yes, Scott; yes, you are.

Beautification and Revegetation of Kalamia School

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (6.59 p.m.): I draw the attention of the House to a project that is being carried out by the Kalamia State School in my electorate. The title given to the project is BARKS, which stands for Beautification and Revegetation of Kalamia School.

The children at the school have embarked on a program to beautify and revegetate a waste area between the school and Lilliesmere Lagoon on a piece of land that is owned by the school. The Kalamia school has already received some recognition for the project. In the year 2000, it received the second prize in the Australian habitat program. In the year 2001, it entered the second stage of the project in the same program. This time, the school went one better and won the Australian habitat award.

Students, along with their teachers and the P&C, have committed to this conservation program. The work carried out by the students at the school and the school community so far with the clearing up of areas and the planting of trees and shrubs has started to transform the area back into a pristine state. It is already starting to attract native birds and animals back to this area.

I have asked the Minister for Education and also the Minister for Environment to support the schools program and I encourage all honourable members to support it. On 30 August this year, students at the school gave a Powerpoint demonstration to around 100 people representing Landcare, Education, James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, water boards, Greening Australia, governments and canegrowers, conservation volunteers and other interested groups. The students, as part of that presentation, also took those present on a tour of the project area. They showed what they had achieved in the first stage of the project and also their vision for the completed development of the area. The students were very professional in their presentations.

The final outcome, when all stages are completed, is to make Kalamia State School an environmental learning area that can be used to educate other students and the community in looking after and learning about the environment in which we live. I therefore once again ask for your support for the students of the school and the school community for this project.

Public Transport, Sunshine Coast

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Nanango—Ind) (7.01 p.m.): I wish to speak in regard to the public transport needs of the Sunshine Coast and the need for a serious coordination of regional development. Currently, we have seen the completion of the CAMCOSS study—a study initiated under the coalition government. I am pleased to see the study come forward. It is necessary for good planning on the Sunshine Coast. But we are still to see a real implementation plan and the funding allocated to truly meet the targets that must be met if we are to see people using public transport on the Sunshine Coast.

I am calling on this government to put some funding into implementation but, most importantly, there has to be some coordination of services. It is a crazy situation when you have an end of the bus contract zone and then nobody seems to be responsible for coordinating services outside those contract zones. There is a lack of coordination between Queensland Rail and Queensland Transport in getting a coordination of services between bus and rail. You would think that in this day and age that would hardly be rocket science. Still we see a situation where there is a poor coordination of services. I am calling on the government to look at a proper

coordinating body, whether it be an authority or some decent system where at least we see some targets met in regard to public transport. This is one of the most pressing needs on the Sunshine Coast. If we want to see jobs created and business being able to expand, if we want to see people who do not have a lot of money get to a job or get to their place of study at the other end of the Sunshine Coast, they have to have access to public transport. There is also a need for an upgrade of the north coast railway line. I understand that in peak times the rail services to the Gold Coast run on the half hour. On the Sunshine Coast you would not even get a service on the hour.

If you look at the lack of regularity of services to the Sunshine Coast to the north of Brisbane, it really shows that this region is in desperate need of funding being allocated—not just planning studies—once the planning studies are done. I want to mention also, though, that planning studies can be strung out. I am disappointed that with respect to a study agreed to under the coalition government—and with the change of government I am pleased this minister took on that project—it will now be four years before we will see that planning project for the Pacific Paradise Road study completed. What does it take when we have communities divided by heavy transport and which are calling for other options such as possible bypass roads to be put in place? Yet it will be something like four years by the time that transport study will be completed. That is a disgrace. That is delaying putting in place the infrastructure that needs to be put into communities. Planning is necessary, but when it takes so long it browns off the local community. They have been consulted and they do not see their recommendations being put into action.

Time expired.

State Emergency Services

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): Last weekend I hosted for the Broadwater electorate the 2001 State Emergency Services Day in the Park at Harley Park at Labrador.

A government member interjected.

Mrs CROFT: Thank you very much; it was a great day.

My intention was to increase community awareness of the services that are available to the residents in time of need and showcase the professionalism and skills that the services demonstrate often in extremely emotional and challenging circumstances. The Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Mike Reynolds, officially opened the day with a fitting tribute to the men and women who every day leave home and potentially say goodbye to their families for the last time.

The minister and I then enjoyed the opportunity to talk with workers from all participating services and looked at the displays. I thank the minister for visiting Broadwater and for the time that he spent meeting with my constituents and event participants. The day brought the police, water police, Ambulance and Fire Services, together with Volunteer Marine Rescue, the Volunteer Coastguard, the State Emergency Services, Surf Life Saving Queensland, the rural fire brigades from Guanaba to Tomewin and the Westpac Helicopter crew. It was wonderful to see many children learning from activities that were fun and informative.

The rural fire brigade offered rides in their flood boats and the Fire and Rescue Authority opened a safety house, teaching the children to stop, drop and roll in the event of a fire. There was a mini ambulance, a car crash simulation, a vertical rescue demonstration by the SES and a dramatic rescue of a sinking boat by the coastguard.

The Runaway Bay Rotary cooked up a fantastic sausage sizzle and kept energy levels going for over 200 volunteers and over 1,000 spectators. All of the organisations put on a fabulous show for onlookers and I cannot thank the volunteer workers and state service staff enough for their participation. All I ask is that we continue to let our Emergency Services personnel know that the Queensland community is justifiably proud of their courage and dedication to the job. Thanks go to Danny Hoyland, *Sun* newspaper, Charis Seafoods and Gold FM 92.5's AJ and David James for their support of the day. A huge thanks goes out to police Sergeant Eddie Bennet, who worked hard to coordinate all of the participating services and shared my enthusiasm for this event.

I look forward to working together with Eddie and all of the stakeholder representatives again next year for what will be a bigger and better Emergency Services day in the park for the residents of the Broadwater electorate.

Land Slips, Blackbutt Range

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.06 p.m.): The Blackbutt Range section of the D'Aguilar Highway has been a bone of contention since I was elected to parliament in 1998. Constituents have often complained about the lack of safety features and the need for an additional overtaking lane, which the Department of Main Roads has assured me is on its RIP. Now it seems that this treacherous piece of road has another problem, and that could be possible landslides. These landslides look imminent. There are fractures in the rock face that line the edges of the road. The picture I am holding of a rock and from where it fell is quite scary. I am now holding a picture of a boulder that fell close to the highway from the steep banks. I had to ask myself how this could happen. Members might notice that in this photo the boulder is as high as a man. It is a terrible thought that something like that could fall down and crash into a vehicle. There is not very far to go except downwards on the opposite side of the road.

In a distance of just over a kilometre, I photographed approximately 15 slips on the side of the mountain, and not small ones. I left them out because I ran out of film, and I did not complete the whole of the mountain. So there were a lot there. Over a four-day period in February 2001 that section had 188.6 millimetres of rain. The average rainfall in the area for February is 125.8, yet in the four-day period alone it exceeded the average rainfall for that particular month. Until 6 September we virtually had no rain. So this rock fell with the smallest amount of rain and wind. Until 6 September 2001, 2,250 vehicles travelled long the Blackbutt Range section of the D'Aguilar Highway. Seventy-six per cent were light and towing vehicles and 23 were heavy vehicles. On average, over 2,000 vehicles travel on that road yearly and this is growing faster and faster. Tarong Energy is a major user of that road as well and the heavy equipment that goes along there, if stopped one day, would be hazardous to the power supply.

This is the main entrance and exit to and from the Burnett to Brisbane. If this road were cut due to landslides, which is looking possible, travellers, residents and business suppliers would have to go through Toowoomba or Gympie to get to the electorate. This is the most dangerous road in my electorate, if not one of the most dangerous roads in the state of Queensland. The price of fixing the problem on this road should not be a life. After every windstorm or every rainy day debris is cleared from the road by volunteers. There are large trees perched precariously high up on the cut-away banks with their roots exposed, and a windstorm has the potential to create enormous chaos.

What is happening on the downhill side of the road? Who knows. I do not. I would like it put on the record that the concerns brought to me by several constituents have been brought to the minister's attention. It is essential that the minister is aware of the growing concern. I seek leave to table this photograph.

Leave granted.

Time expired.

Southport Workers Club

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (7.10 p.m.): On 10 August this year I was privileged to witness the official opening of the extensions to the Southport Workers Club by the Premier, Peter Beattie. It gave me great satisfaction, particularly as I am the patron of this club as well as the first Labor member for Southport. The Southport Workers Club started as an association 34 years ago in the old Trades Hall, which was controlled by the South Coast Provincial Labour Council. It was situated just over the road from the present club site in Scarborough Street. It existed basically as a weekend get-together organisation for local trade unionists and their families.

Years later, land was leased to the club on the old railway station site, and in 1985 the club was incorporated, obtained a liquor licence and a small prefabricated building was erected on the site. The club was one of the first to gain a gaming licence and started with 25 machines, and this number has today grown to 250. Since then, there have been five development stages, which have resulted in the wonderful club that exists today.

The new Bus Transit Centre, which was incorporated in the club, was financed by the club and cost \$5.7 million. The club is an integral part of Southport. It has over 10,000 members and promotes friendship with a caring community spirit. The facilities are excellent, prices are affordable and the club supports many local charities. This club is a tribute to the hard work and foresight of the likes of Harold and Nancy Evans, Charlie and Marion McCormack and Kevin

Guinea, as well as Fred Muirhead and Jim Higgs, the present chairman and deputy, and their dedicated and hardworking board and also Steve Condron, the General Manager.

It has grown from a tin shed on leased land to a wonderful complex on freehold land incorporating the Bus Transit Centre and Kids Club. The friendly and efficient staff complement perfectly this asset for Southport. As part of the agreement to finance the construction of the Bus Transit Centre, the club acquired in freehold title the land which fronts Scarborough Street and which used to be utilised as a bus stop for local, intrastate and interstate buses. The next stage of the club's development will be the extension on this freehold land which will give the club a street frontage on to Scarborough Street.

Whilst it is acknowledged that poker machines have caused problems for some clubs and for some individuals, nevertheless they have made clubs such as the Southport Workers Club the success story they are today. That success is based on good management and planning but would not have been possible without the introduction of poker machines in 1991. Prior to that event, patrons used to travel to Tweed Heads and channel their money into the various clubs over the border. Although times are generally tough for clubs, at this time with the solid base upon which this club is founded, with continuing good management and with the support of members, I am sure its success will continue. I congratulate all associated with the club and wish them every success in the future.

North Keppel Island Environment Education Centre

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (7.13 p.m.): Let me congratulate the staff, their helpers and all who run the North Keppel Island Environment Education Centre. This is the only island environmental training area in Australia. Famous for its cabbage tree palms, it is the only training centre that has three different marine ecosystems. In fact, you can see these if you look out the front door of the accommodation section of the camp: rocky and tidal, sandy substrata and, of course, our reef system. The training centre also has wind, gas and solar power which can all work intermittently off each other. They have won the Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management.

What is of real concern, though, is that there seems to be no structured budget by the Education Department for the ongoing support of this island training centre. The staff provide a 24-hour, seven days a week service. However, I can see the staff are becoming very stressed. The principal, who is expected to teach, has to spend 40 hours on administration before he can actually start teaching. The teacher there, who is well up there in terms of Australian awards, is spending up to 60 hours or more a week teaching. They have to fund a part-time teacher from the actual budget of this training centre and not through the education system.

There is also a need for a new boat. The present boat will take only 20 people. It also has a form of cancer in the hull of the boat and is no longer as serviceable as it should be. In fact, the island has to depend on public transport by invitation. That is not always on time or reliable. They need a boat that will take 60 passengers so that the island can actually do its own thing in terms of getting people backwards and forwards on that half-hour trip. There are some 11 cabins on that boat with asbestos lining and the cooking staff has to be contracted in.

All in all, there is an horrific problem with this absolutely outstanding environmental education centre. I am calling upon the Education Minister and the government to look at this very realistically, because this training centre does a great job in getting the message of the environment across to schoolchildren, university people and everybody else. Yet somehow it seems to be a little—

Time expired.

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Conference

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (7.16 p.m.): On Wednesday, 5 September I opened Australia's inaugural conference on domestic violence and sexual assault on behalf of the Premier. The Seeking Solutions Conference at the Parkroyal Hotel at Broadbeach was attended by more than 400 delegates from government and non-government agencies and women's services from throughout Australia and overseas, and a further 100 had to be turned away. The conference was organised by the combined Women's Crisis Services and the Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service and attracted a high calibre of speakers and experts in the field of domestic violence.

Speakers included Kirsty Sword Gusmao; Professor Robert Connell of the University of Sydney, the author of *Men and Male Roles* and *Masculinities and Violence*; Associate Professor Ruth Busch from Waikato University in New Zealand; Jackie Huggins, the Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit at the University of Queensland; Dr Diana Russell, Professor of Sociology from San Francisco; and also many other noted and experienced presenters.

I think it is very significant that the first such conference to be held in Australia was held on the Gold Coast in Australia's sixth largest and fastest growing city. It is significant because it shows that the Gold Coast is a progressive and courageous community, one that is prepared to tackle the issue of domestic violence and sexual assault head on. As I told conference delegates, I had mixed feelings about this conference. On the one hand, I was delighted that we had the energy, the drive and the commitment to hold an event such as this but, of course, on the other hand I wished we did not have to have it at all. I wish, as I am sure all honourable members do, that this scourge of society did not exist in our community, but I know that we cannot turn a blind eye and pretend that domestic violence does not exist. Domestic violence does exist; sexual assault does occur and it cannot be tolerated.

The Beattie government is committed to working with the community and with all stakeholders to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault and their effects on society. The Safe Families Safer Communities policy and action plan establishes the framework for a whole-of-government response to domestic and family violence. The domestic violence legislation amendment bill circulated earlier this year for public comment aims to extend coverage of the act to include people who are abused by their relatives, people who are abused in informal care relationships, and people who are abused within intimate personal relationships such as dating. The commitment of \$10 million to the PPP, the Positive Parenting Program, is working to help Queensland families break the cycle of poor parenting, lack of information and childhood abuse.

A lot more is being done. A lot more still needs to be done. Those who attended the conference and shared information and sought solutions are to be commended and those who organised the conference are to be congratulated. I particularly want to congratulate Di McCleod and Betty Taylor on the enormous efforts they put in and the very professional and well managed conference that they held.

Flying Foxes

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.19 p.m.): There is great concern in the state of Queensland regarding flying foxes. Many fruit producers are being adversely affected as a result of these pests. There is an opinion in the community that the number of flying foxes is increasing. Even residents in towns are experiencing extreme difficulty in terms of keeping fruit on trees in their backyards. However, this fruit is continually being raided at very early stages of development. There is also an incessant noise throughout the night caused by these animals as they fly to backyards and orchards throughout the state. They make a great deal of noise and it is very difficult to sleep. These pests are also disturbing people who live close to mango trees. The mangoes are stripped of their flesh and the seeds are dropped on roofs.

There is also a great deal of concern with regard to lyssavirus. These pests carry a very deadly virus which a couple of Queenslanders have died from. However, attacks on immature fruit are horrendous. I have seen examples of fruit that flying foxes have attempted to eat but have not eaten fully. They drop the fruit at the base of the tree and, as a result, there are piles of immature fruit surrounding the tree. These pests are on the increase, and there is little question about that. They are causing enormous damage to commercial growers throughout the state. The mechanisms that growers once had in terms of electric grids are now being denied to them. In the future we have to come up with solutions to deal with this problem. These crops are so important to this state but are being lost by this pest.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.20 p.m.