

WEDNESDAY, 6 MARCH 2002

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from His Excellency the Governor a letter in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the records of parliament.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

28 February 2002

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 28 February 2002:

"A Bill for an Act to establish the Queensland Studies Authority, to confer functions on the authority including functions about developing and accrediting 1-12 syllabuses and preschool guidelines, testing, assessment, moderation, certification, vocational education and training and tertiary entrance, to establish the Office of the Queensland Studies Authority, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Subcontractors' Charges Act 1974"

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

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMISSIONER

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that Mr Robert Martin Needham has been appointed as the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner, now known as the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner.

PETITIONS**Roundabout, Hardy Road, Wellington Point**

Mr Briskey from 44 petitioners, requesting the House to rescind Judgment No 3558 of 2000 between Edgarange Pty Ltd and Redland Shire Council in relation to the construction of a roundabout at 57 Hardy Road, Wellington Point.

Gold Coast Harbour Vision 2020 Project

Mr Lawlor from 1,064 petitioners, requesting the House to advise the Gold Coast City Council that the House will not agree to the recommendations contained in "Gold Coast Harbour Vision 2020 Project—Report No 1" and is against any commercial development of the Broadwater (including Wavebreak Is.) and the western foreshore and any further reclamation.

Ningi Bypass

Mrs Carryn Sullivan from 1,921 petitioners, requesting the House to abort all plans for a Ningi bypass road and to implement the original plan though Ningi township (when required) and to prevent the proposed bypass road that would be devastating to the businesses that serve Ningi and grossly unfair to the dispossessed landowners involved.

Ningi Bypass

Mrs Carryn Sullivan from 1,310 petitioners, requesting that the House consider future funding of the preferred bypass in the district of Ningi.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

4 March 2002—

Island Industries Board (Islanders Board of Industry and Service [IBIS])—Annual Report for the year ended 31 January 2001

Late tabling statement by the Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services (Ms Spence) regarding the Island Industries Board (Islanders Board of Industry and Service [IBIS]) Annual Report for the year ended 31 January 2001

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity (Electrical Articles) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 26 and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 26

Mental Health Act 2000—

Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 27

Mental Health Act 2000—

Mental Health Regulation 2002, No. 28

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994—

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 29

Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 30

Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001—

Medical Practitioners Registration Regulation 2002, No. 31

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 32

Animal Care and Protection Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 33

Animal Care and Protection Act 2001—

Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2002, No. 34

Animal Care and Protection Act 2001—

Animals Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 35

Collections Act 1966—

Collections Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 36

Water Act 2000—

Water Resources (Areas and Boards) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2002, No. 37

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT

The following response to a parliamentary committee report, received during the recess, was tabled by The Clerk—
response from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to report No. 59 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled Annual Reporting in the Queensland Public Sector

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PETITION

The following response to a petition, received during the recess, was tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to a petition presented by Ms Struthers from 431 petitioners, regarding the Queensland Competition Authority approval of a Queensland Rail access undertaking—

25 Feb 2002

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

Dear Robert

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2001 regarding the petition received by the Parliament from Mr L Ardill regarding the Queensland Competition Authority approval of a Queensland Rail access undertaking, which was lodged by Ms Karen Struthers MP, Member for Algester.

I have attached a copy of my response to Mr Ardill. I would appreciate it if you would arrange for this response to be tabled in Parliament on my behalf.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Peter Beattie MP
Premier and Minister for Trade

25 Feb 2002

Mr L A Ardill
41 Altandi Street
SUNNYBANK Q 4109

Dear Len

I refer to your petition lodged with the Clerk of the Parliament on 13 December 2001 regarding the report of the Queensland Competition Authority into access by private entities to Queensland Rail infrastructure and facilities.

On 21 December 2001, the Queensland Competition Authority approved a rail access undertaking submitted by Queensland Rail. This undertaking is consistent with the current statutory framework for rail safety in Queensland which has been in operation since 1995. The Government is supportive of the approach taken in Queensland Rail's approved access undertaking with respect to rail safety and other considerations.

Specifically, the Queensland Rail undertaking reinforces the importance of rail safety practices and strengthens the role of the rail safety regulator, the Rail Safety Accreditation Unit in Queensland Transport. The Rail Safety Accreditation Unit administers the rail safety framework set down in the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and has a comprehensive safety management system in place which monitors trends on major and general rail incidences in Queensland. The Rail Safety Accreditation Unit has responsibilities to approve and ensure compliance with the safety management systems of Queensland Rail and other rail operators, and to conduct annual and spot safety audits on Queensland Rail and third party rail operators.

Queensland Rail's approved undertaking does not compromise its ability to deal with specific instances of unsafe practices. Queensland Rail has a comprehensive safety management system in place which enables it to identify, at an early stage, any safety risks in the network. If Queensland Rail has reasonable grounds for suspicion that a rail operator is not complying with network safety standards, it can inform the Rail Safety Accreditation Unit for the rail safety regulator to take appropriate action. In extreme situations where rail safety is at immediate risk or Queensland Rail's legitimate business interests are threatened, the Queensland Competition Authority also recognises Queensland Rail's right to take appropriate action.

The government is, however, aware of Queensland Rail's concerns regarding the requirement to recognise the primacy of the Rail Safety Accreditation Unit in the conduct of safety audits. The Government is examining the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 to ensure clarity of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Queensland Competition Authority, railway managers (including Queensland Rail), third party operators and Queensland Transport with respect to rail safety.

It should be noted that the Queensland Competition Authority approved the Queensland Rail undertaking in accordance with the requirement that it have regard to the public interest in reaching a decision. When the Queensland Competition Authority was established, detailed consideration was given to the level of accountability the Authority must have to Government. The need for independence was recognised by Parliament and a range of provisions was included to ensure a sufficient degree of accountability and that the public interest was considered.

The Government is supportive of Queensland Rail's approved undertaking and its reinforcement and strengthening of the role of the Rail Safety Accreditation Unit as the rail safety regulator in Queensland. As a corporatised entity, Queensland Rail is required to act commercially in all its dealings, and it is anticipated that the introduction of new railway operators on the Queensland Rail network will result in the growth of rail's share of the transport market and bring further economic benefits to Queensland. However, the Government does recognise the importance of maintaining the integrity of Queensland's rail safety framework. Queensland Transport will closely monitor the impact of third party access on the provision of a safe rail service.

While the Government does not believe the safety concerns raised in the petition warrant a full parliamentary inquiry into Queensland Rail's approved access undertaking or the structure and operations of the Queensland Competition Authority, you can be assured safety remains the highest priority of the Government.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

Peter Beattie MP
Premier and Minister for Trade

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education Reforms

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: The Queensland education system has served us well. It has turned out millions of clever and creative individuals, many of them among the world's best. Yet the world is changing more

rapidly than most parents of my vintage would have thought possible when we were at school. It is vital that our education system keeps pace with the changes and gives our children every opportunity to get whatever they want out of life. It is about skilling for life.

The Queensland government's bold new package of initiatives and reforms, called *Queensland the Smart State: education and training reforms for the future*, has three major components: firstly, a significant long-term investment in state school information and communication technologies; secondly, trials at 50 sites of a full-time preparatory year for children before they enter year 1, beginning in 2003—there will be 30 trials in 2003 and 20 in 2004; and, thirdly, an examination of the option of increasing the minimum school leaving age from 15 years to 16 or 17. For the information of the House, I table a full briefing document and also the document I referred to. I have asked that every honourable member be provided with a copy of this document and it will be distributed shortly.

This package, which I delivered on Monday with the Education Minister, Anna Bligh, and the Employment, Training and Youth Minister, Matt Foley, will lead to a more skilled and professional Queensland work force. In the long term it will make our state an even more attractive place to invest, do business and locate the headquarters of international corporations. In other words, the smart jobs of tomorrow will be here. I am heartened by the initial response to our proposals. The general enthusiasm of Queenslanders for our ideas is a sign that they are willing to face up to challenges for the sake of our children and young people and for our shared future.

We are committed to a major long-term investment in information and communication technologies. I will deal with the issues that we are committed to. They are in the blue part of the policy document. Firstly—and this will be announced in the budget by Treasurer Terry Mackenroth this year—we have budgeted to invest \$23 million in 2003-04 in equipment, teacher training and technical support. I underline the importance of teacher training. This will grow to \$35 million in 2003-04, and that will continue on an annual ongoing basis. So it is in the system. This will come on top of the \$197 million-plus that my Labor government has already invested in state schools information and communication technologies.

Our financial commitment does not stop there. We will spend the lion's share of our GST growth money on education. That is a mark of my determination and that of my government to build the Smart State and ensure all Queenslanders share in the benefits of more satisfying work and a better quality of life. This is about equity. The big investment in information and communication technologies will lead to 3,000 new computers, primarily in primary schools; a doubling of funding for computer replacement programs—replacing 19,400 of the oldest computers from the existing stock of 77,000 machines; Internet connection for up to 9,600 more computers—meaning cabling for another 1,600 classrooms and better access to online learning for up to 50,000 primary and high school students; improved technical support to reduce the time teachers spend on technical tasks; an investigation of more cost-effective ways to buy computers and IT services, including managed service contracts and public-private partnerships, which Anna Bligh will investigate as minister; and an information and communication technologies learning guarantee to deliver professional development every year for every state school teacher. This is about taking the teachers with us and increasing their skills so that they can share them with young Queenslanders.

We are also committed—and this is the second part of the commitment—to trialling the full-time prep school year, with 30 trials in 2003, followed by another 20 in 2004. When those trials are completed, the Education Minister, Anna Bligh, will come back to cabinet and we will assess whether to go ahead with the full prep year. If we do—and I want to say this very clearly, because we want parents and Queenslanders to come with us on these reforms; we will not rush into it—the prep year may well start in 2006. But we will work those things through with the community. They need to understand that we are not going to rush it. We will take them with us.

In terms of the next commitment—the school leaving age—again, it could come in, if it is increased, if that is what the community wants, in 2007. We will take our time to get it right. Coming back to the prep year, as I said, Queensland is the only Australian state where state schools do not offer a full year of education for children preparing to start year 1. Queensland children are also at least five months younger than children in other parts of Australia when they start year 1. Research shows early education prepares children for formal schooling and produces better learning outcomes over the years. Some children currently have no access to a year of full-time prep school, and I am fearful that they will be left behind in the fiercely competitive jobs market of the 21st century.

I have dealt with the first two strings of our package, and those are the two we are definitely doing. The third one is open for consultation. The third string of our package, the extension of the school leaving age, is open to negotiation with the people of Queensland. In my view it is absolutely vital that we have a well-informed discussion about this, because we need to decide if a school leaving age that was set nearly 40 years ago gives today's young people the best start in life. I have come to the conclusion that young people would have a better chance in life if they were required to learn or earn until the age of 16 or 17. Our proposal would see Queenslanders participating in full-time schooling, work or vocational education and training until they are 16 or 17—in other words, learning or earning. We have not set an age, because we want Queenslanders to say what they would prefer.

Teachers and schools are finding ways of making school more relevant to our young people, and the senior school completion rate is rising—from 68 per cent in 1998 to 73 per cent in 2001. This is higher than the national average of 67 per cent. But the system is clearly not serving everyone. Today, about 10 per cent of the 103,000 Queenslanders aged between 15 and 17 are not engaged in studies, work or training. That is not good enough. The most successful European economies have better school retention rates. In Germany, where the leaving age is 18, only eight per cent of students do not complete senior school.

No-one would debate that the world has changed dramatically since the last time we raised the school leaving age in 1964. Before that it was 14, and between 1875 and 1912 it was just 12 years. Even in the past two decades our world and our work force have undergone significant changes. In 1980 about 50 per cent of Australian males aged between 15 and 19 were in full-time work. By 2000, this had fallen to less than 25 per cent. The change is clear.

We have also looked at ways of making the senior certificate more relevant to employers, in response to employers' criticism of the current system. Some say the senior certificate—provided at completion of year 12—lacks sufficient information about a student's broader skills, abilities and work readiness. A potential answer would be to record all achievements of every student in years 10, 11 and 12. That would mean achievements in school based learning, learning at TAFE or another training provider, apprenticeships or part-time or full-time work. Such a record might be additional to, or part of, the current senior certificate. On the other hand it could replace the senior certificate.

If we raised the school leaving age to 17 years, Queensland would lead Australia. Only Tasmania requires its students to remain at school until 16. All other states have a minimum leaving age of 15. I want to stress that this is about our learning or earning proposal, which would also improve our comparative position in the OECD, where most countries provide two to four years more schooling than Queensland. When I talk about learning and earning and this package the ministers and I have released, I mean that students need to be in school, in a TAFE, in an apprenticeship, in training or in a job. What we do not want—and I have said this publicly—is our young people in the 15- to 17-year-old bracket simply sitting at home watching *Days of our Lives*.

Lively and informed public debate is a hallmark of the Smart State. The reaction of the past few days shows many Queenslanders have a healthy interest in the issues covered in *Queensland the Smart State: education and training reforms for the future*. I urge them to get involved in discussion about the government's proposals. The consultation period ends on 31 July 2002. These reforms will be the most significant reforms introduced by my government in this term. I urge all Queenslanders to participate in this debate. This is not just about schooling. This is about learning. This is about earning. This is about the very future of Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT CHOGM

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: In the last few days the eyes of the world have been on Queensland as we hosted a state visit by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and a major charity fundraiser with former US President Clinton. I am proud to tell the House that we did so with great style, professionalism and a friendly 'g'day' for all our guests. Twenty years ago we were proud to have demonstrated for the first time that we could host a major event. That was the Commonwealth Games. Then came Expo 88 and, last year, the world's biggest sporting event of 2001, the Goodwill Games. Now we have proved that when it comes to hosting major international events we rate with any other major destination in the world,

having run three major undertakings at the same time, with no hitches in terms of hotel accommodation, transport, security breaches or other important aspects of organisation.

CHOGM is the biggest gathering of government representatives after the United Nations. Fifty-one nations were represented at Coolum, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair and 34 other heads of state. It was one of the biggest political gatherings since 11 September. With the CHOGM leaders came something like 3,000 public servants and foreign journalists. Queenslanders judged the royal visit to Queensland between 28 February and 3 March an overwhelming success by turning out in their thousands to applaud the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. I recommended the Cairns itinerary for the Queen's visit so that Her Majesty and the rest of the world would see some unique Australian icons. And I enjoyed showing the Queen, along with other ministers and members, some of the reasons why tropical north Queensland is so popular as a tourist destination.

When the Queen opened CHOGM as head of the Commonwealth, the Duke of Edinburgh made a special visit to Roma to open the Big Rig oil and gas museum where he was given a rousing outback welcome. Twenty-five thousand to 30,000 Queenslanders then accepted the invitation to a special people's reception at Roma Street Parkland on Sunday, 3 March to see the Queen and the Duke. The warmth of their welcome on such a grey and rainy day was widely reported in the UK and elsewhere. People also flocked to a formal ceremonial farewell at the South Bank cultural forecourt. We thank Her Majesty and His Royal Highness for their warmth and dignity which was so obviously appreciated by everyone who saw them.

On Friday I hosted a fundraising dinner at the Sheraton Hotel to raise money for the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation Research Centre—a unique research centre created to discover new ways of beating children's illnesses and diseases. Former US President Clinton spent time with children, parents and staff at the Royal Children's Hospital in the afternoon and then gave 740 guests the benefit of his intellect and vision by looking beyond the war on terrorism to the equally important job of creating a world where we defuse the hate that fuels terrorism.

Any one of these international events would have been newsworthy in its own right. To be able to host them at the same time so smoothly is a credit to all those Queenslanders who helped organise them. On behalf of all Queenslanders and members here, I thank everyone who was involved in any way with those major events. We have shown that we can compete in the same league as the major players anywhere in the world in being able to host functions of any size and importance.

The successful staging of CHOGM 2002 on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is yet another historic milestone for this state and its people. The fact that international leaders and ministers from more than 50 Commonwealth countries could meet at Coolum in a relaxed, friendly yet very secure environment was a tribute to the thousands of people involved with this event. It was a vast difference from the scenario of terror that engulfed the world on 11 September last year and forced postponement of the CHOGM scheduled for October.

Today I want to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the thousands of people across three levels of government who all contributed to CHOGM's success. In particular, I thank the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Transport, the Department of Main Roads, Queensland Health, the Department of Emergency Services, the Department of State Development, Tourism Queensland and my own department, the Premier's Department, for its coordinating role. I thank the various federal agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, ASIO, the Protective Security Coordination Centre, Air Services Australia, Customs, Immigration, the CHOGM task force, the Australian Defence Force and last but not least the small army of CHOGM volunteers.

I also pay tribute to the Maroochy Shire Council for its willing and efficient cooperation embraced in a relatively tight time frame. Each and every one, both individually and collectively as various agencies or groups, contributed to the success of this summit, the largest of its type ever held in Australia. To have some appreciation of the scale of this undertaking, one has only to look at the resources utilised by the Queensland Police Service as the agency principally responsible for the provision of security for CHOGM. More than 4,000 police personnel were employed specifically on CHOGM. It was the largest security operation ever undertaken by our Police Service, particularly when one considers that it also involved the royal visit and the visit by former US President Bill Clinton. Over 4,000 Queensland Police Service personnel were employed specifically in the management of CHOGM. Over the eight days of CHOGM operations there were over 43,000 police passenger movements between venues and accommodation. There were over 2,000 bus activities over the same period to facilitate the police movements. There was a total of 175 motorcades completed as at 7 a.m. on 5 March. There were 370 close personal

protection officers trained to provide personal protection to the heads of delegations. In this regard I extend my sincere thanks to the people of the Sunshine Coast region for their support, cooperation and tolerance with necessary CHOGM arrangements.

To Queenslanders generally I express my gratitude for their understanding of the need for some local police from various regions across the state to be absent from their normal duties during CHOGM. It is a credit to the Queensland Police Service that normal police services continued to be provided state wide, despite the concentration of resources for CHOGM.

A decade ago the Police Service in this state had its head down. The purge of Fitzgerald meant that there was much pain and sadness. A decade later, with some quality government support and excellent internal leadership, the Queensland Police Service can now rightly put its head high as a service the equal of any in the world. The importance of CHOGM and the royal visit being such a success goes beyond Queensland and Australia and even beyond the Commonwealth. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

In a few days it will be the six months since September 11.

In the aftermath of September 11 I said we cannot let terrorism win.

A month after that fateful day a decision was made it was too dangerous to host a gathering of 50 world leaders.

Less than six months later it has been held—it has been a success.

This was not lost yesterday on the Prime Minister and his favourable comments and indeed it has not been lost on my government and me.

It took Queensland to show that world that more than 35 world leaders and more than 50 delegations can gather in safety and in peace.

Post September 11 there has been an enormous response to ensure terrorism does not succeed.

Our contribution to the world-wide fight against terrorism has been well evidenced in the past week by the successful CHOGM 2002 and the Royal Visit.

For that success I want to say "thank you" to all involved for playing a role in a world-wide fight.

I state again—we cannot let terrorism win.

It is also appropriate here to pay tribute to the various protest groups who rallied in the rain last Saturday to highlight their issues to world leaders.

The level of co-operation and understanding that developed between such groups and police in the lead-up to CHOGM has exceeded all expectations.

In fact, it has set a new national and international benchmark for the handling of major events, the cornerstone of which was the involvement of four independent mediators to assist the consultative process when necessary.

I thank Tony Fitzgerald, Lorenzo Boccabella, Robin Sullivan and John Wanna for volunteering their services in this regard.

Queensland has shown the world that major international summits can be staged without violence or damage to public property and I'm sure this process will be carefully studied and emulated elsewhere in future.

Then of course, there were the CHOGM volunteers, well over 300 of them recruited with the assistance of Volunteering Queensland Inc.

It's safe to say the event would not have been the same without them.

Whether working as drivers, guides, media centre assistants or providing clerical support, they were an integral ingredient for the success of CHOGM.

Finally I want to thank the Australian Government and its agencies, the Maroochy Shire Council and other departments and agencies of the Queensland Government who performed various roles during CHOGM.

I particularly thank our emergency service personnel for the deployment of extra assets and resources to cover CHOGM, and still maintain their normal service capabilities to the general community.

Few people realise the amount of planning and preparation that is necessary to stage an event such as this, and the level of co-operation that is necessary across all agencies and all levels of government for it to succeed.

CHOGM 2002 has been a good example of effective networking and co-operation between a range of agencies at various levels.

This, in turn, has a positive, long-term impact on enhancing the capabilities and knowledge of the various agencies involved.

Whatever one's view is of the actual outcomes of the CHOGM summit is not for me to explore or comment on at this time.

What is important today is to note, once again, Queensland's ability to stage major international events at a standard second to none, and to recognise the talent and professionalism of all the people whose efforts contributed to CHOGM's success.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

CHOGM

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: CHOGM provided an opportunity for the Queensland government to meet senior world leaders. Yesterday Tom Barton and I met with the Prime Minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong. We discussed a range of issues, including Singapore Airlines, education and investment. It was a good opportunity for us to talk about a number of matters of interest to this state.

Secondly, yesterday at this parliament we had the opportunity to host the Republic of South Africa President Thabo Mbeki. It was the only non-CHOGM event the South African President was involved in. We had 120 business leaders here. Ministers were here. The event gave us an opportunity to advance trade links with South Africa. I indicated to the President of South Africa that I will visit South Africa on the way to the biotech conference mid year, because I think there are opportunities to advance trade. That is the advantage of hosting events such as CHOGM. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Yesterday I held valuable trade talks with two Commonwealth Heads of State.

The fact that Queensland hosted CHOGM provided a wonderful opportunity for me to talk one-on-one with South African President Thabo Mbeki and Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

As Minister for Trade I also arranged for about 120 business leaders and State Ministers to attend a business forum at Parliament House which President Mbeki and I addressed.

It was Mr Mbeki's only non-CHOGM function while in Australia.

Any increase in trade means an increase in jobs for Queenslanders and I was able to tell both leaders about trade and investment opportunities in the Smart State.

There is a vocal minority who seek to criticise me for using CHOGM to advertise Queensland as the Smart State, keen to do business with the rest of the world.

But we have had government leaders, senior public servants, business people and journalists in Queensland from 51 Commonwealth countries.

I make no apologies for telling them that Queensland has a low tax regime, a high standard of living, a well-educated and skilled workforce and a wonderful climate.

Trade between Queensland and South Africa has grown rapidly since apartheid ended eight years ago.

Exports to South Africa have risen from about \$95 million in 1993/1994 to about \$155 million in the year to June 30, 2001.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade expects strong future growth for sales to South Africa of aluminium, automotive parts and accessories, mining equipment, telecommunications equipment and processed foods.

I also told Mr Mbeki of our Smart State initiatives in biotechnology.

In my talks with the Singapore Prime Minister I encouraged an increase in the number of students coming to Queensland for their education.

Singapore is already the number one source of international university students in Queensland.

Queensland Education and Training International, a body established to build our education and training exports, has identified Singapore as a potentially valuable market.

The Government is now working to promote the Smart State as a great destination for fee-paying high school and TAFE students from Singapore.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education Reforms

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: The release yesterday of our discussion paper drives our government's Smart State agenda into our schools and classrooms. At the heart of this package is the very purpose of education itself—the preparation of children and young people to take a meaningful place in adult life and the world of work.

The preparation of young children for formal schooling will be the focus of 50 trials of a new full-time preparatory year of school. These trials will be conducted over the next three years. These trials, accompanied by the establishment of an early childhood education unit and an expert reference group, constitute the most profound re-investment for decades in the all-important early years of education in this state. Schools are invited to nominate for the trials, and I anticipate an enthusiastic response from the many schools keen to give children the best preparation for year 1.

Our proposal for a preparatory year of school will bring Queensland into line with every other Australian state. But our government is not content to merely play catch-up. Our Smart State agenda has a much larger horizon. Put simply, we want to see our education system at the cutting edge of the Australian systems and beyond. As a government, our aspirations extend to being among the best in the world.

We are determined to prepare our students for the reality of the world in which they will live and work as adults. Hence, our reform package makes a significant commitment to boost our performance in the use of information and communication technology in our classrooms. The \$23 million initial commitment and ongoing commitment of \$35 million each year thereafter is a direct investment in the skills base of the future, a direct investment in the professional capacity of our teachers to maximise all the opportunities presented by the Internet and its limitless possibilities for curriculum innovation, and a direct investment in the potential of our children to capitalise on the knowledge revolution.

Every dollar we invest in computer hardware, software, network connections and teacher information and communication technology skills opens the window between our classrooms and the world just a little wider. Our investment gives every child, regardless of whether they have a computer at home, a chance to equip themselves with the tools they will need to participate in the workplaces of tomorrow.

The third component of our reforms takes Queensland into ground breaking education territory. The proposal to dramatically reform our senior years of schooling are far reaching and future focused. The green paper articulates the view of our government that young people need 12 years of formal learning in school, in training, or on the job to be truly prepared for the labour markets of tomorrow.

The green paper asks Queenslanders to consider whether it is time, after 40 years, to reconsider the school leaving age of 15 and raising it to 16 or 17. This proposal is not about raising an age limit; it is about raising the skills level of Queensland students. The green paper canvasses the re-organisation of the senior years of school to include years 10, 11 and 12, a re-consideration of the senior certificate, a re-evaluation of the relationship between the school and training sectors, including TAFE, and a re-appraisal of the role of schools in coordinating the activities and participation of young people across the various options available to them. Importantly, the paper acknowledges that this will require extra support for schools and for many young people and seeks public views on how to best achieve this support.

In conclusion, the package of reforms put forward by our government is a step into the future. Our government is prepared to challenge itself and to challenge the Queensland community. We value our partnerships with state and non-state schools, with teachers and with parents, and we ask them to step into the future with us. We believe that together these initiatives will better prepare our young people for the growing challenges of a competitive, high-tech, globalising economy. This morning I urge every member of this House to talk to their communities, their schools and their constituents and actively participate in the most important debate about our school system that we have seen in Queensland for decades.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education and Training

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: Ten thousand young Queenslanders aged 15 or 16 are out of work, out of school and out of training. We have to do better than that.

The world with which young people struggle today is a world of great opportunity and great challenge. I am proud to say that this government is looking anew at how we can support and equip young people for a new world of work and a new world of continual learning. We are also declaring our commitment to social justice and to equality of opportunity. There is no more powerful engine of social justice than the education and training system, because it gives opportunities to young people from any background and any walk of life to achieve and to have a strong future.

In my role as chair of the national ministerial subcommittee on young people's transitions from school to work I have become more and more conscious of the importance of that passage of a young person's life where they move from initial education on to work or to further education. All of the evidence I have seen shows that this passage is critical to a young person's future. Most

are making it—school works for most—and the next move, to university or college or apprenticeship or work, goes relatively smoothly for most. But it is not smooth for some. Many of those, it seems, once lost are lost for good.

In Queensland today there are 10,000 young people who are lacking the opportunity of school, work or training. Missing that first leap from school, they do not easily regain their balance. The green paper proposes that the school leaving age change from 15 to 16 or 17. However, the term 'school leaving age' is somewhat old fashioned and needs to be interpreted carefully. The 'school leaving age' is not just about school. Up to that age, whatever it is, young people will have to be engaged in full-time schooling, vocational education and training, higher education or work, or in some combination of those. We should see it positively as the age of participation or the age of engagement.

As set out in the green paper, the local school would have the responsibility of acting as a local coordination centre for the education and training of young people wherever they are learning or earning—in school, in TAFE, with another training provider, in a job, in an apprenticeship or in a traineeship. It is the quality of their learning experience that matters.

What we are recognising in the green paper is that for some the quality of that learning experience is better assured somewhere other than school. Of course, under the proposal young people can stay at school if that is the best way for them. Most will, and schools must accept the challenge of how best to cater for the learning needs of that diverse group. For a significant number of high school students, that will mean integrated offerings of general and vocational education. For others, school will not be the best place to engage them in learning.

TAFE, other vocational education and training or employment are equally valid pathways and better options for many young people. A full-time job or an apprenticeship or traineeship gives a worker useful skills in a real world context—that is, you learn as you work. What we want is for young people to succeed. They can succeed at school, but they can also succeed at TAFE or in vocational education and training. They can succeed in an apprenticeship, traineeship or at work. They can succeed in a combination of these pathways. Employers consistently tell us that the current senior certificate provided at the completion of year 12 does not give enough information about a student's broader skills, abilities or work readiness. We could do this by recording the achievements for every student from years 10, 11 and 12. This could include school based learning, learning at TAFE or other educational training providers, part-time or full-time work, apprenticeships and any other activity that provides skills.

The observation in an article in today's *Courier-Mail* by Allan Luke and Bob Lingard, professors in the School of Education at the University of Queensland, hits the nail on the head. It states—

But the question hinges less on the length of time young adults spend in schools than on the quality of the time. What the 'learn or earn' proposal does is put on the table real challenges for schools, TAFEs, training providers, universities and employers. They will need to become much more flexible organisations and provide a broad range of curriculum and teaching/learning experiences. At the same time they must combine forces to come up with new, innovative pathways that move kids from school to work, back to further study, and so forth.

It is for this reason that we have strongly supported the examples of excellence noted in the document, such as the Southside Education Centre, formerly of Tarragindi and now of Sunnybank, which works with young women whose needs are not being met in mainstream high school settings, and SCICO, the South Coast Industry Coordinating Organisation, which has acted as a central body linking Gold Coast schools, industry and community organisations. What this government is saying is this: we will not let success pass our young people by without doing all in our power to give them their chance to grasp it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mullen Review

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: Last week I received the findings of the independent Mullen review into Queensland forensic mental health services. The report confirms that the new Queensland Mental Health Act, which came into force last week, addresses the shortcomings of the 1974 act which it replaces. Professor Mullen suggests just one minor amendment to the act, and I will come to that in a short time. The Mullen report finds that Queensland has arguably the most coherent legislative framework in Australia for dealing with

mentally abnormal offenders. Professor Mullen highlights areas where we can improve the way we assess and rehabilitate forensic mental health patients.

I support the report's finding that public concern must be taken into account when decisions are being made about the release back into the community of someone who has been a violent offender. Indeed, that is written into the new act. In line with recommendations in the Mullen report, we will be putting in place independent clinical review committees to thoroughly assess recommendations for rehabilitation and treatment programs, including release into the community, before any application goes to the new Mental Health Review Tribunal. This is an extra safety layer.

I also accept a recommendation from Professor Mullen that we need to have two categories of section 36 forensic mental health patients: one for patients who are a danger to the community and another for those who present no danger. This minor amendment to the act will be made as soon as practical. The Beattie government's new Mental Health Act strikes a balance between meeting the needs of patients with a mental illness and addressing the concerns of the community, including victims or their families, something else that the previous 1974 act did not address. We have now addressed the long overdue changes needed in the legislation. We are in the process of implementing world-class mental health facilities and are now refining our assessment procedures. I table the Mullen report and urge all honourable members to read it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

CHOGM; Queensland Police Service

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: As the Premier has mentioned, last weekend Queensland successfully hosted the historic Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on the Sunshine Coast. I say from the outset that as the Minister for Police I am very proud of the important role Queensland police played in this significant event. I commend the more than 4,000 police involved in security surrounding this event, which was the largest operation ever undertaken by the Queensland Police Service. It was a formidable task because it was required to provide security for CHOGM, the Queen's visit and the visit by former President Bill Clinton. During CHOGM the Queensland Police Service provided security to a total of 21 venues, including the six main venues such as the Hyatt Regency at Coolum, the Novotel Twin Waters Resort, the Brisbane airport and the Sunshine Coast airport.

However, the work of police was not only to ensure dignitaries at CHOGM were safe; many police performed an exemplary role in ensuring normal policing standards were maintained for the rest of this state. I thank the entire Queensland Police Service for its efforts in this regard and I thank the Queensland community. I also say a special thankyou to those officers who stayed behind and indeed kept the home fires burning. In particular, I want to reflect on the efforts of the state government to accommodate the various groups that considered protesting or indeed did protest during CHOGM. As members should be aware, all protests during the event were conducted in a peaceful and orderly fashion. For this, both the police and those individuals involved deserve our thanks and congratulations. The way the protests were facilitated during CHOGM is a reflection of the Beattie government's belief that people have a right to protest and, where appropriate, we want to help them do this in a peaceful and lawful manner.

I draw the House's attention to one recent media report in which the following was said—

A veteran activist today praised Queensland police for their commitment to peaceful protests at CHOGM on the weekend. Graeme Dunstan, the organiser of the colourful Peacebus which will feature at protests at the meeting at Coolum on the Sunshine Coast, described the attitude of police as a 'quiet revolution'.

'I am in full praise of the respect the Queensland police are showing to all the anti-globalisation protest groups, and their commitment to ensure safety for everyone,' he said.

What a stark contrast to the bad old days when protesters were treated with contempt in Queensland. There has indeed been a radical shift in the way we approach these issues, and I am proud to say that this is in no small way due to the work of the Beattie government and the professionalism of the Queensland Police Service. I thank the mediators, police and government representatives for facilitating the peaceful protests during CHOGM. I am impressed to see Queensland once again setting such a high standard.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Alcohol Problems, Cape York

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: The subject of alcohol consumption in Aboriginal communities has been at the centre of much public debate and government activity in recent times. I know that this government has the support of every member of this House in tackling this problem. If we are going to do justice to this issue and effect change, it is important that we avail ourselves of some facts. Compared to non-indigenous people, a large proportion of indigenous people do not drink alcohol at all. However, for those individuals who do drink alcohol, indigenous people are drinking at more harmful levels compared to non-indigenous Australians. Of course, this was not always so.

During consultations with Cape York indigenous communities regarding Justice Fitzgerald's recommendations in the Cape York Justice Study, I have heard disturbing anecdotal evidence of the historical causes of alcohol problems and subsequent violence, especially to women and children. Some indigenous people in the cape recount a deliberate policy on the part of the government of the day to encourage communities to have beer canteens. There was a great deal of reluctance by communities to introduce alcohol despite repeated attempts by the government to do so. It is important that all Queenslanders understand the policy background to the introduction of canteens in indigenous communities in this state. At a time when we are asking indigenous Queenslanders to reject alcohol and reduce their level of consumption, it is more important that we understand that the alcohol that blights their lives was not initially welcomed in many of their communities. It is critical that an understanding of the past informs our actions in the future. We do not want to repeat the errors of our predecessors, nor do we want to ignore the desperate need for change in indigenous communities.

Amendments were made to the Aborigines Regulations in 1972 by the government to permit beer canteens on communities for the first time. Prior to that they were not permitted. However, after 1965 restrictions relating to bans on liquor consumption by reference to race were removed from Queensland legislation. From 1972 and coinciding with a reduction in Commonwealth funding for indigenous communities, it seems there was a deliberate policy to put canteens into indigenous communities whether or not communities wanted those canteens. In many cases they did not.

In establishing canteens, provision was made for community councillors to make a decision on behalf of their communities as to whether a canteen was required. Some communities undertook local opinion polls to gauge community opinion. If councillors made a decision against a canteen, the then Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs could request a community poll. Aurukun, Wujal Wujal, Cherbourg, Doomadgee, Pormpuraaw, Foleyvale and Hope Vale initially made decisions against the establishment of canteens.

I table copies of correspondence between the Aurukun community manager and the director of the department that demonstrate the pressure being placed on the community to have a canteen. In a letter dated 28 September 1971 the manager, W. H. Miller, says—

The Councillors and people of Aurukun would like to stress the fact that over the years their answer to this question has always been "NO" and feel that you are now trying to push liquor on to this Community.

They are asking why the subject of whether liquor should be sold here or not is being asked so often.

At a meeting of the Councillors today, it was felt that if the aborigines have the rights and freedom they are supposed to have then they should be able to please themselves on the above subject and stated that when they want liquor introduced into Aurukun they will come to you and ask for it.

It seems that the often stated preference of the community was for a milk bar, not for a canteen. I think the good citizens of Aurukun were asking a very valid question in 1971.

It is interesting to note that by the time the regulations were changed to permit canteens in communities, the government was ready with funding for the necessary infrastructure and supply arrangements with Northern Australian Breweries. The records show that, despite an earlier decision by the community against the introduction of a canteen, by February 1973 a canteen was operating at Pormpuraaw. A visiting justice had, by July 1973, recommended that the canteen be closed. This was rejected by the department. There were almost continuous reports of disorder and violence at Pormpuraaw from then on.

By July 1973 canteens were also operating at Woorabinda, Palm Island, Yarrabah, Lockhart River, Kowanyama, Bamaga, Mornington Island and Weipa. From the time of establishment of the canteens, the department facilitated their establishment and kept a tight control over their

operations and, from at least 1978, relied upon the proceeds of beer canteens to make major contributions to the development of communities. Where councils threatened to close canteens because of social disorder, the manager was prompted to remind the council of the economic benefits of the canteen to the community.

The adverse social effects of canteens were reported to the department from very early on and by 1978 there were major problems in most communities. By 1989 the then minister, Bob Katter, was referring in notes for correspondence to the Auditor-General to the canteens as 'this onerous burden' and 'this albatross, however lucrative'. This was at a time when the government was loath to continue the difficult task of managing and accounting for canteens and was seeking to off-load this responsibility via councils to private contractors. It is too late to turn back the clock, and the fact that alcohol was imposed on indigenous communities does not excuse the violence and excess that occurs today. But it is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people understand that alcohol is not part of their tradition and culture and that it can be rejected.

The Beattie government is currently preparing its response to the Cape York Justice Study and we have assumed crucial responsibility for fixing the problems in Cape York and ensuring that women and children can live without fear of violence and abuse. Alcohol is the issue and it is clear that radical measures are required. This government will continue to work cooperatively with the indigenous communities of Cape York to find solutions, and I will continue to report on this matter to the parliament.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.14 a.m.), by leave: Last night I attended a meeting of primary producers and community representatives in Chinchilla to discuss the prolonged drought conditions in that region. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who organised the meeting and to thank the more than 200 people who attended. I was joined at the meeting by senior Department of Primary Industries representatives, including the Director-General, Dr Warren Hoey. It was a positive meeting about a very difficult situation.

A number of members of the community spoke of the deteriorating conditions they continue to face and of the need to find some solutions for both the short and long term. While recent rain has been welcomed, it does not remedy the impacts of the prolonged dry conditions. In this and other parts of the state, these conditions are having a domino effect on local towns, with small business also facing a tough time.

The communities present at last night's meeting have resolved to set up a committee to look at the issues pertaining to the prolonged dry conditions they face. I believe this is a good, positive step forward and I have committed the support of a departmental officer to assist the committee. I have also undertaken to meet with the committee and to take their concerns to the next ministerial council meeting in May.

I also informed the meeting that the Queensland government would retain the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. This scheme, which was due to be phased out this year under a longstanding agreement with industry, provides targeted subsidies for drought stricken primary producers. Currently, producers from 25 shires, one part shire and more than an additional 300 properties are eligible for these subsidies.

Our government is concerned about the future climate picture, with the possibility of an El Nino re-emerging. Queensland will be the only state to continue to provide transaction based drought subsidies. The retention of these subsidies is not in line with the national drought policy. As minister, I am committed to ensure drought stricken primary producers receive their share of assistance from both the state and federal governments.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Endless Summer Marketing Campaign

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: Just last month, I reported to parliament that Queensland's \$3.3 million Make Time domestic campaign to generate tourism business had been stunningly successful. I said the campaign sparked an immediate boost to domestic tourism and helped

insulate our \$14 billion a year tourism industry from the fallout from 11 September and the Ansett collapse. We are now rolling out the second phase of our major domestic marketing push.

Our southern neighbours are being tempted by the thought of an endless summer in Queensland, thanks to a new Tourism Queensland marketing campaign. This new campaign's message is to come to Queensland, to extend that summer feeling, the relaxed lifestyle, carefree atmosphere and fun that we relate to all year round in Queensland. The campaign includes specific destination cooperative advertisements under the banner of Endless Summer as well as generic Queensland advertising. Queensland destination advertisements will feature weekly in the major state-wide papers in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria with full colour images.

The first wave of activity has already begun. It was planned for the low season and the lead-up to Easter to ensure Queensland is top of mind for Australians planning a holiday. It will be followed by activity from April to July, which is perfect timing for the mid-year school holidays. The great thing about this campaign is that, even though all the advertising is under the banner of Endless Summer, each destination still retains its distinctive branding. Newspaper advertising is backed up by an extensive television advertising campaign along the same lines as the Where Else But Queensland ads in New South Wales and Victoria.

There are many Tourism Queensland cooperative campaigns available for package holidays through wholesalers and travel agents, but the Endless Summer campaign offers more opportunities for individual Queensland operators to get on board. Tourism Queensland has 55 domestic marketing campaigns running up until April to ensure our message is heard, but there were still some gaps we wanted to fill. Endless Summer will plug those gaps.

Make Time's success was remarkable in that it was an 'emergency campaign', put together very quickly in response to the events at the time. There was little time allowed for detailed planning and selling of advertising, yet it was an unprecedented success in achieving its goals. With Endless Summer, we have had more time to work closely with the media to offer great cooperative advertising rates of up to 50 per cent off the casual rate and to tailor it to market needs. The total investment in Endless Summer is more than \$600,000 and we are sure it will be money well spent for Queensland.

A recent Roy Morgan poll showed that unprompted awareness of Queensland as a holiday destination is almost double that of the next highest state following the Make Time campaign, indicating that marketing campaigns of this type drive sales, preference and awareness. Queensland now enjoys the highest awareness rate in Australia as a holiday destination as well as being the destination most Australians would like to go to for a holiday. We intend to stay number one. Endless Summer will ensure that images of Queensland, its friendly people, pristine beaches, rainforest and reef, outback and cities will remain a perfect holiday option for Australians.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

World Congress on IT 2002

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (10.20 a.m.), by leave: I would like to inform the House just how brightly the Smart State's star is shining in the world spotlight right now. Last week I helped showcase Queensland to leading international information and communication technologies representatives at the world's biggest IT conference. One thousand eight hundred delegates from all corners of the globe were in Adelaide last week for the World Congress on IT 2002 and I am proud to say that Queensland put on a fantastic show.

Seven award winning Queensland ICT companies won a national competition to present their innovative technologies at an IT Business Forum held in conjunction with the world congress. They left Adelaide with multiple leads to follow up after catching the eye of potential investors and partners from the lucrative American, European and Asia-Pacific markets. Braintree Communications, which specialises in the design and development of communications solutions, is already used by Telstra, Ericsson and Boeing in Australia but after last week is following up a number of export related business leads from several European countries. Another example is software developer Ephox. It already has clients like Citibank, Intel and Motorola but is now engaging in talks with potential channel partners that it met at the congress.

On Thursday, I hosted a Queensland government business breakfast for more than 120 invited delegates to the congress at which I spoke long and loud about the fantastic opportunities

and capabilities in Queensland's ICT industry. The Premier could not attend because of CHOGM commitments but via the big screen he told potential investors how Queensland is beautiful one day, smart the next. All delegates who attended the breakfast received a gift—a traditional Aboriginal message stick. My message to them was that Queensland is a can-do state that is open for business with an ICT sector growing substantially faster than the rest of Australia.

We have world leading companies such as IBM, Oracle, Boeing, Red Hat, RSA Security, Indus International and ADC that have chosen to have a presence in Queensland. That is because the Smart State is leading the way in developing world-class ICT solutions, not to mention our unique business advantages in terms of climate—and I might add that it was as cold on a summer's day in Adelaide as it is on a winter's day in Brisbane. We have the lifestyle, proximity to the lucrative Asia-Pacific market, low business costs, a highly skilled multilingual work force and are the lowest taxed state.

The high-tech corridor between Brisbane and the Gold Coast is home to some of the leading lights in Australia's global multimedia and games industry while Queensland has the largest concentration of e-security R&D in the Southern Hemisphere. The Premier showed great foresight and leadership when he created this portfolio. Last week on the world stage Queensland stood out as the leader, with other states following this lead and devoting portfolios to innovation and the information economy, recognising the importance of innovation to Australia's future.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

Sessional Order

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.23 a.m.), by leave: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing and Sessional Orders, the order of business for today and tomorrow shall be as follows—

Today—normal business for a Tuesday and

Tomorrow—normal business for a Wednesday.

Motion agreed to.

Ms BLIGH: I advise honourable members that the House will continue to meet past 7.30 p.m. this day. The House can break for dinner at 7 p.m. and resume its sitting at 8.30 p.m. Government business will take precedence for the remainder of the day's sitting except for a 30-minute adjournment debate.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 2 of 2002*.

Ordered to be printed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Forde Inquiry

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 a.m.): The measure of any government is the way in which it cares for the vulnerable and disadvantaged and particularly the young children who are under its care. This week we have seen the Beattie Labor government turning its back on children in this state by walking away from the recommendations of the Forde inquiry.

The Forde inquiry should have been a landmark in this state. It should have seen a response of substance and it should have seen a response of real commitment. Instead, we have seen just a stunt. Already the Treasurer of this state has turned his back on what has been recommended out of the Forde inquiry. For the Treasurer of this state to say that Leneen Forde had it wrong in recommending the \$103 million is a sudden turnaround from a succession of ministers who have said that they were going to endeavour to implement the Leneen Forde inquiry recommendation of \$103 million.

Not only that, tragically, over the past three years some 49 children who have been in contact with the Department of Families because of their dysfunctional family backgrounds have died. Last year we saw over 2,000 vulnerable young children on a long waiting list for assessment for care and protection. These were young children who were at risk of sexual and physical abuse. But again, the Beattie Labor government failed these most vulnerable of our children, these children who faced great dangers owing to their family backgrounds.

It is a disgrace, because while the Treasurer turns his back on these children we see that this government is able to spend tens of thousands of dollars on continual, full-page colour ads in newspapers throughout this state. We have seen \$29 million spent on a footbridge, but this government still cannot spend the money on the Leneen Forde recommendations for these vulnerable children. What is more important—the vulnerable young children of this state or a footbridge and full-page colour ads that continually praise the Premier and his party? It is an absolute disgrace. The government has failed—

Time expired.

CHOGM Spouses Program

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): It is perhaps fortunate that I have only two minutes in which to speak, because I am caught between being speechless and finding myself with a veritable avalanche of words. It was to my increasing outrage that I read in the *Weekend Australian* of the CHOGM spouses program that was designed to occupy spouses whilst their partners 'thrash out political problems'. The program included a fashion parade of Janette Howard's favourite designers and a forum on women's health and cancer prevention—suggesting, it seems, that all spouses of Commonwealth leaders must be women.

It is beyond belief that in the year 2002, the 21st century, we cannot get past anachronistic stereotypes—in this case that partners must be women. That unveils our unconscious arrogance that, although we are a progressive state, we still cannot grasp that women are equals on the world stage. The article hastened to assure us that Peter Davis, partner of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, had been invited to the fashion parade, but Mrs Howard's office was unable to confirm whether he would attend the fashion fest. It is absolutely insulting to isolate Mr Davis as an extreme case and to even suggest that the most appropriate welcome and hospitality that we can extend to him is a fashion parade and a forum on women's health.

If there was a genuine desire to provide for partners during CHOGM, organisers should have sought to promote inclusive activities and events without paying lip-service to modern notions of equality and women's rights. To host a fashion parade and women's health forum as an acceptable form of entertainment for the spouses whilst the men were off solving the world's problems denigrates not only the women who attend CHOGM as heads of governments but also their partners, both men and women, who are incredible achievers in their own right.

If we are struggling with the notion of women as heads of governments and are unable to accommodate their male partners, I cannot imagine how we will be able to adapt to heads of governments who have same sex partners. I am astounded that in the year 2002 we are unable to move beyond the stereotypes that prevailed 20 years ago. If this attitude continues to prevail in the institutions of the Commonwealth, that is a sad indictment on the progressive nature of that forum.

Time expired.

Atherton Hospital

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.29 a.m.): We have all heard of the recent strikes and protests at the Cairns Base Hospital. I remind the House that when the Health Minister is asked about the lack of general outpatient services she continually reminds us that all health districts have received record funding and that patients are never turned away. Apart from blaming the federal government, the Health Minister also urges people to see their local GP about minor ills and chills rather than attend their local hospital.

I will relate to the House the recent experience of one of my constituents in Atherton. On a Saturday evening, the gentleman was stricken with severe back pain and spasms in the muscles of his back. He was able to drive himself the 500-odd metres to the Atherton Hospital to seek treatment. However, he was told that his condition was not an emergency and that he could not be treated. Staff informed him that there was not much that could be done for him unless they

were able to see a spasm take place. As it was considered that he was not suffering an emergency condition, staff were unable to spend time making observations.

However, the pain worsened and the gentleman's wife had to be called to drive him home. He was so affected by pain that he was unable to drive himself home, even though it was a distance of only some 500 metres. His condition continued to worsen. Not only was he unable to sleep but he was unable to lie down. In the early hours of Sunday morning he again telephoned the Atherton Hospital only to be told that after hours the hospital serviced only accidents, heart attacks and emergencies.

This unfortunate gentleman's condition worsened during the remainder of the night, with the Atherton Hospital just 500 metres away. Finally he reattended the Atherton Hospital on Sunday morning, at which stage a sister told him she would telephone him when a doctor was present at the hospital. At last, just after 9 a.m., the gentleman was seen by a doctor who had access to his charts and other records.

I fail to see where in this entire episode there was any benefit to this unfortunate man from the Health Minister's record budget. It also belies the minister's claim that patients are never turned away and that services at the Atherton Hospital have not been downgraded.

Labrador Early Enhancement and Prevention Project

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (10.30 a.m.): I rise to inform the House of a recent announcement made by the Minister for Health, the Hon. Wendy Edmond, of the approval of funding for the continuation of the Labrador Early Enhancement and Prevention Project at Labrador Primary School. The recurrent funding of \$51,600 is allocated to continue a joint project involving Child and Youth Mental Health Services and Labrador State School. The program has been running successfully since 1 January 2001.

I lobbied the Minister for Health for an extension of funding because the program provides children with greater access to mental health services and ensures children at risk of developing mental health problems receive timely and appropriate services. Through this program, parents are given greater understanding of mental health issues and, through early intervention, the project helps to contain or eliminate emotional and behavioural problems in children.

I commend the minister for recognising this valuable and wonderful project and I thank her for visiting the Labrador Primary School and meeting with the staff and students. I am proud to be part of a government that supports prevention programs and cares for the future of our young children.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Child Abuse

Mr HORAN (10.31 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the remarks made by the Minister for Families last year to this parliament—

Yes, I would like to see us reach the target set by Leneen Forde and we have a systematic program for increasing the budget for child protection each year.

The Treasurer has now told the media that Leneen Forde was wrong to suggest the government needed to spend an extra \$103 million a year to bring child protection funding up to national standards. The Premier has one minister saying that Leneen Forde's budget recommendations should be met, while his Treasurer says that they should not. I ask the Premier: why has he abandoned the most vulnerable people in the state—children at risk of abuse?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am delighted that he has asked me about the Forde inquiry because for many years governments in this state have run away from the issue of child abuse. This government has not. We realise this is a very significant issue which affects the children of this state. What have we done? We did not run away from it. We established an open process through the Forde Inquiry—headed by a former governor, a very distinguished person—as part of the healing process. From memory, we have increased the injection of funds by 50 per cent into the area of child protection, and we will continue to do that. From memory, it is projected that over the coming years up to 2003, those funds will reach an

amount of about \$100 million. Frankly, the reason for this is the state's disgraceful record on the issue of child abuse in institutions. We have not run away from that. We have faced it head on.

I recall a meeting with the previous Minister for Families, Anna Bligh, and church leaders, a practice continued by the current minister, Judy Spence. This government has established a fund which initially contained \$1 million and has been increased to \$2 million, which met an election commitment. That fund is available to help victims re-establish their lives. It was designed specifically to help them. We have sought to encourage churches to contribute funds as well because this was not just government-run institutions, this was church-run institutions as well. I am encouraged by the fact that the Uniting Church has indicated that it is going to put in \$15,000—the Minister for Families tells me they have already put in \$15,000. There have been some other donations from particular parishes. I would be keen to see the other churches make a contribution. I do acknowledge that a number of them have indeed made contributions through legal action—and I use 'contribution' in a general sense.

That fund is an important fund to help people rebuild their lives. I have had discussions with Judy Spence about the operation of that fund and how we can assess and continue to assess the distribution of it to help the victims. We have increased the base funding of this department more than any other department in government to face up to this issue head on. What we said was that we would grow the assistance so that those people who are out providing the help could grow with it. There would be no sense in simply throwing in all the money in one year when we have not trained people, have not built infrastructure and have not developed to assist people. That is logical and that is sensible, which is why—in a tiered sense—we have built it every year. This is an area of heartache and pain. We are doing our best to assist and we will continue to do it.

Public Liability Insurance

Mr HORAN: I refer the Treasurer to the massive increases in premium costs for public liability insurance, a problem that is forcing community organisations to close down all over Queensland. I also refer to the 8.5 per cent stamp duty charged by the state government on public liability insurance premiums. What is the Treasury estimate of the windfall the government will receive through increased stamp duty returns from public liability insurance premiums? Will the government now reduce the rate of stamp duty for community organisations to offset the growing costs of their public liability insurance?

Mr MACKENROTH: The issue of public liability insurance is one that the government is very concerned about. We released our task force report some two weeks ago, and I think next month we are going to have a meeting in Canberra—if ever the Commonwealth can get it together, although I see this morning that the person it appointed to do that report has withdrawn and is not prepared to do the work for the Commonwealth government. But we will sit down and look at that.

In relation to stamp duty, I understand the stamp duty percentage is the same as it was a couple of years ago when the now opposition was in government; it has not changed. We will always look at all government revenue measures when we put together the budget and look at the services that we need to provide. But, of course, if we want to reach the \$103 million that the Leader of the Opposition just raised, one of the things we need to do that is revenue. I would like to answer a little bit about what the Leader of the Opposition said in relation to that because whilst what was in the *Courier-Mail* on Monday in relation to what I said is correct, it is not completely what I said. What I did say is that this year families will be number one priority in our budget. The Minister for Families has put forward arguments in relation to funding for her department and we will make it the number one priority. I think we need to look at that figure. I mean, Forde brought down a report in 1999 looking at funding which had been spent in the past by the government of which the Leader of the Opposition was a member, which was the previous budgets that they would have looked at, and said it was not sufficient. What I said is that I do not believe that anyone can simply pick a figure of money—that is, \$103 million—and say that that is going to solve the problems, because money is not what it is all about.

I would just like to give the House some statistics in relation to New South Wales and Queensland in relation to investigations of child abuse. In New South Wales the figure for finalised investigations in the 2000-01 year was 48.6 per cent; in Queensland it was 55.9. That would suggest the amount of money we are spending here is being very wisely spent. The more interesting figure is actually substantiation. In New South Wales they are getting substantiation in

only 37 per cent. In Queensland it is 67 per cent. I think the really interesting figure is that in New South Wales 38 per cent of child abuse reports to their department are not even dealt with by the department, they are sent to other agencies. In Queensland it is only 14.

CHOGM

Mr CUMMINS: I refer the Premier to the fact that, apart from the stunning personal endorsement from the Commonwealth Secretary General, Don McKinnon, the state government's CHOGM reception at Twin Waters last Thursday on the Sunshine Coast was special for many reasons, and I ask: could he please outline the profiling for the state and state products that took place at this historic gathering?

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Kawana was at the reception and he knows that it was a success. Before I answer the question, I inform the member for Ashgrove that I, too, support the return of the Parthenon marbles. I want to make that very clear.

Mr Mackenroth: You didn't demonstrate, though, did you?

Mr BEATTIE: No, I did not. But I acknowledge the member's right to do so. In fact, while we are talking about peaceful demonstrations, can I say that those who demonstrated did so in the Australian way—democratically and peacefully. They are a credit to themselves and the causes they pursued.

The state government reception was a real attention grabber and an obvious CHOGM highlight. The Leader of the Opposition and others were there, including key ministers and local members. More than 600 people, the majority of them from international delegations, enjoyed a special taste of Queensland. For mine, the Aurukun indigenous artists' works won me. In my view, their landmark exhibition of indigenous sculpture being profiled to such an audience is important in assisting them to take up opportunities and taking Cape York culture to the world. For the information of the House, I table two brochures which they produced on those works called *Old way, New way*, which I hope members will have a look at. They are about indigenous art, of which we should all be very proud.

It was truly exciting to have been part of giving indigenous people from Cape York Peninsula the chance to share the international limelight of CHOGM. Eight artists from the western cape community of Aurukun created those sculpted images based on their traditional carving designs. They were spectacular.

Commonwealth delegation representatives, including Secretary General Don McKinnon, were on hand to be welcomed to Queensland with some unique tastes of Queensland. The menu included kangaroo, crocodile and Queensland wines, which reflected the rich geographic spread of our state—the outback, the tropics, the coast, as well as the vineyards of southern Queensland. I promised that we would promote Queensland wines, and we did not let anybody down.

Mr Schwarten: And beer, too.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, and Queensland beer. The creative Queensland dishes were complemented by a selection of our wines, including Albert River 1999 merlot from Tamborine and some of Ballandean Estate's best chardonnay and non-vintage brut. By the way, I point out that next week in New York we will be serving Queensland wines at a prestigious business lunch where we will be promoting investment in Queensland.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Some people obviously do not get off the wine. I want the world to know that our wines and food are equal or superior to anything on the planet. For the information of the House, I table the menu, which included some of the things I mentioned. It demonstrates Queensland produce at its best being taken to the world.

The issue is how we must take these products to the world and sell them. That is why, if we are involved in the tourism or the wine or fine food industries, it is important that we promote them to the world. We have the best and we need to share it. When we are on the international stage, as we were at CHOGM, we need to take advantage of it. That is exactly what we did. Can I say to the local member that the people of the Sunshine Coast were marvellous in their handling of CHOGM, and I would be grateful if the member, on behalf of the government, expressed our appreciation.

Queensland Rail, Livestock Transport

Mr JOHNSON: I refer the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads to Queensland Rail's continued failure to meet the demands of the livestock industry, and I ask him to confirm that Queensland Rail now proposes to withdraw livestock transport between Quilpie and Charleville, Winton and Longreach, Cloncurry and Julia Creek and from the Nebo saleyard. How can he support his statement in the media that Queensland Rail has increased the number of livestock wagons to 1,020 when a print-out from the QR computer, which I now table, substantiates claims that QR now has only 624 wagons available for use? Is it not true that the livestock wagons constructed since 1999 were ordered by me as minister and that, despite the condemning of older wagons, he has not placed an order for one livestock wagon during his four years as minister?

Mr BREDHAUER: I am not familiar with the list tabled by the member. The advice to me from QR indicates that currently there are 1,020 livestock wagons available for transporting livestock in Queensland, and that that is an increase from 894 in 1999. It is true that the latest order for the construction of livestock wagons was placed by the honourable member for Gregory when he was the Minister for Transport. I have endeavoured to accelerate the program for the construction of those wagons in an effort to try to meet the significant increase in demand which was experienced by QR for livestock freighting last year.

Can I say also that QR is the only railway in Australia that is still freighting livestock. We intend to continue our commitment to the livestock industry and to continue to freight livestock in Queensland, contrary to assertions that are being made by Agforce and members of the opposition in various parts of the state. Notwithstanding that, about 75 per cent of livestock in Queensland is transported by road, and we are trying to improve the efficiency of our livestock transport in consultation with our livestock consultative committee so that we can meet as much of the increase in demand—

Mr Johnson: So Quilpie, Winton and Cloncurry will be retained as principal rail heads?

Mr BREDHAUER: We are trying to improve the efficiency of our livestock operations so that we can meet as much of the increased demand that is currently being generated and was particularly evident last year. In relation to the particular rail heads that the honourable member mentioned, no decisions have been made by QR in respect of those issues. They are still the subject of consideration and discussion between QR and me.

Interruption.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Stafford, I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery the Vice Governor of the Province of Camarines Sur in the Republic of the Philippines, the Hon. Imelda A. Papin.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed.

Ansett Airlines; Aviation Industry

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the collapse of the Tesna bid for Ansett Airlines, and I ask: what can the state government do to assist Ansett employees and what are the implications of this decision for the aviation industry in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: Before answering the question, I note that I can see the Minister for Transport is following the lead of the Deputy Premier. This husky voice thing is becoming a bit fashionable.

Mr Mackenroth: I hope his is not as bad as mine.

Mr BEATTIE: But they actually talk sense. There is a clear difference.

Queensland is rapidly becoming the aviation centre of Australia. While we were all very disappointed with the news last week that the Tesna bid for Ansett had collapsed, the decision highlighted how the centre of gravity for the aviation industry in Australia had shifted towards Queensland. The real tragedy of the Ansett collapse is the loss of jobs right around Australia. Fortunately, we have processes in place to assist Queenslanders who have been made redundant by the collapse of Ansett.

The state government, following a submission to cabinet by the Minister for Employment, Matt Foley, will provide up to \$5,000 assistance to each Queensland staff member through the Worker Assistance Program, which has been developed specifically to help the victims of mass retrenchments. This will help each worker make the transition to other jobs in other industries. Arrangements are being put in place to offer job preparation, training and employment assistance to the Queensland Ansett workers.

With the demise of Ansett mark 2 there are now only two major players in the Australian aviation industry—Qantas, which is the dominant player, and Virgin Blue, located in Queensland. Both companies already have significant operations in Queensland and both are in the process of expanding. As we know, the head office for Virgin Blue is in Brisbane. This government attracted it here. Virgin Blue has already generated approximately 1,100 jobs in Queensland and hundreds more throughout Australia.

Qantas is also active in Queensland and is generating a significant number of new jobs. Prior to the arrival of Virgin Blue and the collapse of Ansett the centre of gravity in Australian aviation was somewhere between Melbourne and Sydney. That has now shifted to somewhere near the New South Wales border with Queensland and moving closer to Brisbane every day. We also have the Australian Airlines hub being established at Cairns with 350 direct jobs in aviation. This government negotiated directly with Qantas, including Geoff Dixon, because we wanted to make sure we were going to get it.

Qantas has embarked on a number of important initiatives in Queensland, including a maintenance facility for 767 aircraft at Brisbane airport and a state-of-the-art meal preparation service, Snapfresh, which provides something like 20 million meals a year and which I opened only recently. Earthworks have started on stage 1 of the Qantas maintenance facility, and planning for stage 2 is under way. This will create 500 new jobs in Queensland.

Recently, with the Honourable Minister for Employment and the Minister for State Development, I opened one of the education aspects of our aviation strategy, that is, Aviation Australia. We were there for that opening not only because it is a symbol of skilling and education but also because it is developing a whole new industry here, that is, aviation.

Needle Vending Machines

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I direct a question to the Minister for Health. Along with the issue of the prevention of transmittable diseases through shared use of needles, the needle exchange program was introduced to allow an opportunity for hospital staff to offer counselling and rehabilitation. While most hospital staff feel powerless to make any inquiry of a person wanting needles regarding age or proposed use, let alone offer counselling, proposals for needle vending machines completely remove any opportunities for supervision or help. I ask: is the minister still considering the introduction of needle vending machines and, if so, how does she propose to control access to needles by, for example, young children?

Mrs EDMOND: This is a very important question. There are a couple of issues that I should address. Staff who work for Queensland Health or any of the agencies that are in the needle availability programs in Queensland have to have mandatory training on both assessing people's health and giving them advice on how to get help if they wish to stop using needles and other advice on the risks of injecting drugs. We are the only state to do that. I launched that program a couple of years ago. I know that some of the other states are now taking up that initiative to introduce it into their needle availability programs. I recommend that they do that, because it is important that needle availability programs do provide advice and support, not just hand out the packages.

When I became minister they used to hand out large quantities of needles—boxes of up to 150. I stopped that and set maximum numbers that they could give out depending on where they were, so that in rural areas or areas where people did not have access to a needle availability program they might be able to access the maximum of 20, but generally much smaller amounts than that. That is one of the major steps I took. It is probably as a result of that that we are starting to see a decline in the number of needles that are being made available, while people are still able to access them as they need them.

In terms of needle vending machines—that was a comment that was made as part of my trip to Europe. Certainly the vending machines we were looking at are only just being developed, but I thought they offered a lot of promise. They are vending machines which require a person to insert a used needle to get back a clean needle. I thought that would address some of the problems

with discarding needles while also making them available after hours rather than having needle availability programs staffed.

So the vending machines we are looking at are those where you have to shove an old needle in to get one out. I thought that was a good move. At this stage it is just being developed in Europe. For the reasons I have just suggested, we said we would be interested in obtaining more information on that when it becomes available. I thought that was an innovative way of handling this issue. Of course, it does not provide expert advice on where people can get help. We would still insist on that in our needle availability programs. It would be a way of handling a small demand in some places, but it means that staff have to be available late at night and at other times when people are seeking those services. I think it is something on which we should keep an open mind. Obviously, in general terms we would have to look at where the machines would be made available. We were looking at having them available in places such as hospital foyers or something like that—not out on the street.

Additional Year of Schooling

Ms STRUTHERS: I ask the Minister for Education—the minister for learning and earning: is the minister aware of evidence supporting the introduction of a preparatory year of schooling?

Ms BLIGH: I know the interest that the member and the schools in her electorate have in the proposal that our government is pursuing. People who have been listening to the debate over the past couple of days about these proposals may have shared my surprise at the somewhat remarkable assertions and revelations from the Leader of the Liberal Party that he was not aware of any research that shows that an additional full-time year of school has a positive outcome on educational attainment. I am very pleased to advise the House that that is not the case with the current Minister for Education.

In February 2000, a working party of high-level government officers was convened to provide advice to the government on strengthening the early years of schooling. The group was tasked with systematically analysing all available research on the subject. In total 69 international published research papers were examined in detail. What did this evidence show? Firstly, it strongly suggests that participation in quality preschool education facilitates the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills and is a predictor of subsequent success in formal schooling. It showed that participation in a full-time preschool education is more predictive of success at formal schooling than participation in a part-time preschool program. It showed that more participation in quality preschool education immediately prior to school entry is a predictor of subsequent success in formal schooling than less participation. It showed that older children in a school age cohort are likely to perform better in formal schooling than their younger peers. And finally, it showed that the most significant benefits of quality preschool education accrue to children who have special learning and developmental needs or are at risk of educational failure because of their economic and/or social circumstances.

Members would be interested to know that of the 69 international research papers that were examined by this group, 43 were available to the member for Robina when he was Minister for Education; that is, they were published in the years leading up to his time in the ministry or, indeed, during the time of his ministry. In fact, nine were actually released while he was the Minister for Education.

Let me refer to the findings of just two of the reports that were released when the member for Robina was the minister responsible for this portfolio. Firstly, there was a paper from 1997 titled 'The effect of full-day kindergarten on student achievement—a meta-analysis'. This meta-analysis, that is, an analysis of 23 other published research surveys, found that overall students who attend full-day kindergarten manifested significantly greater achievement than did students who attended half-day preschool. Even if the minister had failed to notice this substantial body of research, surely he might have heard the message from parents. Parents know what their children need, and parents have been telling our government for months and years that they want more assistance in the early childhood years, and we are going to deliver it.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Maroochydore, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from St Patrick's College at Shorncliffe in the electorate of Sandgate.

Mental Health Offenders

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to the fact that when the new Mental Health Act was passed by parliament she voted against ensuring that violent offenders are escorted while on leave. Given revelations that mentally ill murderers are being released unescorted into the community on leave within 15 and a half months on average, I ask: can the minister guarantee that mentally ill murderers will not be let unescorted into the community within 15 months of their offence?

Mrs EDMOND: The member opposite continually twists and warps everything she says. What she was seeking at that time was mandatory, and we were saying that these matters should be looked at and investigated and that leave should be approved through a proper process. The new act takes very strongly into consideration the issue of community safety. The previous act did not, but the new act does.

These things have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. One of the people named in the media as a killer living near schoolchildren is a woman who, in a very tragic case of post-natal depression, killed her newborn child. I do not think there is anyone in this House who feels under threat from such a person when she is well enough to live in the community. These decisions have to be made on a case-by-case basis. I am not going to give guarantees that we are not going to let such women back into the community when they are well enough to resume their role.

Police Flying Squad

Mr PEARCE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. In January of this year the Beattie government established a police flying squad. Has the minister received any reports as to how the squad is performing?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question. The first thing I say is that there are two types of squads. The first is the flying squad, which the member referred to, which is based in Brisbane. The other type of squad is the tactical crime squad, which we are establishing in the capital city but which will serve right around regional Queensland.

The first seven officers of the flying squad commenced work at the beginning of this year. They have already undertaken a number of very valuable exercises in regional Queensland. The new squad is based in Brisbane, for obvious reasons, and can be flown out at a moment's notice to any part of the state where there are problems. These could be problems against the person, problems against property or, indeed, drug related matters. Flying squad officers will work hand in hand with the local police. It is not as if they are going to move in and take over; they will be there to cooperate with the local police officers.

This squad is an important part of our strategy, and indeed was promised by our government at the last state election. The first success was a joint operation with local detectives in cleaning up crime in central Queensland during the month of February. Over a four-day period the squad assisted in dealing with 20 persons on 48 charges. The squad finalised 67 crime reports, executed 17 search warrants and recovered some \$35,000 worth of stolen property. Another operation in the Bundaberg district resulted in seven people being charged with 13 offences. This included one person being charged with cultivating 532 cannabis plants and another person being charged with possessing 3.4 kilograms of cannabis and one kilogram of cannabis seeds.

These are just two examples of some of the work the new flying squad is performing. As I said, it is early days yet. Part of the flying squad is in place and, as regional members would know, more and more of our tactical crime squads are being set up in regional Queensland.

Moreton Bay Islands

Mr FLYNN: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. The issue of problems besetting the Moreton Bay islands has been around for many years and shows signs of being around for many more. Leaving aside the myriad allegations surrounding the dark deeds involving land deals on these islands, I ask: whilst I realise that the genesis of the problem arose at a time when this government was not in office, does the Labor government intend to secure any financial assistance for some disadvantaged landowners, particularly in the area of sewerage? If the government does not consider that it has any financial obligations in this matter, will it support the statement that there is still a problem? What does it suggest might be done to progress to resolution?

Mr MACKENROTH: This question should rightly go to the Minister for Local Government, but I will answer the member. The government in its last term considered the requests of land-holders on the islands in relation to the lack of services. One of the things we need to understand about the islands is that the land was sold without any services whatsoever. The land was simply subdivided. There were no services—no roads, no sewerage, no water—and people bought a block of land. If they could find the pegs they were lucky. That is basically what they got. They paid probably appropriate prices for that. They did not pay for any services. If we look at when the land was sold we see that prices were fairly cheap. Buyers got the land cheap because they did not pay to have any services.

Of course, what happens as time goes on is that people start to demand that governments provide those services. In this case it is the local government, because it is its responsibility to provide the services. We looked at the issue and we released a report as to how some of the problems of numbers of blocks on the islands could be overcome and how we would go about funding some of the service problems. I think from memory—I could be wrong—we actually increased the rate of subsidy on those, particularly for the islands. We said to the Redland Shire Council, 'The government is prepared to give you a greater subsidy than the 40 per cent'. I think it was 50 per cent, if I remember that report correctly. So we did agree to do that.

One of the other things we endeavoured to do was look at the revenue coming from rates on the islands and what actually was being spent by the Redland Shire Council, allowing for its operations and allowing for the fact that people who live on the islands also use the main roads in the Redland shire and its other services. We looked at whether there was a proportion of money actually being spent on services on the islands. I am no longer in charge of the relevant portfolio, so I do not have the details of what work was done in relation to that, but the government did respond to the problems of the people. I do know that of recent times the member's party has been on the islands and is attempting to solve the sins of the 1960s and early 1970s, and I wish him good luck.

Needles for Diabetics

Mrs LAVARCH: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. What is the Beattie government's commitment to ensuring people with diabetes continue to have access to free needles?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for the question. I have to admit, I thought this was a question the member for Gladstone might have asked me when she indicated she was going to ask me a question about needles.

I report with great pleasure to the House that just over a year ago—on 1 January 2001—the Beattie government commenced the patient co-payment for the supply of needles and syringes to insulin dependent diabetics when the Commonwealth government refused to meet that cost. The government's aim was to support an estimated 22,000 Queenslanders who previously had to pay out of their own pockets \$8 for a box of 100 needles or \$5 a box if they had a concession card. The number of people who are eligible for the co-payment under the national diabetes supply scheme has steadily grown, with more than 25,000 Queenslanders now having access to free needles to manage their condition.

According to Diabetes Australia Queensland figures, over 7.1 million needles, or 71,177 boxes, were distributed last year at a cost to the Queensland government of \$427,170. Forty-seven thousand and sixty-eight boxes were distributed to people eligible for the concession. So it is pleasing that the co-payment is meeting the government's priority of providing safer and more supportive communities and a better quality of life for all Queenslanders. As a government we are maintaining our commitment with a budget allocation of \$434,000 this year.

For the information of members, I state that type 1 diabetes, also known as juvenile onset diabetes, is one of the most common serious childhood diseases in Australia. It is caused by an auto-immune process resulting in the loss of insulin production. Therefore, people with the condition depend on one or more insulin injections each day. The condition accounts for 10 per cent to 15 per cent of all people with diabetes. When I announced the co-payment, Diabetes Australia Queensland's—or DAQ—chief executive officer said the organisation was delighted to have this support from the state government and that the announcement was a triumph for Queensland diabetics after a long battle against discrimination. The Beattie government's action means that both diabetics and injecting drug users are able to access clean needles free of charge.

Mental Health Offenders

Mr SEENEY: I refer the Minister for Health to the review of forensic mental health services ordered in her absence earlier this year and specifically the recommendation that a leave review committee consisting of senior clinicians of the service and senior operational management representatives be established as a 'brake' on the early release of potentially dangerous mental health offenders. I also refer to the fact that the report was critical of forensic patients being released early into the community from secure wards not on the basis of clinical care but on the basis of bed availability. Given that the minister is now relying on the same bureaucrats who reported last year that the mental health system was functioning well and also presided over the infamous escapes of Mark Briscoe and Claude John Gabriel, I ask: how reliable and independent are these same bureaucrats now? How can the community believe that community safety is suddenly of a much higher priority than it was three months ago?

Mrs EDMOND: One of the intriguing things about the debate in recent times in relation to this report is that while the opposition has gone around bagging the report it then complained that it had not been given the opportunity to look at it. That raises the question: is it bagging something it has not actually read? It is on the Net. Is that what it is doing? Heaven forbid! Is that the quality of the opposition we have? Do we have an opposition that goes around harping, whingeing and criticising something it has not read?

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The minister is misleading the House. We have read it. Her office refused to give it to us because it said it was going to cabinet.

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

Mrs EDMOND: It has been available on the web. Last Friday those opposite were complaining about it but were also whingeing that they had not received a copy to read.

I am delighted with the findings of the report. It states up-front in the executive summary—did those opposite read this?—

Queensland is fortunate in having arguably the most coherent legislative framework for dealing with mentally abnormal offenders.

It goes on to say that we are addressing those issues. Indeed, an analysis of the recommendations and the work that we are doing as part of the mental health review, which is already in the act that started last week—

Mr Johnson: Did you write that?

Mrs EDMOND: The member for Gregory is casting dreadful aspersions on a highly regarded international professional in this area. That is a disgraceful thing to say.

I am delighted to say that the vast majority of the recommendations are already being enacted as part of the new Mental Health Act 2000, and that is acknowledged in the report. The criticisms relate to actions under the previous legislation and previous problems with accommodation, such as the fact that there was not suitable accommodation. We know that there were problems with the old act. That is why we have been through a massive reform process. That is why over time we have addressed legislative problems and facility problems. We are ensuring that they meet world standards. We are now addressing rehabilitation and procedural matters within the confines of that act.

Mobile Phone Access, Indigenous Peoples

Ms PHILLIPS: I ask the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy: what is the current level of mobile phone access for our indigenous populations in the more remote parts of the state?

Mr SeeneY: What about access for parliamentarians? Come out to my electorate. You won't give us a satellite phone.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Callide clearly is in need of telephone access, because the Police Union is having trouble getting on to him at the moment. But I am told he has no problem whatsoever ringing the member for Southern Downs on a regular basis.

There are now more mobile phones in the Australian community than there are landlines. Mobile phones are increasingly being seen as a method of essential communication not only for individuals but also for businesses. Telecommunications is of course a federal responsibility, but the Queensland government is doing its part to help people particularly in regional and remote Queensland get better access to telecommunications.

Members would be well aware of Mornington Island in the gulf, but they would not be aware that it will soon be high and dry when it comes to telecommunications. The township on Mornington Island is Gunama, but when it comes to funding mobile phone access there is no help for that community like there is for other communities throughout Queensland. The people of Gunama have a right to have access to mobile phones on the same terms as other people in the community. The Commonwealth has a funding program—and I give it credit for this funding program—to provide access to mobile phone towers in communities with a population of 500 people and above.

Mr Johnson: How much are you putting in?

Mr LUCAS: How many people does Gunama have? It has double that figure of 500. It has 1,114 people according to 1999 ABS figures. So why was it excluded? Why can't the people on that island have access to these phones? Because bureaucrats and boffins in the federal department of communications applied a rigid, inflexible rule which says that in 1996, when the census results were collected, Gunama was not a gazetted town and therefore it got no access. Those 1,114 people were not on the moon in 1996. They were still living there. They were still in that community. They were still real people. They were no different from people in other communities, but they miss out because of rigid bureaucrats applying different rules to them. That is grossly unfair.

Applications for Networking the Nation funding close today. Last week at the online council I raised the issue with Senator Alston. To his credit, he said that he would look into it. I call on Senator Alston to come down hard on those bureaucrats and to tell them that the people on Mornington Island should be treated like people in the rest of Australia rather than an unfortunate special case which is ruled ineligible. It is about time we gave people in indigenous parts of Queensland the same rights to access that the rest of us would expect, not just in urban Queensland but in rural and remote communities as well.

The member for Gregory asked what the Queensland government is doing with respect to telecommunications. I can tell him what we are doing. We did not get \$30 billion from the sale of Telstra and then spend \$173 million of that in Queensland. We spent \$200 million in Queensland getting results.

Government Advertising

Mr QUINN: I refer the Premier to a flood of full-page newspaper advertisements over the last five days such as the one I am holding up featuring his photograph and containing messages on everything from CHOGM to education. I also refer the Premier to his *Return to honest government in Queensland* election document which he launched when he was Opposition Leader and pledged, and I quote his words verbatim—

A Labor government would seek to legislate to eliminate expensive taxpayer funded media advertising featuring ministers of the government.

I ask: after four years in government, where is this legislation?

Mr BEATTIE: Let me make it absolutely clear: I have no regrets about promoting Queensland. I have no regrets about promoting Queensland, and I will do it at every opportunity. When the leaders from 51 nations around the world come to our state, the leader of the state should be used to help promote the state. It is that simple. That is what is called leadership. Members will notice that at the bottom of each one of those ads there are contact numbers for investment opportunities, promotion for tourism and every other opportunity.

I stress that when this state holds major events such as CHOGM, which we encouraged here—we accepted the invitation and we were attacked by the opposition—we will be sure to take advantage of it. We make no apologies for that. We have had the successful visit of Her Majesty the Queen. We have been on the international stage in a way that is absolutely unprecedented. When we are on that international stage, we should do everything we can to attract investment and tourists. This is about jobs, jobs, jobs for Queenslanders. I will get out there and do everything I can to promote this state.

Yesterday we had the Republic of South Africa President Thabo Mbeki here in this building for the first time. I recall that when the National Party was in office a number of us went out and protested because we opposed apartheid. The ghosts of this parliament would have been rattling in their graves to see a black South African here. What a great day for this parliament to have a people's president here! That was because of CHOGM. Yes, we talked about trade and

investment. You bet I wanted every one of those thousands of public servants and journalists who were here to read the ad, because I want them to come back. I want them to holiday here. Let me make it clear: I want every one of them back here for holidays. I want them investing here.

While we are out promoting Queensland, the Leader of the Liberal Party is undermining this state, undermining Queensland. He is undermining the future interests of this state. I will promote Queensland. He can try to undermine it, but Queensland will win.

Indigenous Housing

Mr PITT: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to articles about indigenous housing funds in several regional newspapers which quote the federal Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Amanda Vanstone, and I ask: is he aware of these articles, and can he outline the facts in relation to Senator Vanstone's claims that she has authorised \$44 million in housing grants for indigenous communities in Queensland and the Northern Territory?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for his question. I thank him also for the efforts that he has gone to in the Yarrabah community and for the lobbying that he has done to provide better housing solutions for the residents there. When I first became aware of the newspaper articles describing Amanda Vanstone opening her purse and providing \$44 million to Queensland and the Northern Territory, where there is a most chronic need for Aboriginal housing, I was excited. I thought that perhaps over the last couple of years of constant stoning the drip had worn away, but in fact that was not the case. The truth of the matter is that she was just rebadging the old statement.

Ms Spence: The cruel hoax.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The cruel hoax, as the honourable member says.

The fact of the matter is that not one extra cent was provided over that which was agreed to in the latest round of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, and the figure of \$25 million has remained constant since the Howard government was elected. That is the amount of money that is made available to Queensland for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing.

I noticed that Senator Vanstone big-noted herself by saying that it represented a move from the 'build and abandon' cycle of providing indigenous housing by giving residents the skills to help themselves. It is all very well to talk about giving them the skills to help themselves, but they need actual money. This government has committed a program of \$176 million in 34 DOGIT communities. By the time that program comes to an end in a couple of years, that will not get even halfway.

In reality, the honourable senator has missed the mark. By announcing this \$44 million and getting down to the detail by talking about the number of houses and all the rest of it, she is attempting to mask one of the most shameful examples of neglect in that government's history. Anybody who has been to the Torres Strait or the cape will know of the severe overcrowding problems there. If it were occurring in Amanda Vanstone's own area she would do something about it. But because it is in the far tip of Queensland, she does not care a tinker's cuss about it.

In reality, we are going to continue to see huge problems in those communities unless something is done about housing. Queenslanders are now kicking the can for twice the amount of money that the federal government is putting in. That is unsustainable in anybody's language. If it is not redressed we are going to have even more problems in these communities. That is not helped by people like Amanda Vanstone attempting to cover their own shame by providing these sorts of hoaxes. I call on her to do the honourable thing and go and see Costello and get some extra dough.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Southern Downs I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Mooloolaba State School in the electorate of Maroochydore.

Mental Health Forensic Services

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Minister for Health to the review of forensic mental health services, which is critical of a culture within Queensland Health that fosters a 'liberal' attitude towards leave for serious violent offenders including murderers. I also refer to her continuous denial that anything was wrong with the system which resulted in the Premier and acting Health Minister ordering a review in her absence following a spate of escapes which occurred while she

was the responsible minister, and I ask: will she establish a system of independent oversight to ensure that the recommendations of the review are implemented and to monitor progress, or are we to expect more of the same?

Mrs EDMOND: I need to correct a statement that the opposition keeps making, and that is that I was not there when this investigation was ordered. If they look at the TV coverage they will see that I am the one standing next to the Premier out at Wolston Park with the director-general and the director of Mental Health Services.

Mr Beattie: I thought you stood very well.

Mrs EDMOND: I stood very well.

Mr Mackenroth: You were on annual leave.

Mrs EDMOND: I was on annual leave, but I was still available and was talking to the department on a regular basis, which I think shows the commitment.

Let us be quite clear about this. This was not done in my absence. It was not something that the Premier did without my absolute 100 per cent support; it was a proposal that we put to the Premier and he agreed with us and we were all happy to do it. So let us put that to bed. Secondly, I am happy to recommend the recommendations because the recommendations highlight the problems.

Again let me correct something that the opposition continues to say, and that is that we said there were no problems with the previous act. Why would we reform the previous act if there were no problems with it? I have stood in this House year in, year out since 1994 highlighting the problems with the previous act. Now members opposite are trying to have me say that there were no problems with it. Of course there were problems. It did not recognise movements between states. It did not recognise victims. It did not do any of those things. It also did not contain the strong recommendations that we put in the new act that they had to take into account the safety of the community. Professor Mullen recognises the problems in the previous act. He also recognises that we have done so much. He also talks about cutting edge legislation that this government has introduced that recognises victims and interstate problems. It also recognises that the treating teams of psychiatrists and nursing staff often put their patient ahead of other concerns. While that is hard to criticise—it shows the care involved in a very difficult area—it means that they sometimes overlook the broader issues. That is why Professor Mullen has recommended not a bureaucratic review, but a clinical review of the rehabilitation processes that are being undertaken. He has made some very good recommendations. He has said that they fit very well with the new act and there will be no need to amend it. There is one tiny amendment, as I outlined in my ministerial statement, that needs to be made to the new act.

All in all, I think this is a very good report that indicates how far this Beattie government has come in delivering world class mental health care and getting the balance right between the care of the patient and the care of the community and the safety of the community. That is what this report recognises. Before members opposite go running around repeating the lies of the member for Maroochydore, I would urge them to read the report.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. That is offensive and untrue. Will the minister please withdraw?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is unparliamentary.

Mrs EDMOND: I withdraw.

Tourism Industry

Ms JARRATT: I refer the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading to the fact that we are aware that international tourism slumped dramatically in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the US and that many of our major markets were severely affected. While I was delighted to hear her speak earlier of such positive news in the domestic tourism market, I ask: are the major international markets now showing signs of recovery?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the honourable member for her question. She has shown a great interest in tourism as the member for Whitsunday. Of course, tourism is one of our fastest growing industries and our biggest employer. The 11 September attacks created an immediate and dramatic fallout and Australia was hit just like everyone else. I am happy to report that things are now looking up, thanks partly to marketing campaigns run by Tourism Queensland and the Australian Tourist Commission in our key markets.

Queensland's biggest ever marketing campaign in the United Kingdom, the \$900,000 See Australia in Queensland campaign, has sparked a dramatic increase in bookings for Queensland holidays. Tourism Queensland launched the campaign in London late last year. It has resulted in booking figures with the leading travel wholesalers increasing up to 21 per cent on the same period for the previous year.

The See Australia in Queensland campaign was designed to show that Queensland offers great value for money for UK visitors to have a holiday. Major wholesalers Travelbag and Trailfinder reported combined bookings for Brisbane to Cairns of 14,879 for the period September to January. That is great news and comes hot on the heels of official statistics that showed a healthy hike in visitors from the United Kingdom to Australia in the 2001 calendar year. The increase in visitors from the UK proves that the work being done in this market to develop and sustain demand for Queensland experiences is paying dividends. It shows that people are willing to travel again and suggests that we can be confident of continued growth in the market from the United Kingdom and Europe to Queensland.

The latest statistics reveal a six per cent increase in visitor numbers from the UK to Australia in the year to December. They are encouraging figures. They are a positive sign for Queensland, because we attract nearly 46 per cent of international visitors to Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: The time for questions has expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Forde Inquiry; Capital Works Funding

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 a.m.): At this time of the year we move towards the preliminaries of the budget preparation. Already we have seen this government turn its back on two very important items of funding, that is, the recommendations of the Forde inquiry and the need for increased capital works in our state to overcome Queensland's woeful unemployment statistics. For the 17th month in a row, Queensland has recorded the worst unemployment figure in mainland Australia.

We are seeing in this state a slide into financial mismanagement. Already for the second year in a row it has been flagged that this state will face a budget deficit. The Treasurer is now laying the groundwork. Also, for the first time in 13 years we are seeing a decrease in the budgeted amounts for capital works. So despite Queensland having the worst unemployment rate in mainland Australia and despite there being a very direct link between capital works and the provision of good, full-time work opportunities, this government has cut capital works funding for the state. Over the past financial year, this government underspent on capital works for this state. It now plans to cut even further the capital works budget for this state.

We will see the deadline for Mr Beattie's promise of five per cent unemployment some time early next year. What do we have out of that cruel hoax played on this state? Over the past 17 months Queensland has received the worst unemployment figures in mainland Australia. We call ourselves a great state, we call ourselves a Smart State, but when it comes to the provision of jobs and looking after young Queenslanders who have worthwhile employment prospects, we come last.

For this great state to continually perform below the standard in terms of unemployment describes what this government is all about. It is big on propaganda and big on putting full-page colour ads in the paper. It breaks its promise that it made a few years ago when it was in opposition to provide open and honest government. We have tens of thousands of dollars spent on ads when young people are out of work. All the government can do is cover up with full-page colour ads. The reality of life, which the people are starting to realise and which the media is waking up to, is that for the 17th year in a row Queensland has recorded the worst unemployment statistics in Australia.

In June this year, this government was supposed to have a \$24 million operating surplus in its budget. When the budget was delivered, we finally saw that last year we had an \$820 million operating deficit. That deficit has to be funded either through cash surpluses, through loan funds or through some other means such as cutting back in future budgets. In the last financial year we had an \$820 million loss. This financial year, we are supposed to have a \$24 million operating surplus in the budget. Out of the mid-year economic review we are hearing that that surplus of \$24 million is now likely to be a \$148 million deficit. That is despite a \$269 million windfall in stamp duties from the recent housing boom.

I acknowledge that the government has not made as much as it should through the Queensland Investment Corporation because of some downturn in the world stock markets. But those markets are showing a turnaround. However, despite Queensland receiving a \$269 million windfall in increased stamp duties, we are facing a \$148 million deficit. Queensland taxpayers are asking: where has all the money gone?

We have a Treasurer who cannot even answer a question on notice about capital works funding for the year to date as at last November. The Treasurer is supposedly running a budget of around \$20 billion, supposedly keeping an eye on a capital works budget of some \$5 billion, yet he cannot tell this parliament on a month-by-month basis how much of that capital works funding has been spent. What sort of control is that of the state budget? Is it just a deliberate measure to maintain the secret state, to not be accountable to this parliament and admit that capital works spending is already under budget? Is the government underspending on capital works as a ploy to try to cut back the massive budget overruns that it is facing so that by the end of the year it might actually catch up with those overruns?

This is an example of the ridiculous way in which the government approaches the whole issue of unemployment. Capital works, which is the key way to provide direct and indirect jobs, are just disregarded by the Treasurer. He has no knowledge on a month-by-month basis of where this government actually stands in terms of year to date spending on the budget. It is a pretty lousy way to run the budget and it is a pretty lousy way to run the accounts of this state when, five months into the financial year, the government does not even know how much of that \$5 billion of capital works funding, which is so important, has been spent.

We have also seen a downgrade in the growth forecast for the state of 0.5 per cent. But the Premier continues to spend like a drunken sailor on pet projects such as the footbridge. It was going to cost \$13 million. Then we in this parliament were told that the final cost was going to be some \$23 million. Then on the Friday night before Christmas—virtually Christmas Eve—it was leaked to one media outlet that the footbridge was actually going to cost \$29 million. Suddenly the government found another \$6 million that it had not accounted for and had not honestly told this parliament about. So they leaked that information virtually on Christmas Eve so that the public of Queensland would not be outraged any further by that massive overspending on that symbolic footbridge. We hear about the children in this state who need compensation as a result of the recommendations of the Forde inquiry and the people who need jobs, but we see \$29 million spent on a project that at the end of the day does not drive more economic growth and does not drive exports. So many other projects in this state could have generated exports and long-term sustainable jobs.

We have seen another broken promise from the government arising from the Cooler Schools Program in north Queensland. School communities throughout the state are outraged that they believed the promise made by the government and the Premier that if they raised 20 per cent of the cost of airconditioning in their schools the government would meet the balance of 80 per cent. That is another cruel hoax, another cruel broken promise, that school community after school community has seen. Those communities have worked hard, they have raised the money, but when it comes to actually getting the airconditioning put into the schools, the money is not there. The Treasurer has overspent. The promise was false, just like the false promise on the five per cent unemployment rate.

This morning I spoke about the Forde inquiry. If there is one sad thing to happen in this state, it is the way in which this government has walked away from these vulnerable children—those victims who needed help and some modest form of compensation. Instead it has told them to try their luck in the court system, knowing that most of them cannot afford to pay for their legal costs. In most cases they are unable to get legal aid. So they have just been hung out to dry while the government carries on with its propaganda about the Forde inquiry. Now we see the Treasurer laying the groundwork to make some further cuts in his budget and not meeting Leneen Forde's recommendations, instead saying that she was wrong to suggest that \$103 million was the amount required.

The Forde Inquiry Implementation Committee has reported that the sector is still underfunded by \$171 million. The government has plenty of time for footbridges and for glossy, full-page, colour ads in the paper, but day after day and week after week it is breaking its promise to be an honest and open government. It has turned its back on the children of this state. The black hole in this state budget will be filled by children who are unable to receive the care, the protection and the services they deserve. It will be filled by young Queenslanders who want a job but cannot obtain a job because capital works funding has been cut back.

We have witnessed the cut-back of staffing in the DPI, with some 534 positions lost either through sacking or through the promise of positions not being met. We have witnessed service cut-backs across this state. Cattlemen cannot transport their export cattle to outlets on the coast or to abattoirs, where people are waiting for work. As a result, hundreds and hundreds of B-doubles and semitrailers are carting cattle into south-east Queensland. Some 5,000 head of cattle a day are transported into the south-east of this state and some 3,000 into the Rockhampton area. People who rely upon transportation of their cattle by rail to places such as Cloncurry are serviced by one train a week, and they cannot transport them to the sales at Emerald or at Nebo. They are simply left with a litany of broken-down, little, old rail wagons. The only decent wagons are those ordered and constructed during the term of the National-Liberal coalition.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Health.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Mental Health Forensic Services

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy) (11.41 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Earlier today I said that the report into mental health forensic services was available on the web. I apologise. I understand there has been some delay in putting it on the web. However, it is available through the Parliamentary Library.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order!

Mrs Edmond: I followed the same rules you did, mate!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Johnson: There's two sets of rules here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Johnson: I'd run out of the chamber too, if I were you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory will cease interjecting. I will take action under the standing orders if the member for Gregory does not cease interjecting. You have defied me three times.

Mr JOHNSON: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Resumed.

Transport, Mount Ommaney Electorate

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.42 a.m.): Late last year I was able to take advantage of the parliamentary intern program and had Anthony Franklin undertake a study in transport for the Mount Ommaney electorate. The objective of the study was to provide a report regarding current and potential government incentives to encourage use of public transport and ways to improve traffic hot spots on the Centenary Highway. The study confirmed the well-known fact that the amount of commuter traffic between Mount Ommaney and Brisbane city is unacceptable. The electorate of Mount Ommaney is continuing to grow along with the use of private vehicles and this will only compound the problem.

This morning as I was travelling to parliament using my own vehicle, the traffic slowed to 20 kilometres per hour, stopping and starting from the Fig Tree Pocket turn-off and along Milton Road. A journey that takes 20 minutes in non-peak time took over an hour. It is no wonder I often prefer to take the train from Darra station and then have a 20 minute walk from Roma Street to reach the House in better time. The underlying causes of this traffic congestion include the

preference for low density housing, the lack of high quality and high frequency transport from residential areas and the time taken for the city council buses to reach the city. The desirability of low density living and the convenience offered by using private vehicles will always conspire against the ability to provide adequate public transport and road networks.

One of the major factors contributing to traffic problems in the electorate of Mount Ommaney is supported by data relating to vehicle ownership. Residents of the electorate own and use motor vehicles more than residents in Brisbane in total. The average number of vehicles per household is 1.7, compared to 1.4 across Brisbane. A total of 69.7 per cent of residents use private transport to get to work, compared to 63.8 per cent across Brisbane. Overall, only 9.9 per cent of residents use public transport to get to work, compared to 11.2 per cent in Brisbane in total. Public transport is provided by rail and bus transport. The railway stations at Oxley and Corinda are both on one side of the electorate. Residents of the Centenary suburbs use the railway station at Darra or bus transport.

The Oxley Railway Station is currently being upgraded to have disabled access and discussions are currently under way regarding improving access to Corinda station. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads for his commitment in ensuring that these busy stations are high on his list of priorities. During peak times, up to six trains an hour depart the stations and the time taken to travel to Brisbane Central is approximately 25 minutes. Buses operated by Brisbane City Council take up to 40 minutes to reach the city and rarely depart more than half hourly during peak periods. Documents such as the *Transit Oriented Sustainable Development, Transport 2007, Shaping Up in the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland* call for the integration of train and rail services.

The focus of CityTrans is to develop a system of integrated ticketing which would operate on buses, ferries and trains. The integrated ticketing system at Darra station appears to be working quite well and caters for the public transport needs of residents of River Hills, Westlake and Middle Park. Currently decisions affecting Queensland roads, bridges, parking facilities, trains, ferries and buses are made by diverse bodies, including the federal government and state and local government entities. It would be unrealistic to develop one single body to deal with these issues. However, in order to further develop successful transport systems in south-east Queensland, these separate entities need to be integrated in a more effective way.

Some of the causes of traffic congestion are complicated and far reaching. Consequently, solutions to the problems will not be simple. The solutions must be advantageous to the potential user; they must make public transport convenient, inexpensive and attractive enough to become more desirable than using a private vehicle to reach a destination. Some recommendations made by Anthony in his report include: upgrading existing roads—as per the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland—and subsequent reports. However, suppressed demand is likely to emerge. For example, problems may resurface and roads will continually need to be widened. To improve public transport, railway stations need to be upgraded, safety and parking need to be improved, there needs to be the better integration of rail and bus transport and the reliability and regularity of buses needs improvement as well. Long term solutions could include the integration of land use and transport, encouraging mixed land uses and enabling the development of transit oriented design. These designs promote provision of services within a walkable distance. These recommendations, of course, have been made with the full knowledge that there are many issues to be debated and problems to be overcome.

Drug Squads

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (11.47 a.m.): I rise this morning to alert all honourable members to my concerns about a National Party proposal to reintroduce specialist drug squads into areas such as Redlands at the expense of traffic enforcement. I must confess I was shocked to read the article in which the member for Callide and shadow spokesman for police put forward this deluded proposal. While I support his goals of decreasing drug use and drug-related crime, his comments highlight his limited understanding of the Queensland Police Service and are an insult to many serving officers. If this is evidence of the type of ideas he wants to bring to policing, then one really has to ask whether he is equipped to handle his shadow portfolio at all.

I do not think it will be a surprise to many members that Gary Wilkinson, from the Queensland Police Union, and I have disagreed on numerous occasions. However, on Sunday, 3 March, I read an article in the *Sunday Mail* headed, 'Dud Nats blasted by police union'. In the

article, Gary Wilkinson is quoted as saying, 'They really do not have a clue what they are doing.' On this occasion I could not agree any more with this insightful comment by Gary Wilkinson.

The member for Callide's claim that traffic police are only used for revenue raising is wrong, wrong, wrong. This claim ignores the 300-plus people who die each year on our state roads. To have laws and not enforce them is bureaucratic wastage of the highest order. The member for Callide is either supporting the situation of having laws that the police will be told to not enforce, or he is supporting the removal of all traffic laws from the statute books. Either of these positions is untenable. The member for Callide obviously has little regard for members of the community who are affected by hooners and their outrageous behaviour.

My other concern regarding his claims is that it is an insult to the ability of all traffic police in Queensland and highlights the member for Callide's limited understanding of police work. A friend of mine, Sergeant Sean McKay, has spent a significant portion of his service in the Traffic Branch. According to the member for Callide, Sean was just out there raising money. I can tell the member that Sergeant McKay was committed to saving lives on our roads. Along with other police, I have attended many horrific traffic accident scenes and have seen first-hand the devastating and tragic results of speeding, drink-driving and running red lights. To write off traffic enforcement as mere revenue raising is insulting to traffic police and an insult to the victims of road accidents and their families.

The other factor—and one not acknowledged by the member for Callide—is that Sergeant McKay has an extensive portfolio of criminal arrests. On many occasions what has started out as a routine traffic stop for Sergeant McKay and other traffic officers has resulted in the occupants of the vehicle being arrested on serious criminal charges, such as drug charges, break and enter offences and unlawful use of motor vehicles. It is very lucky for Queensland that traffic police do not have the same silo mentality as the member for Callide.

The basic facts are that on numerous occasions major criminals have been located and arrested following the thorough and professional action of traffic officers. The member for Callide either chose to ignore this or was just ignorant. Either way it shows his limited grasp on his shadow portfolio. By wiping out traffic branches, the responsibility for enforcing traffic laws—that is, if the member for Callide wants continued enforcement—would be added to the workload of general duties police officers. General duties police are the frontline response for victims of crime. The member for Callide wants to further increase their workload, which will have a subsequent effect on response times.

The member for Callide states that he will move officers from traffic branches to drug squads. He again demonstrates his ignorance of the human resource management procedures in the Queensland Police Service. Uniformed officers can be seconded to plain clothes positions for short periods. However, for transferring uniformed staff to plain clothes permanently a position would need to be advertised and applicants would then be selected on merit. Does this mean that the member for Callide's solution was only a short-term political stunt or was he ignorant of these very basic HRM procedures?

Ms Male: I think it was both.

Mr ENGLISH: It was quite possibly both. Will the member for Callide seek to override merit based selection to appoint people regardless of their merit? Most uniformed staff are required to complete some training prior to being accepted for plain clothes duties. Once appointed to a plain clothes position, they are required to undertake at least three years of training and supervision before they are appointed the designation of detective. The member for Callide shows either very little regard for or very little understanding of police training.

Along with the entire Beattie government, I am tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We are increasing police numbers by over 300 each year. Decisions about how these police are allocated are operational decisions made by the Commissioner of Police. Mr Atkinson can currently reallocate staff depending on operational requirements. For the member for Callide to attempt to interfere in this process shows that the National Party has still not learned about the separation of powers 10 years after the Fitzgerald inquiry. If he ever becomes Minister for Police—God forbid—it will not be his own little fiefdom but a professional law enforcement agency impartially enforcing the laws of our great state.

Pork Industry

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.52 a.m.): I get very few chances to bring good news to this chamber, but I am proud to report that one company, Swickers Kingaroy bacon factory, after an

outstanding period of growth, has entered into an exciting new partnership with Brisbane based Hans Continental Smallgoods. I congratulate the Premier in particular on his support for the re-emergence of the pork industry. The government support was good not only for Swickers; it also ensured the success of the Burnett Pork Alliance and the pork industry in Queensland as a whole. I trust that the Departments of the Premier and Cabinet, State Development and Primary Industries will continue the good work through continued support of the pork industry.

Swickers has seen spectacular growth. Thanks to an \$800,000 grant from State Development, Swickers embarked on an expansion program that will see its work force grow from the current 150 staff to an estimated 275 over the next three years. With Swickers and Hans joining forces, it is now a likely reality that Swickers' and BPA's business strategies will remain on target. But we are not just talking about employment in the pork industry. Such projects create value adding and other opportunities for transport, stockfeed suppliers, fuel, veterinary services and the building industry to name but a few. I mention the building industry in particular because the BPA, of which Swickers owns one-third, intends to expand its current 10 contract growers by another 40 over three years. That means a building investment of more than \$350,000 for each and every extra growing facility, which adds up to a lot of money. But that again is a multiplying factor, as building is labour intensive and usually uses locally made products, materials and/or suppliers.

Not only is Swickers the second biggest employer in Kingaroy; it is also a major contributor to the economic growth throughout the Burnett. Only a few years ago, the pork industry looked like disappearing as a Queensland industry. We must ensure that the pork industry never reaches that stage again. We now have two major processing facilities in Queensland—Swickers and KR Darling Downs. They slaughter about 8,000 pigs a week each, and both have invested untold millions in buying state-of-the-art equipment to capture the export and domestic markets. Overall, currently Queensland slaughters 21,000 pigs a week in its abattoirs, but it is estimated that the figure will rise to 28,000 over the next two years. Both Swickers and KR Darling Downs are geared up to meet that extra production demand.

We must continue to support companies such as these and learn from the past mistake that the more we fracture a large industry the more likely it is that it will collapse. I refer in particular to the pork industry. The worse possible scenario, as I am sure the minister knows, would be to allow more pork abattoirs to operate at present in Queensland. The industry is in the throes of picking itself back up, and future projections show its potential as a vital economic contributor to Queensland's future. I urge the government to support cost-effective companies such as Swickers, which is expanding, rather than opening up the industry to less competitive, smaller abattoirs whose overall contribution to the industry in the long term will be its demise.

Supply and demand control prices, which are good at present in the pork industry. To splinter that by allowing the slaughter of more pork than the market can handle would be a backward step. It would also affect our export expansion opportunities. However, with Hans signing off on the partnership with Swickers we can now see the possibilities that lie ahead. Hans, already with an annual 12 per cent growth target, is now the national leader in packaged smallgoods.

So what do we have? A major rural processor and a major metropolitan company joining forces to develop an exciting plan that involves long-term employment opportunities—an exciting plan that has far-reaching effects on a plethora of industries. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that a lot of pain was experienced getting there. We must continue to support the industry if we are to remain a major force in Australian and world pork production.

The Burnett Pork Alliance at Mundubbera has grown from a 1,500 sow farrow-to-finish farm to a modern, high health, high genetic breeding farm currently with 3,600 sows. Swickers's long-term success relies on BPA reaching its full licence capacity of 11,000 sows, hopefully by 2006. For those prepared to take up the opportunities the possibilities are endless. It took courage, initiative and commitment by its management, investors and staff to help turn around the industry. It saved a lot of jobs and it created a lot of jobs. With its new shareholder, Hans, the future for Swickers, BPA and the industry as a whole is looking brighter.

However, along with all good news there is always some bad news. My main area of concern is the availability of water in the Burnett region. Recently, two potentially significant-size piggeries withdrew their proposals for the South Burnett because the water issue had not been resolved. I am aware that SunWater has announced its intention to tender for sale 531 megalitres of additional water allocation from the Tarong pipeline. That is not enough for the region's requirements, and the minister's support in increasing the available water is urgently needed. If the pork industry can lose two major producers, I worry about what other industries we have lost

through the lack of water. We in the Burnett and the South Burnett are on the doorstep of Brisbane. We are now linked to Brisbane.

Time expired.

Back to Work; Experience Pays

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (11.57 a.m.): A very disturbing message is coming from many employers. Their message is: 'If you're over 40 years, we're not really interested in employing you.' I am meeting far too many people both in my local area and around the state who are saying that they are struggling to find work. They feel that they are not being considered for interviews even though they have prepared good applications and feel they have a lot to offer. This is being backed up by research.

A lot of research is showing that employers prefer to employ people under 30 years of age. So for many of us who are well over 30 the future is looking a bit scary, if this is the sort of attitude out there. A recent survey based on job advertisements found that nine per cent of full-time and 21 per cent of part-time job advertisements had upper age limits and they averaged at between 30 and 40 years of age. Our government is determined to do something about this problem so as to turn around this situation and improve employer attitudes to and job opportunities for mature-age job seekers.

The Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, Matt Foley, with the support of his departmental officers, is actively promoting the message that experience pays through two state government initiatives set up this year. The first program, Back to Work, has been operating for about six or seven months. Over 500 people have been put through that program under the auspices of the Open Learning Network of Queensland. The program is offering a lot of mature-age people who have been unemployed for quite a while job-ready skills, computer skills, skills in preparing resumes and applications and fronting up for interviews.

Yesterday I had the good fortune of presenting graduation certificates to about 14 women who had been through the recent Brisbane program at the Open Learning Network. Their level of confidence and optimism impressed me. They feel that they are now better able to present themselves at interviews and find work. They built up a great network among each other. That is critical. If they can build confidence and networks and get a leg in the door of agencies and employers, they are certainly much better placed to find work. The other program, Experience Pays, is very much targeted at employers, with a \$4,000 subsidy. So both of these programs are having a big impact in the state, and it is certainly important that our state government continues this determination to improve employment opportunities for mature-age workers.

I want to talk about a couple of specific people who have benefited, because these are the sorts of stories that really highlight how these programs are working well. Ivanka Taylor from Crows Nest participated recently in one of the programs offered by the Open Learning Network. That is one of the benefits. These programs are working and available in regions throughout Queensland. Ivanka had recently become a widow and she needed to find work, but she had little direction in life and little confidence. She came to the Back to Work class. She heard that traineeships were available to adults, and she actually used the initiative to approach a local business in Crows Nest which she knew was going to expand and suggested that they employ her as an office admin. trainee, and they agreed. That is a good example of someone who gained confidence through the program and went out there and got herself a job.

Lyn Ellis from Toowoomba participated in one of those programs, as well. She gained work as a receptionist in a medical practice halfway through the course in which she was involved. A business acquaintance of the program presenter through the Queensland Open Learning Network had a friend at the centre, and she had mentioned to him that they were looking to find someone for their medical practice. Participants in the program encouraged Lyn to apply for the job, although initially she was fairly hesitant. She went for an interview and got the job and has been working there successfully over the past four or five months.

These are the good news stories that these sorts of programs develop and bring out around the state. It is important that we continue to promote the message to employers that experience does pay; that mature-age workers see themselves as young. In fact, they do not like the term 'mature-age'. The women I met yesterday were mostly in their forties, and they did not like this concept of mature-age. They see themselves as young and energetic and having lots to offer to employers. I agree. I saw them in action yesterday, and I reckon that all of us now in our mature years probably much prefer to be seen as young and energetic. But they certainly saw

themselves as having a lot of loyalty to employers, a lot to offer and a lot of experience. That is the message we have to get out there.

Mental Health Offenders

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.02 p.m.): I note the minister's apology for misleading the parliament about the availability of the Mullens review on the Internet. For the record, I obtained a copy of the review last week through other sources after the minister's office refused to give us a copy because, as her staff told us, it had to go to cabinet. This was patently untrue, as the review was reported extensively in the *Courier-Mail*.

It is not to Mrs Edmond's credit how the report was released—even to journalists—with a deliberate strategy to lessen the impact of what was an embarrassing report for the minister. Minister Edmond's office played games with journalists. Some media outlets got it in full. Others were told that what they had was embargoed until the following afternoon, only to find that their trust had been let down and abused and that they were late with their story. A deliberate strategy to undermine the impact of a report which had significant criticisms of the existing minister is without doubt. After a spate of escapes of mentally ill killers from Queensland's mental health system, the Premier acted in the Health Minister's absence to do what she—

Mr ENGLISH: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. The report was not critical of the minister in any way, shape or form. The member is misleading the House by making that statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Poole): There is no point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: No point of order. The report is critical—

Mr ENGLISH: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is up to you to decide whether there is a point of order, not the member for Maroochydore.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I did say that there was no point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: It is not for the member to correct the Deputy Speaker, either. After a spate of escapes of mentally ill killers from Queensland's mental health system, the Premier acted in the Health Minister's absence to do what she refused to do by ordering an independent review. Health Minister Edmond was conspicuous by her absence at the height of the crisis over mental health escapees, bar a cameo appearance for a few hours before the cameras before disappearing on holiday.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the parliament. What she has said is incorrect. As the minister indicated to the parliament this morning, she was present at Wolston Park. She was also present on a number of occasions, but she was on leave at the time, which she is entitled to do. No doubt the member has holidays, too.

Miss SIMPSON: The minister was away for about a month. There has been a deliberate strategy here not to tell the truth about what is happening in the mental health system. We are calling for an independent monitor over the implementation of these changes because the Health Minister has been transient. She said nothing was wrong with the system. She has also tried to construe that this report is not about the current system but about the previous act. There were some significant criticisms of the existing system, not just the previous act. There are still some significant issues that arise from this report that relate to actions that the minister did not take, and I want to outline them.

I know that the minister is relying on the Premier's special political protection, but her defiance to act earlier is noted. There must be independent oversight of the process by someone from outside Queensland Health or else there will continue to be a lack of accountability in the mental health system. I call on the Beattie government to put in place independent monitoring of the processes. If it does not do this, all that we will see from this report by Professor Mullins—who has done this with the best of intents—is that there will be no accountability, the report will be forgotten and the problems will continue.

I can outline a number of things that this review identified that were not addressed by the Mental Health Act 2000. One was the ability of victims to be notified when their attackers escaped. That was not in the Mental Health Act 2000. In fact, Minister Edmond voted against the opposition amendment and it was lost on the casting vote of the chair. Professor Mullins significantly recommended that victims be able to be notified—something Mrs Edmond previously on the parliamentary record refused to do. She even said that this would be distressing for

people. But all we have said is that victims should have had this basic right. Now, if it is that this does not require legislative change, as the minister is claiming, then why did she and her department not notify Robyn Clarke when her daughter's killer, Claude John Gabriel, escaped from a Queensland mental health institution last year? The family of Janaya Clarke was first notified by the media, not the department. I still believe that the legislation should be changed in order to make the government legally responsible to notify victims if those victims have asked to be notified.

The Mullins report also criticised the liberal culture of the Health Department towards leave for mentally ill offenders. However, during the debate on the Mental Health Act, Minister Edmond voted against tightening up these provisions. The Mullins review does not go as far as stipulating that these types of patients should be escorted, but it does identify a liberal culture. This is about a culture—not just an act of parliament, but a culture with the same bureaucrats who are still in place and are still the ones that we are being asked—

Time expired.

Dingoes, Bribie Island

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.07 p.m.): Dingoes have often been a problem for farmers because they attack their domestic herds. However, most of us did not know all the problems associated with dingoes and dingo crossbreeds in areas other than farmland until the terrible incident on Fraser Island when a young boy died as a result of a dingo attack. No-one knows why it happened, but the end result was very traumatic and some action had to be taken. This government acted swiftly, and it has led to the destruction of several dingoes that were unfortunately habituated by humans. They would feed them bits of food now and again, and therein lies the problem. All too often we interfere with nature and we make a mess of it. It is not natural behaviour for dingoes to hang around human campsites and homes, but the encouragement of food is often too much to bear and that will change their natural instincts.

Bribie Island, which is a part of the Pumicestone electorate that I represent, is home to many dingoes—not only dingoes but other dogs which have been allowed to wander free to breed with the dingoes. Recently on an excursion with the local National Parks and Wildlife officer, Scott Rogers, we saw a juvenile white Staffordshire and dingo cross. Twenty-two per cent of Bribie Island is national park, and dingoes are protected there. However, they do not differentiate between it and other land uses. They wander from the park to the esplanade, enticed by barbecue scraps and other tidbits left by the public, including fish bait and entrails dumped by fisher people.

After the incident on Fraser Island people began to feel threatened by the ever-increasing sightings of the wild dogs. They wanted action. So I, together with Scott O'Keefe from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines—a feral pest officer—organised a public meeting to ascertain the extent of the sightings and what the public perception was in relation to the wild dogs. That night we heard many scary stories about encounters with the dogs. There had been several attacks on pets, and a woman had been circled by three dogs and had to yell for someone to come and help her.

From that public meeting we decided to set up a special task force and have regular meetings with all stakeholders. The focus was on cooperation between these stakeholders, because it is everybody's problem. Stakeholders included the council, which is the body under the Rural Lands Act responsible for wild dogs, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, national parks and wildlife officers, the RSPCA, the local vet, a community representative, me and my staff. The first meeting was not well attended, but since then we have had regular enthusiastic attendance from all of those mentioned. Several goals were set, including an education process for the public, businesses and schools in conjunction with the euthanasia of a few problem dogs. Everyone was allotted a number of tasks each month and had to report back to the next meeting.

The community representative, Garry Sheppard, and another local resident, Bill Allison, have been instrumental in distributing many hundreds of brochures throughout residential areas, businesses and schools. Brochures which refer to Bribie Island as a dog awareness community included information on the dangers of feeding dingoes and making properties safe from wild dogs. Garry and Bill have also had council permission to place stickers on public rubbish bins. These stickers alert people to dispose of their rubbish responsibly.

I was instrumental in talking to local butchers and distributing advertising material to show the dangers of buying bones for wild dogs. Most butchers were happy to cooperate, seeing the

dangers of feeding these dogs. Caboolture council, which is represented at the monthly meetings by Kerry Myatt, has recently employed a dog compliance officer, Jeff Pittstock, who is currently being trained by DNR officers Scott O'Keefe, Greg Brown and Nigel Gallos, with assistance from RSPCA representative Sheila Collocot and local vet Craig Kohler, to use special equipment supplied by the state government to capture these problem wild dogs. The equipment has the support of the RSPCA. Darren Sheil, Pine Rivers Shire Council dog compliance officer, and Scott Rogers from Queensland Parks and Wildlife have also been very helpful in the process. We have also recently welcomed the attendance of local councillor John Bateman.

This is a first—a pilot program on Bribie Island. I am proud to say that we have had correspondence from councils as far away as Townsville, asking for information about what we are doing. I recently prepared some information for the member for Nicklin, who told of problems with wild dogs in his area. Our local papers have been kept up to date by our giving them a copy of each meeting's minutes.

The first crossbreed wild dog was captured last weekend and was euthanased by the local vet immediately after capture. The RSPCA has confirmed that wild dogs cannot under any circumstances be transported or relocated after capture. A very few more crossbreeds will have to be treated in this manner in the hope that it will be a deterrent for others and hopefully will curb the problem in the future. We are about to advertise another public meeting to take place next month to alert people about all we have achieved in the past eight months. This has taken some time—

Time expired.

CHOGM; Governor-General Dr P. Hollingworth

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (12.12 p.m.): The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting has come and gone. There are arguments for and against this meeting. Most against it would use remarks such as 'irrelevant to the world today', a 'talkfest' or 'it achieves nothing'. What a dull old place we would live in if we did nothing to engender debate and cooperation between nations. In light of people's stance on the relevance of the meeting and indeed the Commonwealth itself, I ask: why is it that so many nations fight to remain within its ranks? Why—because by and large it is an internationally respected body! It enables nations across the world to have a group voice in progressing the future of those less fortunate.

We continually gripe about the cost of foreign aid, but if the Commonwealth moves only a short way to achieving its goals we should find in the long term that the need to supply such aid will be reduced. The Commonwealth allows generally respectable partnerships with less developed countries and the opportunity for larger nations to showcase their achievements and skills and engender trade.

Though obviously not a participant in the meeting, I was nevertheless grateful for the chance to meet a range of visitors to our country who were present at the Premier's reception and to listen to their views on issues to be debated at the meeting and their opinions of our state. It is only on such occasions that we are provided with the opportunity to develop relationships and exchange ideas outside of our comfort zones. I congratulate the Premier for affording our guests the opportunity to witness Queensland in all its glory—including the kangaroo kebabs, which I could be persuaded taste better than steak.

Mr Cummins: And the crocodile vol-au-vents.

Mr FLYNN: I did not get around to those.

Part of the celebrations surrounding the meeting included a tour by Her Majesty the Queen, and I was thrilled to have a ringside seat on People's Day to bear witness to the enduring popularity the Queen still enjoys in Australia. It was not a day, I was glad to see, to debate the issue of a possible republic; rather, it was a chance for the people to get close up to the person whose office has always served us fearlessly so well. I was impressed by the respect shown Her Majesty by many people, some of them republicans who know how to behave and do not indulge in hurtful, insulting rhetoric. Several thousands of well-wishers greeted Her Majesty with great enthusiasm, despite having endured an hour or so of quite heavy rain. Regardless of the progress on the question of a republic, both Her Majesty and the people have shown that such matters can be handled with tact, diplomacy and happiness. We have shown here that we can be civilised.

On the issue of civility, and without entering into the debate on the rights and wrongs of the Governor-General's behaviour, I must say that as there is little doubt about the outcome of this issue, we have witnessed some unforgivable, vicious attacks apparently, it would seem, on Hollingworth's ability to relate to children. I refer to moves on a daily basis to remove him as patron of a number of organisations on the grounds that he is not a fit and proper person. I regard this as quite a separate issue from the understandable efforts to replace him in his role as Governor-General. The Education Union has stated that he should not be permitted contact with children in schools as his actions may traumatise them. What utter rubbish! I consider these contemptible lies. Hollingworth's ability to continue in the job will, I am sure, be determined by those other than in this place, but we should not paint him as a threat to children, like some *de facto* paedophile.

Community Sports Program, Kingston

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): On Sunday, 10 February I had the honour of representing the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, the Hon. Rob Swarten, at the Kingston Allsports centre to launch its community sports program for 2002. In May 2001 the minister approved this free sports coaching program under the auspice of the Department of Families—another spectacularly successful community renewal project. There are now 340 children, aged between five and 14 years, receiving free coaching in such sports as tennis, squash and field sports. One hundred and seventy of our local families are involved, with many of the parents attending the sausage sizzle held on Friday afternoons, plus the six Sunday tournaments and family social days which will take place over the 12-month period. Sunday was a spectacular success, with families and community members witnessing their youngsters engaged in demonstrations of their sport and enjoying the barbecue, pool and social activities. A number of the children who had excelled in their sport were recognised with the presentation of medals and trophies.

The concept of this program was first mooted by a number of members of the Kingston Neighbourhood Watch group, who hold their meeting at the Logan Allsports centre in Mary Street. Coordinator of the centre, Chris Langton, and his wife, Judy, were immediately enthusiastic about the possibility of involving many of the local youngsters whose families could simply not afford the outlay for equipment and coaching. Following further development of the concept, it was presented to the Kingston community reference group to consider as a community renewal project. Such community members as Steve Lane and Eric Neilsen have continued to support the project, and Fred Kisbee and his community reference group, along with David Shellshear from the Department of Families, have been instrumental in the development and successful passage of the application.

Our state government has contributed \$50,000 to the project and Logan Allsports has been responsible for \$50,000 in kind. The number of children involved has far exceeded its expectations and its ability to cope with the coaching load, so additional instructors were brought in. I wish to pay tribute to Chris and Judy Langton and all of their instructors for their enthusiasm and, having seen the faces on the youngsters, for the obvious inspiration they are passing on. Of course, this is about far more than sports coaching. It is developing teamwork, discipline, reliability, coordination and just the sense of accomplishment required to boost the self-esteem of a young person.

Kingston is an area like any other young suburb with plenty of youngsters with lots of energy and promise. However, there are some families who find the cost of sporting equipment and coaching way beyond their reach. Thus, this has given many of our young people a chance to experience first-class training in sporting skills. It is not yet evident what lies beyond this scheme when the funding ceases at the end of April. I have a hope that we will find a way for this program to continue. It has caught the attention of other sporting bodies, and it would be good if this was to become a blueprint for others. There is nothing better for our young people than to become involved in such activities as sport, music and service clubs to help produce good citizens. I thank the minister and his Community Renewal staff, our community reference group, Logan Allsports and the parents of the young people who have shown support for this program. Unfortunately, in years past this area has suffered a poor image and battled with a high crime rate. I pay tribute to our government for the implementation of what is now recognised as the most significant program now taking effect in many areas of the state.

Without the Community Renewal Program, which injects millions of dollars into our community, and most importantly is driven by community members, we would still be doing it

tough in my electorate of Woodridge. Through the enthusiasm of Minister Rob Swarten and his team, magnificent things are happening. My community renewal reference group members are salt of the earth people who love their area and community and have committed hundreds of hours of their time to ensure that these funds are spent to the benefit of the wider community. They selected the Kingston Allsports Coaching Program because of their great commitment to our children. This is yet another example of the community taking charge of its future through successful partnerships. All involved are to be commended.

SunWater

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.21 p.m.): The government owned corporation SunWater has earned itself an unenviable reputation across regional Queensland. Last week that reputation was further enhanced by news that SunWater has entered into a new lease arrangement for three floors of what is being marketed as Brisbane's most prestigious new office address. This lease arrangement is apparently at a rate of some \$1 million a year for seven years. It is not hard to imagine how Queensland water users and Queensland irrigators will greet this news. SunWater has consistently argued that there needs to be massive increases in Queensland water prices. Irrespective of the ability of irrigators and water users to pay, there has to be increases in water prices to fund its operations. It consistently argues that it is looking at reducing the cost of those operations, yet we see this almost absurd lease arrangement that has been entered into.

SunWater will move from occupying two floors at Mineral House—a government owned building, I might add—to occupying three floors at Brisbane's newest and most prestigious office address. This latest move by SunWater will surely earn it the title of the Christopher Skase of government owned corporations. This corporation must be reined in. This corporation must be brought to heel by the ministers responsible. The Minister for Natural Resources and the Treasurer simply cannot hide behind the fact that this is a government owned corporation which can operate in whatever manner it likes. No government owned corporation can do that. All government owned corporations are responsible to the government. They cannot simply abdicate that responsibility. This is especially so in the case of SunWater, because SunWater deals with a product that is vitally important to regional development throughout Queensland. It deals in an area where it has an absolute monopoly. There are no other options for people who must deal with SunWater. There are no other options for people who are faced with massive water price increases to fund this type of absurdity on behalf of this government owned corporation.

The government has given this corporation a total monopoly. It has given it quite extraordinary powers over the business activities of individuals and quite extraordinary powers over the future of whole communities. That corporation has to be responsible to the minister. The minister has powers of intervention, and this is a classic case of where those powers of intervention must be used. They must be used in the interests of commonsense. They must be used in the interests of fair play. But, more importantly, they must be used in the interests of Queensland water users and Queensland irrigators. It is simply absurd for SunWater to spend \$1 million a year leasing a premier office address in Brisbane while at the same time Queensland water users have to pay water charges that are continually being jacked up.

I have noted that SunWater's response to the concern that has been expressed already begins to rely on commercial-in-confidence arguments. That is a situation that the government just simply cannot defend. No government can defend a government owned corporation which tries to hide behind commercial-in-confidence arguments at any time. It simply cannot defend that government owned corporation hiding behind commercial-in-confidence arguments when that corporation has an absolute monopoly on a natural resource product that belongs to all Queenslanders.

There is no commercial-in-confidence argument. Every Queenslander should have the right to know the details of SunWater's operations, but more importantly water users and Queensland irrigators have every right to know every detail of SunWater's operations. The potential for SunWater to either make or break the operations of so many Queenslanders is very real. The potential for SunWater to make or break the future of some Queensland communities is very real. It cannot be allowed to operate in a situation where there is no accountability and no responsibility. There is no accountability with this particular lease deal. There is no responsibility being displayed by SunWater when it can squander \$1 million a year of money that it wrings from Queensland water users and that it squeezes out of Queensland irrigators simply to put up its executives in prestige office addresses.

Youth Project 500

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.26 p.m.): Last week in Toowoomba I had the pleasure of representing the Hon. Matt Foley, the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, at the launch of Youth Project 500. Any project that helps young people to confidently face the demands of the workplace and life's many challenges is a project worthy of support. I was honoured to launch a program that may soon become a model for other community based vocational education and training programs across the state.

I share the minister's passion for the future of our young people. As chair of the Ministerial Subcommittee of Ministers on Young People's Transitions to Further Education, Training and Work, Mr Foley places a great emphasis on giving young people life skills, self-confidence and hope in their future. The future of our state and nation ultimately depends on it. The long-term success of our labour force, our economy, our emerging industries, the social cohesion of our communities and our international reputation is in the hands of our young people. Minister Foley has joined forces with Commonwealth, state and territory ministers to devise national strategies that will remove the obstacles that prevent a significant number of 15- to 24-year-olds from successfully participating in society.

Young people who are disconnected from society or who are at risk of being disconnected—whether it be due to isolation, inequality, social or cultural barriers, addictions or family problems—are the primary focus of that subcommittee. The subcommittee comprises ministers from Education, Employment, Training, Youth Affairs and Community Service portfolios. The subcommittee's principal objective is to make the transition from non-compulsory schooling to further education, training or employment an easier one. I feel extremely proud that a project that will help achieve this important aim is taking place in Toowoomba.

The Toowoomba City Council is to be commended for having the foresight to develop a three-tiered training program that incorporates prevocational preparation and a traineeship followed by career guidance, mentoring and professional development. This full spectrum approach to training ensures that our young people are fully prepared for the demands of work, have every reason to see their training through to the end and are supported and encouraged along the way. Youth Project 500 offers 500 days of training and support, but inevitably the skills and confidence that are gained will last a lifetime.

The 30 trainees who are expected to commence these traineeships this year will join more than 50,000 people currently undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland. Reducing unemployment is the Queensland government's number one priority.

An opposition member: Jobs, jobs, jobs.

Mr SHINE: Jobs, jobs, jobs, as the honourable member says.

Queensland leads the nation in school based apprenticeships and traineeships—accounting, in fact, for around 50 per cent of the national total. These successes can be attributed to the commitment of Queensland employers as well as the government who value training and invest time and resources to help young people develop work ready skills and a work ready attitude.

The Toowoomba City Council, a major employer in our city, is to be congratulated on its dedication to vocational education and training. SQIT—Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE—Southbank and Bremer Institutes of TAFE, Dalby Agricultural College and many enthusiastic private training providers are also to be commended for providing the council's new recruits with quality training. One can see that training is a lifetime process, a continuous journey that does not end with a completion certificate.

I have two concerns on this subject matter. Firstly, a major employer just outside of Toowoomba in a specialised industry takes on trainees and employs them for the duration of the 12 months. However, at the end of the 12 months it lets them go and replaces them with new trainees. I do not think that is the object of the legislation. The object of the legislation is to provide long-term employment for people who are properly trained rather than to allow people to use government funds to run their business.

My second concern is the fact that in our city employers, according to the Toowoomba branch of Construction Training Queensland, tell me that there is a paucity of apprentices. The apprenticeships are there, but the young people, despite high unemployment, are not applying for them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired.

TOURISM, RACING AND FAIR TRADING (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.31 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 Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading, and for other purposes.

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 objectives of this bill are to—

- amend a number of acts administered by the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading; and
- repeal two acts and one regulation as part of the implementation of the recommendations contained in national competition policy reviews.

The bill affects more than 20 acts. The vast majority of the amendments are technical or consequential in nature. However, a number of the amendments and the repeal of two acts are significant. The bill broadens the way in which notices can be served by associations and by the Chief Executive under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981. This will provide a very practical benefit to many associations which find it very difficult and expensive to comply with current notice provisions.

Amendments to the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955 and the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931 will increase administrative efficiency within the Office of Fair Trading. The amendments will allow electronic payment for bills of sale and liens on crops registration and will allow searches of the registers to be conducted online by information brokers. Amendments to the Business Names Act 1962 will provide more flexibility for businesses in lodging forms, making payments and renewing registration. Telephone renewals of business name registration and electronic form lodgment will be made possible. It will also be possible to cancel business name registration if an electronic payment is rejected. Businesses will be given the option of renewing their registration for one or three years.

The Classification of Publications Act 1991, the Classification of Films Act 1991 and the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 will be brought into line with the national scheme for the classification of films, videos, publications, computer games and images by providing complementary definitional changes. Additional call-in powers and exemptions will overcome procedural defects and improve the operation of the national scheme.

The Collections Act 1966 will be amended to enable the chief executive to delegate his or her powers under the act. This will promote greater administrative efficiency within the Office of Fair Trading. The Fair Trading Act 1989 will be amended to allow the Office of Fair Trading to accept a greater range of enforceable undertakings from traders who breach the act. Currently, the act only allows a written undertaking that a person will not continue or repeat the conduct or omission.

The Fair Trading Act 1989 will also be amended to protect the minister from liability for making disclosures and for publishing information relating to matters arising under the act. This amendment is needed to enable the minister to issue warnings to consumers about inappropriate business practices and to deter individuals and businesses from acting in an inappropriate manner towards consumers in the future. It is consistent with the protection already afforded the Commissioner for Fair Trading. In some circumstances it is likely that warnings from the minister will attract greater media attention and have greater positive impact on consumer protection and on deterring inappropriate behaviour than similar warnings issued by the Commissioner for Fair Trading. The disclosures will need to be made in good faith and can only be made if the minister is of the opinion that disclosure is in the public interest.

The bill repeals the Hawkers Act 1984. The national competition policy review of that act concluded that the licensing regime for hawkers creates an unnecessary barrier to entry into the marketplace and places administrative and financial burdens on licensed hawkers. The credit reporting provisions of the Invasion of Privacy Act 1971 will be repealed, as will the Invasion of Privacy Regulation 1988. The national competition policy review of the legislation concluded that the credit reporting regime under the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 will adequately protect consumers in their dealings with credit reporting agents.

The national competition policy review of the Loan Fund Companies Act 1982 recommended the repeal of the act as many of the mechanisms contained in it are redundant. Currently there are no loan fund companies operating in Queensland. However, in order to ensure ongoing consumer protection, the prohibition on the operation of loan fund schemes in Queensland will be transferred to the Fair Trading Act 1989.

Various amendments are proposed for the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000. The bill amends the provisions relating to when the buyer and the seller, under a relevant contract for the sale of residential property, are bound and clarifies the commencement of the cooling-off period. The buyer and the seller will be bound by the contract and the cooling-off period will commence when the buyer or their agent receives a copy of the contract signed by both parties. This will remove the need for the buyer to then return a copy of the signed contract to the seller. Receipt of a facsimile of the signed contract will be sufficient.

This will simplify the process for agents and solicitors acting for clients in property sales and will reduce delay in the exchange of documents between the two parties. The onus will be on the seller to prove that the buyer has been given a copy of the signed contract. The buyer may, by written notice—including by fax—to the seller, withdraw from the contract at any time before being bound by the contract. This will encourage sellers to return the signed contract to the buyer as soon as practicable. The bill removes the requirement for a witness to sign and date a warning statement attached to contracts for the sale of residential property. This will simplify the procedures to be followed by agents in completing approved forms as part of sales of residential property.

Inspectors will be empowered under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 to enter the business premises of licensees and marketeers in certain circumstances without the requirement for the inspectors to first obtain a warrant or consent. Inspectors will also be able to require documents from marketeers as well as from licensees. These powers are needed to meet the consumer protection objectives of the act. Without these powers, inspectors cannot make on-the-spot inspections to collect crucial evidence. This avoids the possibility of evidence necessary to enforce the act being destroyed.

Similar powers of entry are contained in other Queensland legislation, including the Introduction Agents Act 2001, the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 and the Retirement Villages Act 1999. A person who is affected by a bankruptcy action is currently unable to become a registered employee of a real estate agent. In many situations, this is an unfair restriction on the person's employment and is not in line with current thinking on the restrictions which should be imposed on people simply because they are bankrupt—often through no fault of their own.

The Bill seeks to amend the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 to enable a person who is the subject of bankruptcy proceedings to be employed as a registered employee of a licensed real estate agent, provided that the person is not in a position of influence over the management of the licensee's business. The chief executive may impose a condition on the registration certificate of a person affected by bankruptcy—for example, a condition that the employee is not to be responsible for trust account matters. The Partnership (Limited Liability) Act 1988 is to be amended to clarify the activities limited partners can engage in without breaching the prohibition on taking part in the management of a partnership. The amendment achieves this by providing an inclusive list of activities that will not be regarded as taking part in the management of a partnership. The bill amends the Retirement Villages Act 1999 to ensure that an ingoing contribution paid by a prospective resident when purchasing a residence off the plan is held in trust and can be refunded to the resident in the event that premises are not suitable for habitation within a specified period of time. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

CONSUMER CREDIT (QUEENSLAND) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.42 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to make changes to the Consumer Credit Code.

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) (12.43 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to amend the Consumer Credit Code to introduce mandatory comparison rates for fixed term consumer credit products and extend the time limitation period for civil penalty applications currently available under the code. The Consumer Credit Code regulates all personal lending in Australia, including home loans, personal loans, credit cards and in-store finance. The code provides protection to consumers who borrow money. For example, the code:

- requires the lender to fully and frankly disclose the terms of the loan;
- requires loan contracts to be in writing with a copy provided to the consumer; and
- makes lenders accountable for the payments made by consumers.

Comparison rates

Consumers face difficulties when they try to compare the cost of credit between different lenders and different products. The combination of fees and charges and interest rates makes it difficult for consumers to make an informed judgment in this regard. The total cost of fees and charges payable on a loan can have a significant impact on the overall cost of the credit and is an important matter consumers consider in making decisions when borrowing money. Comparing interest rates alone is only part of the picture.

The mandatory comparison rate, or average annual percentage rate—AAPR as it is also known—is a method of reducing the total cost of a loan, including interest and all fees and charges, to a single percentage rate. This allows for much easier comparison of the overall cost of loan products by consumers. The proposed amendments will require credit providers to make available to consumers the comparison rates applicable to their products in advertising, in brochures and on the Internet that are available to consumers. This will provide consumers with an added tool in comparing the cost of different credit products and the products offered by different credit providers.

The bill will only make it mandatory for credit providers to disclose the comparison rate for fixed term credit products—that is, home loans and personal loans that must be paid out within a fixed term. The regime will not apply at this stage to continuing credit products such as credit cards. The bill provides that the mandatory comparison rate regime will sunset after three years. During that time, government, industry and consumers will be able to monitor its effectiveness. Prior to the expiration of the sunset period it is intended to review the effectiveness of the regime, including whether it should be extended to cover credit cards.

Extending time limitation

A further objective of the bill will be to extend the time limitation period for commencing civil penalty applications under the code from two years to six years. The code provides that in the event of a credit provider breaching a key requirement of the code, for example, failing to disclose details of fees and charges which are payable under the loan, the Office of Fair Trading, as the regulator, may commence an application to the court seeking the imposition of a civil penalty on the credit provider. Currently in Queensland, the Limitation of Actions Act 1974 limits taking such action to a period within two years from the date on which the cause of action arose. All states and territories have an equivalent provision.

As most of the key requirements are in relation to disclosures that occur at the time of the contract, the Office of Fair Trading effectively has only two years from the date the contract was entered into to commence a civil penalty application. This is very limiting considering home loans are written for up to 30 years. Usually complaints to the Office of Fair Trading in relation to credit contracts do not occur until some point well after the contract has been entered into.

The two-year time limitation is a major limiting factor on the ability of the Office of Fair Trading in policing the actions of credit providers and their compliance with the code. It also significantly undermines the deterrent value of the civil penalty regime. Credit providers know that even if they breach the key requirements of the code, they have the option of doing nothing and hoping no-one notices for two years, after which they are immune from any potential civil penalty action by the Office of Fair Trading. The amendment will increase the time limitation period to six years. This is the time limitation period applicable to most other civil actions, including tort and breach of contract based claims and the civil penalty provisions of the Corporations Law.

The code is national template legislation, with the other states and territories, except Western Australia, adopting the Queensland code as the law of that state and territory. Therefore, these amendments will apply nationwide. Other states and territories have supported these amendments.

The introduction of the mandatory comparison rates will help consumers in making decisions about their financial futures by providing them with more information about the products they are considering. The increase in the limitation periods for taking action will give the Office of Fair Trading greater scope in policing the actions of credit providers and their compliance with the code. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES (ACCREDITATION) BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.50 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to regulate the conduct of residential services.

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) (12.50 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a regulatory framework to mandate the standards and conditions under which residents of the residential services industry live. This bill aims to—

- protect the health, safety and basic freedom of residents;
- encourage service providers to continually improve the way they conduct residential services; and
- support fair trading in the residential services industry.

The residential services industry is one of the few within the broader residential rental market that remains without consumer protection legislation. This bill is one component of a reform package that has been developed by the Hostel Industry Taskforce and other agencies in response to poor conditions and standards in this industry. The Residential Services (Accommodation) Bill 2002 is another component of the reform package. It establishes the accommodation rights and responsibilities of residents and service providers.

Many residents living in residential services experience poor conditions, with little or no protection of their rights and are open to exploitation, neglect and abuse. They are some of the most vulnerable people in our community, having limited incomes and experiencing a range of disadvantages—including intellectual and/or psychiatric disability, drug and alcohol problems, brain injury, problems associated with ageing, social and economic disadvantage, and social

isolation. They have no market power as consumers and are unlikely to complain about their living conditions for fear of reprisal. The vast majority of residents rely upon government income support as their only source of income and surrender a high proportion of their income to service providers.

I am pleased to announce that for the first time the government will provide a framework for the regulation and continuous improvement of the residential services industry. This bill will establish minimum standards and living conditions for residents in private sector supported accommodation hostels, boarding houses and aged pensioner rental complexes by providing for a mandatory accreditation scheme to be administered by the government. This means that a residential service operator will not be able to conduct a residential service without being registered and accredited to the required level.

Registration will be the first step towards accreditation. To become registered a residential service operator must demonstrate compliance with a number of minimum standards. These include building and fire safety standards and standards regarding the suitability of persons conducting or who are involved in the management of a residential service. The scheme has been designed in this way to address concerns regarding the immediate safety and wellbeing of residents. It has also been designed to complement, not duplicate or take over from existing regulatory regimes. Accordingly, the bill recognises the role and expertise of local government with regard to determining compliance with building and fire safety standards.

Following registration, a residential service provider will be required to apply for accreditation. The accreditation scheme aims to ensure services comply with agreed industry standards while encouraging continuous quality improvement. Industry standards will be set out in subordinate legislation and will provide a blueprint for good practice. Service providers will be required to assess the performance of their own service against these standards and will also be required to undergo external assessment by an audit team.

The bill establishes three levels of accreditation. A service may require accreditation at more than one level and this will be determined by the type of service conducted. All residential services must be accredited at level one. Services that provide food to residents must also be accredited at level two, and services providing a personal care service must also be accredited at level three. Accreditation may be granted where a service provider does not fully meet the required standards in instances where they agree to meet certain conditions within a nominated period of time. This may include conducting specified work on the premises; undertaking a specified training program; or preparing a quality improvement plan dealing with stated aspects of the residential service. This is a unique approach to regulation that recognises an unusual intersection of private sector business interests with the delivery of human services. The accreditation scheme aims to meet the needs of a 'for profit' industry, which the government cannot afford to replace, and community standards about the care of people who are aged, have a disability or who are one step removed from homelessness.

The bill establishes compliance processes and provides for sanctions ranging from agreed corrective action and improvement orders through to the capacity to remove or refuse accreditation and close a premises where industry operators do not, or will not, meet the minimum requirements. A closure order is only likely in circumstances where there is serious risk to the health and safety of residents and all appropriate avenues of corrective action have been pursued.

Where a service provider disagrees with an accreditation or registration decision, they will have the right to seek review of the decision by the accreditation body. Where a service provider disagrees with the review decision, they will have the right to appeal the decision by lodging an application with the Queensland Building Tribunal. The tribunal will have the power to confirm, vary or reverse review decisions, make consequential orders and directions or set aside review decisions either in whole or in part. These are important measures to ensure the openness and accountability of the government in operating the accreditation system.

The Queensland Building Tribunal will also be empowered through this legislation to appoint an administrator to a residential service where it is necessary to ensure the health or safety of residents. Such an appointment would only occur in exceptional circumstances—for example, where a service provider who is a sole operator fails to provide a service and cannot be located and alternative options are unavailable.

The bill also affords protection to persons who make a formal complaint about the conduct of a residential service. This is necessary to ensure that a resident is not asked to leave a facility

or otherwise adversely affected because they have made a complaint. Accordingly, the bill will make it an offence to attempt to retaliate or cause detriment to another person for making a complaint or providing information about the conduct of a residential service or alleged offences against the act.

This legislation provides for an incremental approach to regulation of the residential services industry through the combination of registration and accreditation requirements. Registration will address core minimum standards which must be met in order for a service to operate. In addition to this, introduction will be staged across the different accommodation types to minimise the risk of closures and to target the highest risk premises first.

The bill represents the culmination of a lot of hard work and is an important legal reform for this state. I would particularly like to thank the industry associations, Supported Accommodation Providers Association, Boarding House Owners and Managers Association, the National Industry Association for Disability Services and Aged Care Queensland, and resident advocate groups, Queensland Disability Housing Coalition, the Boarding House Action Group and the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants League for their contribution during development of the bill.

This legislation is an important step in recognising the need for the ongoing improvement of housing and support arrangements for residents in the residential services industry. It is my very great pleasure to commend this bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! Before calling the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, I would like all honourable members to acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Mr Fernando De Araujo, East Timorese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES (ACCOMMODATION) BILL

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (2.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act about residential service agreements, and related matters.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (2.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce to the House the Residential Services (Accommodation) Bill 2002. This bill is part of a legislative package to regulate, for the first time, the private sector residential services industry comprising premises commonly referred to as boarding houses, supported accommodation and aged rental complexes.

The other element in this legislative package is the Residential Services (Accreditation) Bill 2002, introduced into the House a short time ago by the Hon. Merri Rose, Minister for Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading. That bill provides definitions for residential services covered by both bills and establishes a mandatory standards and accreditation system. This combined legislative package is being introduced in response to ongoing concerns about standards in the residential services industry.

While there are many good operators, there has also been a history of operators who have delivered substandard accommodation and less than satisfactory service. This legislative

package is part of a program of reform which has the aim of improving the lives of the residents of this sector, who are some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Turning to the accommodation bill, the residential services industry is one of the few sectors within the broader residential rental market which remains without legislative protection. The Residential Services (Accommodation) Bill addresses this gap. The bill has been developed after extensive consultation over a three-year period with representatives of key industry stakeholders and residents. Importantly, the policy model underpinning the bill has been developed from the lessons learnt from a pilot project conducted during the year 2000 in a number of residential services premises. The trial involved seven premises and 250 to 300 residents. The project piloted the use of a written residential agreement, standard house rules and a dispute resolution process. The results of the pilot were considered in developing the model on which the legislation is based.

The aim of the bill is to strike a fair balance between the interests of residents and service providers. It does this by setting out the rights and responsibilities of both parties in regard to the accommodation provided. The bill defines a residential services agreement as the agreement under which a service provider provides accommodation to a resident in the course of a residential service. It prescribes that all residential service agreements must be in writing with a signed copy given to the resident. This gives protection to both parties so that each is clearly aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The bill also provides that residential services agreements must include standard terms and house rules prescribed in subordinate legislation. Agreements may also include special terms which are not inconsistent with the provisions of the bill. Agreements must, among other things, state the amount of rent payable and the components of the rent attributable to accommodation, a food service, a personal care service or any other service provided. This will allow prospective residents to understand any service charges before they enter into agreements.

The bill has further provisions relating to rent, which include what rent receipts and rent records must be given and kept. Procedures for rent increases and decreases by the service provider are prescribed. The seizure of residents' goods in lieu of rent or another amount due is prohibited. The current practice is that rental bonds paid by residents of residential services must be lodged with the Residential Tenancies Authority and are dealt with under the Residential Tenancies Act 1994. The bill replicates these arrangements to ensure that rental bonds continue to be dealt with fairly and an entry condition report must be completed if a rental bond is taken.

While the bill will continue to require service providers to lodge rental bonds paid in full with the authority within 10 days, provisions relating to rental bond instalments have been adjusted in recognition of the specific circumstances in the industry, where the bond may be paid in small instalments. These instalments may be held by the service provider until the final instalment is paid or up to a maximum of three months before being lodged with the authority. However, any instalments held must be lodged within 10 days with the authority, if the agreement ends before the final instalment is received.

Turning to house rules, these are rules for the use, control or management of residential services and are commonly used in this sector. The bill provides for prescribed rules, which must form part of any agreement. It allows rules to be made by a service provider in specific areas such as the use of shared facilities, parking or noise, as long as these rules are not inconsistent with the prescribed rules. The bill also sets out a process whereby residents can dispute rule changes. Any house rules must be given to residents and displayed prominently.

Recognising residents' right to quiet enjoyment of their room, the bill sets out the grounds for entry to rooms by service providers and procedures which must be followed. Entry can occur for any reason with the resident's agreement. The service provider may enter to inspect the room at a reasonable time, after giving 48 hours' notice, no more than once a month. Entry is also permitted at a reasonable time with 24 hours' notice to clean the room, carry out pest control or routine maintenance, to show the room to a prospective resident or purchaser or to make a valuation. Entry can occur without notice in an emergency or if the service provider reasonably believes the room has been abandoned or to carry out urgent repairs.

A key element of the bill is the introduction of procedures to deal with accommodation disputes between residents and service providers. The bill sets out a three-stage dispute resolution process involving self-resolution, conciliation and, if necessary, arbitration by the Small Claims Tribunal. The first step in the dispute resolution process is self-resolution by negotiation

between the service provider and resident. If agreement cannot be reached between the parties, the bill provides for a conciliation process under which either party can make a dispute resolution request to the Residential Tenancies Authority to help the parties to resolve the issue.

This system has been found to be effective in other sectors of the rental industry in achieving a satisfactory settlement without having to go through the formal court system or without eviction occurring. If, however, a satisfactory settlement cannot be conciliated, the bill allows an application to be made to the Small Claims Tribunal for an order to resolve the dispute.

There are occasions when either residents or service providers may wish to terminate a residential services agreement for a variety of reasons. The bill sets out procedures which are intended to treat both parties fairly in these circumstances. Specific notice periods are prescribed for these procedures. These notice periods have been set after a thorough consideration of the nature of the accommodation provided in this sector and seek to balance the interests of both residents and service providers.

The bill prescribes how a resident can end an agreement. A resident can end a periodic agreement—where the term of the agreement is not set—with seven days' notice without grounds. In the case of a breach of the agreement, the resident may end a fixed term agreement—where the term of the agreement is for a set period—with seven days' notice, if the service provider has failed to remedy the breach within five days. A service provider may end a periodic agreement without grounds by giving at least 30 days' notice to a resident. A fixed term agreement may be ended by giving at least 14 days' notice to the resident at the end of the agreement. In the case of a breach of the agreement the service provider may give the resident a notice to remedy the breach.

In the case of rent, for residents of less than 28 days the notice period is two days. For residents of 28 days and over, the service provider must wait two days before giving the notice and the subsequent notice period is four days. For breaches other than rent, the notice period is five days, regardless of the length of residency. If the breach is not remedied, the service provider may then issue a notice requiring the resident to leave the premises. Where the breach is non-payment of rent, residents of less than 28 days may be required to leave immediately, while residents of 28 days and over may be required to leave after four days. For breaches other than rent, the notice period is two days.

The resident may be issued with a notice to leave immediately in certain serious circumstances. These circumstances are where the resident has used the premises for an illegal purpose, or where the resident or their guest has intentionally or recklessly—

- destroyed or seriously damaged part of the premises; or
- endangered another person; or
- significantly interfered with another resident's reasonable peace, comfort, privacy or use of the premises. I cannot stress that point enough.

The current practice allows that a service provider may forcibly evict a resident with no restrictions other than the criminal law about the use of force. The bill specifically addresses this problem by regulating the means by which a service provider can remove a resident, if the resident refuses to leave after the expiry of a notice to leave, or if the agreement has been terminated. It limits the service provider to the use of necessary and reasonable force to remove the resident, short of force likely to cause bodily harm. It also provides that force can only be used when a police officer is present. The bill provides a safeguard by providing that a resident can apply to the Small Claims Tribunal if they believe the service provider has unlawfully removed them or their goods from the premises. The tribunal may then make an appropriate order about the matter, including an order for compensation.

The bill also makes amendments to other legislation to achieve its objectives. It amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1994 to provide for the administration and enforcement of the legislation by the Residential Tenancies Authority. The RTA was established in 1989 and has considerable experience in administering legislation regulating the broader residential rental industry. Its work is highly regarded and the government decided to build upon an existing and recognised base for the new arrangements. The bill also amends the Small Claims Tribunal Act 1973 to provide tribunals with the powers to deal with accommodation disputes.

The explanation I have given about the bill is not exhaustive. The relationship between service providers and residents is complex and the coverage of the bill is wide. Both factors are reflected in its size. The bill has been subject to wide consultation with representatives of key

stakeholders. I believe there is support for the broad direction taken. No doubt there will still be some who argue there is not enough or too much protection for residents. There will be some who argue for more or less protection for service providers. However, there can be no doubt that the rights of tenants and those providers who want to do the right thing will—for the first time—be protected in this state.

The government will require the Residential Tenancies Authority to monitor the operation of the legislation. It will also require that the legislation be reviewed after two years of operation to ensure it is achieving its aim of striking a fair balance between the rights and responsibilities of service providers and residents. In addition, there have been concerns within the residential services industry that the cost of accreditation may cause closures. In response to this, the government has approved development of a loan product by the Department of Housing. That new product will be available to those wishing to undertake capital repairs and improvements to premises so that they meet the registration and accreditation standards under the new Residential Services (Accreditation) Bill. However, this loan product will not be available until legislative amendment has been made to the State Housing Act 1945. The Department of Housing will monitor the impacts of regulation on the viability of the residential services industry. I believe this bill is an important step in achieving the government's objective of improving the lives of residents in this sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

ELECTORAL AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.44 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Electoral Act 1992, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.45 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill marks a new era in Queensland politics. It delivers on the commitments made by the Premier in his Barcaldine statement in January last year and will make Queensland's electoral laws the toughest and most democratic in Australia. The bill requires political parties and candidates to meet new standards of honesty and accountability and imposes tough new penalties on electoral fraud. These reforms are aimed at eliminating electoral fraud and restoring public confidence in the electoral process. Many of the initiatives in the bill are new, not only for Queensland but for Australia.

Tougher Penalties for Electoral Offences

The bill includes the toughest penalties for electoral offences of any jurisdiction in the country. To reflect the seriousness of these crimes they are removed from the Electoral Act and relocated in the Criminal Code and the penalties have been increased as follows:

- false or misleading information: the penalty increases from six months to seven years imprisonment—the toughest in Australia;
- bribery: the penalty increases from two years to seven years imprisonment—the toughest in Australia;
- forging or uttering electoral or referendum papers: the penalty increases from six months imprisonment to 10 years imprisonment—the toughest in Australia; and
- voting if not entitled: the penalty increases from six months to three years imprisonment—the toughest in Australia.

In addition the bill bans people with convictions for 'disqualifying electoral offences' from nominating as candidates for state or local government elections. This is necessary to maintain public confidence in the honesty and integrity of their elected representatives.

New Registration Requirements

In his Barcaldine statement the Premier committed to the reform of the membership and conduct of political parties. To achieve these commitments the bill imposes strict new requirements for registration of political parties. Only parties which have constitutions that comply with the standards set out in this bill will be eligible for registration and public funding. This will bring a level of transparency and accountability to political parties never before seen in this country. Under the bill a party's constitution must contain information about how the party manages its internal affairs, membership rules and election rules for office bearers and preselection of candidates for state or local government elections. The constitution must also:

- commit the party to conducting preselection ballots in accordance with the principles of free and democratic elections;
- exclude people who are not on the Queensland electoral roll from voting in preselection ballots; and
- prohibit people from becoming or remaining a member of the party for 10 years if convicted of a 'disqualifying electoral offence'. There will be a six-month transitional period to allow parties that are already registered to adjust to the new requirements.

After this time, parties that have not lodged a complying constitution with the Electoral Commission of Queensland will have their registration cancelled.

Preselection Ballots

The Barcaldine statement included a promise to clean up preselection processes in political parties. The bill delivers on this commitment. The bill establishes new controls on the conduct of preselection ballots. These new rules confer fundamental rights on the members of political parties to ensure that preselection ballots are free and fair. The bill defines preselection ballot. It encompasses ballots where party members vote directly for a candidate in their capacity as members, rather than as members of a committee or some other representative group, to select a candidate for party endorsement.

The bill only regulates the direct voting component of a preselection process. It does not regulate central preselection or endorsement by the executive or a committee of the political party. The bill does not require that parties conduct a full preselection ballot of rank and file members. Parties will be free to adopt whatever form of preselection process they wish, provided the rules are clearly stated in their constitutions. However, where the party rules provide for preselection ballots to be conducted as part or whole of the preselection process, new standards of accountability will apply and the ballots will be subject to oversight by the Electoral Commission under the new part 8A.

These new rules provide a challenge to all political parties to improve the processes for selection of candidates for political office. The challenge is to follow the lead of the Australian Labor Party and conduct open and accountable preselection processes in which members of the party have a say. Part 8A provides for oversight of preselection ballots by the Electoral Commission.

Model procedures will be prescribed for the conduct of preselection ballots. The Electoral Commission will be able to inquire into a ballot at any time before, during or after its conduct and act on its own initiative or on complaint. This will apply to preselections for both Legislative Assembly and local government elections. There will, in addition, be an overall random audit of preselection ballots for Legislative Assembly candidates following each general state election.

The bill will impose some constraints on complaints to deter people from abusing the commission's new supervisory role to gain political mileage. Only candidates and members eligible to vote in a ballot will be able to complain and must do so within 30 days of the preselection ballot. The complaint to the Electoral Commission must set out the grounds of the complaint. It will be an offence to make the same or substantially the same complaint to the commission after having been advised it will not be investigated because it appears to be frivolous or vexatious.

New Public Disclosure Requirements

In his Barcaldine statement the Premier promised that public disclosure laws would be tightened and overseen by the independent Electoral Commission to ensure that there are no secret deals. The bill delivers on this commitment.

There will be new requirements for how-to-vote cards to be lodged in advance with the commission, along with declarations as to any financial contributions received from or on behalf of another political party or candidate. This way everyone will know what the preference arrangements are well before polling day. The lodged cards will be available for public inspection before polling day and, as far as is practicable, on polling day in each polling booth. Cards which have not been lodged at least seven days before polling day will not be able to be distributed on polling day.

There will be tougher financial disclosure requirements for both parties and candidates. Parties and candidates will be required to keep certain particulars of loans they have received from entities other than financial institutions. These will include the terms and conditions of the loans to reveal whether the loan was provided on commercial terms. The purpose is to ensure that gifts to parties and candidates are not disguised as loans from third parties to conceal the true source of political funding. Candidates will be required to disclose loans in election related returns and there will be new obligations on donors to candidates to also lodge election related returns.

New Measures to Maintain the Integrity of the Roll

In his Barcaldine statement the Premier committed to clean up the electoral roll, and the bill achieves this. While Queensland continues in a joint roll arrangement with the Commonwealth, the ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of the electoral roll will remain with the Commonwealth. However, the bill contains a range of measures to allow the Queensland Electoral Commission to play a greater part in maintaining the roll's accuracy and integrity. The commission's functions have been amended to include the function of promoting electoral enrolment. This is to ensure the commission can undertake enrolment campaigns targeting groups which are traditionally underrepresented, for example young people and people in remote communities. Special postal voters will be subject to more rigorous reviews within a more meaningful time frame before each general election.

The electoral commission will also be authorised to obtain electoral roll related data from state government entities and local governments prescribed by regulation. The bill authorises the Queensland Electoral Commission to obtain this data specifically for the purposes of the Electoral Act. It will be protected by the confidentiality requirements of the new section 33A. The Australian Electoral Commission will be able to data-match this information with similar data obtained from federal sources to ensure that the roll used for state electoral purposes is of the highest accuracy and integrity.

This bill delivers on the commitments made by the Premier before the last election and in so doing repays the faith that the Queensland people put in the Beattie Labor government. It will deliver an electoral system that is the strongest and most transparent in the country. I commend the bill to the House

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.55 p.m.): by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the criminal law, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.56 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to effect changes to the criminal law to improve the responsiveness of the criminal justice system to the needs of our citizens, particularly jurors, witnesses and victims of crime. The bill amends the Criminal Code, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Evidence Act 1977, the Bail Act 1980, the Jury Act 1995, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 and the Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Act 2000. The bill will correct a number of technical and drafting anomalies in the Crimes (Confiscation) Act 1989, the Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995 and the District Court Act 1967.

The Criminal Code contains provisions which 'protect' witnesses before and during a civil or criminal proceeding, and jurors after the conclusion of judicial proceedings. However, there is no specific offence that deals with people who take revenge or reprisals against witnesses after a proceeding because of what the witness has said or done as a witness. There is also no protection for judicial officers against revenge or reprisals. This bill addresses community concerns about the lack of protection afforded to witnesses, jurors and judicial officers after that person has exercised his or her function or duty.

Our government believes people who are good enough to come forward to give evidence as witnesses or perform their civic duty as jurors should have the full protection of the criminal law against any vengeful acts. Judicial officers must also be protected from those who would target them for vengeance because of what they have lawfully done in their capacity as a judicial officer.

Anyone convicted of doing, or threatening to do, any injury or detriment to such a person or their family should be dealt with severely, because this behaviour strikes at the heart of both the civil and criminal justice systems. The bill provides for a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment for these offences. Of course, even harsher penalties can also be imposed through existing offences, if actual physical or emotional harm is caused.

The proposed offence is directed at a person who threatens to take, or actually does take, revenge on a person because of the person's involvement in the justice system. The offence does not seek to stifle comment or criticism, including robust criticism, about the function of the criminal justice system and any decision a court might reach. It is a fundamental principle that justice is administered in open court. A court is open when members of the public, including the press, have a right of admission.

By exposing court proceedings to scrutiny, the public can be reassured that justice is administered fairly, impartially and in accordance with the law. For example, a complaint that a witness committed perjury or gave false information to police may not breach this section. However, a threat to inflict violence on a person would be 'without reasonable cause', even if the accused believed that the person had acted unlawfully. Similarly, an act that is otherwise lawful may be a retaliation if it is done with intent to punish a person for what he or she has done in court—for example, sacking a witness because of their testimony in court. In addition, the penalty for corrupting jurors has been increased to seven years to be consistent with the offence of corrupting witnesses in section 127.

The street address of jurors is currently recorded on jury lists and jurors have raised concerns about the disclosure of these addresses, especially where the list has been made available to accused persons not represented by lawyers. Although the judge's associate will recover the jury list from self-represented accused after the empanelment of the jury, sections 29(2) and 37(1) of the Jury Act 1995 require the full street address of jurors to be placed on the jury list. The proposed amendment to section 37 balances the acknowledged importance of a juror's occupation and residential area for informing challenges to jurors with the right of a juror to feel that their privacy is also protected. The amendment reaches an acceptable compromise by requiring the disclosure of a potential juror's suburb or town but not their street address.

Modern technology also has the potential to compromise the right of an accused person to be tried upon admissible evidence heard in the courtroom. With the advent of Internet web sites such as crimenet.com.au which disclose the antecedents of convicted persons, there is a concern that jurors could readily access the criminal history of persons on trial. This issue has serious implications for the integrity of criminal trials. On 24 May last year in *R v. McLachlan*, a Victorian Supreme Court judge aborted a murder retrial because he feared it would be prejudiced by information on crimenet.com.au. The general consensus is that a judge's direction to a jury is not sufficient. It is proposed an offence be inserted into the Jury Act 1995 that will prohibit jurors making inquiries of an accused put into their charge. The prohibition will operate from the time a juror is sworn in a particular trial under section 50 of the Jury Act 1995 until they are discharged from their oath.

The 1997 amendments to the Criminal Code gave judges in the District Court and Supreme Court the power to make binding pretrial rulings. This bill gives magistrates the same power. This power will particularly assist victims of crime and witnesses. Until now, arrangements as to how a victim would give evidence—for example, giving evidence by closed-circuit television—could not be finalised until the day of the committal hearing. This bill allows magistrates to make early rulings on these questions, saving victims weeks of anxiety.

There are other initiatives in the bill to increase the efficiency of the Magistrates Court. Amendments to section 20 of the Bail Act 1980 and section 84 of the Justices Act will allow a magistrate to excuse a legally represented offender from appearing on administrative mentions. This reflects the practice in the higher courts. Amendments to the Bail Act 1980 will also allow police, entrusted with the power to grant bail to offenders in a watch-house, to instead issue a notice to appear or an attendance notice for juveniles in the appropriate circumstances.

Offences of stock stealing are serious offences. These offences not only affect the individual stock owners but can endanger the entire Queensland stock industry by undermining disease prevention work which is dependent on appropriate livestock identification systems. The use of the term 'stock' in the Criminal Code has been rationalised and the protection for criminal liability for cases where civil action has commenced has been removed, as these offences are now classified as misdemeanours. Such protection does not exist for any other indictable offence. This bill increases the penalty for offences relating to stock stealing in the criminal code from one year's imprisonment to five years imprisonment. The maximum fine available for offences of unlawfully using stock, suspicion of stealing stock, illegal branding, defacing brands or having in possession an animal with a defaced brand are increased to \$50,000.

Section 398(2) of the Criminal Code has been amended to make clear that stealing of stock of a value over \$5,000 is to be treated in the same manner as the stealing of any property valued at over \$5,000, with a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. The bill also makes technical amendments to the Criminal Code. Section 568 of the Criminal Code is amended to correct an anomaly resulting from amendments made in 1997 to sections 419, 421 and 433. It also addresses a difficulty identified by the Court of Appeal in *R v. Williams* 2000 QCA 409 where the penalties for the alternative offences are the same and the judge is required to enter a conviction for the offence with the lesser penalty. Subsection (10) states that, where the same penalty is provided, the trial judge is to decide on the offence for which the conviction is to be entered. Section 671G of the Criminal Code has also been amended to make plain that when an offender appeals a conviction or sentence to the Court of Appeal their term of imprisonment, except if granted bail, continues to run during the appeal period. The bill also makes minor amendments to a number of other criminal statutes.

Sentencing of offenders is a complex task. A sentencing judge must tailor a sentence to ensure that offenders are adequately punished and that the reasons for their offending behaviour are addressed. To do this, judges need flexibility in the types of sentence orders that they can impose. This bill includes amendments to the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 that provide that flexibility. This bill will allow up to 12 months imprisonment to be coupled with a three-year probation order. Judges will also be able to reinstate an operational period for a suspended sentence if that period expires before an offender is dealt with. The period of time before a court can review an indeterminate sentence where the nominal sentence is life imprisonment has been increased to 15 or 20 years to accord with the parole eligibility dates for life imprisonment.

Amendments have been made to ensure persons detained under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 are integrated into the same processes for conditional release as those persons serving life imprisonment. These detainees can currently only be released by the Governor in Council when it is expedient to do so. This is an anomaly not applied to any other prisoners. Furthermore, there is doubt whether the Governor in Council can attach enforceable conditions to any proposed release of these prisoners, and this uncertainty has attracted judicial criticism. The changes proposed by this bill deem these detainees to be serving life imprisonment if these persons were to apply for a post-prison community based release order. These persons would be subject to the very careful scrutiny of the Queensland Corrections Board in accordance with stringent guidelines laid down by the government before any supervised release could ever be granted. I must be notified when a prisoner makes an application and would have the opportunity to make submissions to the board. Most importantly, the law will expressly require that, if a person constitutes a risk to the safety of others, they may never be considered suitable for supervised release.

DNA profiling has become an extremely important investigation and prosecution tool. It has the potential to convict the guilty and free the innocent. Producing a DNA profile can take considerable laboratory time and involve many scientists in testing, checking and carrying a sample. In Queensland, the documentation of these laboratory procedures reflect world standards for carrying out forensic DNA profiling. Court obligations can impact heavily on a scientist's time. The courts have commented on this problem. In *R v. Hytch* 2000 QCA 315, Justice Mackenzie said—

It will generally be inevitable that a forensic scientist will be called to interpret the findings of the analysis and the statistics, which give the findings their cogency. Whether it is necessary to call other persons involved in the process either to prove continuity of the sample or for cross-examination in the hope that some actual flaw in the process may be fortuitously discovered is, no doubt, a matter of judgment for counsel in a particular case.

In other areas of the law where analyses are performed, identity of the sample tested and, by inference, the integrity of the testing process can be proved by certificate (eg. Drugs Misuse Act 1986 s56; the Traffic Act 1949 s16a(16b)).

The same kind of resource implications that underlie such provisions may be assumed to exist in the case of DNA samples.

It may be that if unnecessary strains are placed on resources by routinely calling persons who are unlikely to give contentious evidence, it will be necessary in the future for the legislature to consider such a provision with regard to DNA evidence.

There should, of course, be no impediment to calling witnesses in cases where a real purpose will be served by requiring them to give evidence.

This bill therefore inserts section 95A, evidentiary certificates, into the Evidence Act 1977. The effect of this section is that a certificate signed by a DNA analyst appointed under statute because of their qualifications and experience is evidence of matters stated in the certificate. Matters in the certificate may include the day a thing was received at a laboratory; the day testing of the thing occurred; that a stated DNA profile had been obtained; and that the DNA analyst had examined laboratory procedures and confirmed that records indicated appropriate quality assurance procedures had been complied with. Other witnesses involved in the testing process apart from the forensic analyst do not have to be called by the prosecution unless the judicial officer gives leave.

There are a number of safeguards in this provision to ensure that the rights of an accused are not prejudiced. Any party seeking to rely on a certificate must, upon request, produce all records relating to the receipt, storage and testing of the thing. The forensic analyst making the certificate must be called for cross-examination. It is this forensic analyst who makes the comparison between DNA profiles to establish a match. The certificate does not seek to prove this comparison. The scientist must still come to court to give this evidence and be cross-examined.

The Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Act 2000 established a drug court pilot program that operates from Beenleigh, Ipswich and Southport Magistrates Court. The legislation expires 30 months after commencement—December 2002. However, the government is committed to running a drug court pilot in north Queensland to be implemented this year. Consequently, this bill extends the operation of this legislation for 12 months with the option of an extension for a further 12 months by regulation. The amendments also provide for an expanded regulation making power to enable many of the procedures of the drug court to be set out in regulation.

Amendments to the eligibility criteria require that, before the making of an intensive drug rehabilitation order, the pilot program magistrate must be satisfied that the maximum number of prescribed intensive drug rehabilitation orders have not been exceeded. This will ensure that sufficient rehabilitation facilities are available for all drug court participants. Technical amendments are also made to the legislation to clarify the procedures for terminating an order and entering information into the database. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 February (see p. 48).

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (3.12 p.m.): The National Party will not be supporting the proposed bill for a number of reasons that I will discuss later. Firstly, I would like to give an outline of the bill. The objective of this amendment bill is to implement the government's position in

addressing the impact on retail traders and consumers in the areas near Brisbane following a recent decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to introduce Sunday trading in the city of Brisbane area only.

The Retailers Association of Queensland Ltd filed an application with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to introduce Sunday trading for non-exempt shops from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the 'Brisbane and near metropolitan area'. This area extended north to Caboolture, west to Ipswich and south to Beenleigh. The commission handed down its decision on Friday, 21 December 2001. This issue was last determined in 1998 when the Borbidge government put a submission to the IRC opposing any extension of trading hours.

This current application was granted in part only to the local government area of the city of Brisbane to operate from 1 July 2002. The decision by the commission has caused some controversy, to say the least. There have been a number of criticisms from different organisations and the state government as well. It has been said that the decision of the commission will disadvantage traders, shopping centres and consumers in areas adjacent to Brisbane by disallowing access to Sunday trading and, as such, was not in the public interest. Areas excluded from the decision include Ipswich, Redbank, Strathpine, Pine Rivers, Arana Hills, Caboolture, Redcliffe, Capalaba, Browns Plains, Springwood, Redlands and Logan.

Another issue raised was the current situation whereby numerous different trading hours exist between the Sunshine Coast area and the Gold Coast area, resulting in inconsistencies and both industry and consumer confusion. The government, through the proposed bill, says that it wishes to improve the commission's decision. The government claims that it is doing so in the best interests of both the retail industry and consumers.

There are a number of reasons why the opposition will not be supporting the proposed bill. I would like to now outline some of the concerns that are apparent in the government's handling of this issue. The argument that extended trading hours will create more jobs is illusionary. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on the Victorian experience in 1997 when they deregulated showed—

- a 2.8 per cent reduction in the number of retail traders, which is really pretty terrible;
- a 13.1 per cent reduction in the number of food industry jobs; and
- a 1.1 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the personal and household goods sectors.

This is strong evidence for the argument against the passing of the proposed legislation.

Even stronger evidence comes from Queensland. Under regulated trading hours in 1997, Queensland experienced a 3.8 per cent increase in the number of jobs in the retail trades and a 12.8 per cent increase in jobs in the food industry. The government needs to realise that extended trading hours are, in fact, not the source of extra employment but indeed drain employment in areas of high importance. The retail and food sectors are large employers of Queensland youth.

The other important issue is the government's claim that extended trading hours have a beneficial effect on prices. I wonder. Large retail corporations in particular claim that increased profits from extended trading hours will be passed on to consumers through lower prices. I ask honourable members: when the retail traders have been reduced to two or three big companies, do they think that the prices will be lower? One needs only to look at what happened in relation to air fares and Qantas when the competition was knocked out. Unfortunately, we are looking at fewer jobs and higher prices.

Lower prices come from healthy competition in the particular industry. If extended trading hours are introduced, then competition will be stifled. This is because the proposed amendments will threaten the viability of many small businesses, and this will benefit the large corporations. Markets will be increasingly controlled by a small number of large firms. This can make the consumer liable to paying higher prices for their products and services.

As I have said, the main beneficiaries of extended trading hours are the large multinational corporations through the strengthening of their monopoly power. Unlike other political parties, the National Party does not support the domination of the business sector by large multinational corporations. The National Party is the only party that is interested in the needs of small business in this state.

Government members: Ha, ha!

Mr LESTER: If Labor Party members want to laugh about this matter, they can. However, I challenge them to vote with the National Party on this legislation. What do they think is going to happen once the big corporations—the Woolworths, the new German crowd that has come in and Coles Myer—have the market by the throat? I would like to know what will happen in about 10 years time. They need not laugh too much about some of these things because they might find that it all comes back and bites them.

I know that it sounds good. People in my area are on my back to have a Woolworths on the Capricorn Coast. But I can tell members that, once Woolworths appears in that area, small businesses will be knocked out of the ring. This is where we have an argument about this policy. Consumers love the big corporations, but it is not so good when the big corporations are the sole operators. We saw what happened in the airline industry a few years ago when Compass I and Compass II entered the market. Ansett, as it was then, and Qantas lowered their prices until they knocked out Compass. Then the prices went up higher than ever.

The scenario presented in this bill is absolutely no different. I hope that I am wrong—but I will not be and I know that the members opposite know it, too. I know that there are quite some divisions within the Labor Party on this issue. They are all going to be very nice and talk about their own areas, because with this trading hours bill they are in a no-win situation. What is proposed will suit some people and it will not suit others. The members opposite will be given a free rein when they speak to this bill. So we will hear a mishmash of comments so that the members opposite can at least say that they were able to speak and do what they needed to do for their area. But when it comes to the vote, that might be a different matter.

The National Party, through its business advocacy policy, has shown its interest in the needs of small business in this state, which importantly proposes to improve the lines of communication between government and small business. I think that we need to do that. At one point small business was employing 61 per cent of our work force. We should never forget that. The big corporations are there to help their shareholders. They use more computers and fewer people. When people go shopping in stores owned by those big corporations, they have to know the size of their shirt and everything else they wear. Unfortunately, that means fewer jobs.

If the government had consulted more closely with small business over the decision, then it may have thought otherwise about extending these trading hours. The other important point to make is that the Industrial Relations Commission is the umpire. It is important that its decisions are given due respect. Most importantly, the National Party believes that the umpire is there to perform a function and that its decision is final. The government should not just jump in and overturn a decision of the Industrial Relations Commission just because it is not happy with the outcome.

Mr Purcell: You wouldn't have done that when you were minister.

Mr LESTER: I know that the member has a big voice, but I have a big voice, too.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jarratt): Order!

Mr LESTER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for pulling the member into gear. He is very much out of order in trying to interject on me when I am sticking up for the small business people of this state. I want to see these people employ 61 per cent of the work force. I do not want to see them turned into nothing. That is what will happen. They will be gone. Everywhere we go in Australia we will see the Crazy Clarks, the Woolworths, the Coles Myers and the McDonald's. It will be exactly the same in Perth as it is in Brisbane, and as it is in Canberra. We will not have diversity. That will affect our tourist trade. So we will lose out in that regard as well.

In conclusion, the opposition will not be supporting the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. I have outlined the reasons why. I advise others, including the members of the Labor Party, to think about these issues—to think about the employment prospects, to think about our state's future—and vote with the National Party, that is, vote against the bill.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.24 p.m.): I rise to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill and the introduction of the new trading hours zone in south-east Queensland for Sundays and public holidays. The new zone will standardise trading hours on Sundays and public holidays and provide a significant economic boost to the retail sector and the broader economy.

Already the major retailers are predicting an increase of over 2,000 full-time equivalent jobs as a direct result of additional trading hours, representing a two per cent increase in total retail

employment across Queensland. Of the 2,100 jobs the Retailers Association of Queensland has forecast, half are expected to be new jobs—casuals or part-time employees working the additional days—and the other half are expected to be taken up by existing casual and part-time employees who want to volunteer to work more hours. This is important in today's labour market, where a significant number of workers are seeking to work additional hours to gain greater job and income security. With the ever-increasing trend towards non-standard hours of work in the labour market, it has become even more important to provide greater choice for all workers and members of our community in how they balance their work, family and daily lives.

To this end, the government has acknowledged the commitment given by the Retailers Association of Queensland on behalf of its members and the SDA that existing employees will not be rostered to work on the new trading days except where they volunteer to do so. To that end, the SDA filed a consent award called the Voluntary Work (Extended Trading Hours Non-Exempt Shops) Award—State on 17 December before the commission handed down its decision in regard to trading hours in Brisbane. This probably would have been about the time that the SDA also absented itself from the commission and agreed to Sunday trading. So the award was made on a consent basis.

These arrangements protect the interests of existing employees and will be able to be enforced through a new voluntary work award for retail employees filed by the union, which is currently before the Queensland Industrial Commission and will be heard tomorrow. When the minister gets an opportunity to do so, he will move an amendment—and he will go into the details of it—that will give employees notice if they are required to work on public holidays. Their consent to their employer will have to be given in writing.

Penalty rates for all workers, including casuals, are those that apply under existing industrial arrangements through the Retail Industry Award—State and enterprise bargaining agreements entered into between retailers and unions on behalf of their members. These rates include additional remuneration for workers who actually work on Sundays and public holidays. They are standard rates that operate on the Gold Coast where there is trading on public holidays and Sundays. They also operate in Brisbane and on the north coast. I imagine that they would also operate in Cairns. Those rates mean that, if a person works on those days, they get eight hours pay plus time and a half. So it is two and a half times the rate. If a person does not work and is not required to work, they get paid for a public holiday on a public holiday.

In addition to the number of new jobs and increased employment opportunities for existing staff that this bill will create, the expanded hours are also expected to result in increased retail turnover for the industry. Since the introduction of core trading hours for Monday to Friday and Saturday in 1994, large retailers in Queensland alone have experienced more than a 50 per cent increase in retail turnover, with similar experiences reported interstate.

Some time ago members in this place may have heard me talk about the extended trading hours. I was not very keen on that. I saw how it affected the smaller retail people in my area, particularly the fruit people and the butchers who operated in those centres. Their busiest trading hours were on Thursday nights. But those people who are still in business improved their operations. Those who did not have gone by the board. I know where the member for Keppel is coming from, but retailers in little shopping centres or small strip centres—and I would probably have 10 times more of those in my electorate than he would have in his—have to think smarter and operate better.

The Colmslie shopping centre in my electorate has been revitalised with the addition of a Woolies, and the fruit bloke there does a roaring trade. If any sporting clubs or schools need a tray of goods to raffle, he is the bloke to see because he looks after his customers. People give loyalty to those places. The quality of his fruit is very good and the service is good. If shopkeepers want to compete with Woolies, Coles, Franklins and so on, they have to provide better service and offer good quality goods. They can compete and they can beat them because they do not have the same overheads. I know that Woolies targeted that little fruit bloke for a period of time, but it gave up after a while because it got sick of losing money. He just outperformed Woolies.

The member for Keppel has said that smaller retailers who are not operating correctly, who do not give their customers good service and who do not have good quality goods will go by the board. So they should! However, those who look after their customers, those who have good quality gear and those who give good service will still be in business for a long time to come.

Along with the increased retail trade, we expect there will be a further spin-off to the Queensland economy with an estimated \$2.24 generated for each additional dollar spent in retail. This is good news for Queensland. The introduction of Sunday trading will also help meet the increasing demands of a growing population within the south-east corner of Queensland. Expanded trading will also assist the tourist areas. That little shopping centre in my electorate is very busy and a person is flat out finding a parking spot. Extended shopping hours make it easier for mums and dads to get in there and do their shopping.

The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission already acknowledges the needs of the tourism sector, with existing trading allowed on Sundays and public holidays in the inner city areas of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. There are also four mandatory closed days under this bill: Good Friday, Anzac Day, Labor Day and Christmas Day. There will be an additional mandatory closed day of Easter Sunday which the new zone will standardise. So there will be an extra non-trading day in Brisbane, on the Gold Coast and on the Sunshine Coast.

The member for Keppel has said there was not a lot of consultation. There was a lot of consultation with those people who wanted to talk to the government. On 23 January 2001, the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Industrial Relations Minister met with the Retailers Association of Queensland, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Property Council of Australia and the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association. After the decision was made, that was the first large meeting held to let people know what the Premier had been lobbied about. As members would know, the Premier, Peter Beattie, has his finger on the pulse. He was lobbied by retailers from all areas not to allow that decision to stand or to enhance that decision. They saw that some areas were being left out, that it would be detrimental to their businesses and that it would cost jobs in Queensland. The Premier would not allow that to happen.

Shortly after that, the SDA filed an amended application for a consent award with the commission. On 15 February, the Premier and Deputy Premier held a further meeting with the AWU and the SDA. Then on 20 February and on 5 March, the Industrial Relations Minister met with the SDA on its own. As late as last night, the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Industrial Relations Minister held further talks with the union to iron out any difficulties. For anybody to say, as the member for Keppel has, that there was not any consultation is well wide of the mark.

In summary, the new trading hours zone will introduce uniform trading hours for south-east Queensland. It is good news for consumers, retailers, shopping centres, employees, and good news for Queenslanders in general.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.34 p.m.): I rise to speak on behalf of the National Party on this amending bill and to strongly oppose it. It is the National Party alone that is standing up for small business. Thank goodness that there is one party in this place that has the courage to stand up for small business, those Queensland family-owned small businesses that work so hard seven days a week and will see a large chunk of their gross for the week bitten off by the major corporations when this bill gets passed by the sheer weight of numbers that the Labor government has in this parliament.

The issue that we are talking about today concerns parliament and government caring about both sides of the argument and, in particular, caring about people who have invested their money in a business and who have probably borrowed money to buy a small business. It is the dream of many Queenslanders that they can one day own a shop or a small retail business and work hard and make a profit out of that business to provide for themselves and their family. It is this network of small business that is the backbone of our society—our towns, our suburbs, our communities. It is these small businesses that provide so much of the employment in Queensland. Small businesses together generate more employment than any other sector. Importantly, they are the very fabric of our communities.

Currently, we have seven day trading that covers—and I will go through this later on—almost all categories. We have seven days a week trading now and, generally speaking, we have a great deal of convenience for consumers. This bill really does one thing: it allows the big majors—the Woolworths, the Coles and the German organisation that my colleague the shadow minister spoke about—to enter the retail trade on a Sunday, whereas at the moment they have got full trading rights from Monday through to late Saturday afternoon. The smaller businesses that currently provide convenience shopping seven days a week will lose about 20 to 30 per cent of their gross weekly takings. That means that many of these businesses will have to restructure. They are going to have to shed staff. They are going to have to change the whole way they

operate. They are going to have a lesser surplus or profit at the end of the week. And for many of these family businesses it is going to mean an extension of the incredible hours they are working. If they are working many hours and many days a week now, because of this involvement of the bigger majors, because of a lower gross for the week, they will probably have to put off staff. Where they may have employed staff on, say, a Sunday or a Tuesday, they will have to do the work themselves and try to spread it across the family business.

We are really talking now about a historical change which is not taking into account the arguments that have been put forward before the Industrial Relations Commission. This debate today really drives home the broken promises of the Premier of Queensland. He said and the government said that they would abide by the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission. That is the policy of the National Party. The Industrial Relations Commission hears from all sides—small business, consumer groups, unions and the organisations that represent the bigger retailers. The commission weighs it all up and it makes a decision based on changing trends and the various needs of consumers. The commission asks itself, 'Should we stand by these small businesses? Should we, with a stroke of the pen, just take away 20 per cent of their take, or should we do it in a more gradual way?'

If you look at the history of trading hours in Queensland, you will find that it has changed gradually over a period of time. I think we all realise that we live in a changing society. In more and more family units, the husband and wife or both partners are working. We have got more flexible hours and people are generally working longer hours. Therefore, people are looking for the convenience of being able to shop on a Saturday and a Sunday.

Historically, we have seen a gradual extension of trading hours from Monday to Friday, to Saturday mornings, to Saturday afternoons and then to night trading. Currently, stores are able to stay open until 9 p.m. but traditionally stay open on only one night a week—Thursday night in some areas and Friday night in the CBD. Trading was then extended to Sunday, with the exception of those in the non-exempt category, the major corporations.

On a Sunday virtually all of the strip shops are open, as are nurseries and hardware stores. The exempt shops include those selling antiques, art, aquariums, arts and crafts, bait and tackle, books, newsagents, bread, cakes, camping equipment, chemists, confectionary, cooking provisions, delicatessens, fish, flowers, fruit and vegetables, funeral directors premises, hairdressers, beauticians, ice cream parlours, licensed premises under the Liquor Act or the Wine Industry Act, marine products, milk bars, nurseries, pets, photographic premises licensed under the Pawnbrokers Act, restaurants, service stations, motor vehicle spare parts, soap, souvenirs, sporting goods, temperance beverage shops, tobacco, toys, veterinary supplies and video cassettes. That highlights the level of convenience available today. Other stores, such as Harvey Norman, also open on Sunday.

Generally speaking, there is an extraordinary level of convenience. There are full extended trading hours on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Brisbane CBD, Cairns and tourist areas such as the Whitsundays. We have substantial and extended trading hours. It is just that the majors are not allowed to trade on Sundays.

The proposal went before the Industrial Relations Commission and it had to make a judgment based on the arguments for and against. For example, what would happen to small business, what are the needs of the consumers and what level of convenience is required? It was a case of convenience versus any detrimental effect on family owned small businesses. Again, it is very easy to dismiss some of these points. The previous speaker, the member for Bulimba, said that they had to get smarter, more efficient and so on. However, many small businesses are working at maximum capacity in terms of smartness, innovation, hard work and entrepreneurship.

All of us probably vote with our feet sometimes; people enjoy shopping at Woolworths and Coles. However, whereas these companies were once just grocery stores, they now want to sell white goods, fruit and vegetables, meat, petrol and liquor. They want everything. We are becoming a nation where 80 per cent to 85 per cent of all our trade is going through big retail conglomerates. The smaller groups, which have always been the backbone and the philosophical heart of our communities, are suffering. Young people who dream of owning a small store of their own will probably end up working on part-time or temporary wages for a major retail conglomerate for the rest of their lives because it will not be possible to own a small independent family business.

Those are the competing interests the Industrial Relations Commission looked at. As I have pointed out, over the years the commission has been able to move gradually with the times so that the effect on small business is reduced. In this way it has been able to adapt gradually to change.

When this application was made to the Industrial Relations Commission there were over 70 submissions. I think that demonstrates the level of concern, particularly from small business but also from the side pushing for the trading hours to be extended for big corporations. Although we all thought the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission to grant extended hours to the Brisbane municipal area only was strange, it was still a considered judgment. Obviously, it considered what would happen to small businesses in surrounding areas and how they would be affected when the majors opened for extended trading, taking away business.

I spoke about the bite being taken out of the gross earnings of small business operators. Honourable members should put themselves in the shoes of the owner, for example, of a small fruit shop who has borrowed money, works long hours, does the book work at night and the ordering and purchasing the next morning. The shop runs seven days a week, employing family members and good loyal staff to provide a service to customers and also to contribute to the success of the business and to a thriving community. Just imagine what happens to these shops in the three weekends before Christmas, when shopping hours are extended allowing the majors to open on weekends. The small operators all lose about 20 per cent and, in some cases, food stores lose up to 30 per cent of their take. The loss of that much gross represents a serious bite from the take for the week.

Many people have borrowed money and bought businesses based on the existing trading rules. Despite this reduction in gross weekly earnings, they have to make a surplus so that staff wages and other overheads—workers compensation, licence fees, capital and interest repayments, insurance payments, lease fees, cleaning fees, garbage removal fees, innumerable government charges and so on—can be met. A drop in gross income of 20 per cent or 30 per cent creates an enormous impost on people in small businesses.

That is why the National Party has always believed that the Industrial Relations Commission system has given a measured, considered, fair and balanced appraisal of the situation. It looks at a submission from all sides and considers the changing needs and demographics of our community. However, at the same time it takes into account the fact that family owned small businesses have borrowed money and are part of our society and deserve consideration such that changes are gradual and carefully managed so that they can continue to operate.

This is a broken promise. I do not know how many times I have heard the Premier and the government say that they would abide by the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission. This adds to the growing list of broken promises—five per cent unemployment, high standards for those entering the prostitution industry, the Cooler Schools promise for north Queensland, and full and proper funding of the Department of Families according to the Forde recommendations. All of these promises go out the window when it becomes convenient. We are dealing with people's lives. These families work hard and are the salt of the earth. This legislation will have an enormous effect on the lives of these people.

It is up to us as members of parliament to ensure that the social fabric of our communities is amenable. I think everyone would agree that it is nice for people to have a Sunday off and for young people to be able to play sport, visit relations, go to church, family picnics, attend school fetes and so on. Through decisions like this one, more and more people, particularly younger people, are being forced into an extended system of working—a few hours one day, a few hours another day, and a few hours on Sunday and Saturday. This does not leave them with a decent amount of time to spend with their friends and family and to do the things that people should do in a good, healthy community.

By doing this we are promoting the 'shop till you drop' syndrome and encouraging people not to spend Sundays with their families. There is only so much pie to go around. If this bill is passed in the parliament today it will not mean that any new money is printed. There will still be the same amount of money to go around. Having all of the majors open will mean that the pie will be spread more thinly. We will have half-empty malls, shopping centres with half their lights on and two or three shops operating with skeleton staff.

The situation does not get any better when it comes to employing staff, because the same amount of money has to be spent across the week. So it will be spread across more people than at present. This will result in a loss of jobs and a loss of viability for a number of small businesses.

It is going to mean an enormous struggle for some family owned businesses. We in the National Party believe that it is a total sell-out of small businesses for the government to make this decision. If at least it had abided by the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission small businesses would have seen a gradual, incremental process. That would have been difficult for businesses in the Brisbane metropolitan area, because they would have suffered the losses I have talked about, but at least the submissions of the Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association were taken note of.

Associations on both sides have spent money in good faith. But at the end of the day the government has come in with heavy boots and trampled over the top of everybody. It may as well not have even had this process. It might as well not have spent that money. The fees and levies that various organisations pay are an absolute waste of time. They went into this process in good faith, but they were completely overruled by a Premier who said he would abide by the umpire's decision—the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission. How can we believe the Premier? He has said, 'In future we will abide by the decision.' What happens if there is consideration of this issue in other parts of Queensland? Can we believe the Premier again? Would the Industrial Relations Commission conduct another hearing if organisations and individuals paid money and went to the expense of putting together a proper and considered submission? Would that all be an absolute waste of time? Would the government and the Premier once again walk over the little people with their jackboots and say, 'We do not like this decision'—for whatever reason—and we are going to overrule the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission'?

There are some figures available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics analysing what happened in Victoria when that state deregulated trading hours in 1997. There was a 2.8 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in retail trades and a 13.1 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the food industry. That demonstrates that 20 per cent to 30 per cent cut that will come out of the gross take particularly of retailers in the food industry, and a 1.1 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the personal and household goods sector.

I am proud to stand here today and say that the National Party has the courage and the determination to stand behind small business in Queensland. Thank goodness there is one organisation that is prepared to do that. Yes, the National Party recognises the issues of convenience. We recognise what has happened historically and the way the Industrial Relations Commission has over a period made gradual changes and improvements. But what we are about today comes down to one thing. There is an incredible amount of convenience in Queensland today where unlimited trading hours exist in places such as the Brisbane CBD, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and various tourist areas. There is an incredible amount of convenience in other areas where non-exempt shops are able to open. People can go to virtually any strip shopping centre, any hardware shop, any furniture shop, any chemist shop, any newsagent, any ice cream parlour or any nursery and get virtually everything they want to get on a weekend through convenience stores which, in the main, represent small business operators. That is the one opportunity they have during the week when the big major stores are not operating and are not grabbing, like a great white shark, 85 per cent to 90 per cent of all the retail trade in their areas.

Whereas this decision is spoken about as providing convenience, it is only going to provide limited convenience when we consider all the non-exempt shops that now open seven days a week in areas where totally unrestricted trading occurs. I ask members to think about family owned small businesses. It is tough. It is hard. There is a constant need for them to consider issues such as workplace health and safety, public liability insurance, quality assurance and litigation, and have the right conditions and arrangements in place for their employees. All of that is very, very difficult, and it is becoming more difficult by the day.

This decision today is going to be another big hurdle in front of decent family owned small businesses in Queensland. I am proud that at least the National Party is standing up for those small businesses and their employees and standing up for the workers so that they can have a job and so that they do not lose their jobs. This will make it very, very difficult for many small businesses to maintain loyalty to their own loyal, talented and hardworking employees. It is with great pride that I speak on behalf of the National Party in standing up for small business in this debate.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (3.55 p.m.): The introduction of Sunday trading in a single zone in the south-east of this state will not only bring uniformity and better service but, most importantly, it will bring more jobs for Queenslanders. That is what this government is about: jobs,

jobs, jobs. Despite the concerns of the opposition, there is in fact no evidence that the introduction of Sunday trading for south-east Queensland will result in job losses. To the contrary, all the evidence available indicates that this decision will result in a significant increase in jobs within the retail sector.

Since the introduction of core trading hours by the Goss Labor government in 1994, that is, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, the Queensland retail sector has grown by a massive 29.9 per cent. That is an additional 52,500 jobs. Coles Myer has specifically indicated to the government that it expects to create an additional 460 full-time equivalent jobs before the end of the year as a result of this decision. Indeed, in evidence given to the Industrial Relations Commission to extend Sunday trading, traders like the Colorado Group, Foot Locker, Bakers Delight, Terry White Chemists and Angus and Robertson bookshops expected to increase staff numbers.

Experiences of trading hours deregulation in New South Wales and Victoria also demonstrate substantial increases in retail jobs. Research from New South Wales has revealed that 40,000 new jobs were generated in the retail industry there between 1986 and 1992. Contrary to the arguments of those members opposite, 20,000 of the new jobs created in the New South Wales deregulated market were in fact in the small non-food business sector. The experience has been similar in Victoria. Since late 1996, 30,000 additional jobs have been created in the retail sector in Victoria. That is a 10 per cent increase in jobs since deregulation.

There is also direct evidence that this growth does not come at a price to small traders. In fact, a 1997 study of Victorian very small retailers, that is, milk bars, small grocery stores, butchers and newsagents, found employment levels for the great majority remained unchanged and that deregulation did not lead to job losses. But just as importantly, the economic spin-offs for Queensland will be considerable. For every extra dollar spent through retail trading there is an estimated \$2.24 generated within the broader economy. Since expanded core trading hours were introduced in Queensland in 1994, total retail turnover alone for large retailers increased by more than 50 per cent. This bill means that Sunday trading will now put money in the pockets of workers and businesses right across south-east Queensland, not just in Brisbane.

This bill allows trading hours on Sunday to include the city of Ipswich. Ipswich is a great regional city with thousands and thousands of shiftworkers who want extended trading hours. They want to be able to shop in their city and not be forced to shop in Brisbane in centres such as Mount Ommaney, Indooroopilly and Mount Gravatt.

Mr Cummins: Keep the money in Ipswich.

Mrs MILLER: That is right, keep the money in Ipswich. I am advised by Ipswich City Council that, under the Ipswich economy model, residents purchase some \$252 million in goods and services outside the Ipswich economy. This economic leakage represents 19 per cent or one-fifth of total consumer spending. Can members just imagine what would have happened to my city's economy if extended trading hours did not include Ipswich? I can tell them that in the eastern part of my electorate the Mount Ommaney shopping centre is eight minutes down the Ipswich Motorway and the Centenary Highway. It is indeed that close.

Mr Cummins: Exporting jobs.

Mrs MILLER: That is right. Indooroopilly Shoppingtown is about 20 minutes drive from my electorate. Our shopping dollars would have been spent in Brisbane, thus causing an even higher economic leakage from Ipswich. This would have had a devastating effect on our local economy, Ipswich's own 'Indooroopilly'—Redbank Plaza—and other great destinations such as St Ives at Goodna, the Redbank Plains shopping centre, Kruger shopping centre, Springfield shopping centre, Bundamba shops and also Booval Fair, Ipswich City Square and other major shopping centres in Ipswich. Over many years Ipswich City Council and I have determined that it is vital to our Ipswich economy that such consumer spending outside our city be reduced. We are looking at ways of encouraging consumers to shop locally to reduce the leakage, and this bill will assist our people to shop locally on Sundays.

Whilst Ipswich recognises that it is a vital part of the south-east Queensland economy, we also want to be able to spend our hard-earned dollars locally and not be forced to drive out of our city to shop. Members should have no doubt at all that this is what would have happened. It would have been absolutely ridiculous. It would have been an inconvenience to the fine people of Ipswich to have to drive down the Ipswich Motorway to Brisbane, and it would have been an inconvenience to many of our families. Ipswich is combating the issue of consumers shopping externally when they are travelling to and from their places of work. More flexible trading hours

may enable these consumers to shop locally in our city. Our city needs to be on a level playing field to compete with businesses in Brisbane and in other areas. We are not a city that sits on its hands. We get up and we have a go. We are bringing tourism dollars into the city with the Global Arts Link, with the Ipswich Festival and with our great art and cultural exhibitions, including the *Two Emperors: China's Ancient Origins*, starting mid-year.

We are a city that grabs every opportunity for job creation, and we welcome the new retail jobs that will come to our city as a result of this bill. The Synergy Industrial Park, the Bremer Business Park, the Riverlink development, the expansion of AMH at Dinmore and the aerospace industry, amongst others, will create jobs—thousands of jobs. We welcome every single job in our city because for every job that is created there is a significant multiplier effect in our local economy as well as the added benefits of individual self-esteem, confidence for our workers and a future for them and their families. This bill will create retail jobs in Ipswich, and I know of many people in my electorate who are already seeking work in the retail sector with the specific aim of working the extended trading hours.

The mayor of Ipswich, John Nugent, and the Deputy Mayor, Paul Pisasale, and other councillors have shown their strong support for this bill, for they see the benefits of extended trading hours for our people and for our economy. When the Beattie Labor government and our council work together for the benefit of Ipswich council we have a great future and we all prosper, both in the creation of new jobs and economic spin-offs for the Ipswich economy and the Queensland economy.

This is a government that moves with the times. This is a government that listens to the people, and the people want extended trading hours. This is a government that is delivering jobs, jobs, jobs—and there are going to be more jobs, jobs, jobs as a result of this bill. I congratulate the minister for his hard work on this bill and for listening to the people of Ipswich by including our great city in this extended trading hours zone. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (4.03 p.m.): The Liberal Party will be supporting the Trading (Allowable Hours) Bill before the House. We realise this legislation has come about as a result of an anomalous decision made by the Industrial Relations Commission. We think it is right that the parliament should go ahead and legislate in this area. If I have a problem with this legislation, it is that I suspect it does not go far enough.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Dr WATSON: I suspect that down the track we will find that other areas experience the same problem the member for Bundamba spoke about in relation to Ipswich—that is, people moving out of the area, voting with their feet, and shopping in other areas. Quite frankly, I would be amazed if we could not find people in Toowoomba with exactly the same view and reaction as the member for Bundamba outlined. While we support this bill, we recognise that it will not fix all of the problems. In fact, if anything it probably should have been broader. That is an issue that will be revisited by this parliament at some time in the future.

This bill is an example of what happens when we interfere in markets. The Industrial Relations Commission has set trading hours for some time now, because this parliament in the past decided that that was the way it was going to be. If I recall correctly, the member for Keppel as minister introduced some rather radical, although I think appropriate, changes to trading hours. Then, unfortunately for this state, other events unfolded.

The fact is that there has been interference in the market. Over time, the changes that occur in society build up. Instead of incremental changes, as there would be if the markets were working more freely, there are significant changes that occur in a way which actually ends up hurting people. The member for Toowoomba South was right in some respects. People might get hurt by this bill in a particular way. That is because anomalies have built up over time.

Changes in society do not stop just because the government interferes or because the Industrial Relations Commission interferes. The changes that are taking place in our society—flexible working hours, changes in lifestyles, changes in technology and so on—continue to occur. They will all eventually force some significant change in our society. Instead of nice incremental changes to which people can adjust bit by bit, significant changes, such as those contained in this bill, need to be made. In some respects this legislation is a result of past decisions of previous governments and the Industrial Relations Commission.

I want to talk about some of the changes that are taking place. This bill does not go far enough, and not just in a geographical sense. It also does not recognise the other kinds of changes taking place in our society in a way that will affect all businesses in the future. The

Minister for Industrial Relations has to deal with these issues and will have to deal with more of them in the future because technology in particular is changing in a dramatic way, and that is impacting on the way we do business. Over the luncheon adjournment, I searched the Internet and looked at a few pages from different places around the world and from Australia. I will quote some of these references to the parliament, because some of these things are actually taking place. We have to recognise that things are changing. They are changing in ways that all of us recognise just from driving down the street, not just from getting on to the Internet. For example, petrol stations have changed in a dramatic way. Members can see how petrol stations have changed. Once upon a time when people went to the petrol station they bought petrol or had their cars repaired. These days car repairs are done in specialised areas and petrol stations have, in many cases, 24-hour shopping for simple things that people demand and that the corner store used to look after—milk, bread, the paper, cigarettes and so on. Those things are now being sold by local petrol stations. These sorts of changes are occurring in many areas. Our approach to trading hours has to reflect that kind of activity.

As I said earlier, our lifestyles and our working styles are changing. Where and how we work is changing. That is contributing to significant changes in the demands that consumers are rightfully putting on businesses to deliver services. Those changes will occur even more so in the future. There are also significant changes taking place because of the growth of the Internet and the ability to shop 24/7—that is, 24 hours a day, seven days a week every week of the year. People can shop not only in their local area but also anywhere around the world.

Just before Christmas my eldest son decided to buy a particular piece of technology from the United States. He logged onto the Net and found that he could buy it from I think it was Illinois, although I cannot recall precisely where in the United States. He ordered it and arranged to have it delivered to our home in Kenmore Hills. When he ordered it, he was given a Fedex number. He knew precisely when it left the US and was able to track his parcel every step of the way on the Internet. He knew when it landed in Brisbane and when it would be delivered. It was not precise. They said it would arrive early morning and it arrived about 9.30. He did not get the exact detail that it would be delivered at 9.30, but he knew the day and knew that it would arrive early morning.

That is the reality. That is occurring. If local businesses cannot adjust and deliver that kind of service because of restrictions imposed by parliaments, Industrial Relations Commissions or whatever, they will suffer, because consumers will use the technology available and shop where it is convenient at a time which is convenient. That is the critical thing. People are putting much more emphasis on the way they use their time and therefore demand services to be available when they want it. Because of technology, they can in fact demand that. Businesses have to start to adjust to that. No matter if it is a small business, a medium sized business or a large business, if they do not respond to the demands of the consumer they will fail. It is as simple as that. That is not going to change. It has not changed in hundreds of years, but today's technology means that they have to change.

I want to mention a couple of examples I picked up from the Net. One article from 15 January this year by Shelley Dempsey said that Christmas online sales were up 50 per cent for Roses Only. I must admit that I did not have enough time to find out what kind of business Roses Only was, but I assume it is an Internet florist. I assume that is what it is, even though I have not actually purchased any of its products for my wife.

Mr Cummins: It could be an undertakers.

Dr WATSON: It could be, but I think it is a florist. The article detailed that the experience of Roses Only mirrored that of retailer David Jones. David Jones's operational director was quoted as saying that the retailer had doubled its online sales this Christmas and that all its internal sales targets had been met. The article goes on to say that in fact David Jones was the No. 1 local site visited, with 162,000 visits in the lead-up to Christmas. Even though that number is not very high when compared to a site like Amazon.com, it still means that in Australia there were 162,000 visits by online shoppers to David Jones.

It is interesting to note the response by the owner of Roses Only. The article states—

We've been out there now for seven years and I suppose there is that real endorsement by our customers now for branding. I would say that as high as 80 per cent of all our orders are use-before customers.

The article goes on to say—

Roses Only launched in 1995 as a bricks and mortar business and added a website in 1999. Both online and offline affiliate marketing programs have been carried out with partners ...

The critical thing is that this small business was growing at the same rate or faster than the giant retailer David Jones because it tapped into a market and delivered a service that customers wanted using on-site, off-site and online opportunities. The article continues—

Plans are on the drawing board to broaden fulfilment to more regional areas and to open more shopfronts both in Australia, to every capital city if possible, and to some Asian capitals. There's definitely an opportunity to expand the brand in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and so on,' says Stevens.

They are the opportunities that are available. Those opportunities will arise faster and businesses have to be able to adjust to those kinds of opportunities and demands.

Another interesting article from late last year by the same author, Shelley Dempsey, states that 19 per cent of all SMEs are now selling online in Australia, up from 14 per cent the year before. Small and medium enterprises are fast getting into the online business. As I said before, that is 24 hours a day, seven days a week business because they are not in any way confined by artificial restrictions on trading hours. Retailing is not the only thing that is being affected by use of the Internet. All of us know the affect it has had on banks. Last year in Australia between June and December the overall online domestic market for banks rose 13 per cent. The Commonwealth Bank now reports that Australia has four million registered Internet banking customers. Those people are doing more and more of their banking online. As they get used to doing their banking online, they will use the Internet for other online services. As people get more familiar and confident with the processes, they will rely more and more on that method.

At the end of last month in the United States a Forrester Research survey indicates that total US spending on online sales increased from \$4.9 billion in November to \$5.7 billion in December. The number of householders shopping online increased to 18.7 million in December from 16.8 million in November. Consumers spent on average \$304 per person in December compared with \$293 in November. Total online sales for 2000 reached \$42.4 billion. In 2001, it reached \$47.6 billion. That is the reality we are facing. If this parliament does not address that reality, then we are simply living in the past. Those who do not want to accept the changes taking place in our society and those who do not want to accept the extra demands being placed upon businesses and the rising expectations by consumers are living in the past.

If we want to respond to the changing world, this parliament and other places have to start adopting the demands consumers are putting on business. Parliaments ought to be facilitating business, because that facilitates the creation of jobs and encourages investment. That in turn lowers the cost of delivering services to consumers, and that is what this is about. The Liberal Party believes that the parliament ought to be taking this opportunity and grasping the nettle to encourage businesses of all sizes in Queensland to respond to consumer demands. If we can do that, Queensland will be better off.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.19 p.m.): The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill does not, as has been suggested by some opposition members, set aside or trample or even overturn a decision made on Friday, 17 December last year by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission which granted an application for Sunday trading for non-exempt shops—that is, those who employ 20 or more workers—in the local government area of the city of Brisbane.

I might point out that the decision was widely criticised on the basis that it disadvantaged traders, shopping centres and consumers in areas directly adjacent to Brisbane. In fact, the amendment bill introduced into the House in February seeks to expand and improve the commission's decision by extending the original geographic area to include a trading area from Noosa on the Sunshine Coast to Coolangatta on the Gold Coast and west to Amberley. This enlarged area also includes Bribie Island in the electorate of Pumicestone, which I represent.

At present there are five different trading hour zones throughout the south-east Queensland region. This bill seeks to introduce a single common trading hour zone instead of the existing five. This will get rid of the inconsistencies and provide uniformity and is to be adopted based on the current hours applying on Sundays in the Sunshine Coast, inner Brisbane and Gold Coast areas. These hours, from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. for non-exempt shops, will apply on Sundays with the exception of Easter Sunday. Closure on this day will provide a better balance for trading and non-trading days over the whole Easter period for small and large retailers. Non-exempt shops will be unable to open on Good Friday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day.

Tenants within shopping centres will be protected by having the choice of trading on Sundays and public holidays under their retail shop leases. This will be achieved by providing that the trading hours on Sundays and public holidays are not allowable hours for the purposes of

establishing core trading hours under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994. However, it must be emphasised that there are reinforced provisions in the bill whereby employees cannot be coerced into working the extended hours if they do not want to. It is not compulsory, and it is hoped that all business operators and employees can cooperate to make sure that this can be worked through. Hopefully, this cooperation will create more flexibility in the work force.

I must stress that these provisions have a number of implications for the employees in the area that I represent. Parts of Pumicestone are isolated and the lack of public transport at certain times, particularly on a Sunday, is a real concern for some employees. I have also been approached by people who are worried that child care may not be available as most day care facilities do not open on weekends and public holidays. One woman who works in the day care centre industry said that her industry attracts mostly females. So if she had to work on weekends to accommodate those people who require child care then her time with her family would suffer.

The Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association, or SDA, has had a number of meetings with the Premier, Deputy Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations because of a number of concerns raised by its members. The SDA has lodged in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission a specific award for all non-exempt employees in the state, which spells out clearly that extended Sunday working hours by existing employees will be on a voluntary basis.

Small businesses have also raised some concerns in the electorate of Pumicestone. One local butcher commented that the government was bowing to pressure from the multinationals. He is worried that his trade on Sundays will be severely diminished when the larger stores open on Sundays. Fortunately, changes to the trading hours will not take effect until 1 August this year. That at least allows a six-month lead-in time for business owners to make the necessary administrative arrangements for patrons to adjust, which will not take them long, and for employees to determine whether or not they wish to work the extended hours. To some it will be a welcome financial boost, but for others it will be an infringement on family time.

However, I have heard a lot of positive comments about the proposed extended trading hours. People will be able to spend locally as opposed to going to Brisbane or to some other parts of the Sunshine Coast. Parts of the Pumicestone electorate are some of the fastest growing in Queensland. The population is currently increasing at a rate of approximately four and a half thousand per year. If honourable members look at the Caboolture shire as a whole, they will see that we now have a burgeoning population of 117,000 people. The most astonishing part of that is that half of them moved to the shire in the past decade. All these extra people are consumers and must benefit local businesses. As they prosper, they will need to employ more workers, therefore creating jobs, jobs and more jobs, which is what this government has always focused on.

Some major retailers have already indicated that more jobs will be created. We must be mindful and give some thought to major retailers wanting to move into areas such as Caboolture and Morayfield. These new hours just might create the opportunity for expansion and, therefore, create jobs. I commend this amendment bill to the House and congratulate the minister on his consultation with all stakeholders.

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (4.25 p.m.): I rise to address this bill at a time when there appears to be ample evidence to suggest that many of society's problems, including crime, can arise from socioeconomic factors caused by a gradual erosion or breakdown of family time and time with friends relaxing and exchanging thoughts and deeds beyond the workplace. Again and again we have witnessed the erosion of family time.

Today almost every job involves some degree of shiftwork and work at weekends. Whilst it is acknowledged that there have been some exempt businesses for a long time, it must be stated that, by the very nature of the goods and services they supply, they are geared towards weekend trading anyway. If we permit an almost open slather on Sunday trading, many businesses other than family-run businesses who employ outside staff would not be able to afford the extra wages and overheads. It has been suggested that for many businesses the volume of trade would not increase but that existing trade would have to be spread over a greater period.

Moving back to social issues, I ask: how do we interact with family and friends if the time available is continually eroded? When one member is at work the other one is at home. Both my wife and I worked when I was working shifts and we managed our retail dealings. Society at work must have limitations. We must have some regular periods when the majority of people have

time to enjoy leisure together, which might assist in reducing some social friction or even domestic violence and more.

I note that there is a provision regarding Sunday trading in that traders within shopping centres will have the option to trade or not to trade on Sundays and existing employees will not be forced to work on Sundays. The reality is that great, unseen pressures in these areas will force businesses to compete with traders, particularly the Coles, the K marts and the other supermarkets that do open. I would suggest also that there may be subliminal pressures brought to bear upon employees to be flexible about working at weekends. I wonder if the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association actually canvassed its members on their opinion on whether or not Sunday work would be genuinely voluntary.

The bill appears to be about support for medium and big business instead of small business—the heartland of our jobs market in this country. In small business the battlers frequently cannot afford the extra staff suggested by the honourable member for Bundamba.

The member for Moggill made much of shoppers demanding all businesses use the much touted e-commerce. In truth I believe the majority still prefer personal contact in their day-to-day shopping experiences. Many Internet users still distrust e-commerce and there is much work to be done in convincing shoppers and consumers of Net security, particularly when using online credit facilities. At a time when we are trying to encourage the rebirth of intimate communities in urban areas and, therefore, the retail business that goes hand in hand with such growth we should not be causing possible financial difficulties for the corner store, which many would prefer to flourish.

Therefore, I cannot support this bill. I think that the government has not looked far enough into the future and the possible consequences that this legislation will have on our social structure. If we are prepared to have people shop and conduct other businesses, as the member for Moggill says, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, it really makes a nonsense of the separation between work and home. I truly believe that our social structure will suffer if this bill is allowed to take its course.

Mr POOLE (Gaven—ALP) (4.29 p.m.): I rise to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. This bill seeks to end the confusion that exists under the current five trading zones within the south-east Queensland region. Sunday trading has existed in the inner city of Brisbane since 1988, on the Gold Coast since 1992 and on the Sunshine Coast since 1994. For the first time under the proposed changes, south-east Queensland will have a single trading zone north to Noosa, south to Coolangatta and west to Amberley. This bill will improve the decision handed down last December by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to include Ipswich, Redbank, Strathpine, Pine Rivers, Arana Hills, Caboolture, Redcliffe, Capalaba, Browns Plains, Springwood, Redlands, Logan and all areas between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

This bill will go a long way towards rectifying the present inconsistencies and financial disadvantages to the large and small retailers that exist under the several different trading zones in the south-east. The extended zone will cover an additional 140,000 people living in the areas between the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, where presently there is no Sunday trading. Those areas, such as Bribie Island, Sippy Downs and Coomera, are some of the fastest growing in Queensland. Currently, they are growing at a rate of more than 4,500 people a year. Within these areas are nine major shopping centres and two new centres planned for development.

The new single zone will have uniform Sunday trading hours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the consultation between the government and the key stakeholders on this issue, it was agreed that all shops will be required to close on five common days: Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day. Under the proposed new arrangements, tenants within the shopping centres will have the choice to trade on Sunday or not. The same choice will apply to the workers. Existing employees can volunteer to work on Sundays or public holidays, but these amendments in no way allow employers to force existing employees to work on Sundays or public holidays. I suggest that employers should join unions to make sure that that is enforced.

The Retailers Association of Queensland has given its full support to the government on this issue. This bill will improve services to residents in south-east Queensland. Going from the experiences of extended trading hours in New South Wales and Victoria, it will lead to a significant increase in jobs in the Queensland retail sector. Already the major retailers in the south-east are predicting a two per cent increase in retail employment before the end of this

year. That is an extra 2,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and we need them. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.32 p.m.): The introduction of this bill into the House is the latest example of the Beattie government's appalling practice of playing populist politics on an issue that is crucial to employment in this state. Let me say that the issue of extended trading hours is not a simple one. A number of competing issues need to be considered properly before any decision can be made on trading hours. These issues include greater consumer amenity, the reduction in the small business market share, the cost of penalty labour rates against the ability of small business to pay, and the social welfare costs to small business owners and their employees.

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of erroneous information in the general community as to what this whole issue is all about. An example of just how much confusion there is in the general community about this issue can be seen from the interview I gave to the media about the Premier's announcement of the extended trading hours in the Noosa to Coolangatta trading zone. I was asked by the media whether I would support the extended zone. My answer was that I would support it provided that all sections of the small business community were properly consulted and agreed. The media took those comments to mean that the National Party had backflipped on its position of supporting small business.

One thing that the National Party does is support small business. At the same time, this full consultative process was never put in place. That shows just how conditioned all sections of the community in Queensland have become to what consultation means under the Beattie government. Consultation should not mean that any and all views contrary to the government's predetermined view are railroaded. Consultation should be an essential component of policy making where the government gathers information so that it can make the best possible decision. People can be forgiven for thinking that under the Beattie government consultation means nothing more than lip-service.

But the main misconception relates to the belief that there is not already extended trading hours in Queensland. There is. There is already extended trading hours in a number of tourist areas and in city precincts throughout Queensland: the inner city of Brisbane, which covers the city heart, Spring Hill, Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, Newstead and New Farm areas; the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast; the Cairns-Port Douglas and Whitsunday areas; and the Townsville central business district. Only the major retail chains are not allowed to trade beyond those areas where the Industrial Relations Commission has already sanctioned them.

The Beattie government's position on this issue has been based solely on the sustained marketing strategy of the major retailers who have been seeking to create a perception of demand in the community and a public need for extended trading hours. The purpose of this marketing strategy is for the multinationals and the major retailers to gain greater market share through the elimination of competition. One has to wonder how much market share is enough. Small business has only 13 per cent of the market, as compared to the 87 per cent market share of the major retailers. Yet small business is the larger employer in this state.

This issue is about employment. It is about jobs, jobs, jobs—a catchcry that we hear from the Premier so often. It is about responsible government, not pandering to the populist opinion. This issue is not about misinformation being fed to the caffelatte set that we are not sophisticated in Queensland unless we can have extended trading hours everywhere. What is sophisticated about sending small business to the wall? What is sophisticated about workers in small businesses losing their jobs? What is sophisticated about higher prices resulting from loss of competition if small business market share evaporates?

This legislation will allow the Beattie government to create its extended trading hours from Noosa to Coolangatta without a proper consideration of the employment implications for small business in this zone. Figures from the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia show that for every two jobs in major retail stores there are 2.7 jobs in smaller stores. I have heard media reports from the Minister for Industrial Relations that this extended trading hours zone will create 2,000 full-time jobs. I hope that he is right. I want the minister to tell the House where these 2,000 full-time jobs will be. What is his source for these figures? Is it Coles Myer or is it Woolworths?

Small business estimates that this extended trading hours zone will cost them 30 per cent of their trade to the majors. I want the minister to tell the House how many small business will go to the wall because of this extended trading zone. I also want the minister to tell those small

business owners and operators how many and which employees they will have to sack because they cannot afford to pay the labour penalty rates associated with these extended trading hours.

When the extended trading hours were introduced in Victoria in 1997, the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed that it led to a 2.8 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the retail trades and a 13 per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the food industry. These are certainly serious figures and they are figures that have foundation. The Beattie government's lack of informed knowledge on this topic is epitomised by the comments made today by the member for Bulimba about small traders not having to meet the same cost as larger traders such as the major retail traders. The member for Bulimba's comments demonstrate the typical lack of business acumen that is characteristic of the Labor Party. Obviously, the member understands nothing about the economies of scale. The major retail traders, with the fixed cost of their investments, can absorb the various costs associated with these extended trading hours. Because of their size, those costs would be limited to wages.

The legacy of the Beattie government to Queensland is the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia for 17 consecutive months. The current jobless rate is 8.2 per cent—a far cry from Mr Beattie's pre-election promise of 1998 of five per cent.

Mr Cummins: It is down, Vaughan.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, I do say it is down, but again it is a far cry from the five per cent being prophesied. I will come back to that later on.

This legislation is a by-product of the Beattie government's lack of an employment strategy for Queensland. That is fairly obvious in a lot of other ministerial portfolios. This government has meaningless slogans such as 'Jobs, jobs, jobs for Queensland'. We have all seen what that means: Queensland is last, last, last!

With this legislation, the Beattie government has ratted on small business but, more importantly, it has ratted on the workers of this state. I endorse the words of my leader, the honourable member for Toowoomba South, that the National Party is the workers' party. We have identified with workers for a long while now and the two are fairly synonymous when one sees the Labor Party abiding by the whims of players in big business who want to satisfy the share market.

Last month I visited a number of small businesses in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. Two small business proprietors at Brendale told me that this legislation, if passed, will mean that they will probably have to get rid of approximately 22 workers. Those small business operators, a shopping complex manager and a butcher, challenged Mr Beattie to visit their shops, to meet them and their staff and to advise which staff would have to be sacked as a result of this legislation and the resultant loss of trade to small business. These two business operators have still not heard from the Premier. He has failed to take up their challenge, just as he has failed to lift Queensland off the canvas of coming last in the unemployment stakes in mainland Australia.

The Beattie government is so committed to the welfare of small business employment in Queensland that it did not even bother to make a submission on the recent decision handed down by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The only comment made by the Beattie government to the QIRC was that it neither supported nor opposed the extension of trading hours. Given the employment crisis that the Beattie government has created in Queensland, one would think it would use the resources of its bureaucracy to find some meaningful solutions. What did it do? Absolutely nothing! The whole thing was too hard. As usual, the Beattie government went missing in action.

What is particularly damning about the government's decision to introduce this legislation is its complete failure to undertake any kind of meaningful consultation. After announcing its decision to overrule the QIRC's decision last year, the Beattie government had meetings with these stakeholders: the Retailers Association of Queensland, the Property Council of Queensland, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association and the Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association. The consultation process went as follows: on 10 January 2002, meeting between stakeholders and officers from the Department of Industrial Relations; on 23 January 2002, meeting between stakeholders and the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations; the third meeting promised by Mr Beattie never took place.

During the second meeting, the Premier promised that he would get back to these stakeholders and let them know what was being proposed once the government had prepared a cabinet submission. The next thing these stakeholders heard was the Premier's media

announcement on 18 February this year of his government's decision to impose the Noosa to Coolangatta trading zone. This is consultation Beattie style: two meetings and a broken promise.

Yesterday, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association showed the Premier and the people of Queensland exactly what it thought of this government's decision to introduce this legislation. Yesterday the association took the extraordinary step of placing a full-page newspaper advertisement in the *Courier-Mail* protesting against the loss of public holidays for workers in the retail industry resulting from the Beattie government's unilateral decision to create an extended zone from Noosa to Coolangatta. Here it is, an open letter to the Premier of Queensland, which I table, proof that the people of Queensland are beginning to see through the policies without substance of the Beattie government and this Premier's obsession with media coverage. I know there are a lot of people on the other side of the House who agree with what these people say in this letter. This is what the association wrote to the Premier in its open letter—

Your government's proposed amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act means that it will virtually cancel the following public holidays: Exhibition Wednesday, Queen's Birthday, New Year's Day, Boxing Day, Easter Monday and Australia Day.

The association goes on to state what it thinks about the Beattie government's consultation process—

There has been no consultation for workers and no consultation or agreement with the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA).

The SDA deplores this action.

It degrades family life in Queensland. These public holidays remain some of the few days available to retail workers for relaxed family and social gatherings.

You have expressed a commitment for a single trading zone in south-east Queensland. What is for the greater good? A so-called single trading zone or family life in Queensland?

The Labor Party claims to be a party for workers—not anymore! It is a party for media tarts and electoral cheats.

I can assure Queensland's retail workers that the National Party will not rat them out like the Beattie government has and the National Party will stand up for workers and jobs, jobs, jobs, as the Premier's catchcry has been. We will be protecting those jobs, which is far from the hollow, cheap rhetoric that we have seen bandied around by this government in recent times. The SDA's advertisement vindicates the National Party's position in relation to extended trading hours. It is not a simple issue and one which is subject to a number of complex and competing interests, not the least of which are the social implications of small business owners and, just as important, the employees of those small businesses.

The Beattie government does not care about retail workers. It has ratted them out to the multinationals and the majors for the sake of a few populist headlines.

But it gets better! This morning I was faxed a letter dated yesterday from Gawain Road Shopkeepers Association in Bracken Ridge to the Premier. I table a copy of the letter.

Leave granted.

Mr JOHNSON: This is what the Gawain Shopkeepers Association said to the Premier yesterday—

Re: Extended Sunday Trading.

Soon you will be called upon to make a very important decision. It will be a decision that could adversely affect every small shopkeeper and trader in SouthEast Queensland, even forcing some right out of business. It may even affect you and your future as our parliamentary representative.

When called upon to make any decision the principles are always the same. You can do only what is right. If it is right you approve it. If it is not in the best interests of the people and yourself you say no.

Was it right for a government to say before an election that they would not interfere with trading hours yet have no compunction in breaking their promise? Was it the truth when the Government's submission made under oath before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission stated that they neither supported nor opposed the application? Integrity is essential if we are not to descend to the chaos engulfing so many other parts of the world.

... and real estate shops. The old, the young, the lonely walk to us on Sundays with their strollers, their dogs on leads, searching for the warmth and friendship from caring people they know and who know them. They don't spend much because they don't have much. But then neither do we. We understand and care about each other.

We, they and you, are all living people able to listen, to care, to help other people and ourselves. The globalised corporations seeking to squeeze us out can do none of these life giving things. They are lifeless money making machines. They seek more wealth and power by buying. We do not have any money to spare for political parties. We cannot vote with our cheque books. Yet we and our friends, who talk to us, do vote at election times.

We could not under any circumstances support any candidate who votes to take away from our customer friends and us the little we have. Every shop is permitted to open every Sunday now. Most of them don't because they need a day off to do other things. The only ones excluded are the big corporate chain stores. This has always been the case to allow the Australian owned private small shops a fair go.

As we see it, you have two options. You may decide to retain the present shopping hours, which meet the needs of most people. Or better still you could refer the matter back to the proper ones appointed to do the job, the QIRC. We will again present them with our views and petitions. We will abide by the umpire's decision. Will you? Yours faithfully.

It is signed by the Gawain Road Shopkeepers Association. That is a very serious situation.

These objections to the Beattie government's knee-jerk populist politics on the issue of extended trading hours is why the National Party believes the QIRC should be umpiring these matters. The Premier said that he would abide by the umpire's decision, yet we see another broken promise. He did not get the decision he liked so he spat the dummy, took his bat and ball and went home and unilaterally concocted the Noosa-Coolangatta extended trading zone. The Premier changed the rules of the game after small business had played and won the game. A future National Party government would return the task of determining the trading hours equation to the QIRC.

The QIRC is equipped to consider all of the evidence from all stakeholders and to examine impartially the employment implications. Many people have said that they did not understand the QIRC's decision last year, and that is not surprising given the complexity of the issues involved. But rather than compromising the independence of the QIRC, a more responsible action for the Beattie government would have been to quash the original decision and order the parties back before the commission. In that way the commission could have heard the submissions from all interested parties in areas surrounding Brisbane, including Logan, Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Redlands.

The only conclusion we could draw from the introduction of this legislation into the House is that the Beattie government is anti-small business and anti-jobs for Queensland. I would have thought that, given the prophetic statements we have heard from the Premier over recent years, he would be listening to small business operators and engaging in dialogue and exhaustive consultation to make certain that the jobs of small business employees and potential future jobs are kept sacred.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (4.51 p.m.): This bill is an embodiment of this government's commitment to positioning Queensland as the Smart State. While not endorsing change for the sake of change, the government recognises the need to adapt to the social and economic pressures that surround us. In the areas that have had extended trading to date, Sundays and public holidays have been shown to be enormously popular with consumers. Not surprisingly, they are quite popular among retailers. Accordingly, retailers have sought to extend the areas of coverage for trading on Sundays and public holidays.

We recognise that, in a state where tourism is a major section of the economy and where retailers are a major component of the tourist industry, demand should be met or our economy will not expand. We are compelled by the fact that in a region of the state that is especially tourism driven many businesses and employment opportunities are enhanced with the extra activity this bill provides for. We cannot ignore our geographical proximity to other areas and economies that are buoyed by tourism and the retail opportunities it generates.

Prominent in Monday's *Courier-Mail* were stories of visiting dignitaries and their families here for CHOGM eager to leave their money with small retailers along Hastings Street. Clearly consumers have an expectation that they have maximum opportunity and convenience with regard to shopping, and retailers want every chance to benefit from consumer demand. It would not be smart to deny consumers in growth corridors between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast the same chance to do their shopping at a time more of their choosing.

As our lives become busier, our expectations of services and facilities also grow. Of course, the lives of retailers and retail staff are affected by an increasingly hectic world. Naturally, they would like time away from work and with their families and friends. It is for that reason that the government has been careful to build safeguards into the arrangements. Staff and retailers will be able to elect whether they work or open on Sundays and public holidays. We are mindful of their needs and have stressed the voluntary nature of these arrangements. What has been put forward is a smart package for consumers, retailers and their staff. It increases opportunity and provides choice and protection. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (4.54 p.m.): Once again, the government is the voice of moderation and reason in this place. On the one hand, the National Party wants to wind back the clock. It is not made clear just how far it will go. However, Sunday trading has been identified and doubtless the Nationals could use this to reassert themselves on the Gold Coast. Will they contemplate a repeal of Saturday and late-night shopping as well? On the other hand, the Liberals want complete deregulation. The government's position does not go far enough for them. The government's position is by far the most practical and the fairest. The determination of the QIRC would have left a patchwork quilt of trading zones in the south-east. Important growth areas would have been disadvantaged. Instead the government has acted decisively to bring uniformity of service and to generate job growth.

This one trading zone in the south-east delivers certainty and clarity and it will avoid confusion and inconsistency. Importantly, workers will have the opportunity to decline Sunday and public holiday work and retailers have the choice as to whether to open for trade on those days. The government has recognised the need to move with the times, and businesses of whatever size recognise that change is constant and has to be mastered. While affording retailers the ability to close on those days, the retailers themselves will also need to respond to the shifting challenges that society and social patterns generate. While supportive and encouraging of small business, the government also recognises the challenges and opportunities that accompany these new measures. While those opposite are strident in their declarations that workers and their workplaces must adapt and change, they seem to be less enthusiastic in echoing this message to small business.

Small business in the main should not be devastated by this legislation. As entrepreneurs, no doubt they will fashion their operations to meet demand. Specialist shops ought not be threatened by shopping centres down the road being opened. The pet shop, the book shop, the sport shop, the toy shop and the chemist should not be affected. The member for Bulimba spoke briefly about this and about how traders in his area are offering quality products and high-quality service and are now reaping the benefits.

The challenge for those who fear the replication of their service in shopping centres is to specialise and to service a market that shopping centres cannot or will not provide. With the extension of trading hours previously, successful butchers, greengrocers and bakers have identified the niche that the shopping centres cannot fill. They have specialised. They have provided a level or a type of service that their competitors cannot match. This government encourages the establishment and thriving of small businesses, but we must recognise that it is not the role of the government to moderate competition and that the success of small business is coupled to their operation, management and entrepreneurship.

The QIRC in its previous decisions, the SDA and the government all understand that there have been, and will be, changes in patterns of society, changes in the hours and structure of hours of work, and changes in consumer demand and expectation. This can neither be avoided nor wound back. We have to work collaboratively to deal with these changes, and this legislation takes account of all these factors.

The decision to restrict seven day trading to only Brisbane suburbs would have been detrimental to the businesses and the people in Logan. I know some small business operators have concerns about the extensions. However, without this bill Logan businesses will be unable to trade. The situation will arise such that people will travel away from Logan to Brisbane or the Gold Coast shopping complexes on Sunday and spend money in those areas rather than supporting local businesses.

When I spoke to retailers, some were very much in favour of Logan having extended hours. While others did express concern about working long hours and working every day of the week, they also said that they were prepared to work hard to ensure their customers get service and their businesses are successful. They told me that they do not want to lose trade to the outer suburbs of Brisbane. In some cases, shopping centres outside Logan are less than 10 minutes away, making it desirable to hop in the car on a Sunday and travel only a short distance to go shopping. They believe this is what would happen if they were not allowed to have extended trading hours.

Ms Keech: That's for sure.

Ms STONE: Absolutely.

The retailers want to support their customers and they want to support Logan. When the decision came down from the QIRC not to include the retail precincts of Springwood or

Loganholme, the people of the electorate of Springwood came to me and said, 'I don't want to go to Mount Gravatt, Sunnybank or some other Brisbane suburb. I want to shop in Logan.' The people of Springwood have told me they want to go shopping at their local shopping centre and keep their money in Logan.

The people of Springwood want to help the local economy. They want local jobs and they want to support their local businesses. This is what I want also. I urge the people of Springwood to support our local traders at all times, and I encourage them to use these extended trading hours to do that as well. I urge the people travelling to and from the Gold Coast to call in to Springwood, Loganholme or any of the other district shopping centres between Logan River and Rochedale and support these people. They will be surprised at the great service and the range of shopping that is available to them, and I guarantee they will not be disappointed. I congratulate the Premier and the minister on listening to the people of Logan on this issue and commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.00 p.m.): It does not seem that long ago—in fact, it was in the last term of parliament—that many electorates right across Queensland were experiencing a blanket campaign by the major retailers to get 24-hour or extended trading seven days a week. They did that in my electorate—and I know that this was not unique—by having a table set up at the front of a supermarket with a young person sitting at the table with a heap of unsigned letters which all said the same thing. As shoppers came past they would ask them, 'Would you like to shop whenever you want to?' without any qualifying information or any indications of the cost or the benefit to the community or other traders in the area. Kids hate shopping, and I know that if I was a mum with a small child on my hip and somebody asked me, 'Do you want to shop any time you like?' my instant thought would be that if I could shop a couple of hours later or a couple of hours earlier my partner could look after the children and I could get the shopping done in about a third of the time. So the majority of people said, 'Yes, I would certainly like to shop whenever I want to.' They were then told, 'That is what we are trying to get for you. Sign this letter.' Hundreds and hundreds of those letters were signed. They were then faxed in bulk to our electorate offices and the then Premier's office, tying up fax machines to the point where nobody else's correspondence or business could get through.

Mr Lester: That happened to me, too.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I think it happened in all electorates. The upshot was that the IRC did hear the request of the major retailers, and that was denied. I am very thankful for that, not because the majors in my electorate do not do a good job—they certainly do. We have K mart, a Woolworths supermarket, a Woolworths variety store, a Woolworths in the valley and one at Boyne-Tannum. They do a good job, but it is at a cost to the smaller independent retailers, often the family businesses. In my electorate—and I know this is not unique—we have seen the slow disappearance of the independent butcher. There is only a small handful of family owned butcher shops in my electorate. They sell a wonderful product—a quality product—and they provide a very personal service. But people find that the supermarkets have meat and they can buy everything in one store. In a busy family situation, many shoppers choose to buy everything in one place.

I think the minister took quite a novel approach to this bill when he said, 'The Beattie government is committed to addressing these concerns by way of improving,' or enhancing, 'the commission's decision.' I have to congratulate the minister. I am serious, too. I thought that was the most novel way of putting it. I was trying to think what would have happened if Santo Santoro had said the same thing. The minister would have had his guts for garters. It would have gone down like a bomb. Yet that is the premise on which this bill is introduced: that the IRC, which is the body that is supposed to make decisions on these sorts of industrial matters, has made a decision but that the introduction of this bill is 'okay because we are going to enhance it and improve it'. I could not think of a better way of putting something that flies in the face of the charter given to the IRC.

It is proposed to introduce a single trading zone known as the South-East Queensland Area. It extends over a big area. My electorate is a mix of urban, industrial and some tourism. Many groups are trying to grow the tourism market. We certainly do not face the same pressures as the south-east corner does. In these comments I have to recognise the fact that I do work in a different environment. However, I do not believe that the environment is significantly different for the small traders. I think the effect will be the same, and it is those concerns that I wish to express. When the majors were looking for extended trading hours Monday to Friday and then an increase in trading hours on Saturday to 5 o'clock, we heard a mantra about the creation of

additional jobs and the accessibility of shopping to the community outside the normal 9 to 5 working hours. Have I gone to the supermarkets after 5 o'clock? Yes, I have. Did I support the extension? No, I did not support the notion of extending trading hours because of the impact on small traders.

However, as to the issue of increased employment, I have watched anecdotally—if one can do that. When I go into shops after 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, almost without exception I notice that there is a skeleton staff on and the checkout people are generally young people who are doing that as a casual job. As soon as they reach an age when they require adult wages, those people invariably almost always disappear and younger people are then employed in those jobs. The claimed extra employment did not eventuate. In fact, I have been to one of the supermarkets in my electorate where they have one checkout open, one other lady who is there because she supplies technical support, and two men who are there partly for security reasons. They are not security officers, but that is what they are partly there for. I am certainly sceptical about the statement that this will create a lot of additional jobs.

The commission is going to be allowed to continue to decide trading hours for non-exempt shops by way of the trading hours order with a proviso. This parliament is going to put a caveat, if you like, on the work of the IRC that the new uniform hours introduced in the South-East Queensland Area on Sundays and public holidays cannot be reduced. My question to the minister is: if over time it can be shown that it does have a detrimental effect not on the big shops but on the little shops whereby they gradually disappear, will he revisit the whole issue? It is a bit like giving RDOs—either one RDO a fortnight or one RDO a month. It is extremely difficult to withdraw them—whether it be by negotiation under EB or, as some of the more heavy-handed companies have done, by sacking all the work force and re-employing a new group under those new provisos. I just wonder: if it can be shown that there is a huge detrimental effect, particularly to our smaller businesses, will the minister be prepared to review the new uniform hours?

The bill talks about the fact that tenants in shopping centres throughout the south-east Queensland area will be protected from being forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays under their retail shop leases. Again, without doubting or questioning the motives or the reasoning behind the minister's decision and the Premier's decision, the minister said—

Core hours are established by a 75 per cent majority vote of lessees and must fall within the allowable trading hours.

I wonder how much weight is given to the majors in those votes. It certainly is not one vote, one shop. The major shopping centres survive and thrive on the fact that they attract one, two or more major shopping enterprises into their complexes, and those major shopping enterprises are given preferential treatment in a whole host of ways. This might be something that the minister can clarify. What additional voting power do those majors have in deciding the majority vote of lessees? My concern about that comment about the 75 per cent majority vote and the fact that small businesses will not be forced to trade outside those core hours is that there is a disproportionate exercise of power. I believe we have all seen situations where the rules might say one thing but the reality is something else. Those smaller businesses can ill afford to pay overtime to staff. Therefore, the principals probably will work seven days a week. But they may be coerced in some other way to open. One of the ways that has occurred—not for the same reasons, but it has occurred in a shopping complex—is that when the shop lease came up for renewal it just was not renewed. It has happened in two instances I am aware of, not because of an unwillingness to trade but for other reasons. I just wonder how the government will protect the small businesses—the locally owned jewellery shop or the locally owned butcher shop—from being damaged, not by the letter but by the spirit of the new law. The spirit of the law is to allow all of the little shops a choice about whether to operate outside of those core hours. The reality may be different. I just wonder how the government will be able to police that.

Another issue covered by previous speakers relates to the fact that seven-day-a-week trading does have an impact on family life. There may be ways of redeeming time—that is, giving people time off in lieu. One member of the family may work on Saturday and Sunday and have Monday and Tuesday off, but the rest of the family often does not. If such a person has school-age children then the children are at school. If they have shift-working partners then the partners may also be at work. So there really is no way to ameliorate the effects of seven day trading on particularly small businesses that do not have the choice to pay the penalties required for working on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. The principals will be forced to cover those shifts, resulting in quite significant impacts on their family life. Towards the end of the minister's second reading speech he states—

Additional amendments will ensure that the commission must take account of issues such as employment and local government views when deciding trading hours.

I agree with those sentiments. I just wonder how much confidence the IRC can now have, because when it makes a decision and the government disagrees with that decision, whether it is for practical reasons or political reasons legislation is enacted and the commission's decisions are improved or enhanced. I just wonder how much independence the IRC feels it has. The minister concluded his second reading speech by saying—

... the government's action in improving the original decision of the Industrial Commission is in the public interest and will not affect the position whereby the commission will continue to determine trading hours based on the merit of applications made to it.

I would have to disagree. The government has already undermined that process by this—

Mr Nuttall: That is your view.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I am talking about the spirit of the work the IRC has. I would be interested to see what the reaction would have been if a previous industrial relations minister had tried to do the same thing. There would have been a huge outcry. The decision may have been made in the public interest according to the minister and to the Premier. There has been, though, significant feedback to me and to others in our electorate offices that there is concern.

My electorate is not concerned about this particular decision because it affects only the south-east corner, but certainly small business in my area has expressed concern that, if it can be so easily done, small businesses in regional Queensland could be detrimentally affected. I for one would hate to see that happen. I think all businesses need to have a fair go. It is not that long ago that the large corporates were offered the opportunity to operate seven days a week and they refused it because they could not see that there would be significant economic benefit to them. Times have changed, as some speakers have already said.

Mr Reeves: When was that?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It was a couple of years ago.

Mr Reeves: They refused it?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: They refused it, and now that they can see some economic benefit to it—

Mr Nuttall: Are you saying that the major retailers were offered seven day trading a few years ago? Is that what you are saying to me?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is what I have been advised. My advice states—

Many years ago the chain stores were offered Sunday trading and refused and left it to the independents to cater for the trade they did not want.

Mr Nuttall: That information is like the rest of the information you have given in your speech. It is all wrong—the whole lot.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I beg to differ. People who have small businesses do have great concerns about being obligated to trade. The bill endeavours to give some freedom to small retailers not to trade. I would be interested to see just how effective that protection is over time. I seek the minister's response.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.14 p.m.): I rise to make a few comments in relation to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill, notwithstanding that there is a major event going on immediately below us, being the unveiling of a painting of the august member for Ashgrove.

Of course, my city of Toowoomba is not at this stage directly affected by this legislation. Although the legislation is entitled to refer to the South-East Queensland Area, that area extends from Noosa south to Coolangatta and west to Amberley, well short of Toowoomba—about an hour's drive away. However, it is relevant for representatives of the Toowoomba area to give consideration to this issue because of the concerns that have been expressed in the past. One cannot take a head-in-the-sand attitude to the issue of Sunday trading or trading on public holidays.

The Leader of the Opposition, my colleague from Toowoomba, made some remarks concerning small business with which I sympathise. He indicated that experience shows that there is a loss of 20 per cent to 30 per cent of business when extension of hours occurs to non-exempt businesses. If that be true, then that is something to be regretted. He indicates that the workload is spread over family members over a longer period of time rather than extra staff being

put on. But he did acknowledge that gradual changes in society have taken place. People now are working longer hours and they are looking for the convenience of being able to shop 'after hours', on weekends.

The member for Toowoomba South also indicated that exempt shops are now open and selling often the same products that one can buy in major centres. He also indicated, as has been said by other speakers today, that consumers do vote with their feet on these issues. He also said—I agree with him, as does the government, of course—that the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission was, to use his word, strange. I say that the government was right to bring in legislation to endeavour to rectify the anomalies which are so clearly indicated by that decision.

In Toowoomba, the question of Sunday trading is one on which there is divided opinion. The CBD traders have made their views very plain to me. I was able to bring representatives of CBD traders down to see the minister, and I thank the minister very much for the time he gave those representatives and for listening to their submissions. They were very pleased with the consultation they had with the minister.

Part of their concerns were that Sunday trading in Toowoomba would not mean more sales but only more cost. They raised the point that there is only so much money to go around and that that same amount of money would only be spent over longer hours. They take the view that they would not in fact put on more staff but would just spread their existing staff to cover the hours. They also point out that Toowoomba does not use the hours currently allocated to it. Only four stores in Ruthven Street open after seven on a Thursday night, for example. They also indicate that Toowoomba is not a tourist centre yet in the sense that the north and south coasts are. It does not attract that tourist trade. They are the sentiments of those traders who operate in the CBD in Toowoomba.

Those traders argue plausibly that there would be a consequent loss of employment, particularly if that 20 per cent to 30 per cent loss of business is correct. They indicate that the workers themselves would be the losers in the sense that they would miss out on time with their families, that the togetherness of families on weekends would not be available to the same extent. The ability to socialise with their friends and the ability to play sport would be impeded, as would the ability to attend children's sports. Toowoomba is a city where Sunday observance of church attendances is higher than the state average, and that is a fervent consideration to take into account.

As against those reasons, there has to be an acknowledgment that there is growing consumer demand. The people of Toowoomba are no different from any other people living in Queensland. Their hours of work are the same as for people in the south-east corner and they demand the convenience of shopping on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. I was interested to hear the divergence in the arguments between the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Moggill, and they put their contrasting views very well earlier in the debate. One consideration in favour of Sunday trading in the Toowoomba area is that workers would receive two and a half times their normal wage. This would further help students in particular to survive. Toowoomba is an education centre; the USQ is a major university in Queensland. Many students would look for weekend work in order to keep their heads above water.

Despite what I said before in relation to Toowoomba's observance of the sanctity, if you like, of Sundays, like anywhere else in Queensland Toowoomba reflects a pluralist society where people's views, habits and adherence to values have changed compared to days gone by. Years ago one could not go to a hotel on Sunday because they were not open. In years even before that sport was prohibited on Sundays. Society changes and our values change as time goes on. The legislature has to reflect those sorts of changes.

There are a couple of other points I want to make in relation to the legislation before the House. The point has been made that the legislation contains provision for non-compulsory work on Sundays and public holidays. I know that the minister has heard speculation that there is some scepticism within the community from both employers and employees as to the workability of that provision. He has indicated that there will be amendments at a later stage to tighten that provision, and I look forward to seeing those amendments. How that provision works in practice is something that the minister would be encouraged to keep an eye on in the future.

It has been indicated that there has been extensive consultation with employer groups, the retailers and the unions involved. That is necessary and is good to hear. Consultation of course is not just telling people in advance what is going to happen; it requires, from a definition of the

word, the seeking of advice and the seeking of opinion in relation to what is proposed. I am sure that that type of consultation is the sort of consultation that has been talked about here.

The member for Gladstone made passing reference to proposed amendments to section 26 of the act dealing with the effect of employment and the views of local government. As I understand it, there is the intent to insert in section 26 a requirement on the commission itself to take into account, amongst a whole range of issues, what affect it might have on employment and what advice or input local governments are prepared to put up. The government and the minister in particular are to be congratulated on expanding the criteria which the commission must take into account.

Finally, I note the passionate views of members of the National Party as expressed here today by the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Gregory compared to the views of the member for Moggill. I simply ask the question: with this huge difference of opinion between those two conservative parties and, in the context of what one reads in the paper, their desire to amalgamate or join in coalition, how is that to be achieved when this enduring sore exists? I look forward to the contribution of subsequent members in this debate which might throw some light on how that great difference and divide will be healed.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (5.25 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. Before I speak about some of the substantive aspects of this bill, I want to address an issue raised in particular by the National Party. It astounds me that it gives the House the impression that the only reason for opposing dramatically increased trading hours for retail trade in the south-east corner of Queensland is that in some way small business is going to be duped. I find it concerning that, with all the social concerns and the concerns about family time, workers' entitlements and the rights of workers, what concerns the National Party most is not that workers would be appropriately remunerated for working on a Sunday or a public holiday but rather that small business may in some part lose out.

In his contribution to the debate the member for Toowoomba North spoke of the massive differences between the National Party and Liberal Party on this bill. He asked how these two conservative parties could ever seek to amalgamate with such divergent views. I have a suggestion for the member for Toowoomba North: perhaps the Nationals work Monday to Friday and the Liberals do all the work on Sundays and public holidays.

I am personally concerned about Sunday trading and holiday trading, but my concerns have, for the most part, been addressed by the bill. I have a concern about schoolchildren working Thursday nights, Saturdays and then Sundays to make money while at school. In my electorate there are a number of high school students in particular who work Thursday nights and then work Saturdays. I had a concern that they would work Thursday nights, Saturday and Sunday and then be tired for school on Monday. However, that concern has been adequately allayed when one looks at the penalty rates they will receive for working on Sundays. That will mean that they will be able to work fewer hours and, as a result, be less tired for school on Monday, enabling them to work harder at school.

There are also many university students in my electorate who work at Indooroopilly shopping centre, formally Westfield Shoppingtown, who would be very pleased to have the opportunity to work extra hours to allow them the opportunity to buy extra reading and/or text books. I had a concern that small businesses near large shopping centres would be disadvantaged, but again that concern has been allayed by the evidence presented that increased trading hours will in fact increase economic activity in and around shopping centres. At the moment there are three coffee shops operating on Station Road at Indooroopilly and an ice-cream shop just around the corner on Coonan Street. I know that they will be quite pleased to see the shopping centre open on a Sunday, because it will mean a lot more business for them. In particular one of those coffee shops is right next door to my office and has just been refurbished. I think they will be particularly pleased to see some extra business coming their way.

I am concerned that Sunday trading in Brisbane might mean an erosion of family time, that there would be less time for parents to spend with their kids because they will spend it shopping. I recently visited the ACT and had a look at how Sunday trading operates there. The fact of the matter is that the convenience provided by having the opportunity to shop on a Sunday may—and I am not 100 per cent convinced of this—mean that families have more time to spend together. If parents have the opportunity to go along and watch their children playing soccer at Taringa Rovers on a Saturday or cricket on the Graceville Memorial Park on a Saturday, it may mean that mum or dad will be able to spend time watching the kids play the sport and do the shopping perhaps on a Sunday afternoon. That would only make things better for local families.

I believe the Industrial Relations Commission has raised a number of issues of equity and fairness which have been addressed by the bill. I had three concerns in this regard. The first was obviously the geography of what was being suggested—a situation where there was Sunday trading and holiday trading on the Gold Coast. It was not in Logan, it was in Brisbane; it was not in Pine Rivers; it was on the Sunshine Coast. From a fairness point of view that would be an absolutely ridiculous situation. It would be completely unworkable.

On Monday of this week I had the great privilege of attending a school captains badge presentation at a school that was a little bit outside of my electorate. I was there not as a member of parliament. I attended the Patricks Road State School's school leaders badge presentation as the brother of Rioghnach Lee, one of the year 7 captains there. That school is within the electorate of Ferny Grove. People there speak very highly of their local member, Geoff Wilson. I had a look around when I was there and I thought, 'What would it be like for those children to know that when they get to high school if they happen to go to school in Stafford they might be able to work in Woolies on the weekend but if they happened to live in Arana Hills or Ferny Hills, just a couple of kilometres away, that would not be an option open to them?' That would probably be one of the stupidest and most unfair situations imaginable.

I was also concerned that workers might in some way be pressured or coerced into working on a Sunday or a public holiday when they were not keen to. I think that concern has been resolved by an agreement between the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association and the Retailers Association of Queensland. They agreed to formulate a specific award covering voluntary work on any extended trading hours in all of the non-exempt shops throughout Queensland. The award will be known as the Voluntary Work Extended Trading Hours Non-Exempt Shop Award—State. I believe it has been filed at the Industrial Relations Commission for ratification as soon as possible. I am pleased to see that taking place.

Sunday trading has been operating in Queensland for some time in certain places. It strikes me as exceptionally odd that we would have a concern now about Sunday trading or holiday trading when it has been going on for quite some time. Something that has irked me considerably for quite some time has been the emphasis placed upon commercialism in our society. I must commend the minister on this point. I am very pleased that under the new arrangements there will not be trading on Easter Sunday. For me Easter Sunday is going to be returned to what it should be: a day for family, friends and community and a day on which we as a community can celebrate the Easter season. I am pleased to be a part of, and assisting, this Labor government in making Easter Sunday a shopping free day. I am happy to support the bill.

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (5.34 p.m.): Previous speakers for the National Party, such as the members for Toowoomba South, Gregory and Keppel, have certainly emphasised the National Party's attitude towards these amendments, and I certainly support them. However, when I walked into the chamber today I heard you speaking, Mr Deputy Speaker. When talking about these amendments you were saying that they will overcome the indecision and inconsistencies of previous legislation. I also heard the member for Springwood saying something very similar when she was talking about the discrepancies and the uncertainties of the previous legislation.

I wish to talk about some of the discrepancies. My understanding of this particular amendment is that areas such as Browns Plains, Logan and others would be considered in these new amendments. However, the media from Jimboomba has contacted the minister's office, which has explained that Jimboomba will now be included in these amendments. If the minister looks at the south of Brisbane and the two areas of Jimboomba and Beaudesert, he will see that we are now left with a very, very serious anomaly. Jimboomba has a Woolworths—and a very successful one. When I walk around there I find that the small businesspeople have very mixed—

Mr Lawlor: They are in favour of this.

Mr LINGARD: Let me explain without the member telling us about Elizabeth Taylor and all his funny little jokes and that he was the No. 40 speaker in the schools debate. I had to sit here and listen to every speech about the schools the other day. Not one other person had to do that. Now as soon as I want to start to talk the member for Southport wants to interject.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Poole): Order! I remind the member to keep to the facts.

Mr LINGARD: I ask the minister: now that he has said that Jimboomba will be included in these amendments and that Woolworths at Jimboomba will be allowed to open on a

Sunday—and, as I have said, some of the small businesses have mixed thoughts about whether or not that will be successful—he has excluded Beaudesert, which has a large Coles. Therefore, there is this one little town sitting in south-east Queensland and somehow or other the minister's authorities have drawn a line from Coolangatta, through the mountains—and I do not know how he has included Jimboomba, but he has—and across to Amberley and cut out Beaudesert. Now there is a competitive thought between Beaudesert and Jimboomba.

If Sunday trading is successful and it leads to successful small business and if the minister is going to promote that concept, what is he going to do about Beaudesert? Are we going to say that Beaudesert Coles will have to close? If there is some spin-off to the small businesses of Beaudesert, quite obviously the minister now has a very, very serious anomaly.

I take the comments of the member for Gaven and the member for Springwood simply because I heard them and also because their electorates adjoin mine. If we are going to clear up the discrepancies, I would point out to the minister that a very serious anomaly has occurred in my electorate. I would ask that, before this legislation is passed, he tries to clear it up.

I spoke to the managers of Coles this morning. It is situated in a one-off large building which also contains five or six other small businesses. My understanding is that if Coles shuts, those businesses would have to shut as well because they have common frontage and common doors. They themselves said this morning that they do not know what is going to happen. Will they still be allowed to open on a Sunday? Obviously they do not have 20 employees. So they are facing a little bit of indecision. I would ask the minister to try to clarify this situation with his people so that we do understand exactly what is happening. I know that with 66 government members this legislation is going to go through. I know it went through last December, regardless of our thoughts.

Mr Nuttall: Can I just say to you that I will make sure I respond in my reply.

Mr LINGARD: Thank you.

Much has been said about employment. I want to talk about some of the small businesses and the way—in all fairness to them—they create a lot of employment for our young people. I want to talk about one of the projects that this government has been talking about, and that is school based apprenticeships and traineeships. I look at a release from Minister Matt Foley. It states—

The Queensland Government will boost the growth of school based apprenticeships and traineeships by 60% over the next three years ...

"This involves committing an additional \$5 million to support the growth of the successful school based apprenticeships and traineeships program", Mr Foley said.

Over the next three years, it was expected about 10500 students would be provided with the opportunity to undertake this form of training ...

"A schoolbased apprenticeship or traineeship allows a student to study for the Senior Certificate and at the same time undertake nationally recognised training as a paid employee."

I reckon that is a fantastic project and we support it. It certainly has massive support out there in the community.

As Matt Foley said, students may work one or two days a week in paid employment or for blocks of time and attend school on the remaining dates. The Minister for Public Works, Mr Schwarten, has made great play of this project. He has talked about having some of these students within Q-Build. In January 2002 he sent out to all of the schools a letter along with application forms for school based apprenticeships with Q-Build. The selection criteria were also enclosed. In that letter the minister said—

Mr Reeves: This bill is not about education.

Mr LINGARD: This is about small business and what small businesses can do. If I have to sit and listen to Elizabeth Taylor in a school debate, then surely employment is relevant in terms of this debate.

Mr Reeves: This bill is not about education.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! The member for Mansfield will cease interjecting. I am listening very carefully to this speech.

Mr LINGARD: In that letter the minister stated—

We are seeking students who completed Year 10 in 2001, with good results, particularly in English, Mathematics, and Shop/Manual arts subject. They should be keen to complete Year 12 at a high standard.

Although few students will have significant work experience at this stage, applicants should indicate all work they have undertaken, including voluntary tasks, paid work, work at home or with relatives.

The government has made great play about that Q-Build initiative. But let me say that there are only 10 of these positions in Queensland and only one in Brisbane—at Hemmant. There is also a carpenter's apprenticeship with Q-Build in Brisbane. So how can students at Park Ridge, Logan, Beaudesert, Springwood—all of those areas—apply for an apprenticeship at Hemmant? I would like to know just how many students and how many families saw these ads, because they are excellent. The government has made great play of them. But how many students would really have had a chance to become a shopfitter at Hemmant? There are only 10 apprenticeships available in Queensland—one of them at Thursday Island.

So whilst great play was made about this project, I say to the Minister for Public Works to be fair. How many people would have thought that they would have had a chance of being successful in gaining one of these apprenticeships? I ask members to remember that students had to attend high school close by—and the apprenticeship was at Hemmant. There was absolutely no chance for anyone on the Gold Coast or anywhere else to gain one of those positions. The government is continually making great play about these projects but in the end it is making very little significant difference.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.42 p.m.): The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill proposes uniform trading hours across south-east Queensland extending in an area from the Gold Coast to Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. The key issue in this whole debate is uniformity. The government has made it very clear that that is one of the fundamental reasons for proposing this legislation.

As a former practitioner of the Industrial Relations Commission—as indeed was the minister—I have a great deal of respect for its processes and its decisions. However, this decision of the commission would have resulted in a number of different trading zones within a very small area—different hours, different days, some people working on public holidays and some not, in some cases in areas quite nearby to each other within the Brisbane city limits and surrounding areas. Although the Industrial Relations Commission may have resolved this issue over time, I believe that the uncertainty and the inconsistencies that were created by this decision and the time frame in which it would have taken the commission to resolve it justified the government's decision to intervene as quickly as it did. The decision created a situation that needed a prompt response. On that basis, I support the government's decision to intervene and introduce legislation in this instance.

It is also fair to say that there was quite a strong reaction in a number of areas in the community against the commission's decision. In many quarters it was argued that it would disadvantage traders in those areas nearby to the Brisbane region where the decision of the commission applied. There were significant issues relating to investment in major shopping centres in adjacent areas that would have been severely compromised if the decision had been allowed to stand as it was. There was also quite a strong reaction from substantial proportions of the community acting as consumers. In effect, as other members have said, consumers are demanding a greater service from industry, and indeed the retail industry, and many consumers felt that they would have been quite disadvantaged if the commission decision had been allowed to stand as it did.

The member for Moggill and the member for Toowoomba North touched on the issue of consumer demand. I believe that consumers generally are very supportive of the availability of extended trading hours, particularly on Sundays and on many of the public holidays. As has been pointed out, contrary to some of the views put by some people in the community, it provides a lot more flexibility for many families. With the changing demands on families—parents and carers working different hours, the different leisure activities of families—the availability of shopping throughout the week and on some nights is growing in demand and I think that consumers are, in fact, crying out for it. A few examples of the changes that are occurring have been referred to. I need only to point to an area that I have a great interest in, horseracing. Who would have thought 10 to 15 years ago that we would have had horseracing on a Sunday. When that was proposed, it created quite a reaction. Now it is an accepted part of that industry, as indeed Sunday trading has become in the retail industry. So the government had to act to ensure uniformity. To do anything other than that and reflect what currently does exist already in areas such as the Brisbane CBD, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast in my view would have caused a great deal of unnecessary disruption and disadvantage to a number of parties.

One of the issues that I have been contacted on in my electorate office following the government's decision relates to the protection for small business tenants of large shopping centres. It is clear in this legislation that tenants will be protected in the shopping centres from being forced to trade on Sundays and on public holidays. I have had a number of representatives of small business sectors in my electorate contact me seeking assurances in that regard. Of course, that issue is dealt with clearly in the legislation. Those retailers who occupy tenancies in large shopping centres cannot be forced to operate on a Sunday if they choose not to. That protection is achieved by providing that trading hours on Sundays and public holidays are not allowable hours for the purpose of establishing core trading hours under the Retail Shop Leases Act.

The issue of protection of employees has also been a significant one. It is fair to say that this debate needs to be put in context, because currently many thousands—in fact, probably tens of thousands of retail employees—work Sundays and public holidays, and the public holidays that are listed in this legislation. I give as an example those employees who work in independent retail shops as defined in the current act. The only restrictions on trading hours for independent retail shops, except food and/or grocery shops, which are unrestricted, are that they must close on Christmas Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day and on Anzac Day up until 1 p.m. So in those instances Sunday trading and trading on public holidays has been a reality for many, many years.

Also those many thousands of employees who are engaged in exempt shops, which are those that are considered under the act to provide necessary services and which, therefore, would be accessible to the public at all times, have totally unrestricted trading hours under the act. Of course, that covers everything ranging from bait and tackle shops, booksellers, camping and equipment shops, chemists, confectionary shops, delicatessens, fish shops, flower shops, hairdressers, ice-cream parlours and licensed premises to milk bars. So there is a long list of shops, and indeed employees, who currently may be required to work Sundays and public holidays. It is really only those employees who are employed in non-exempt shops, which is essentially the large retailers, who have been exempted except for those areas that have already been identified, that is, the Brisbane CBD, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. There are a number of other parts of the state where Sunday trading occurs. To name just a few, currently the New Farm area of Brisbane has Sunday trading and trading on some public holidays, as do Cairns, Port Douglas, Whitsunday, Townsville CBD and some parts of the Great Barrier Reef Wonderland tourist complex. There are many employees of exempt and independent retailers who currently work Sundays and some public holidays under orders of the Industrial Relations Commission. That includes, of course, many small and large businesses.

I will make a few general comments about employee protection and some of the issues raised by the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association, or the SDA. Like many other members of this House, in recent days I have been quite heavily lobbied by the SDA through letters and visits from union officials. It goes without saying that, as a former union official, I am obviously a strong supporter of the trade union movement, including the SDA. I believe that the SDA does an exceptional job of protecting the interests of its members.

However, I have a few difficulties with the current campaign being waged, particularly in relation to public holidays. I will make clear my understanding of the issues raised by the union. The material before me indicates that the SDA has lodged a consent application with the Industrial Relations Commission to the Voluntary Work—Extended Trading Hours—Non-Exempt Shops Award—State, the award which protects employees who are required to work on Sundays.

I will read a couple of provisions from the application lodged by the union to put in context the Premier's public statements on the issue. The SDA application states—

Consequent upon the Commission's decision in matter B810 of 2001, the Queensland Government has, via publicly reported statement attributed to the Honourable the Premier, foreshadowed legislation the effect of which, in the apprehension of the Applicant, will comprise an extension of trading hours for non-exempt shops trading by retail.

It is the reasonable expectation of the Applicant that the foreshadowed legislation will take the form of an amendment of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990.

The important part of that application by the SDA—which I understand is a consent application—is the reference to the publicly reported statement attributed to the Premier about this proposed legislation. I will quote from one of the Premier's press releases to put the issue in context. The Premier stated—

The Government has acted to prevent unnecessary pain for non-Brisbane businesses by designing a zone to blanket an area between Noosa, Coolangatta and Amberley.

Retailers will have the choice of opening between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays and public holidays.

Shops will close on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day.

That is the information available to me. The fact that this legislation extends to both Sundays and public holidays has been a matter of public record for some time. The reference by the SDA in the consent application clearly reflects the Premier's reference to Sundays and public holidays in his public statements. That said, the SDA has quite rightly raised issues on behalf of its members to protect its members' interests.

I believe that the government has taken significant steps to protect employees' interests. The proposal to extend trading hours has always excluded Easter Sunday in all areas. Previously, Sunday was included as a trading day on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast and in the Brisbane CBD and employees could have been asked to work on that day. The proposed legislation removes Easter Sunday from the list of days that can be worked. In addition to Easter Sunday, the public holidays of Good Friday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day are also specifically excluded from the provisions of the bill.

During negotiations on this issue, the government received an assurance from the Retailers Association of Queensland that it supported the proposal that employers could not force employees to work on these new trading days. Of course, after strong representations from the union, the government will move an amendment to this bill which further enshrines the protections for existing employees that their employers cannot force them to work on Sundays or public holidays. To my mind, the interests of employees have been exceptionally high on the agenda of the government when dealing with these issues.

A number of speakers who have preceded me have referred to the issue of jobs. It is an issue that comes up from time to time with respect to trading hours and other matters of importance. It is fair to say that there is a significant body of evidence that the extension of trading hours or more flexible trading hours in fact stimulates employment in the retail sector. It has already been referred to, but I will mention it again in my own contribution. When the core hours for trading were introduced by the Goss government, there was a significant increase in employment of 29.9 per cent in the retail sector.

The experience of trading hours deregulation in both New South Wales and Victoria has shown a significant growth in employment opportunities in the retail sectors of those states. Interestingly, of the 40,000 increase in jobs in New South Wales between 1986 and 1992, half were in fact in the small, non-food sector. It is the impact of extended trading hours on that sector of small business which people raise the most concerns about. The evidence from New South Wales is that there was a major increase in employment in that particular sector. A study in Victoria with respect to small retailers—milk bars, small grocery stores, butchers and newsagents—found that employment levels for the great majority remained unchanged following deregulation.

I understand the concerns of small retailers. I have a number of them in my electorate and they have raised concerns with me, both in relation to the current legislation and previously when the matter of trading hours has arisen. It is fair to say that small business seems to be continually going through difficult times in terms of maintaining viability. However, that is the very nature of our economy at the moment. There are significant changes taking place, not just in respect of trading hours but in respect of increasing competition across the whole sector. I do not think it is fair to blame extended trading hours for the fact that some businesses might fall by the wayside in the future. Those businesses which are innovative and provide and deliver services that local communities want—whether it be the local corner store or a small operator in a major retail shopping centre—will survive if they meet the needs of their local consumers. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.58 p.m.): It is a matter of regret that the Queensland government has had to step in on a matter which should have been resolved by the Industrial Relations Commission. The decision brought down in December would have treated my electorate as second-class citizens. It would have denied them the shopping hour freedoms granted to the people to the north and south of Logan City, and that would have been unjust. Let me explain why.

In the suburbs of Logan City, particularly West Logan, the Brisbane city boundaries extend on one side well past the city, and also to the north they adjoin one of the suburbs. What would have happened? The net effect of the commission's decision would have been that neighbours on one side of the road would have enjoyed extended trading hours on a Sunday while others in

the bulk of the city would not. What would have happened, for example, at Browns Plains, where Bunnings is the largest hardware store? People could have purchased hardware items on Sundays, yet in the nearby Grand Plaza shopping complex the only commerce that could have been transacted on the Sunday, under the commission's ruling, would have been a visit to the cinema. It is a confusion created by overregulation of shopping hours, and the commission's decision would have only added to that overregulation. In effect, people in Logan West would have been able to travel five minutes to the Sunnybank Hills shopping centre and do their Sunday shopping. If this had become the principal shopping centre to transact their shopping, I believe that in time businesses and job opportunities would have been lost in the Logan West area.

Let us look at the alternatives. I am very pleased that the do-nothing approach of the National Party, through the member for Keppel and the Leader of the Opposition—in the short time that he is going to be with us in that capacity—is in fact a policy. I welcome that. It is good to see Her Majesty's loyal opposition coming up with a policy. But that policy would have done this: it would have consigned the Logan West area to a Sunday shopping hours backwater.

What is also revealed from the opposition is that it has no faith—none whatsoever—in the small business sector. It believes the small business sector has no capacity to adapt. In fact, I have faith in the small business sector. It shows an ability to adapt to change very well. I will give the House an example. The major chains dominate in Logan West—Woolworths and Coles. Both sell fruit and Woolworths also has a bakery. In spite of that emergence, a fruit shop was established after that time at Grand Plaza Avenue. That fruit shop does extraordinarily well against that competition. Why? It is because the owner of that shop has adapted and fought out and won a niche market for himself.

Let us turn to the bakery shop. I said that Woolworths has a bakery. If we walk that great distance across the aisle we will see a bakery shop at Grand Plaza. Rather than go under to the majors it has won more customers and been awarded a business prize for its achievements. I have tremendous faith in the small business sector's ability to adapt. I think sometimes the National Party draws on its own experience and inability to adapt and therefore thinks that small business behaves exactly the same as it does. The opposition fails to appreciate that there are small businesses now operating in effectively a deregulated shopping hour environment, with 7-11 stores and Spar stores trading well into the night. It also overlooks the service stations, which now in addition to selling petrol sell a whole range of household items. Is the opposition saying that the person who took out the loan for the Spar store or the 7-11 did not do so with some risk in mind. Of course they did. Of course they have to adapt, and they do.

The Leader of the Opposition's argument is that deregulated trading hours ruin small business. If that is the case, why is there any small business on either the Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast? People living on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast should be told that the opposition thinks they are a mob of duds and will go under. The reply will be absolutely riveting. No wonder the National Party dropped 40 per cent—a mere 40 per cent—in the Surfers Paradise electorate, the heart of small business. They have woken up to the game. These characters do not speak for them and never have. It is the Labor Party who is in their corner on this. We are the ones who understand it and we are the ones out there encouraging it.

One result of these changes on a Sunday will be a reconfiguration in shop visitation by consumers. It will not surprise me if that reconfiguration has an impact on night-time shopping, particularly Thursday night. I think we will find a movement downwards. However, that is not my decision. It will be the housewives' decision, and that is where it should be. Leave it up to the men and women in the suburbs to determine when they want to do the shopping. It is not a decision for us in the parliament and not for the commission but for all of the people out there who want that freedom.

I wish also to take issue with the contribution made by the member for Keppel—that famous telephonist. He took great umbrage and said that it was sad that Crazy Clark's got an advantage. I have had the fortune to meet Mr Clark from Crazy Clark's. The only thing crazy about him is the prices. He is a young family man who put it all on the line and has now built up a very significant enterprise. In addition to the employment of shop assistants, at Crestmead a firm named BDS employs 100 people in making the shelving and so on for firms like Crazy Clark's. So if this means more customers for Crazy Clark's, it also means more jobs for a whole lot of people in the industrial estate at Crestmead. I take great exception to the member's lambasting of Crazy Clark's as if it is of no significance. If the schools in my electorate want something for their fete,

they go to the firm they can afford and that wants to give back a bit to the community—Crazy Clark's.

In relation to this argument about deregulation of shopping hours, members who have been here long enough will have heard the National Party trotting out the same old line. We could almost pick up the speech from the great old bakery speech in the early nineties when we decided to give the housewives what they always should have had—a bit of choice in the price of bread. We take that choice for granted now, but it was opposed bitterly by the National Party when the Goss government introduced it. What was the great old rancid argument they used? That small business bakeries would close down! What have we got? Not closures but more bakeries, more choice, more quality, more competition and the greatest range of prices we could ask for! That has happened as a direct result of deregulation.

The other political point—and it highlights the lack of policy direction of the opposition—is that the coalition government in Victoria deregulated shopping hours right across the state. Small business did not collapse; it adapted. The opposition cannot adapt. It is led by somebody with a 1950s view of the world, its economy and lifestyle. The age of the computer and the Internet, unrestricted shopping hours and borderless transactions has completely escaped them. It is not for them to get on the Internet and order something at any time of the day or night. The computer age has completely washed past the Leader of the Opposition.

The other point I would make is this: if they do not want deregulated shopping hours they should accept the other corollary. They are always in here enjoining us about flexible working hours and conditions. They do not want flexible shopping hours. Why do they demand of the work force what they do not demand of business? If they do not want flexible shopping hours, why do they make it open for people to work on Sundays? Why not ban shift work or overtime on a Sunday? Because although they are travelling at only seven per cent even that would be halved, because there would be such a hue and cry about it. They should not lecture us about shopping hours when at the same time they want flexible working conditions. If they want flexible shopping hours, they have to have flexible working conditions. The two go hand in hand.

For some families Sunday is the day when they get together. Some of them get together by doing their shopping. This is a matter of some regret for some religious groups, and I do not want to be unmindful of that. Sunday is regarded as the Sabbath. That is their belief. I do not make light of that at all. For many Sunday is, and always was, a family day—a day with the kids or time for gardening. But the reality is that most families have both parents working these days—that is if they are together. With a single parent family the choices are limited. Unfortunately, Sunday may be the only day—with shift work and the casual hours that people have to cobble together—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr MICKEL: For many families Sunday is the day for shopping. In answer to the minister, I might say that I try to organise my kids' football a little better than on Sunday mornings.

I want to highlight the difficulty for shop assistants. There is a humane dimension to shop assistants, and it is simply this. A shop assistant these days does not have a lot of bargaining power at all. With modern technology, it does not take much to train somebody to do that job. So shop assistants live in real fear that at any given time they cannot take on Coles Myer or some of those companies. Of course they cannot. So in my view the fear of being made to work and having no bargaining power is very real. I met yesterday with some people in the industry who expressed that view to me, and I could understand it. I would not like to be the sole breadwinner who is a shop assistant having to take on Coles Myer, particularly when that mob over there want to do away with unions. I would hate to be wandering in there on my own when I knew it was my job that was at risk.

Mr Rodgers: No job, no hope.

Mr MICKEL: No hope. So if members think that farmers have a battle, I ask them to imagine if they were the sole breadwinner—male or female—going in there to do battle because they do not want to work on Sundays. I applaud the fact that the minister is going to do something about removing the compulsion for working on Sundays. I do not believe for one second that, given the religious grounds of some people, they should be coerced into working on a Sunday or public holiday.

I know that there is an ongoing concern about working on public holidays. It goes back to the point I started with. I wish the government did not have to intervene in this. I wish that all those issues that have been the subject of some public comment lately had been resolved by the commission. That is what unions and the commission are for. I believe that a sensible

commission handing down a sensible decision would not have come up with the grab bag of ratbaggy that it did when it came to shopping hours. In Logan City we would have had shopping hours deregulation to the north and south and we would have been in the middle. But we were supposed to sit back and say, 'Gee whiz, somebody who is paid an inordinate amount of money to be a commissioner has come up with this decision.' They were not going to cop it, and on their behalf I was not going to cop it. I am very pleased that on this occasion the government has stepped in, in a community way, and rectified the decision.

Let me finish on a rather unpleasant note. The member for Keppel said that we should abide by the umpire's decision. What a deathbed repentance for the National Party. This is the mob who overruled the commission and brought in the essential services legislation. Do they reckon we have all forgotten that? The trouble is that when someone has been around for 28 years they have probably accumulated a fair amount of baggage, and that is one of them. They overruled the commission whenever they wanted to.

Mr Lucas: Electricity (Continuity of Supply) Bill.

Mr MICKEL: The Electricity (Continuity of Supply) Bill. Have members ever heard of it? Of course we have. We remember it, because a lot of us had families who were affected by it.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr MICKEL: The Minister for State Development was protesting, along with the member for Bulimba, about the way it was handled. So members opposite should not come in here and remind us about overruling commissions. We had to do this on this occasion because, in my view, the commission made a lunatical decision. On behalf of my community I am glad that the minister and the Premier have stepped in and rectified it.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—Ind) (6.14 p.m.): Before the member for Logan leaves the House I would like to tell him that the first e-commerce licence in Australia—No. 1—was awarded to a man in Maryborough with my help. He is about the same age as me—geriatric, in other words. And currently in Maryborough one of the high schools—again with my help—is establishing a web site with the aim of pulling by force, if necessary, our business community into the e-commerce world.

Mr Mickel: Hear, hear! I'm glad you're going to support the bill, then.

Mr Cummins: He'll finish by commending the bill to the House.

Dr KINGSTON: I rise to oppose the bill. I oppose the bill as a person with many years of experience in a successful retail pharmacy in a small provincial city employing about 30 well-trained staff and creating an annual turnover of some \$6 million. I oppose the bill, but I strongly disagree with government regulation. I agree with the member for Bulimba that those retailers and businesses which provide good service and a good range of products are the ones which deserve to profit and to survive. But good service means different things to different people. Personally, I prefer to shop at a family run corner store with friendly well-known staff rather than at an impersonal, large supermarket.

I disagree strongly with the statements by the member for Springwood that shops such as pharmacies and toy shops will not be negatively impacted upon. She has obviously never invested her own capital and time into running such a business. However, conversely I do agree with the member for Logan that certain families and certain other shops can work alongside Coles, for instance, can compete with Coles and can profit by the closeness of a Coles store, because business is about numbers of people and Coles attract people. In fact, in the pharmacy world there is a formula: if you want to know what your turnover might be, you go and count the number of checkouts at Coles and multiply that by a factor of so many thousands of dollars, and that is quite accurate. Unfortunately, it is the large corporate supermarkets which can afford the additional staff costs of extended hours.

I have spent the last 12 months watching the impact on the Maryborough CBD of the construction of a new efficient supermarket adjacent to the Maryborough CBD. Undoubtedly the retailers within the Maryborough CBD could improve their performance if—and I repeat 'if'—they had the capacity to acquire the necessary capital. But they are so flat out just surviving that they cannot get out of their survival mode into an aggressive developmental stance. They are like a boxer on the ropes and they cannot at the moment get off the ropes. This legislation will not help them to get off the ropes.

I agree with many of the statements made by the member for Gregory. This legislation will impact negatively on many small-business operators and there will be a loss of community and

social values. I oppose the bill because the underlying assumptions are flawed. Modern economists evaluate proposed developments, such as the thrust of this bill, by the methodology commonly called triple bottom line accounting. Such modern economic analyses consider the impacts on the environment and on the social capital of the community and, lastly, the financial impacts. I would like to illustrate the flawed underlying assumptions by considering the results of the entry of Safeway into a small unique Welsh market town called Brecon. I wish to relate the impacts on Brecon and the marketing methods superstores use to monopolise the food market in Britain while they destroy small towns and local economies. George Monbiot has written extensively in the reputable British journal *The Ecologist* concerning these factors.

The member for Gladstone has detailed the detrimental impacts she expects in her electorate if extended hours are introduced. She has asked the government whether, if this experiment is shown to have adverse impacts on small businesses, the position can be reviewed. But to review this position involves regular monitoring in a multifactorial manner, and currently we do not have the mechanism to do that.

The local government authority which assisted the entry of Safeway into Brecon argued that they were bringing choice to Brecon. The locals argued, for instance, that they already had nine butchers—local, caring butchers—and thus a very wide choice. They called the neighbouring town of Monmouth, which already had a new superstore, 'the town for sale'—and unfortunately it was. Seventeen out of 34 of its shops were empty and for sale. Locals argued that the introduction of Safeway would ruin the town. They argued that people came to Brecon because of its peculiarities—the ancient buildings, its small scale, the quirky and engaging shops. It was a unique shopping experience. If members go to Melbourne they will see that strip shopping centres have been revived and rejuvenated in the last three years. They have gone back and created an atmosphere in which shopping is a social experience once again. It is an interesting experience; it is not an expedient experience of getting what you want and getting home. That provides a choice to the population.

Locals in Brecon also mourned what they sensed would be the loss of social cohesion which the small shops consolidated. These small shops, many argued, 'are what stick us all together'. They said, 'They make us talk to each other.' Effectively, they were mourning the loss of social capital. Monbiot claims that the people of Brecon were sadly misled. They were told there would be no store closures, but there were many small store closures. The fishmonger, the only fishmonger in town, was the first one to go. Safeway's consultants maintained that the new store would enhance and promote the vitality and viability of Brecon. However, the most comprehensive assessment of the impact of superstores ever undertaken in the world, published by the UK government, came to precisely the opposite conclusion, using almost the same words. It said—

Even where town centres' food retailers suffer an impact but do not close, there is reason for concern that there is a general decline in activity in the centre, thus adversely affecting the viability and vitality of the CBD.

Safeway argued that there would be at least 150 new jobs within this small community, but a study commissioned by the superstores themselves showed that every time a large supermarket opened a net 276 jobs were lost. I oppose this bill not so much because of the shopping hours but because it creates an environment in which large corporate stores can flourish and in which small family stores find survival very difficult.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (6.24 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. As has been stated by many speakers before me, there was a need to address the impacts caused by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission's decision to introduce Sunday trading hours in Brisbane only and to add to the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast's existing trading hours. How fair is it for my local traders that just 20 minutes down the road their competition is allowed to open on a Sunday, yet they are not? I can shop at Aspley but not at Morayfield, or I can go 20 minutes the other way to Caloundra but I cannot shop at Caboolture.

Ms Keech: It is the same for people in Albert, too.

Ms MALE: It is the same for people in a number of our electorates, and it is just not fair. I am not sure what the Industrial Relations Commission was thinking when it made that decision, but it is up to us to fix the situation it created.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Our money goes elsewhere.

Ms MALE: That is right. Local money goes out of the area.

The issue with Sunday trading is that there will still be personal choice on the part of business owners as to whether they will open on a Sunday. I have been assured that this choice will be enshrined in the legislation by the provision of tenants within shopping centres having the choice to trade on Sundays and public holidays. There has also been a period of many months set aside, until August of this year, for retailers and traders to work out the best possible options for their business.

I have noted that the bill provides for existing employees to be given a choice of volunteering to work on Sundays and public holidays. The amendments have ensured that existing employees cannot be forced into working on a Sunday. I spoke to the minister earlier this week regarding this matter, as several workers in my electorate have raised concerns with me about just how voluntary their decision to work on a Sunday will be. I am pleased to see that the government has taken my workers' concerns, as well as the concerns of the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association, on board by providing penalties in the amendment. We all know that employers could abide by the letter of the law and still punish their employees, for example by cutting down hours and so on. It is up to the unions and all honourable members in this House to ensure that the workers of our electorates remain protected.

As has been said before, an overwhelming number of people support extending shopping hours to Sundays, especially consumers. However, one thing we have to monitor closely is the impact of the longer shopping hours on those involved in the retail trade. Those workers who rely on public transport will have long waits at railway stations and bus stops on Sundays, and those people with children will have to arrange alternative child care on weekends. This bill obviously has not caused these problems, but it has highlighted them. I ask the government to take these very real concerns on board and work with unions and workers to come up with solutions.

Extended shopping hours will undoubtedly improve quality of life for the shopping public, and there are any number of workers who want the opportunity to earn extra money in their pay packets by working on public holidays and the like, but we must make sure that they do not lessen the quality of life for those involved in the retail trade. Many occupations involve shiftwork every day—ambulance officers, police officers, nurses and workers in many different fields.

Ms Liddy Clark: Actors.

Ms MALE: Especially actors. It is something we as a society will have to come to terms with as the hours of work shift and the way we run our lives becomes very different. As I have said, we must make sure this change does not lessen the quality of life of people in all sorts of areas who undertake shiftwork. There will always be some sort of trade-off.

The Sunshine Coast has had Sunday trading for a very long time now. I have not been approached by shopkeepers or retail workers with any issues about this. Once extended trading hours come into effect later this year, I am sure we will all be monitoring the flow-on effects carefully. There are continuing challenges as we deal with our change to a modern society, where people look for lifestyle options that include shopping at all hours of the day and night. We can go to the movies at 10 o'clock at night, for example. There has to be someone working at the cinema to take the money, to show the film and to sell the popcorn. We can go to the beach at 6 o'clock in the morning and pick up breakfast on the way. These are lifestyles we have chosen. They are different from the lifestyles our parents had, and their lifestyles were probably different from those of their parents before them. We cannot live our lives in the fifties or the twenties. We have to deal with the modern society and with the issues it raises.

Mr English: Society is changing. So is the legislation.

Ms MALE: That is what we have to deal with. We have to change as we go, and the legislation we introduce in this House has to reflect that.

As I said, I do have concerns about how workers will deal with this. Once again, those concerns are not related solely to this bill. They relate to a number of fields. Child care is a very important related issue we will have to explore to see how we can make it more available, especially for those involved in the retail trade, where a lot of the workers are women with families. That is an issue we have to look at very carefully so they are not disadvantaged in any way.

Ms Liddy Clark: They'll still have to do the shopping.

Ms MALE: Some women will still have to do the shopping. For example, my husband does all the shopping, so the retail trading hours will not affect my lifestyle as such.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Ms MALE: I thank the Minister for Innovation for that. As a society we face continuing challenges. I put it on the record that I will always work with my constituency to deal with their issues and come up with the best possible solutions for them.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I put on record the fact that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision excluded the Redlands. The people of Redlands were treated as second-class citizens, and we are not going to wear it. The people of the Redlands—encompassing the electorates of Capalaba, Cleveland and Redlands—are as important as the people who live in Brisbane, the people who live on the Sunshine Coast and the people who live on the Gold Coast. We do not deserve to be treated as second-class citizens.

This decision means that people from my electorate can shop at Carindale but cannot shop at Capalaba. They can shop at Garden City but cannot shop at Victoria Point. They can go down the road and shop at Cannon Hill but, no, they cannot drive to Cleveland and spend their money. This results in a flow of money from the area. I, the other state members and State Development are working hard to try to develop local businesses. My area does not want to become a dormitory suburb of Brisbane. We need to generate local jobs and to keep money in the area. Obviously this is not seen as a high priority for members of the National Party.

The National Party attacked this bill as unfriendly to families, but I highlight the hypocrisy of the National Party. Obviously the National Party believes that the families who live on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the Brisbane CBD are less important than the families who live outside the Brisbane CBD. It does not care that families on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and in the Brisbane CBD will have to live with extended trading hours. When Mr Borbidge was Premier of this state he did not try to change extended trading hours on the Gold Coast, so the National Party was not concerned about families at that time. Its hypocrisy makes me sick. The National Party has to acknowledge the impact of this on families, as does the Labor government.

I was a shiftworker for 12 years prior to becoming a member of parliament.

Mr Lucas: In fact, you were a blue-collar worker.

Mr ENGLISH: I was the ultimate blue-collar worker: I was a police officer. I acknowledge that when I joined the Police Service I knew shiftwork would be part of my life. I signed on knowing that. However, people who are currently 'shoppies' were not aware that this change would occur and the minister has taken steps to ensure that they cannot be forced to undertake extended hours. From the perspective of a shiftworker, I have two comments to make. One is that workers must be remunerated for the inconvenience of working shiftwork, of working extended hours and of not being home on Sundays and public holidays. It is my belief that as long as workers are remunerated for the inconvenience it is of overall benefit to the workers and society that this occurs.

Whilst the award covering shoppies protects the remuneration of workers and whilst the legislation dictates that extended hours are to be voluntary and not compulsory for workers, there is a genuine concern in relation to the ability of major employers to bring pressure to bear on employees to work extended hours. As a result of his consultations, the minister has taken this issue on board and has brought an amendment to this House to enshrine in the legislation that it is illegal for any employer to coerce workers to work extended hours. I and all members of this House warn any shonky employers out there who seek to coerce employees that we will be watching, the unions will be watching and the QIRC will be watching. I put those shonky employers on notice. My advice to workers who have concerns in this regard is to join a union. Unity is strength. This is an important motto. Join a union and gain the protection it offers.

I would like to think that the unions are currently working towards preparing statistics to support any challenge against these shonky employers. I would like to think that unions are collecting copies of rosters and staffing hours to monitor the actions of employers. This will enable the unions to detect cases where a particular employee, who has worked 20 hours a week, is offered work during extended trading hours but, because of family commitments or being a single parent, is unable to work because they cannot get child care and is penalised by the employer. If that irresponsible and incompetent employer reduces the hours of that worker to three hours and gives some shady, shonky excuse, the statistics collected over the previous six months can be used in the QIRC to substantiate a claim of coercion against that employee. I would encourage the unions to start collecting statistics, because there are incompetent and lazy employers out there who will seek to do this.

Ms Male: And we need to protect the workers.

Mr ENGLISH: Yes, we do need to protect the workers. Unfortunately, it seems to be a sign of the times that employers take workers' labour for granted. A recent nauseating example is Qantas. Qantas had the hide to complain that it could not direct staff to work overtime. This is an insult to all workers. Employees work a certain number of hours in return for a fair wage. Employers can offer overtime with penalty rates attached, but it is the employee's right to accept or reject that overtime. If Qantas has so much overtime for the offing, it should employ more full-time staff and not force existing workers to work overtime. It is an insult to its staff and it is taking the labour of its staff for granted.

I also want to comment on some of the statements made by the member for Logan earlier in the debate. I pointed out the hypocrisy of the National Party in relation to families, and it is also extremely hypocritical in relation to its claims for small business. Small business has survived and thrived on the Gold Coast, in the Brisbane CBD and on the Sunshine Coast despite having extended trading hours. Unlike the National Party, I have confidence in small businesses in the Redlands. They are as talented as small businesses anywhere in this state or Australia. Small businesses in Redlands will survive because they are clever; they will adapt and they will overcome. For the National Party to say that small business in my electorate is any less competent than those on the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast or the CBD is an insult to those small businesses. I will defend them to the hilt, unlike the National Party. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.38 p.m.): I rise to participate in debate on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. I acknowledge that this bill provides for a single trading hours zone to include uniform trading on Sundays and public holidays in the south-east coastal area of Queensland. In contrast, I understand that the current trading hours zone in this area includes separate trading hours zones that cover the following areas: the Sunshine Coast, the near north coast, the inner city of Brisbane, the city heart, the New Farm area and the Gold Coast area. I understand that these all have individual trading hour zones with different trading hours applying for other geographical areas south of the Sunshine Coast and north of the Gold Coast.

In the minister's second reading speech he stated that, under the government's proposed new single trading hour zone in the south-east coastal area of Queensland, tenants in shopping centres and employees would be protected from being forced to trade or work on Sundays and public holidays. I accordingly ask the minister: will he provide an unequivocal guarantee to all Queenslanders that parties will not be able to contract out of this prohibition on being required to work on Sundays or public holidays if they do not want to?

I also ask the minister to tell me the suggested course of action that a worker should take if they are required to work on Sundays but wish to retain employment with their respective employer. I intend to support the bill subject to the minister's satisfactory answer to my questions.

Ms KEECH (Albert—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I am happy to rise in support of the bill because the extension of the Sunday trading zone, which this bill provides, directly affects the people of Albert. At present in Albert we have the situation, as many members have expressed tonight, where if a family wants to do some shopping on a Sunday they have two choices: either driving to the Brisbane CBD or driving to Pacific Fair or the central areas of the Gold Coast—that is if they are lucky enough to have a car. If they do not and they have to rely on public transport, the journey is going to be a very long and incredibly inconvenient one. I can assure members of the House that the majority of the people of Albert look forward to Sunday trading coming into effect in August.

In fact, this afternoon the Beenleigh Merry Widows Group came along to have a tour of Parliament House as well as to enjoy afternoon tea with me. When I explained to them that I had to leave them to attend to this debate, the one question they had was, 'Is Sunday trading coming to Beenleigh?' They are very happy that at long last they will be able to shop in their local town rather than being forced to travel to either Brisbane or the Gold Coast.

Mr Shine interjected.

Ms KEECH: That is after they have been to mass, certainly.

The member for Gregory commented earlier this afternoon that the whole issue of extended trading hours is not a simple one, and I could not agree more with him. He expressed the National Party's concern for small retailers that may be disadvantaged by any extension of trading hours. I am sure that these small businesses are happy to have the support of the once mighty National Party. However, as a former owner of a small business in a Beenleigh shopping centre, I know these very traders would have much preferred to have had the National Party's

support back in 1998 when the Howard coalition introduced the GST. The subsequent regulation for these small businesses to produce BAS statements at least every three months has done more to damage family life than any provisions offered by the bill we are debating here tonight.

Thankfully, my husband and I sold our business in the Beenleigh Coles mall before the introduction of the GST. However, I have had so many small business traders share with me the personal stress to themselves and their families caused by the impact of having to regularly complete the BAS statements. After a trader has been working 14 hours or more, instead of being able to go home, relax and spend a few precious hours with their spouse and loved ones, they find that they have to go into the home office and spend at least two or three hours each night working on the dreaded BAS statement. So much for the National Party supporting small businesspeople!

I know how hard small business traders work. They would have strongly welcomed the National Party's rhetoric four years ago, when its federal coalition partners introduced the GST and the subsequent BAS statements.

Mr Shine: They sold out.

Ms KEECH: Absolutely! Clearly the National Party's rhetoric as the champion of small business traders is simply that and has no substance in fact.

The member for Nudgee also reminded us about the variety of problems small business traders face. In fact, last night the Beenleigh Chamber of Commerce convened a meeting for small businesspeople in the area. Unfortunately, I was not able to make it due to other commitments with another community meeting, but I was represented. It was interesting to hear of the comments raised at this meeting, because traders in City Road and Main Street are concerned about their future. It is also interesting that there were difficulties in the sustainability of the small businesses in Main Street long before any issues regarding Sunday trading had arisen. In fact, the major reason that they have had problems has been the introduction of a new shopping centre in Beenleigh.

At this meeting last night at which all the small business traders in Beenleigh were represented, guess how many times the issue of Sunday trading being introduced to Beenleigh was mentioned? None whatsoever! In fact, these small businesspeople have a far wider vision of their own business and they certainly have a lot more confidence in the Beenleigh business area. They talked about such issues as developing an image and a vision for Beenleigh so that they could find opportunities to attract customers and residents to Beenleigh. They know that they have to adapt to survive, but they also know that local money must be provided and spent in local businesses.

I am happy to support the bill, but I also have some reservations regarding small businesses that are tenants in major shopping centres. To ensure that tenants are not forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays, the bill will provide that these trading hours are not allowable hours for the purposes of establishing core trading hours under the Retail Shop Leases Act of 1994. This bill ensures that if core hours are to be changed 75 per cent of the lessees in a shopping centre must vote for that change. Once the vote has been made and the decision has been determined, tenants can then be required to trade the new core hours. Therefore, it is only in those shopping centres where the great majority of tenants have voted for Sunday trading that they will be able to trade legally.

The member for Gladstone raised the issue of fairness to traders who do not agree with the decision of centre management to introduce Sunday trading. However, it is a fact that in our society such decisions are based on a principle of abiding by the decision of the majority, whether it be voting for the school captain or for a member of parliament. Reasonable citizens understand and abide by such a decision.

Concerns have also been expressed in relation to the voluntary nature of working on Sundays and public holidays for existing staff in major shopping centres. This is a right and proper concern to be raised. In fact, this government has always been sensitive to issues affecting the working life of Queensland families. It has been a matter of priority to repeal the unfair legislation of the coalition and restore balance to the working life of families. The industrial relations legislation of the Beattie Labor government has become the model for other jurisdictions. Improvements to WorkCover, access to parental leave and other entitlements for casuals, and improvements to long service leave are just some of the commitments on which this government has been working. Therefore, the government is concerned about any potential for pressure to be brought to bear on retail staff to work on Sundays or public holidays. For that

reason the government has been encouraged by the negotiations and communication between the shop assistants union and the Retailers Association of Queensland in ensuring that staff who work on these days choose to do so voluntarily.

As members are aware, Sunday trading has been in force in the Brisbane CBD and parts of the Gold Coast for many years. One has only to try to find a car park in these areas to know how successful this trading has been. The majority of employers work hard to do the right thing by their employees. I am, therefore, happy to note that neither the union nor the Retailers Association of Queensland have raised issues of coercion of staff to work on these days previously. The reality is that the government cannot comprehensively safeguard against coercion in the workplace. Members are aware that no government can fully legislate to ensure that all individuals do the right thing all the time.

My own experience is that coercion by unscrupulous employers is unlikely to be necessary in the retail sector since many staff in this sector are currently under-employed. The young people in Albert I speak to are constantly trying to find more hours to work, not less. In preparation for the introduction of Sunday trading in August, shopping centres in Beenleigh and Ormeau are already planning interviews for the employment of more casual and part-time employees. I am aware that there are many teenagers in Albert who have already approached traders in shopping centres and have asked about working on a Sunday.

Given that substantial penalty rates apply to working on a Sunday, I am not surprised that teenagers are keen to work. Let me give an example of some of these penalty rates. For those people working for Coles and Woolworths and who are under the federal certified agreements, permanents working on a Sunday receive 150 per cent and casuals, 170 per cent. Myer's arrangements are quite similar. These penalty rates ensure that if an employer wants his or her permanent employees—who are more likely to be older and, therefore, have family responsibilities—to work on a Sunday or public holiday, they will have to pay more. For example, today I have been told that a senior Woolworths supervisor will be paid double time for working on a Sunday. This is a supervisor who is a permanent worker. Of course, she has told me that rosters will be drawn up so that supervisors are required to work only one Sunday in the month. That person said that, although she is not that keen on working on a Sunday, she will be more than compensated because she will have to work on a Sunday only once in a month and she will receive double penalty rates. A 17-year-old casual employee, although being paid penalty rates of, say, 170 per cent or more, will be certainly more affordable to the employer. I am happy to note the amendment in this bill to section 36A, which offers protection for current employees. The section notes that an employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees in writing to work during extended hours. Of course, penalties will apply.

The bill brings uniformity across the corridor from Noosa to Coolangatta and west to Amberley and provides for a single trading zone for Sundays and public holidays. It provides for protection for employees against being pressured to work on those days. In addition, tenants in large shopping centres will also be protected from coercion to open by centre managers. The bill means that the people of Albert will now be able to shop locally on a Sunday and on public holidays. It is good news for consumers. The provisions of the bill also mean that it is good news for the workers of Albert. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (6.52 p.m.): Tonight, I rise to speak against the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. This bill is another clear example of the state government developing policy on the run with very little consultation with all the relevant stakeholders and with no regard to the potential effects on the wider community. These amendments to the allowable trading hours in the bill before us today concern me deeply. I am concerned about the future viability of those small businesses that are located inside the so-called south-east Sunday trading zone. I am also concerned about the suburban, regional and rural small businesses that are located outside this zone that will now come under increased pressure to bow to the search for Sunday trading in the state. Above all, I am concerned about the impacts that this bill will have on the wider communities of southern Queensland in terms of widespread job losses, social impact, family strain and stress, and the loss of lifestyle, all of which will come about through the deterioration of market share and ultimately the demise of many of our small traders. These are the same small traders who are the very lifeblood of our communities who provide the majority of our employment and make available the bulk of support for our community groups and sporting clubs.

When the commission began hearing the extended trading hours application in early May of last year, the Premier stated publicly that he would respect its decision and that his government would not make policy on extended trading hours. On Saturday, 5 May, the day after the commission hearing began, the *Courier-Mail* quoted the Premier as stating—

We will abide by the decision of the independent umpire. If they win their case before the independent umpire there will be Sunday trading, if they lose their case before the independent umpire, there will not be.

Unfortunately for small businesses in south-east Queensland, the Premier could, in fact, not be trusted to keep his word and accept the independent umpire's decision. Nor could the Premier be trusted to keep his word to not develop policy on extended trading hours. Before the dust had barely settled from the commission's decision, the Premier was busily drafting up legislation to override it. Clearly, the Premier and his government believe in the Industrial Relations Commission only if it delivers the result that the Premier wants. The Premier and his government do not need to sit through two months of intense scrutiny. They do not have to sit hearing evidence from small, medium and large traders as well as authorities speaking on the economic and social effects of extended trading. As the member for Gladstone said earlier, there would be absolute uproar if any of the former IR ministers had tried to do this. It begs the question: what other decisions may be overturned in the future given that the precedent has now been set by this Labor Party government.

I have been advised that the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association wrote to every minister in the Beattie government before cabinet discussed this legislation. In its letter that association requested to meet with each member of cabinet before the meeting to discuss their concerns regarding the proposed south-east trading zone. Of these requests, the QRTSA has advised that not one cabinet minister agreed to meet its representatives. Even worse is that out of all the letters sent out, only one-third of the ministers actually had the decency to reply.

Earlier, the member for Bulimba said that there was a meeting with all parties. One round table meeting with the parties does not constitute broad consultation. If that is correct, it is a terrible indictment on the state government's ideals of community consultation when the main body representing retailers and shopkeepers against extending trading hours in Queensland cannot even receive a decent hearing.

We should be very clear about who is driving the push for Sunday trading. It is the major retail chains, including Woolworths and Coles, which want to increase their market share and their profits. In Australia, we have a virtual monopoly in the retail grocery market that enjoys almost complete market domination. In Queensland, at the end of 2001 the market share of the three major chains stood at 85.3 per cent: Woolworths at 42.5 per cent, Coles including Bi Lo at 33.9 per cent, and Franklins at 8.9 per cent. With the further market concentration and control of the market that will ensue as a result of this legislation, everyone will lose: consumers, producers, manufacturers, and processors.

The only way to restrict that domination in any way is to keep a restriction on the hours that they are allowed to trade. Some people may say that to do so is anti-competitive. I say that, in many cases, the way the majors operate could be described as anti-competitive. I am a staunch defender of small business in Queensland, especially in my electorate of Cunningham. Consequently, I am against the further deregulation of trading hours across Queensland. I have spoken before in this House against the extension of trading hours. On that occasion a number of members opposite congratulated me because of the stance that I took because they agreed with it. I note that those members are not on the speaking list tonight. I stated then that my personal belief was that there needed to be a political response, just as in 1998 when the Borbidge government opposed a similar application before the commission, which was subsequently declined. However, the Beattie government publicly advised that the Industrial Relations Commission would determine the issue and that it would not even appear before the commission.

I then sought to express a defence of small traders in regional and rural areas by appearing as a witness against the extended trading hours application before the commission. By doing that, I followed the appropriate channels to put my beliefs and my argument forward. In fact, I was the only politician to do so, regardless of which side of the debate they stand on—the same as many other community representatives, shopkeepers, retailers and retailer associations. However, it would appear that the appropriate channels are a complete waste of time and, more importantly, an absolute and complete waste of a lot of money being spent because, after all the evidence is heard and after the umpire makes his decision, the Premier suddenly stands up and

decides that he wants Sunday trading rolled out across the entire south-east corner. It is a great pity that the Premier could not have shown his colours while the commission was hearing its evidence and put his case forward, like all the other stakeholders in south-east Queensland.

The Premier and his government defend their resolution to override the commission's decision, because they argue that the push for Sunday trading is consumer driven. However, this argument has largely been blinded by the major retailers. As the member for Gladstone indicated earlier, the question that they posed in a referendum some years ago was quite clearly an open question that did not give an accurate representation. The push for extended trading hours is not about improving service and convenience for consumers. This push is all about the major retailers attempting to forge a larger market share and profit for themselves at the expense of the small businesses in our communities. Sunday trading is the only competitive advantage that small business has over the major retailers. Sunday takings amount to up to one-third of weekly takings for many small businesses. The amendments before us today will strip this competitive advantage from small traders in the south-east and the results will be devastating.

Small traders will be taken to the wall and many jobs will be lost. In reality, these job losses will far outweigh any gains made through extra positions created or that are said to be created by the major retailers. Masses of statistics and polls regurgitated allegedly prove that consumers overwhelmingly want extended trading hours across Queensland. Many of those surveys have been conducted by the major retailers and serve as a defence for their push for market share. Of course, the bottom line is that we will always receive the answer we want if we structure the question to get the desired result and provide no consequences or conditions.

Sitting suspended from 7.01 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Mr COPELAND: Prior to the break I was referring to some results of the surveys conducted by some of the major retailers as part of their push for market share and increased trading hours. The line of questioning in these surveys can really affect the results. If the questions outlined some of the dire consequences of this proposal on the fabric of society, people may not be so hasty to back the extra shopping hours for the majors. In the case of Sunday trading, for example, if the question was, 'Do you support Sunday trading for major retailers?' and it stated some of the consequences such as, 'If this means your local butcher, greengrocer or corner store may close down?' I think there would be some very different answers given.

The major flaw in the argument that consumers want to shop whenever they want is the fact that currently in Queensland people can buy virtually anything they want on a Sunday. The difference is that currently those items can be bought from a small business, a business with less than 20 employees that is already allowed to trade on Sundays. After this legislation is enacted, those dollars spent will go to Woolworths and Coles.

The state government does not appear to understand that a vibrant and confident small business sector is able to increase investment in the community, thereby creating more jobs for Queenslanders. The legislation we are debating tonight will drain the small business sector of its confidence by further eroding its market share. Not only will our communities suffer in economic terms, but with this loss of market share our local sporting and community groups will also feel the pinch. No longer will small business have enough money to support these groups in the community, and if we believe that the two major retailers will fill that void with community based generosity and commitment, we will be sadly disappointed. The major retailers are profit driven and have very little concern for those communities. This is a very significant difference.

I will touch on a great concern I have with regard to the future effect of this legislation on rural and regional areas that are on the doorstep of this south-east zone. My electorate of Cunningham takes in six shires, including approximately one-third of the Toowoomba City Council and the northern parts of the Warwick shire. These shires are home to many strong and progressive towns that boast determined and innovative small businesses which work incredibly hard to provide a service to the community on only the smallest profit margins.

If Sunday trading were brought to the Darling Downs, we would witness the ravaging of these businesses. I invite anyone who does not believe me to walk down the main street of Pittsworth, Clifton or Cambooya, or to visit the Westridge shopping centre in Toowoomba. These shopkeepers and retailers, along with their very satisfied shoppers that go to them, will tell everyone loud and clear that Sunday trading is very bad news for them. I emphasise to the House that this is a very real concern for Darling Downs communities. I know that members have similar towns in their electorates that boast the same depth of spirited small businesses. As I have mentioned previously, these businesses provide the bulk of employment for those communities.

Consumers have only a finite amount of money to spend in retail stores. Sunday trading will not suddenly create more money in the retail sector. The existing money will simply be transferred from a Saturday or a weekday to a Sunday and, more importantly, from small business to big business. If Sunday trading were introduced in Toowoomba, it is highly likely that many people from across the Darling Downs would conduct much of their shopping at the major retailing outlets in the city on a Sunday, when previously they would have simply purchased goods and services while ducking into their local suburban shopping centre or into the main street of their local town. Now the major retailers will consume the money, the profit and the market share.

This will affect not only the Darling Downs economy but also the local sporting and community groups and local events. Last week my wife and I had the great pleasure of attending the Pittsworth Show Ball at the Pittsworth Town Hall, just one of many such functions that local members attend. This integral community event was greatly assisted by its sponsor, R. K. Thomas and the Heritage Building Society minibranch. R. K. Thomas is a longstanding small business located in the main street of Pittsworth and is a common example of small business supporting their community. It is this type of vital community support which could be in danger if profit margins decline further with the advent of Sunday trading. I certainly cannot imagine that a Coles Myer Pittsworth Show Ball will ever be a reality. As I said, our communities will be the ones that feel the pinch.

It is already a fact that the major retailers will push for Sunday trading on the Darling Downs. It will most definitely be considered next in line for extended trading hours if this legislation is successful in rolling out Sunday trading throughout the south-east zone. On 21 December last year, the executive director of the Retailers Association of Queensland, Mr McKendry, stated publicly in the *Courier-Mail* that the RAQ would consider a push for Sunday trading in other areas of the state if the application in the Industrial Relations Commission was successful. In these comments he singled out Toowoomba as a future possibility for extended trading hours. History will record that the RAQ's application was not successful. However, if this legislation is passed they will receive all the changes to the trading hours they sought in that application—and then some, which means that Toowoomba and the Darling Downs are now staring down the barrel of Sunday trading.

It is a fact that small businesses on the Darling Downs are concerned with Sunday trading and do not want it at any cost. In February of this year, just last month, the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey of its members and businesses in Toowoomba and the surrounding areas, asking for their opinions on Sunday trading. The lopsidedness of the results came as quite a shock to the Chamber of Commerce, with businesses responding with an overwhelming 70 per cent opposed to Sunday trading, while only 30 per cent stated they were not bothered or would like Sunday trading. This is a very telling result and spells out clearly that the Darling Downs will suffer with extended trading hours.

In addition to this groundswell of business opposition in Toowoomba, the Warwick Chamber of Commerce, which covers the southern part of my electorate, has come out publicly and stated that they are unequivocally opposed to the introduction of Sunday trading. The legislation before us tonight will place these businesses squarely next in line for Sunday trading, in effect, placing at severe risk the economic and social wellbeing of the Darling Downs, which currently is one of the strongest performing regions in the state. This government has forgotten about those small business. It is far too preoccupied with the gloss and glamour of the major corporate retailers who have the money and who have blinded them to the plight of the small business sector. They have forgotten about the nuts and bolts of our state's economic and social engine room. Perhaps that is why Queensland is currently faced with the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia.

This legislation also clearly displays that this government is all about developing ad hoc policy when and where it pleases, with no regard for consultation or consistency in the decision-making process. The government states that it is committed to addressing any concerns it has with the Industrial Relations Commission's decision by overruling it and drafting the legislation before us today. In contrast, it also states that in the future it will abide by the commission's decisions on any further applications for extended trading hours. In future decisions, how can any small business operator trust a government that blatantly goes back on its word and makes haphazard changes to a commission's ruling with no consultation or adequate consideration? The next such application could well be for the extension of Sunday trading to Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. How can small business operators and communities on the downs, or

anywhere in Queensland, be sure that the government will not step in regardless of the commission's decision and grant across-the-board Sunday trading?

On 20 November 1998, the Industrial Relations Commission denied an application for the extension of trading hours for large retailers in the areas that will be largely covered by this legislation, stating it was not convinced that the additional jobs created would not likely cover job losses in small stores. In its latest ruling, the IRC obviously recognised that there are still very real concerns and did not grant the application in its entirety.

The figure that has been bandied about that there will be 2,000 new jobs created as a result of this legislation is at best optimistic and, at worst, rubbish. For a government that has consistently had the worst unemployment levels in mainland Australia to claim such a figure is empty rhetoric, especially when considering the number of jobs that would be lost in the small business sector.

Mr Cummins: Lower than when you were in power.

Mr COPELAND: The member will see that it is disgraceful when we compare today's unemployment rate in Queensland with the national average.

Just as empty are the promises that businesses will not be forced into opening and employees will not be forced to work. The notion that pressure will not be applied even in the most subtle ways is simply wishful thinking. I congratulate the member for Gladstone on her earlier contribution and her very well thought out argument. The member for Bulimba stated that the extension of trading hours in his area in addition to Thursday night meant that many of the small businesses in his electorate struggled and some even closed down. That is exactly what happened. That is what will happen once this legislation goes through. He said that businesses must get smart to be competitive. However, no matter how smart they are, they do not have the buying power. They are not able to dictate what products are on their shelves. They are not able to make manufacturers pay for product placement on their shelves or for advertising. They do not get preferential rental agreements. However, what they do have at the moment is the ability to trade on Sundays.

The member for Moggill said earlier that all businesses must be able to compete whether they are small or large. That is absolutely correct. But they cannot be thrown out and expected to compete in an anti-competitive environment. To say that I value small business, that I value the role small business plays in our community and that I believe small business is something that I want to see thrive in our society is not to live in the past, as has been suggested; it is simply a recognition of its worth and something that I will continue to do. We must all ask: do we want small businesses in our community?

The rolling out of Sunday trading outlined in the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill will affect small business. It will affect employment, families, employees, sporting and civic groups and, consequently, it will hit hard at the very heart of our communities.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (8.41 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise to support this legislation. Before speaking about the benefits to my electorate of extended shopping hours, I wish to make a few points. Although some might want to rewrite history—albeit very recent history—it was the SDA which agreed to extended shopping hours and, as a result, the IR Commission brought down its decision and allowed for an extension in Brisbane. It would appear from past decisions of the IR Commission that, if the SDA had not agreed to the extension, the IR Commission would not have allowed it.

I must say that I was opposed to Sunday shopping until Megan and I joined the real world and bought a house. Now, like many home owners who do not get time to shop during the week, Sunday has become a well-known shopping day for us, particularly at stores such as Bunnings. In attending these stores, it has become apparent to me, just as it has to many thousands of others, that in the year 2002 we should have shops open when consumers want to shop. From my experience, whether we like it or not, Sunday is when people want to shop if they do not get time to do so during the week.

Another claim that surfaces time and time again—and the National Party speakers harped on it this evening and this afternoon—is that the small operator will not survive and that this is an attack on small business. I do not believe it is healthy to have legislation or regulations in place that give one private business an unfair advantage over another. In reality, not allowing Sunday trading at major shopping centres gives businesses not located in major shopping centres an unfair advantage.

I have also heard enough of the argument that this is an attack on small business. There are many small businesses in these major centres. For example, at the Garden City Shopping Centre, although there are some majors, most stores are owner/operated franchises—small business operators—employing local people. The only difference is that they are in a shopping centre, not in a local strip shop. They are just as much small business operators as those at the local strip of shops.

The National Party claims that this is an attack on small businesses. Members opposite should come with me for a walk at the Garden City Shopping Centre, speak with the small business operators and ask them whether they want Sunday trading. Over the past few months, I had the pleasure of walking through the Garden City Shopping Centre with the Premier, Peter Beattie, and two weeks later with former Prime Minister of Australia Bob Hawke. They were both extremely complimentary of Garden City, which is an award-winning shopping centre. Bob Hawke said that he thought it was the best designed shopping centre he had been to. That is no understatement; I am sure he has been to a few shopping centres in previous election campaigns.

I take the opportunity to congratulate all of those at Garden City Shopping Centre, particularly David Fenwick, the manager, who recently celebrated 10 years of service with AMP Shopping Centres. He has been at Garden City for about four years. The centre provides not only a great retail outlet but also an entertainment precinct that is second to none. The town square, which not only has the number one cinema complex in Queensland—

A government member: Are you the number one ticket holder?

Mr REEVES: I will come back to that. It also has a number of coffee shops and restaurants and in particular the very popular Dicey Reilly's Irish Bar and Restaurant. I congratulate John Dodrill, the manager of Dicey Reilly's. It is a great establishment. His father, Mitch, is a great supporter of Dicey Reilly's and also works there. At the moment, Dicey Reilly's is undergoing some major extensions, which should make this St Patrick's day even bigger than last year's. I look forward to attending the opening of the extended Dicey Reilly's on St Patrick's Day, and I encourage other members to come along.

It is great to have this entertainment precinct in the suburbs, as it no longer means that our young people have to go elsewhere for entertainment, in particular to the city. In other words, we are shopping, buying, socialising and creating jobs locally.

Mr Briskey: Catch the bus.

Mr REEVES: If the member holds on for a second, I will get to that.

Garden City has held annual awards for eight years. The idea behind the awards is to present awards to the best retailers in each retail category. The judging criteria are assessed on a quarterly basis and five aspects of businesses are examined. I have had the pleasure of attending three of these annual retail awards nights. Last year's was an excellent evening. The major/mini retailers award was won by, as I said, the number one cinema complex in Queensland, Birch Carroll and Coyle Cinemas. The fresh food award was won by Fruits of Life. The fast food award was won by Michel's Patisserie. The women's and children's fashion award was won by Pumpkin Patch. The men's and mixed fashion award was won by Just Jeans. The footwear and fashion accessories award was won by Walkover Shoes. The personal purchases award was won by Wallace Bishop. The household award was won by Carpet Call. The retail services award was won by OPSM. The banking, travel and non-retail award was won by the Heritage Building Society. The national chain retailer of the year award was won by Just Jeans. The independent retailer of the year award was won by Judith's Boutique. The community choice award was won by Wombat. The overall retailer of the year award was won by Wallace Bishop.

Mr Cummins: Brought to you by the Mansfield Tavern.

Mr REEVES: It was Garden City management, actually.

Just to emphasise my point, I indicate that the majority of these winners are small business operators who employ many local people. The retail sector is one of the major industries in the Mansfield electorate. As a consequence, it is one of the major employers in the area. This extension to Sunday trading will create more jobs for local people. I spoke to the centre manager today. He believes that the impact of Sunday trading on business, based on what happened in New South Wales and Victoria, will be a lift in sales of three per cent to four per cent in the first 12 months. This will increase Garden City's turnover by between \$12 million and \$15 million in the first 12 months. This means jobs, jobs, jobs for the Mansfield electorate.

Garden City is just about to undergo another \$30 million worth of expansion. That creates jobs in construction and jobs once the expanded development opens because the turnover increases and creates more employment in the local area. Sunday trading has been the catalyst of this, and the extension of Sunday trading has encouraged AMP to expand that centre. I encourage anyone who wants to shop till they drop to go to Garden City. It is the only way to go every day. Or if they just want to have a good time, it is the place to be. We have a world-class bus station at Garden City. It is only 16 minutes from the city to that world-class shopping centre. We have a world-class busway going to a world-class shopping centre. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (8.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill because it is what the Liberal Party has been advocating for since last year. We took the view last year that the Industrial Relations Commission of Queensland ought not be the body that decides trading hours in Queensland. On that basis we put forward our idea that Sunday trading should be allowed within the greater Brisbane metropolitan area. We did that simply because we believed that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission was ill equipped to handle that sort of decision. That belief has proved to be correct. In fact, the decision that was handed down had to be amended by the Premier and legislation introduced to make sure that some of the ill effects of that decision were not set in concrete. We took the view that governments, irrespective of political flavour, had the responsibility to legislate for trading hours in this state. That was because the consumers themselves should be at the centre of that decision making.

There is no doubt in my mind that overwhelmingly consumers in the greater Brisbane area want to shop on Sundays. Any survey that people would like to conduct on this issue would provide them with that answer. But not only has that answer been provided recently; in fact, it was provided some 10 to 20 years ago. Members might remember that during the Bjelke-Petersen era there was a trial of 24-hour, seven days a week shopping. At that time the consumer sentiment was totally in favour of deregulated shopping hours. The minister at that time was none other than Vince Lester. Let me remind members of the minister's words at that stage. He said—

Small business and other business groups who oppose any extension of trading hours may just have to look at reality—the weight of public opinion is clearly in favour of being able to shop at weekends.

If that was the weight of public opinion then, it has got even weightier today. With interstate migration and people being able to move around the world and shop whenever they like in other parts of the world and other parts of Australia, more and more Queensland is being seen as out of step with the rest of the world. That is why we said it ought to be a function of this House to legislate for shopping hours, whatever they might be. That brings us to the present time, when we have a bill before the House as a result of an Industrial Relations Commission's decision.

But not only is there a set of double standards on behalf of the National Party; there is also a set of double standards on behalf of the Labor Party. Here we have the Premier saying, 'We have full confidence in the Industrial Relations Commission's decision.' It handed down a decision, and what did he do? He said, 'That is not good enough. It is a mess. I am going to legislate.' That is the hypocrisy of this man. He expresses confidence one minute, then he gets the umpire's decision and says, 'I don't agree with the decision. I am going to change it.' But then he says, 'With any other subsequent application I will abide by the umpire's decision again.' What happens if the commission does not get it right again? He will be back here. Talk about hypocrisy! He has double standards on double standards. That is his position. There is not a consistent line anywhere in his argument. One day he says that he has faith in the Industrial Relations Commission, then the next day he says, 'We have no faith in the commission and we are going to legislate.' For goodness' sake, he should let everyone know what the principle is on which he bases his policy. It is either one or the other. It is not a combination to suit the circumstances. He has a very malleable policy—one that can be bent and twisted to serve his own political agenda. It is no wonder that no-one knows what is going on in this state. We have a government that twists and turns and—

Mr Nuttall: Not at all.

Mr QUINN: Yes, we have. The government has one policy one day and another policy the next day. It has double standards all the way.

At the end of the day, what we are on about here is putting in place a set of trading hours that suits modern Queensland and suits the lifestyle of families throughout the greater Brisbane metropolitan area. We have to take into account that for many families the days of a husband

and wife with two kids working nine to five from Monday to Friday have gone. More and more these days people are working shifts. They come from single parent, single income families, and they want the added convenience of being able to shop on Sundays. That is what this legislation is all about. It is all about bringing Queensland into the modern era and giving families a choice as to when they can shop, a choice of lifestyle, and a choice in terms of the way in which they manage the balance between work and home duties. The more we can do that, and the more we can allow our families those sorts of choices, the more we will make sure that families can work and thrive. By restricting their choices we will place added pressures on families, and we ought not be about that. We ought to be about managing shopping hours so that people have a range of choices to suit the lifestyles that they wish to pursue. That is what this bill is about. That is why I support the bill.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (8.56 p.m.): I join in this debate on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. All I can say is that this is strike 2 by this minister against the Industrial Relations Commission. I reckon we have strikes 3 and 4 about to come. On the first occasion we found a hit against the Industrial Relations Commissioner, because the Premier does not particularly like him, and against the commission itself. Here we see it again. I am amazed that the minister responsible for the commission would introduce a bill and follow it through when what this bill is doing is saying to the commission and to the commissioner, 'You are irrelevant. What you decided was wrong, so we are going to go over the top of you and we are going to pass legislation.' If that is the way the minister feels, why does he not get rid of the commission? I know he would like to change a lot of the chairs on that particular deck, but one of his predecessors gave the commission tenure. So he cannot get rid of them. I suppose the minister now realises that that is hampering his actions. If we are to have an Industrial Relations Commission, the minister should abide by its ruling—whether he likes it or not—or we should not have one.

The commission looked at the cases as presented, made a reasoned judgment on them and gave its decision. But for political reasons, because of a clutch of ALP seats in the areas that did not get extended trading hours, the minister has decided to change the legislation. This has nothing to do with being broad minded about people having extended trading hours whatsoever. This is political expediency of the worst kind. Believe me, that is what it is seen as out there in the wider community.

However, I do believe that consumers should have the right to trade at times that suit them. I look at that particularly from the point of view of a woman, and a woman who has over many years worked in different professions and jobs and, at the same time, had a family to look after. Trying to shop between set hours is extraordinarily difficult. We are living in a changing world. We have a changing environment. People do want that choice and the right of choice, and they do wish to be able to shop at a time that suits them. A lot has been said about how this will affect people and businesses, particularly small businesses that have never been in an area that has extended trading hours. They are really concerned about how it will affect their businesses. Their employees are also concerned. Their concerns are very genuine.

The Sunshine Coast has had extended and weekend trading hours for a very long period because it is a tourist area. Small businesses there are still operative and are still very good. Often they are niche businesses. While in shopping centres there might be Coles at one end, outside the door there might be a butcher shop doing very well, a bakery doing very well because it has much better breads, or a delicatessen doing very well because it has a better product. There are clothing shops, even though K mart is at the other end of the complex. So people have a choice and they will make their choice.

I think small businesses are different from the big supermarkets and provide good service. Let us face it, the only service in a supermarket is at the checkout. There is none anywhere else. People have to find whatever product they may want.

Mr Lester: You get overcharged sometimes.

Mrs SHELDON: That is exactly right. They do overcharge, so people have to check what they have bought. In small businesses the articles have prices marked on them and people can relate them back to what they are paying. I am pleased that Mr Lester is agreeing with my speech. I think in that situation one really has to see that extended trading can help small businesses. These days I think employees are also interested in more flexible hours. Such an employment situation could be beneficial for women who often serve in these capacities. They may be able to structure their work hours around a family life.

As I said, my great concern relates to where the Industrial Relations Commission sits in this. If I were an industrial relations commissioner I would be thinking, 'What is my real relevance?' When commissioners sit as a court, which they pretty well are now—they are an industrial court with the tenure of judges—they look at an issue as presented by all sides.

The government took a very wishy-washy position on this issue. First it was going to follow whatever ruling the commission made because, after all, it was the 'independent umpire'. Then the commission came down with its decision. That really, for political expediency, was not the decision the government wanted so it was changed.

Mr Livingstone: Are you supporting it or not?

Mrs SHEDDON: I am supporting the concept of extended trading hours. What I am not supporting is the blatant hypocrisy behind this bill and the political expediency of it. I think people should not be deceived as to the real purpose of this bill. It is to garner votes in marginal ALP seats on the fringe of the area that would otherwise not have been covered.

Mr Livingstone: Garbage.

Mrs SHEDDON: The member's seat was most probably one of them. If the situation were not changed, those areas would have been left out of the extended trading hours area. Why has this particular area been selected? The minister said in his second reading speech—

The bill also provides a single trading hours zone to include uniform trading on Sundays and public holidays in the south-east coastal area of Queensland.

What a load of rubbish! The south-east coastal area of Queensland has had this for a long period of time. It is not the south-east coastal area of Queensland that is being addressed by this legislation; it is the outer metropolitan marginal Labor seats that the government is concerned it might lose at the next election if it does not change the current situation. That is the real reason. Let us forget that the minister is the friend of the consumer, because he is not the friend of the consumer. He is the friend of ALP expediency and he does not give a damn about the consumer.

The government is polishing this up to say, 'We are the consumer's friend.' Let us face it. The only people in this House who really are the consumer's friend are those in the Liberal Party. We believe in what we are saying about trading hours. We said long before this bill ever came before this House that we believed there should be extended trading hours so that consumers could shop when they wished according to their lifestyle. That is our basic philosophy, our basic position. We are very pleased that the Labor Party has adopted the premise of what the Liberal Party was putting forward, but it has adopted it for all the wrong reasons.

We will be supporting this bill because we support the premise that should be behind this bill, not the premise the minister has put here. Those on the other side of the House who support the Industrial Commission and the unions that go to it regularly should beware because if a decision does not suit the political ambit of this particular government, whatever the commission says will be overridden in the following couple of weeks by a piece of legislation.

The whole thing is a farce and it should be seen for what it is. I can tell members: the commission and the commissioners are not very happy with what is currently happening in this state. We should look at the real reasons people should have this freedom to shop. I do believe in the overall and long-term benefit. This change will be of benefit to small businesspeople, even though one must acknowledge their genuine concerns about how this may affect their livelihood and their lifestyle and that of their employees.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (9.06 p.m.): I rise to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. In my speech I hope to answer some of the criticisms of the member for Caloundra. The electorate of Aspley is home to extensive small and medium businesses, located on suburban streets and corners and contained within large complexes such as the very first Brisbane hyper shopping centre, the Aspley Hypermarket.

The electoral boundaries of Aspley are adjacent to two large shopping centres, the Chermside shopping centre and Westfield Strathpine shopping centre. In fact, many hundreds of Aspley electorate constituents work and shop in these centres. Our large shopping centres, like those in the electorate of Mansfield, in particular Westfield Strathpine, contain many dozens of small businesses, as well as Myer and Woolworths.

The electorate of Aspley has the unusual honour of covering two shires—Brisbane city and the Pine Rivers shire. Following the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision to restrict the RAQ application for extended trading hours, the Brisbane City Council area of my

electorate could trade on Sundays. The Pine Rivers section at the end of my electorate was effectively locked out of competing and accessing the new shopping environment afforded to those at the lower end.

The result of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision was that shoppers from the Strathpine section of my electorate would simply get into their cars, drive five minutes down the road to Aspley and Chermside and purchase their goods and services there. When one considers what impact this would have on the business owners and the community of Strathpine, one comes to a relatively simple conclusion. They would in very real terms lose business and jobs to those shops operating on an extended hours regime as allowed within the Brisbane City Council area.

As a busy mother of four children I know the reality of life in a greater urban suburb. I actually live in the Strathpine section of the Aspley electorate. Our lives, like those of a lot of people, are incredibly busy. They are seven days a week. We are busy with our own and our children's activities during the day, during the evening and on the weekends. We snatch time to do our weekly grocery shopping. We grab windows of opportunity to get our dry cleaning, birthday presents or the forgotten dog food and, yes, occasionally to have a cup of coffee with our mates down at the local centre. We can spend from early morning to late evening running from one end of our lives to the other.

People who live in a greater urban area can spend two to three hours each day going to and from work. Many people from the Pine Rivers shire work in the Brisbane city centre, so they can spend two to three hours each day in the car. The fact is that extended trading hours simply suit our lifestyle. People will certainly want supported extended trading hours.

A considerable number of the people who live in Strathpine in the electorate of Aspley will drive that five minutes up the road to Aspley and Chermside to shop. The result for the people who work and own small and medium businesses in Strathpine is job losses and revenue losses. That outcome, in combination with the exclusionary treatment of the people of Pine Rivers shire in denying them the opportunity to access their local shops, is what is unacceptable to the Beattie Labor government. This legislation takes steps to prevent the collateral damage to the workers and owners in the retail industry as a consequence of the Pine Rivers shire's exclusion from extended shopping hours.

I want to briefly raise two issues. The first one is the issue of employee and business rights in relation to the prevention of compulsory opening of businesses and the compelling of employees to work extended hours. These are issues that are of vital concern to the state government. The Minister for Industrial Relations in his second reading speech clearly identified that retailers will be protected from being forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays under their retail shop leases by ensuring that Sundays and public holidays are not allowable for the purposes of establishing core trading hours under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994.

Employees have always had rights under their relevant industrial laws to be protected against coercion in many respects. However, in response to concerns by employees and their unions, this minister intends to move further amendments to ensure that there is a strengthening of provisions so that existing employees cannot be coerced into working Sundays or public holidays. It is important to note that these matters of voluntary work for employees are the subject of a consent application lodged by the SDA in the QIRC. It is my understanding from reading the award application that clause (x) of the application indicates that the SDA is of the understanding that the Retailers Association of Queensland will support the application.

This government has listened and will continue to listen to the concerns of employees, their unions, shop retailers and their respective associations. But this state government will show leadership in ensuring the best possible and equitable outcomes for all Queenslanders, whether they live within the boundaries of the Brisbane City Council, Pine Rivers shire or elsewhere. The businesses in the Aspley electorate are hard working, vibrant members of our community. Aspley electorate residents support both small local corner and street businesses as well as large shopping centres. Competition is fierce. One has only to drive slowly through Aspley to understand how fierce the competition is. People shop where there is service, price and quality, and they all add up.

I recently had the honour of travelling to New Zealand with the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee with the member for Tablelands and the member for Mulgrave. As members would know, New Zealand is predominantly a rural community. Everyone was bragging about their industries, whether it be sheep, wheat or sugarcane. They came to me and said, 'Ms Barry,

what's your industry in Aspley?' I was at a bit of a loss but replied, 'The industry in Aspley is shopping.' People thought I was saying that tongue in cheek, and I have to admit that I probably was at the time. But the reality is that if one drives through the electorate of Aspley that is what we are: we are shopping. Our communities are created in our shopping centres.

For those members who have children, particularly teenagers, we teach our children to grow up and to become independent by sending them to the cinema at the local shopping centre as a way of learning independence. That might sound crazy to some people, but they are actually quite safe environments. We go there to shop and as a result we talk to and bond with the people in our local shopping centres. Our problem is this: if our shops are not allowed to open, we cannot do that. That might be unusual and a bit of an eye-opener for many National Party members, but things have changed in local urban shopping centres and our way of life has changed. This legislation ensures that our Pine Rivers businesses have the opportunity to open if they wish.

I want to respond to the National Party's contribution to the debate about trading hours both in this House and in the community of Pine Rivers. First of all, in the characteristic and back to the past style of the National Party, it describes what it thinks of as the small business industry as those shops found on the corners of our towns and those locked out of shopping malls by evil-doing multinationals. The truth is that our shopping malls are primarily made up of dozens of small businesses. It is those businesses that will lose revenue to the mall down the road which is allowed to open on Sundays if we do not change this law. Is the National Party aware of the collateral damage done by excluding zones such as Pine Rivers shire? If so, why does it ignore the plight of small businesses in what would have been excluded shopping centres?

The other thing I want to comment on is the National Party presumption that small business has successful shopping days only on Sundays and that somehow they cannot compete at all with bigger retailers. The truth is that small businesses are indeed often vibrant and fiercely competitive. They are able to maintain customer loyalty through quality product, good service and genuine savings. It is an insult to suggest that small businesses will simply be unable to cope. Like many people in Strathpine, there are local stores I shop at from Monday through to Sunday regardless of whether or not the mall is open because they provide me with a product and a service that I want. It will continue to happen, because many small businesses have incredible resourcefulness and many shoppers have strong loyalty to them.

What we do not need is scaremongering and confusion caused by the National Party and confusion caused by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who initially could not work out whether his party was for or against Sunday trading. Thank goodness, the Leader of the Opposition was able to be contacted on holidays to clarify the situation. But wait, there's more! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has gone into the Pine Rivers shire doomsaying the end of a proposed community bank because of seven day trading—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms BARRY: I am going to Charleville, Vaughan.

On 3 March he was then forced to change his mind and say that the bank would survive in spite of it. His comments either smack of a lack of conviction to his own party policy or are the sign of a confused and fragmented National Party policy—but they display a distinct lack of faith in small business in the Pine Rivers shire. I have no such lack of faith and my message to local businesses is clear and consistent: I will continue to work hard with local businesses through the work I undertake with the Office of Small Business in State Development which works very hard to ensure that our businesses have access to the resources that they need to grow, to survive and to prosper, and they do that very well.

I regularly meet with businesses in my area. I hold a very successful local women's business breakfast attended by over 100 women. They are fantastic. I work closely with the chambers of commerce. In fact, as proof of commitment to the Strathpine centre, this state government has committed \$1.1 million to assist Pine Rivers shire in the redevelopment of the Strathpine streetscape, a community redevelopment project that is designed to inject new shopping friendly facilities that will encourage local residents to shop along Gympie Road. The multimillion-dollar streetscape project in Strathpine is currently building new footpaths, will remove overhead powerlines and provide planting and seating designed to welcome people to walk, shop and enjoy the local street businesses in Strathpine. We are a government that is serious about supporting businesses, particularly small businesses, in Strathpine and we are putting our money where our mouth is.

I will continue to listen to the workers of my electorate. I encourage them to contact me. I have worked shiftwork all my life as a nurse. I understand the concerns of workers in relation to quality of life with their families. This government has listened to their concerns. I will commit to work closely with them to solve any problems that arise out of this new regime. This government is serious about family-friendly workplaces and about workers' rights. It was this state government that reformed the anti-worker state industrial legislation introduced by the National-Liberal coalition, restoring employer and employee equity and access. It was this Minister for Industrial Relations who established a Work and Family Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations. The unit will run projects about family flexible initiatives in the workplace, and there is a \$99,000 commitment to develop industry codes on reasonable working hours. Money is allocated for a workplace bullying inquiry and youth advocacy services. This government is on the record with its achievement and commitment to workers. I will continue to work with my constituents and the Minister for Industrial Relations to develop solutions to their workplace concerns.

This legislation is before the House because times have changed. This legislation is before the House because this is a state government for all people of Queensland. This legislation is before the House because this government is committed to all businesses in this state. This legislation is before the House because this state government will show leadership and will not shirk away from that responsibility. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for his time and for his preparedness to listen to my representations on behalf of my constituents, my businesses and my workers and for the people of the Aspley electorate. On behalf of all of the people of the Aspley electorate, I commend him and the Premier for their leadership. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (9.20 p.m.): I rise today to speak on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill, and I take this opportunity to advise the minister, the Premier and the House of possible concerns that both I and Sunshine Coast constituents may share with regards to some of the changes that we specifically on the Sunshine Coast will face following this bill's implementation.

It never ceases to amaze me when I hear the conservative hypocritical rhetoric that small businesses cannot and will not survive upon implementation of this legislation. In former conservative heartland—and I stress former—the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, we have had extended trading hours. Small and medium businesses alike have embraced the concept for a number of years, and the ill-founded conservative rhetoric that continues to be espoused is an insult to all such businesses that have achieved successes and to their owners, managers and employees. One would indeed think that the conservative side of this House would embrace a level playing field—what this bill attempts to achieve: uniformity.

This bill before the House amends the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act of 1990 to address the impact on retail traders, shopping centres and consumers in south-east Queensland of a recent decision by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to introduce Sunday trading into the city of Brisbane area only. As has been well publicised and outlined, the bill provides single trading hour zones to include uniform trading on Sundays and public holidays in the south-east coastal area of Queensland. I for one can see the benefits of a level playing field, that is, uniform trading hours on Sundays and public holidays across the south-east coastal area of this great state.

The Industrial Relations Commission has previously granted extended trading, including on Sundays and public holidays, in a number of tourist areas and city precincts throughout Queensland, including the inner city of Brisbane; the Gold and Sunshine Coast areas; the Cairns, Port Douglas and Whitsunday areas; and the Townsville CBD. A further important issue raised in the consultation with various industry parties is the current unsatisfactory situation in which numerous trading hour zones exist between the existing Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas, resulting in both industry and consumer confusion.

Separate trading hour zones that fall within this area include the Sunshine Coast area, near north coast area, inner city of Brisbane area, area of the city heart, area of New Farm of inner city of Brisbane, and the Gold Coast area. These areas all have individual trading hours with different trading applying in the areas in between. An anomaly exists in that the growth areas to the south of the Sunshine Coast area and the north of the Gold Coast area currently do not have Sunday trading. These areas have a combined population of approximately 140,000, growing at some four and a half thousand persons annually. This anomaly of shopping hours does need addressing, hence the bill before us tonight.

The Beattie government is committed to addressing concerns by way of improving the commission's decision in the interests of the retail industry, the consumers and, in my region, the workers by ensuring that they have Easter Sunday off. It is proposed to introduce a single trading hour zone known as the South-East Queensland Area, extending from Noosa on the Sunshine Coast to Coolangatta on the Gold Coast and west to Amberley. The current Sunshine Coast area will be extended south along the Bruce Highway to include Bribie Island and the Sippy Downs/Chancellor Park areas on the north-west boundary of my electorate of Kawana.

Uniform trading hours are to be adopted based on the current hours applying on Sundays in the Sunshine Coast, inner city of Brisbane and Gold Coast areas. These uniform hours of 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. will apply on Sundays and public holidays for all non-exempt shops within the South-East Queensland Area. All shops will be required to close on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day. Currently in the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas shops are required to close on Good Friday, Anzac Day I believe until 1 p.m., Labour Day and Christmas Day. Accordingly, the only additional closed day will be Easter Sunday.

The big positive of this bill is that changes as proposed will introduce, as I have said, uniformity of hours on Sundays and public holidays within the one trading hour zone. These changes will operate from 1 August 2002 to ensure that industry parties have a lead-in period in which to make any necessary administrative or commercial arrangements. Easter this year will remain under the current system, that is, open Easter Sunday on the Sunshine Coast and those other areas that presently allow for that.

The proposed amendments, I believe, will protect shopping centre tenants from being forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays and are supported by key industry parties. Should this protection not be applied uniformly within the whole area, inconsistencies could exist in respect of those areas that currently trade on Sundays and public holidays, such as the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and the inner city of Brisbane. Core hours could be established within these areas, thereby forcing tenants to take trade, whereas in other areas such core hours could not be established.

I am advised that consultation on this bill has been undertaken with the following key industry stakeholders: RAQ—the Retailers Association of Queensland; the Property Council of Queensland—PCA—incorporating the Shopping Centre Council of Australia; the SDA—the Shop Distribution and Allied Employees Association, Queensland branch; QRTSA—Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association; NMAA—National Meat Association of Australia, Queensland division; and the Australian Workers Union—the AWU. Questions have been raised by the National Party with regards to the consultation that has been undertaken. I have been advised that consultation included the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Industrial Relations Minister meeting with the Retailers Association of Queensland—the RAQ, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Property Council of Australia and the Shop Distribution and Allied Employees Association on 23 January 2001. The Premier and Deputy Premier met with the AWU and the SDA on 15 February. The Industrial Relations Minister has met with the SDA on 20 February and 5 March. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and Industrial Relations Minister also held further joint meetings with the SDA on 5 March at 6.45 p.m. In total, five meetings have been held between the government and the union on this issue. Make no mistake, consultation with all stakeholders has been undertaken. While, yes, there are issues, I believe we must make a decision and not continue to procrastinate.

People have raised with me the issue of working Easter Saturday but having both Good Friday and Easter Sunday off. I have raised this very issue with both the Honourable Minister for Industrial Relations and the Honourable Premier. I appreciate their commitment to address this issue with my constituents in the future. I acknowledge that both are regular recreational visitors to the Sunshine Coast, so I am happy they will be visiting the area as part of their jobs. This will not be hard as they both have a love of the Sunshine Coast, as do I and many members on our side of the House.

In closing, I must admit that I am old enough to remember the introduction of Thursday night shopping. I ask: how many of the hollow conservative speeches we have heard today contained the same arguments raised in the seventies? Not only do they continue with the same hairstyles from the past, but they also continue with the same policies, as mentioned on ABC radio this morning. As far as the state coalition goes, this issue of shopping hours again outlines how far apart these two floundering parties and their ideologies are. In closing, I commend the minister and the Premier, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (9.29 p.m.): I am very pleased to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. This important piece of legislation simply gives the people what they want. Make no mistake, what they want overwhelmingly is to be able to shop at times that are convenient to them. Much has been said about the need to have family friendly legislation, but I know from personal experience that our large retail shops in Hervey Bay are full of families doing their shopping on Sunday afternoons.

I do not have any problem with Sunday shopping as long as workers are appropriately remunerated for their sacrifice. I acknowledge that small retailers would like to live in a different legislative environment, but the vast majority of people in my electorate want choice and flexibility and the tide not to be turned back on this issue.

I note that this bill does not change anything in relation to my electorate of Hervey Bay, but that Hervey Bay has been flagged as one area in which the Retailers Association of Queensland will bring a further application in the reasonably near future. Hervey Bay is a tourist town with 90,000 people coming to see the whales each year and 340,000 visiting Fraser Island annually. We are marketing Hervey Bay as the most successful city in Queensland, and indeed in Australia—a city purpose-built and friendly for people with disabilities and mobility issues. Tourism Queensland is specifically pushing Hervey Bay as a drive destination just three hours up the road from Brisbane. Hervey Bay is the perfect weekend holiday destination.

But having said that, it would be untenable if all of those visitors did not get the shopping options and flexibility that they expect in a modern holiday destination. For all of those reasons and for all the families in my electorate, I support the bill. The moteliers, the restaurateurs and many other small businesses that thrive on the tourism industry require flexible shopping hours. I commend the bill, I commend the minister and I welcome the introduction of this legislation into the House.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (9.31 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise tonight in this parliament to speak in support of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. It is sensible legislation, because it seeks to address a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission that granted the city of Brisbane area Sunday trading to commence on 1 July 2002 and created a zone separate from the existing Sunday trading zone on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. As the electorate of Kallangur falls between these areas and comprises parts of the Pine Rivers shire and parts of the Caboolture shire, residents in my electorate would be discriminated against by not being allowed to shop locally on a Sunday in a non-exempt shop. That is an unfair and discriminatory situation.

This legislation provides a single trading zone, known as the South-East Queensland Area, extending from Noosa to Coolangatta and west to Amberley. Uniform trading will be conducted in this area of Queensland. In common with many members in this parliament, I represent a growth area within south-east Queensland and to me the decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission—certainly from what I have had an opportunity to read—defies logic. What is the public interest provision that prevents people who live in my area from being able to shop locally on Sunday, but if they drive to Brisbane or the Sunshine Coast, for example, they are able to shop? To me, that simply defies any sort of reason. What is the logic of the commission's decision that creates, through artificial trading hours, restrictive access to large retailers and department stores?

Business operates and survives by making a profit. Profit is the motivating force of any business enterprise. The effect of restrictive trading hours in one area over another reduces the opportunity for profit, because one business is not able to trade on a Sunday because of a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The effect of this legislation before the House is that traders can conduct business in growth areas such as the Caboolture shire and the Pine Rivers shire and expand and develop them. Of course, the effect of the decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission is clear to everybody and that is to reduce competition in the market. So if people live and shop in the Pine Rivers shire or at Caboolture, there is a smaller range of goods for sale. Unfortunately, having a smaller range of goods for sale means that often those goods are for sale at higher prices. As I have said before, that is an unfair and discriminatory situation for the people who reside in that area. Why should people who choose to live in my electorate in a part of the Pine Rivers shire or a part of the Caboolture shire not have the same access to shopping services as do people who live in Brisbane city or on the Sunshine Coast simply because of an artificial line on the map? I think that situation is absolute madness.

Today, I heard the opposition leader express concern for the family. Although he recognised the effect that increased working hours has had on most families, he did not understand the simple problem with his argument is that, if people live in the Caboolture or the Pine Rivers shire, they would not be able to shop at their local department store on a Sunday. As I said before, I think that situation is madness. Most people understand that is a nonsense situation.

The Opposition Leader, the member for Toowoomba South, advanced the argument that it is okay to just follow the decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission because over time that will change. So the opposition agrees that there is going to be further flexibility in working hours, it agrees that there is going to be technological change, it agrees that there is going to be population growth and I think it agrees that there are going to be lifestyle changes. But the opposition is saying, 'Just don't worry about it. Just sit by and eventually someone will again go to the commission and there will be changes over time.' That is simply not good enough and I am so pleased to see that the minister has come into this place with legislation that recognises the problem that has been created by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and, through this legislation, attempts to solve it.

The whole matter of trading hours is an interesting issue, because the longer we spend looking at the issue, we wonder how long it will be before the current minister comes back to this parliament to repeal shopping hours legislation altogether. When we consider what this bill is about and look at the issues behind it—and I do not care what party we come from or what group we represent or what we do within this parliament—when we think about it, we really think to ourselves, and I certainly do, that it is odd that legislation exists that regulates when and where someone can shop. People talk about governments interfering in what they do and where they go, but when we seriously think about it, in the year 2002, we have legislation that decides when and where we can shop. That is pretty strange. But that is the situation. As I said before, the minister has come into this place with legislation that certainly recognises the problem and addresses it by creating this new zone within south-east Queensland.

The legislation is certainly good for consumers and I think good for business in general. It attempts to put some logic into shopping hours. It certainly fixes a glaring problem that exists within the Pine Rivers shire and the Caboolture shire in south-east Queensland. I know that this legislation will be welcomed by the majority of people in growth areas, particularly in the growth areas in the Pine Rivers shire and the Caboolture shire.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (9.39 p.m.): I rise to speak in strong support of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. This legislation creates a uniform trading zone and rectifies the ludicrous situation that would have existed if the Industrial Relations Commission's plan had been implemented. Ipswich people need to be clear about what the alternative would have been. On Sundays it would have been possible to shop at Mount Ommaney but not 15 minutes away at Redbank. Ipswich consumers would not have had the same choice as their neighbours. While we do a huge amount of work to promote local shopping, on Sundays we would not have been able to support Ipswich businesses even if we had wanted to. It would have meant Ipswich jobs were lost. While I appreciate that there are concerns amongst some Ipswich businesses about Sunday trading, the fact is that once Brisbane had Sunday trading, Ipswich had to have it. Clearly, this decision was the only sensible one.

I strongly reject the argument that Sunday trading is necessarily anti small business. It may disadvantage the convenience store, as opposed to Woolies, but it creates real opportunities for small businesses such as coffee shops and book shops that specialise in recreational shopping. I believe the Beattie government has taken genuine and commendable steps to ensure that working on Sunday is voluntary. Certainly no-one should be forced to work on Sunday and this legislation establishes a structure to ensure that freedom is protected.

I spent many years working at Big W, Booval and during that time the staff were always very keen to work on Sundays and receive payment at double time and a half. I am sure that there are many workers in Ipswich, many of them young people, who look forward to that decent money, which only ever came at Christmas when I worked at Big W, becoming a regular thing.

There is some concern in Ipswich that Sunday trading will not take off. I share that concern. Currently a lot of money is being invested in Ipswich shopping centres. A new car park is being built to cater for the huge trade at Booval Fair and the \$10 million redevelopment of the Westway centre will make a real difference to shopping options at Ipswich. The Riverlink development is awaiting council approval. I believe that if the council is vigilant and the development is done well, it could create a real boost as well as shopping opportunities for the centre of Ipswich. We know that there is money to be made from retail in Ipswich and that there is money to be invested, so

what is missing? The Ipswich CBD is letting the community down. While Ipswich is a community with soul and, as all the evidence shows, with money to spend, the empty shops and quiet streets of the CBD do not reflect that vitality. The state government made a significant investment, along with the council, in the CBD when the Global Arts Link was built, and more funds are coming for Darcy Doyle Place.

However, public infrastructure alone is not the answer. The Ipswich City Square is crying out for redevelopment. It was massively redeveloped by the Kern Corporation in the eighties but barely a cent has been spent on it since. The time for redevelopment has well and truly arrived. The original planning was certainly questionable and it remains a great shame that Ipswich turns its back to the river. However, improvements can certainly be made. We need a redevelopment that incorporates a department store and that greatly extends the number of specialty shops available in the CBD.

While I question the sense of the situation which developed in the eighties where one company and now one person—T.P. Tay—owns the entire centre of town, the fact remains that that is so. This situation cannot simply be solved by government money. Ipswich City Square is a private centre and needs private investment. It is a let-down to the people of Ipswich that the centre of our city should be left to wither on the vine. While I remain the member for Ipswich, I will work to see that investment is made in our CBD. This bill provides further opportunities for investment, jobs, work and shopping choice for the people of Ipswich and I commend it to the House.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (9.43 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill before the House. Various changes in society mean that we have to adapt our laws and practices. Sometimes this adaptation can be painful or confusing. I have long had personal experience of working on Sundays and public holidays because I grew up in a family whose income came from a liquor and hospitality small business. This meant our family worked on most weekends and many public holidays.

As we know, an application before the QIRC resulted in a decision which would have caused some confusion within the south-east corner of the state. A number of possible paths could have been taken to address these concerns. This legislation takes one of those paths.

A broader assessment of our society causes us to make major decisions as to what type of lifestyle we want. No longer do we live in small, self-contained communities where the activities we want to access are within easy walking distance. We no longer walk to our work or recreation, accompanied by neighbours whom we know, in surroundings that are familiar to us all. Our lives are complex and are becoming even more hectic as we are presented with even more options as to how we spend our time and money. Through the mass media, we are bombarded with the constant message to spend, spend, spend. It is a difficult message to ignore, but it is one that we must address on an ongoing basis.

I congratulate the minister on ensuring shops will not open on Easter Sunday. At some future time, I hope the minister will consider applying the same restriction to Boxing Day. Many families have their Christmas celebrations disrupted because a family member has to be at work early on 26 December to open for post-Christmas sales.

I note the concerns about this bill raised by the SDA. Previously, many unions have taken similar action and I am sure that other unions will do so in the future. There are many members of this parliament who were in government when affiliated or non-affiliated unions held demonstrations or ran campaigns against a Labor or coalition government. I recall the QUT, QNU, firefighters, coalminers, metal workers, transport and rail unions and the public sector unions participating in media campaigns or taking direct action in the streets to achieve their industrial goals. That is the role of unions and I support all unions that fight for their members in the context of their responsibility to the broader community.

Our political opponents would know that in recent history one union official stated that if he did not get his way, his union would consider standing union-backed candidates against endorsed Labor candidates. The Labor Party, the Labor government and the union movement have all survived such differences of opinion in the past and we will do so on this occasion.

In the broad debate on this legislation, there has been some confusion as to what was said in various discussions or what was contained in the ambit claims being negotiated. I was not part of those negotiations, so I will take the word of those who were part of the discussions as to what happened. Confusion has been expressed to me by people as to whether the debate was referring only to Sundays or to Sundays and public holidays. They have usually relied on

newspaper reports to find out what was happening. Many of them said that reports, such as the one in the *Courier-Mail* on Thursday, 24 January, referred only to Sunday trading. Whatever the status of prior discussions, this bill clearly sets out the trading zone and the hours of trading that will apply.

I appreciate the efforts of the government to try to ensure greater choice for shop assistants through the amendment which has been flagged. However, from personal experience with my own children, who have worked part time in retail and hospitality, I know the pressures that can be brought to bear on low-paid workers. I encourage the minister and his department to keep an eye on this aspect of the bill. It is my hope that consumers, workers and businesses will all benefit from this bill.

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.48 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate today. I particularly thank the members of the government very much.

Mr Johnson: Be nice!

Mr NUTTALL: I have sat here for five hours and copped it from that side of the House. Give me a break!

There have been some 32 speakers to the debate, so that obviously says that there is a huge amount of interest in the bill before the House. The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill introduces a new trading hours zone for south-east Queensland for trading on Sundays and public holidays, extending from Noosa to Coolangatta and west to Amberley. The new zone will come into operation from 1 August this year and will enable retail traders to open for trade between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. The bill also provides that Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day will be closed trading days after this time.

I want to address a number of issues that have been raised by honourable members. The first is the misconception that this government has nobbled or interfered with a decision of the Industrial Relations Commission. That is a fallacy which has been put forward by a number of speakers from the opposition. I make it quite clear that that is not the case.

When the Industrial Relations Commission handed down its decision on 21 December it created eight zones from Noosa to Coolangatta. I spoke with the Premier, who made it clear that, from a government perspective, having eight zones was a crazy and untenable situation. Therefore, it was beholden on the government of the day to address that issue. It was not about saying that we were going to overturn the commission's decision because it was a dud. We said that we accepted the decision of the commission but that we now had a problem as a government because there are eight zones, and that is why we decided to introduce this legislation to have one zone. I wish to make it clear to all honourable members, particularly those opposite, that that is the reason for doing this.

The honourable member for Caloundra raised the issue that the only reason we did it was that they were Labor seats. A lot of people in Queensland in those seats that will now have Sunday trading if this bill is passed did not vote Labor. This is a government for all Queenslanders, and it is wrong for the honourable member for Caloundra to think that it is okay for people in Caloundra to shop on Sundays but not okay for people south of Caloundra not to shop on Sundays. That is not on. All people in this state are treated equally by this government. Having the one zone achieves that.

The development of the bill has entailed wide-ranging discussions. I need to make that very clear, because there is a misconception that there has not been consultation. A number of honourable members from the government side have addressed the issue of consultation. The parties included in the consultation other than the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association were the Retail Association of Queensland, the Property Council of Australia, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association and the National Meat Association of Australia.

The introduction of the new trading hours zone with uniform trading on Sundays and public holidays will provide, we believe, a significant economic boost for south-east Queensland. The government is particularly pleased at retailers' forecasts of the creation of an additional 2,000 full-time equivalent jobs within the retail sector. Major retailers have estimated that at least half of these 2,000 new jobs will be jobs for additional workers, representing a net growth of almost two per cent in retail employment in Queensland. The remaining half are expected to be taken up by existing part-time and casual workers who wish to volunteer to undertake more hours. This is

particularly important given the number of casual and part-time workers who have expressed their desire to work more hours.

The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that more than 40 per cent of casuals working part time and 35 per cent of all part-time employees would like to work more hours to increase their income. The new zone which will be created from this bill will therefore give these workers greater job and income security. Previous experiences of expanded trading hours in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have all demonstrated significant job growth within the retail sector.

The honourable member for Keppel raised some doubts about the possible job creation from extended trading hours, and I wish to address that issue. He was selectively quoting figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Since the introduction of core trading hours by the Goss Labor government in 1994—that was 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays—a further 52,500 jobs in the Queensland retail sector have been created. That is a 29.9 per cent increase in retail employment in this state since 1994—in eight years, 52,500 jobs with a massive 29.9 per cent increase in retail employment. There have been similar experiences of expanded trading hours in New South Wales, which delivered 40,000 jobs between 1986 and 1992, and Victoria, which delivered 30,000 jobs since 1996.

The new zone will also provide a significant stimulus to the Queensland economy, with a projected higher retail trade turnover as a result of the expanded trading. It is estimated that for every additional dollar spent in retail trade a further \$2.24 is generated within the broader economy. The new zone will come into force from the beginning of August in order to give retailers and employees an appropriate time to adjust to these changes. This was a specific request of the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, which represent many small retailers. This is also consistent with the six-month lead in time provided for the December 2001 decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

Importantly, tenants within shopping centres will be given the choice—this is an important point—to trade or not to trade on Sundays and public holidays, because these expanded trading hours are not deemed to be core trading hours. Likewise, work will be voluntary only on Sundays and public holidays for existing employees employed immediately before 1 August 2002 other than those in areas of the proposed zone where employees currently work on Sundays and public holidays. This is reflected in a current application for a voluntary work award for retail employees which is currently before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. This application by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association and supported by the Retailers Association of Queensland on behalf of its members provides that where there are extensions to trading hours, such as those proposed through this bill, existing employees cannot be forced to work within those extended hours.

After representations from the union, this government has now decided to reinforce the principle of voluntary work through an amendment to the bill, which I have circulated to all honourable members. This amendment will provide that an employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees in writing to work during extended hours. In addition, the amendment will complement the current application before the QIRC by allowing for an industrial instrument to provide for arrangements under which current employees may refuse or agree to work during extended hours. In other words, there will be both an award provision and there will be a provision within the legislation. Existing employees will include those employees who are employed on a weekly basis as either full-time or part-time employees or on a casual basis in a non-exempt shop immediately before 1 August 2002. These provisions will provide stronger protection for existing retail workers who do not wish to change their working hours for either family or personal reasons.

I now turn to address issues raised by a number of honourable members. Members of the National Party have indicated their opposition to the bill on the basis that it would allow major retailers to dominate the market to the detriment of small businesses and that it sets aside a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Extended trading hours, we believe, are in the public interest and will benefit retailers, shopping centres, consumers, employees and the community. Increased consumer choice will help create a more efficient retail sector. Greater competition will result in lower prices and a more efficient use of retail investment. I have already outlined the growth of 52,500 jobs that has occurred in the retail sector in Queensland since the introduction in 1994 of expanded trading hours from Monday to Friday and for Saturdays. Retailers are predicting at least 2,000 additional full-time equivalent jobs before the end of this year as a direct result of extended trading for Sundays and public holidays,

and not just by big retailers. It is also clear that evidence from interstate on expanded trading hours demonstrates that large retailers will not monopolise the retail sector or expand at the expense of small traders.

Small retailers continue to exist both inside and outside of shopping centres. Indeed, the vast majority of small businesses in Victoria in a 1997 survey reported no change to their businesses as a result of expanded trading hours in that state. One only has to visit Victoria and New South Wales to see the small retail traders who are continuing to thrive in those economies. These changes will simply mean that small businesses, like large traders, need to be more flexible and innovative and respond to market needs.

I turn now to issues that have been raised in respect of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. This government does respect the independence of the commission. However, if the December 2001 trading hours decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission were allowed to stand, both small and large retailers operating outside of the Brisbane City Council areas would have been severely disadvantaged. Small and large retailers in Logan would lose business to Mount Gravatt. Likewise, Strathpine traders would lose to Chermside, Capalaba to Carindale, and so on. And without extended trading between Brisbane and the Gold Coast and Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, all businesses in these areas would have lost trade to Brisbane. The government's intervention in this issue now means the economic benefits of Sunday trading will be shared throughout the south-east and not just pooled in Brisbane.

The honourable member for Gladstone has raised a number of issues, and I would like to endeavour to answer her queries. The member asked whether I was prepared to revisit the issue of uniform trading hours on Sundays and public holidays if it was found to have a detrimental effect on small traders. As the minister responsible for trading hours, I can inform the honourable member that I will continue to monitor the effects of trading hours throughout Queensland, including the impact on retailers—both large and small—shopping centres, consumers, employees and the general community.

The honourable member also raised an issue with respect to tenants' rights under their shop leases. These issues were dealt with in some detail in my second reading speech, but for the information of the honourable member I point out that the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 does operate in conjunction with the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 by providing for the establishment of core trading hours for shopping centre lessees. Core hours are established by a 75 per cent majority vote of lessees and must fall within the allowable trading hours. Lessees can be required to trade core hours and in any ballot each retailer—large, small or medium—does have equal voting rights. Irrespective of this, the changes introduced in this bill do not allow any core hours to be established on Sundays or public holidays. Therefore, voting rights are immaterial, because there will be no vote. There will be no such thing on Sundays and public holidays. They are not deemed as core hours, so the retailers in the major shops cannot force the smaller shops to open. They do not have a vote because they are not in the core hours. Tenants in shopping centres throughout the south-east Queensland area will therefore be protected, and under no circumstances can they be forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays under their retail shop leases.

The member also raised issues about the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission arising from the decision of government to introduce this amendment bill. I also note that the members of the Liberal and National Parties have both indicated in the chamber today that there is an acknowledgment that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission's decision of December 2001 was indeed a strange one. After examining the QIRC's decision, the government determined that it would expand the decision and bite the bullet on Sunday trading for all of south-east Queensland. As I have stated in response to other members in this House, it would have been irresponsible of the government to ignore the pleas of many retailers—both small and large—as well as shopping centres which would have been economically disadvantaged as a result.

The honourable member for Gladstone raised one further issue which I believe related to an example of large retailers not wishing to trade on Sundays. I am unaware of the example that the member has raised, and after queries from my department to the Retailers Association of Queensland this afternoon I am advised that it is also unaware of a situation several years ago when large retailers decided not to trade on Sundays. I am, however, informed that trading days on Sundays and public holidays in existing areas within this state, as well as interstate, are regarded as among some of the better trading days for retailers. Regardless, this new zone allows all retailers the choice to trade or not to trade on Sundays and public holidays.

The honourable member for Beaudesert raised a specific issue with respect to the boundaries of the new south-east Queensland trading zone. Existing recognised boundaries have been used to formulate the new area. In this regard the area known as the Brisbane statistical division has been adopted as it has been previously recognised as a population area by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and is an accepted and easily definable area. The area incorporates the northern portion of the Beaudesert shire, which includes Jimboomba but not Beaudesert.

Similarly, to the north of Brisbane townships such as Beerwah and Landsborough are excluded from the new zone. A clearly definable area is, however, essential for the purpose of these changes. The option will therefore continue to exist for applications to be made to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission for extended trading in those areas where deemed necessary. I can also inform the member that these issues have been canvassed widely with the Retailers Association of Queensland, which represents all major retailers in Queensland and is strongly supportive of the zone in its current format.

The honourable member for Nicklin has asked for commitments that parties will not be forced to trade or work on Sundays or public holidays where they do not currently do so within the proposed new zone. I have previously raised the processes whereby tenants with shop leases are not required to open on these new trading days. I believe the bill provides more than adequate protection to allow tenants with shop leases to choose whether or not they wish to trade on any of the extended days. I can assure the honourable member that existing workers who are currently not working on Sundays or public holidays in the proposed new zone will be subject to the principle of voluntary work which I have outlined. This principle is embedded within the amendment I intend to introduce to the bill during the committee stages.

This amendment specifically outlines that an employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless they agree in writing to do so. I also expect this issue will be contained in some detail within the SDA's voluntary work award which is before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission tomorrow morning for hearing. The current award application—of which I am happy to provide a copy to the honourable member—outlines the processes for voluntary work for existing employees. Under this application, an employer will be required to provide each employee with written notice 28 days prior to the proposal to implement changed trading hours. This notice is to contain a form of election for employees to work or not to work during the extended hours. The award application then provides that an employer is not to draw a working roster contrary to the election of an employee who has elected not to work within the extended hours. Neither is the employer to alter a working roster to the disadvantage or prejudice of an employee who has made such an election. Employees who believe they have been forced or coerced to work contrary to the provisions—either within the bill or within the proposed award—will have recourse to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission or the Industrial Magistrates Court. The bill provides for significant penalties to be imposed against an employer who breaches these commitments. In addition, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission will have power to order an employer to enforce an employee's rights to retain their existing hours. I trust that these issues have answered the issues raised by the honourable member for Nicklin.

The member for Cunningham raised the issue that extended trading hours will have a detrimental effect on Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. Clearly, the amendment does not cover the Darling Downs region. This is a matter that would need to be determined by application to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission based on the argument put before it at the relevant time. I can advise the honourable member that I did meet with the Warwick Chamber of Commerce at the Stanthorpe community cabinet meeting I recently attended, and I have relayed the details of this to them quite fully.

In summary, the introduction of the new trading hours zone will bring about significant economic benefits for the south-east corner, creating an estimated 2,000 additional jobs by the end of this year, with projected increased retail trade turnover, which will also help provide growth in the broader economy. I take this opportunity to thank members of my staff who worked long hours recently and in particular last night. I also thank my departmental officers who have also put a lot of hard work into the bill before the House today. I commend the amendment bill to the House.

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

AYES, 64—Barry, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, N. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hayward, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszcuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Quinn, Reeves, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Sheldon, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Watson, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 18—Copeland, E. Cunningham, Flynn, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson. Tellers: Lester, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Committee

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr NUTTALL (10.20 p.m.): I move government amendment No. 1—

1. Clause 2—

At page 4, after line 3—

insert—

'(1A) Section 9 commences on a day to be fixed by proclamation.'

This amendment will commence from a date to be proclaimed but prior to the commencement date of the act of 1 August 2002. This will enable proper consideration to be given to the current SDA application for a voluntary work award, which is scheduled to be heard before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission on 7 March 2002.

Mr LESTER: Clause 2 provides for the commencement of section 7 of the bill on assent. This section provides that any other order arising from the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission of Queensland made on 21 December 2001 introducing Sunday trading in the city of Brisbane from 1 July 2002 will have no effect. As I stated during my speech at the second reading stage, the National Party does not support the Beattie government's intention to provide for a single trading hours zone including uniform Sunday trading and public holiday trading in the south-east coastal area of Queensland.

The Beattie government had the opportunity to put a submission to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission that recommended a course of action that made use of the full range of resources of the government and the opinions of all interested parties in the areas surrounding Brisbane, including Logan, Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Redlands. But the government, with all of its resources, failed to take this opportunity, opting instead to overturn entirely the commission's decision through this piece of legislation. Based on that, we cannot support this clause.

Mr JOHNSON: In relation to clause 2, the shadow minister is exactly right when he says that the amendment to section 7 commences on assent. This section provides that any order arising from a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission made on 21 December 2001 introducing Sunday trading in the city of Brisbane effective as at 1 July 2002 will have no effect. In real terms, the remaining amendments and trading hours arrangements introduced by the legislation will commence on 1 August 2002. Again, it is fairly obvious that the opposition certainly will not be supporting the government's intention to provide a single trading hours zone, including Sunday and public holiday trading, in the south-east coastal area. The government had the opportunity to put a submission to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and utilise the full range of resources available to it, but it did not opt to do that. It opted to walk away. It had every opportunity. The Premier himself said that he consulted with two of these bodies but then turned his back on the QIRC.

I heard the contribution of the member for Caloundra to this debate. What is the relevance now of the QIRC? It seems to me that the QIRC has no relevance whatsoever. The minister had the opportunity to do something about this. He did not have the guts or the courage of his convictions to do anything about it and he has walked away from it. Members in this House who spoke in the debate talked about people wanting to be able to trade on Sundays and every other day, but the real issue is that this is about employees and employers. This is the one body that employers can make representations to. The government has turned its back on the QIRC. I have to say that the minister has gone missing on this issue. He put it in the too-hard basket.

Mr NUTTALL: I have said to honourable members in the National Party before that this is not about our walking away from a decision of the commission. As I said to them before—and I do not know if they saw these wonderful maps I have—when the commission made its decision, there were eight zones. We as the government then said that we were not going to sit back and allow there to be eight zones. That is crazy stuff in anybody's language. We decided to have one zone—one piece of legislation, one zone—and that is what we are doing, nothing more, nothing less. It has nothing to do with our saying that we are not happy with the Industrial Commission. We have said to those opposite time and time and time again: we have confidence in the Industrial Commission. When it made its decision, there were eight zones. We had to address it. The only way to address and fix it once and for all was to have one zone.

Mr JOHNSON: It is fairly obvious this evening that we are seeing the irrelevance of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. It made that recommendation to the government because the government asked for that recommendation. What has this government done? As I said earlier, it has turned its back on it and walked away. Many members have said during this debate that big business picks up 87 per cent of this business in the south-east and small businesses 13 per cent. When those opposite do the calculations and the final analysis, they will find that the greater proportion of people are employed by those small business operators. I note the amendments the government intends to introduce—and the opposition will certainly speak on those, too—but again the government is playing into the hands of those big multinationals at the expense of smaller operators. That will certainly show some of those people the back door. We talk about jobs, jobs, jobs. We will also see high bankruptcies in this state as a result of this ludicrous legislation.

I believe that the minister is a fairly sensible bloke and a fellow who has an understanding of these issues, but at the end of the day there are many people on that side of the chamber who do not support this legislation. The minister should revisit the legislation and show these small businesspeople that this government is fair dinkum, because the passing of this legislation and this clause shows that the government has turned its back on the QIRC. We may as well just close the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission down, because that is virtually what has been done to it.

Mr LESTER: This means that if decisions of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission are suitable to the government, that is fine and it accepts it. If they are not suitable, at some point in the future we will see more legislation. On that basis we just cannot support this amendment.

Mr NUTTALL: I want to make something very clear to honourable members opposite, particularly in relation to this issue about small retailers and how they will be affected by the trading zones. If we had let the decision of the commission stand as it was, all those people who live outside the Brisbane City Council boundary would not be able to shop on Sundays, except for the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. That means that small shops in Logan, Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Ipswich would not survive on Sundays, because all of those people would jump in their cars and come to Brisbane to shop. Therefore, not only would those small shops suffer, but the money would not stay in those areas. It is just not right or fair to do that just because someone lives in Logan, Caboolture, Pine Rivers or Ferny Grove—

Mr Cummins: Redlands.

Mr NUTTALL:—or Redlands—

Mr Lawlor: Jimboomba.

Mr NUTTALL:—or Jimboomba. Why should they be treated as second-class citizens? Why should they not be able to shop, yet the people on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the Brisbane City Council area are able to shop on Sundays? The logic just does not stand up.

Question—That the minister's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 66—Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, N. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hayward, Hollis, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Quinn, Reeves, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Sheldon, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Watson, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 17—Copeland, E. Cunningham, Flynn, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney. Tellers: Lester, Springborg

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr LESTER (10.37 p.m.): Clause 7 will insert the new part 5A into the act to provide special allowable trading hour arrangements for the south-east Queensland area. This clause introduces section 31A, which will state that the decision made on 21 December 2001 by the Industrial Relations Commission will have no effect. In other words, this clause will have the effect of overruling the commission. Frankly, we cannot support this clause.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr NUTTALL (10.38 p.m.): I move amendment No. 2—

2. After clause 8—

At page 7, after line 13—

insert—

' 9 Insertion of new s 36A

Part 7, before section 37—

insert—

' 36A Protection for current employees

'(1) An employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees, in writing, to work during extended hours.

Maximum penalty—

- (a) for a first offence—16 penalty units; or
- (b) for a second or subsequent offence—20 penalty units.

'(2) However, subsection (1) does not apply in relation to a current employee if—

- (a) an industrial instrument provides arrangements under which the employee may refuse or agree to work during extended hours; and
- (b) a regulation prescribes the industrial instrument as an approved industrial instrument for this subsection.

'(3) In this section—

"agree" means agree for a stated period or for an indefinite period.

"closed day" see section 31B(8).

"current employee" means an employee who is employed in a non-exempt shop immediately before 1 August 2002, other than in a non-exempt shop for which the permissible trading hours immediately before 1 August 2002 include trading hours on a Sunday or public holiday, other than a closed day.

"employer" means an employer of an employee employed in a non-exempt shop.

"extended hours" means the permissible trading hours on a Sunday or public holiday, other than a closed day.

"industrial instrument" means an award or certified agreement within the meaning of the *Industrial Relations Act 1999*.

"non-exempt shop" means a non-exempt shop in the south-east Queensland area.

"permissible trading hours" see section 31B(8).

"south-east Queensland area" see section 31B(8).'. '.

This amendment reinforces the principles of voluntary work for existing employees under the expanded trading hour arrangements contained within the current SDA application before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. This application made by the SDA and supported by the Retailers Association of Queensland provides that, where there are extensions to trading hours through either amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act of 1990 and the Trading Hours-Non-exempt Shops Trading by Retail-State order, employees employed at the time immediately prior to the changed trading hours will not be able to be forced to work within those extended hours.

After representations from the union, the government has now decided to reinforce the principle of voluntary work through an amendment to this bill. The amendment specifies that an employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees in writing to work during those extended hours. However, subsection (2) of the new section 36A provides for an industrial instrument, such as an award or certified agreement, to contain other or more detailed agreements under which current employees may refuse or agree to work during extended hours. In addition, a regulation made in accordance with this

section may prescribe the industrial instrument as an approved industrial instrument to ensure the arrangements are acceptable and within the spirit and intent of this amendment bill.

The amendment provides a maximum of 16 penalty units for a first offence and 20 penalty units for a second or subsequent offence. For a body corporate or organisation the maximum penalty is increased to 80 and 100 units respectively, consistent with the penalties under the Industrial Relations Act 1999 for a breach of an industrial instrument.

A 'current employee' means an employee who is employed on a weekly, full-time or part-time basis or as a casual in a non-exempt shop immediately prior to 1 August 2002 other than in those areas of the proposed zone where employees currently work on Sundays and public holidays. This ensures that there are no changes to existing working arrangements for the inner city areas of Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. At the same time it ensures protection for existing employees who do not wish to work on Sundays or public holidays for personal or family reasons.

Mr LESTER: The government has legislated for the extended trading hours. It is all very well to say that on a Sunday or at those other times the shop does not have to open. However, if the shop does not open, that shop will be left behind and ultimately will go broke and have to close. However, the minister is saying that the employee has the right to choose whether or not to work. So if the employer tries to get the employee to work, they will be committing an offence. In other words, they will be criminals and they will have to pay 16 penalties units for a first offence and 20 penalty units for a second offence.

The employers have not asked for this. This amendment means that if their employees do not wish to work, then quite obviously they have to find somebody else to help them. That person may not be trained. They might have to get somebody in from outside, who would disrupt that business. That business has not caused that situation; it has occurred because of this legislation. I think that the government has let off the employees. It has chosen to lie down to the union and has kicked the employer fair in the tummy. Under these circumstances, we are unable to support this amendment.

Mrs SHELDON: My understanding is that under the current arrangements and awards for areas such as the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, this does not apply. Is that correct?

Mr NUTTALL: That's right.

Mrs SHELDON: My question to the minister is: why now make those areas, in which there has been a good working relationship between the employer and the employee and an agreed position, come under the penalties in the amendment that the minister is proposing? There is no industrial relations reason for this, because the existing situation is working well at the moment. The only real reason for this is that the government is buckling to the unions. We have seen the full-page advertisements by the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association. This is the Labor Party's answer to that union, which has blasted it in the paper.

This is really bad legislation. It is being proposed for political reasons. The minister cannot say that he is doing it to change an industrial environment that has not been working, because it has been working and it has been working well. So this amendment should not be introduced. It is political expediency at its worst. The minister should not be changing a situation, which has worked well for both the employer and the employees, by making it more onerous for the employer to suit the government's political end, which is to get votes. It is very wrong to put that amendment into legislation. We will not be supporting it.

Mr JOHNSON: I trust that the minister is hearing what the opposition is saying. The minister says that an employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees in writing to work during extended hours. For God's sake, who is paying the wages? Who is running the operation? Is it the union? It certainly is! It is very obvious that once again the unions are dominating the agenda.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member should sit back and just listen. He would not have a clue. I will give the minister an example: fully trained butchers working in a butcher's shop. Where is the employer going to find a butcher to work on Sunday if the blokes decide that they are not going to work? Who is going to do the work? They will shut down the shop. That is exactly it. Those speciality shops have specially trained tradesmen. I ask the minister: has he taken that into account?

There is no doubt in the world that again we see the union domination of the government's agenda in moving this amendment. At the 11th hour it was dropped on the table. What consultation has the government had with employers in relation to this amendment? I bet the minister that it has had none at all. There is no doubt in the world that union pressure has been applied. If we read the whole amendment—regulation after regulation—we see that it is all in favour of the employee. In one breath the minister is saying that these shops are going to open on Sunday and in another breath he is saying that people who work within these operations do not have to go to work if they do not want to. What a hypocritical statement! At the end of the day, why is the government introducing this amendment? It has hoodwinked the people in businesses in south-east Queensland. That is precisely what the government has done.

How many members opposite who represent these fringe areas are going to front up to those businesses after this legislation is proclaimed and say, 'I supported that'? They supported it all right! This evening the member for Aspley crowed about how she supported the legislation. She congratulated the minister and the Premier on a good piece of legislation. When we see the unemployment figures and the incidence of bankruptcy going through the roof, they will see that it was a good piece of legislation! When this legislation was passed in Victoria, there was a rise in the unemployment rate in the retail sector of 2.8 per cent straightaway and 13 per cent unemployment straightaway in the food sector. That is a fair indication of precisely what is going to happen here.

Mr NUTTALL: I think that there is confusion by honourable members opposite in regard—

Mr Johnson: There's no confusion.

Mr NUTTALL: If the member would just listen to me for a minute I will point it out. The amendment that I circulated states—

An employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours.

The member is going on about small businesses not being able to get anything. On the next page it states that the definition of a current employee means an employee who is employed in a non-exempt shop. That means 20 or more employees. So this does not apply to any of those businesses who have fewer than 20 employees. So that knocks out the member's argument.

Mr Johnson: No, it doesn't. There's plenty of shops out there with more than 20 employees, minister.

Mr NUTTALL: They can still operate and that will apply.

Mr Horan: What if people don't want to work?

Mr NUTTALL: The operators can get some casuals to work. The members opposite are the mob who support the labour hire companies.

One of the members opposite raised the issue of signing the document saying whether they consent or not consent to working.

Mr Johnson: I didn't say anything about signing documents.

Mr NUTTALL: I think the member did. The clause that we are seeking the parliament to pass today in relation to this amendment in the bill really reflects only the application that is currently before the Industrial Relations Commission for the new award.

That application is supported by not only the union but also the Retailers Association of Queensland, so it is a consent award. Therefore, the employers and the unions have agreed on whether people should be working extended hours and the arrangements that are made. This amendment simply reflects that agreement—nothing more, nothing less.

Dr WATSON: Did the minister answer the question raised by the member for Caloundra about whether or not the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast are now forced by this legislation into an arrangement which they do not currently have under the award?

Mr NUTTALL: Sorry about that. I meant to answer that question. The answer to that is no. When we extended trading hours in 1992 and 1994, there were arrangements then. I honestly thought I spelt that out in my response, but I will go through it. The arrangement that will now be in place cannot force employees who are currently employed in the new areas, not on the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast or Brisbane City heart.

Mr HORAN: I thought you said it was consistent all across the zone?

Mr NUTTALL: No. It is about the new regime. These amendments have no effect on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane city heart.

Mr HORAN: So they have to turn up for work?

Mr NUTTALL: That is right. In 1992 and 1994 when they got their extended trading hours, the same situation applied then. This is a new one for the new area for 2001.

Mrs SHELDON: Could I ask a question about the minister's answer, please?

A Government member interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: It is a very important issue, believe me. It states—

An employer must not require a current employee to work during extended hours unless the employee agrees in writing to work during extended hours.

Do they currently agree in writing to work extended hours in areas like the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast? Does this override what is currently there?

Mr NUTTALL: No, it does not. If the member looks at page 2 of the amendment—

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, I am.

Mr NUTTALL: The definition of 'current employee'—

Means an employee who is employed in a non-exempt shop immediately before 1 August 2002, other than in a non-exempt shop for which the permissible trading hours immediately before 1 August 2002 include trading hours on a Sunday or public holiday, other than a closed day.

Mrs SHELDON: So why is that in it?

Mr NUTTALL: It states—

Other than in a non-exempt shop for which the permissible trading hours immediately before 1 August 2002.

This will only apply to those shops from 1 August 2002. It does not apply to those shops which already have the extended trading hours. That is what the definition clearly states.

Mrs SHELDON: So there are two sets of industrial instruments: one area where the employee has to agree in writing and another area where they do not?

Mr NUTTALL: Because that applied in 1992 and 1994 when we extended those hours. It cannot be made retrospective back to 1992 and 1994.

Mrs SHELDON: You're changing the whole zones.

Mr NUTTALL: No, we have not.

Mr JOHNSON: It is fairly obvious that this new section here is a blanket cover of the whole zone we are talking about. I ask the minister: is that right? What the minister has said in response to the member for Caloundra is that there is a duplicate or triplicate meaning to the section in question.

Mr NUTTALL: What it means, quite clearly, is this: in the existing areas where there is extended trading on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the Brisbane City heart we are not changing their current working arrangements. This definition states in the new single zone, excluding those areas, we are changing it to what we did in 1992 and 1994.

Dr WATSON: And the RAQ support that?

Mr NUTTALL: The RAQ support that, yes.

Mrs SHELDON: If the RAQ supported that, they would have to do so in writing.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, and that is in that consent application before the commission as well.

Question—That the minister's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 67—Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Bredhauer, Briskey, Choi, E. Clark, L. Clark, Croft, Cummins, E. Cunningham, N. Cunningham, Edmond, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hayward, Hollis, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McGrady, McNamara, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Phillips, Pitt, Poole, Purcell, Quinn, Reynolds, N. Roberts, Robertson, Rodgers, Rose, Schwarten, C. Scott, D. Scott, Sheldon, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Strong, Struthers, C. Sullivan, Watson, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T. Sullivan, Reeves

NOES, 16—Copeland, Flynn, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, Pratt, E. Roberts, Rowell, Seeney. Tellers: Lester, Springborg

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.03 p.m.): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Cyclist Safety

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—ONP) (11.03 p.m.): This evening I wish to take the opportunity to lobby on behalf of the many cyclists of Queensland and particularly those within my electorate to obtain better and safer roads for them to travel upon. I wish also to applaud this government's initiative to increase the current number of cycling journeys from two per cent to approximately eight per cent of total journeys. Whilst this is a marvellous goal, there are some major obstacles which need to be addressed before these increases can occur. These obstacles can be found in the state of a number of roads which are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Main Roads.

A few weeks ago, I was invited to view a number of these roads within my electorate by a Noosa councillor and a member of the Noosa Triathlon Club. Whilst it was wonderful to witness the enthusiasm of these people, it was clear that there is a great deal of concern regarding the road shoulders, which is where the majority of cyclists ride.

The many cyclists to whom I have spoken would like to urge the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads to apply the AusRoads Standards to all new roads and road upgrades. The AusRoads standards provide for a 1.5 metre smooth surface shoulder with an increase in that width for roads of a higher speed. Compliance with these standards would provide a safer environment for both cyclists and drivers and would greatly reduce areas of conflict between the two.

All cyclists realise that these improvements cannot be made overnight but can be achieved over time. For example, Noosa has a 10-year cycling capital works program. Again, whilst this could be perceived as being a long period, it certainly is a start and a proactive approach to encourage an increase in cycling.

In addition to the provision of wider roads, road maintenance of established roads also needs to be addressed. Regular road sweeping such as that which occurs in more urban areas is vital in terms of safety for cyclists, as one small piece of glass or debris can cause a major accident.

Another safety tool for cyclists would be the removal of foliage from road black spots and corners in order to improve rider visibility. The benefits of cycling as a preferred method of travelling would mean a dramatic decrease in congestion, parking problems, noise and pollution as well as improved health and fitness and a decrease in diabetes, heart problems, depression and obesity, the last two being on the rise in most developed countries.

Improved road conditions would also contribute to an increase in tourism for many areas of Queensland. The popularity of cycling cannot be overlooked, particularly with the increasing numbers who participate in the Noosa Triathlon, which is now in its 20th year and attracts around 20,000 participants. It would not take too many improvements to make Queensland a mecca for cyclists and reduce the unnecessary carnage on our roads. If a little crowded country like Holland can do it surely Queensland can, too. Providing safer facilities for cyclists would benefit us all.

Yallamundi Open Day

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (11.06 p.m.): I wish to inform the House about a trip I did with my wife, Margaret, to Yallamundi on Sunday, 24 February. We visited one of Australia's largest olive plantations, near Millmerran, with over 150,000 trees planted. When fully developed, it will comprise more than 400,000 trees. Yallamundi is located approximately 86 miles south-west of Toowoomba and is ideally suited to take advantage of Inglewood Olive Processors' new plant. Yallamundi is a 2,724 hectare property. It is one of the largest single commercial olive plantations in Australia and is managed on behalf of more than 1,570 investors.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr PURCELL: None at all. I just want to see jobs in the country. Jobs are needed for the people out there, some of whom I know quite well. I saw a mate of mine, Vince Dobinson. A lot of members might know Vince Dobinson. He has 1,400 trees and a little place out there. We had a talk about our mate Bob Tait, whom I knew from my Texas days. He has not been very well,

but he is on the mend now. I spoke also to the mayor, Paul Antonio, the chief executive officer for Yallamundi, Roy Flynn, and the director of Australian Olives, Tim Myers. Also, I saw Stuart Copeland on his way out as I was coming in. Tom Barton officiated on the day. Les Bryant, from the Brisbane City Council, was also there. A cross-section of people attended. That just shows us how important olives are becoming to that part of the country and to Australia.

Australian Olives has 35 full-time employees on a property which used to have two or three. These employees include farm managers, horticulturalists, mechanics, heavy machinery operators, and other skilled and semiskilled tradesmen. Over the past four years Australian Olives has successfully developed its property. Australian Olives Limited was formed in 1997. I looked at the plantation about two years ago when they had finished putting in the irrigation and were starting on the first three sections of the groves.

Australian Olives has achieved financial success through developing a cost-effective broadacre olive plantation applying world best practice cultivation and management techniques, having a dual income stream derived from selling grove interests and collecting recurring annual management fees. The demand for olive products in Australia has increased strongly in recent years. In 1999-2000, Australia's consumption of table olives and olive oil grew to \$119 million and continues to grow.

Time expired.

North Queensland

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (11.10 p.m.): Recently I read with interest correspondence forwarded to me regarding the Australian National Athletics Championships being held in Brisbane for the third consecutive year. It is appalling that again regional Queensland is not being considered for another national event when many facilities in the north are not only adequate when it comes to hosting such events but surpass expectations. Townsville has an excellent arena which could have been used for staging this significant sporting event. North Queensland is often subject to rhetoric, with promises made regarding events to be held in the region. Unfortunately, these promises are not being fulfilled.

North Queensland must be recognised for all that it possesses. It is imperative that this recognition is gained. The region must be promoted as a viable option for events and proceedings, as well as national events taking place in the south-east corner. I hope that when Premier Beattie refers to the Smart State he is not only referring to the south-east corner. So it is time for the north to be recognised as one of the engine rooms of Queensland's economy. Efforts must be made by the government to secure recognition in Townsville and other cities of the north's ability to stage such significant events.

Having said this, I note that the first-ever parliamentary sittings in Queensland outside Parliament House in Brisbane will take place in Townsville later this year. This is a small step towards including the north in events that would normally only take place in the state's capital. But is it just window-dressing? To build confidence in the north's ability to generate activities for Queensland, the National Party in government will have a department of northern development to act as a strong advocate for the region. North Queensland has a plethora of attractions that make it appealing for the area to be hosting events and functions. From the pristine coastline, outstanding function and convention facilities to first-rate sporting amenities, north Queensland has a great deal to offer those considering bringing their events to the north. It is time that north Queensland is afforded the same opportunities as those that exist in the southern end of the state. It is extremely disappointing that the Australian athletics championships will not be conducted in the major city of the north, Townsville.

Single Crew Locomotives, Sugar Industry

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (11.12 p.m.): The sugar industry is one of the largest industries in the Burdekin. CSR is one of the major owners of mills in that area. Recently, discussions have taken place with unions in regard to single crew locos, which I totally oppose mainly for safety reasons and for the loss of jobs within the industry. I believe that CSR should be held responsible if it does achieve what it is aiming at, that is, single crew locos. Over the years there have been fatalities and accidents. There have been near misses with cane locos going across crossings and vehicles crashing into them. I believe that some of the mills in that area

have had to employ extra personnel as traffic officers to make sure that the locos are operated efficiently.

The idea of trying to go to single crew locos is totally abhorrent to me. I believe that there is a need for two people on those locos. The ability of a single loco driver to handle a situation such as when a bin breaks away—which can cause derailments—is almost impossible. The assistant loco driver is there to learn the job, and he usually steps up and eventually takes over the role of loco driver. If CSR, in its wisdom, wants to do away with that person, eventually it will have no-one with the ability to drive locos once the existing drivers leave those positions. There is definitely a need for improved safety in that sector, but looking to cut back on loco crews—which CSR seems to think it needs to do—is not the answer. The answer is more people being employed in the weighbridges to control the flow of the locos, their movements in and out of the mills and the traffic flowing around the mills.

I am speaking out on this issue because these are things that have happened. I worked in the sugar industry for 20 years. This issue has been bandied about a lot. It is not acceptable to the work force in the industry, and for safety reasons it is not acceptable to me and the rest of the work force. I strongly suggest to CSR that it stick with the current process of having two-man crews on the locos and maintain safety in the mills by doing that.

St Joseph's Primary School, Nambour; Mental Health Services

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (11.15 p.m.): While world leaders were meeting at CHOGM held at Coolum last week, a small group of leaders and mediators were staging their first sitting of parliament for this year. On 4 March I had the honour and privilege of joining students, parents and teachers at St Joseph's Primary School at Nambour for the first meeting this year of the school parliament. Like our own parliament, St Joseph's parliament boasts a range of committees—or portfolios—and a shadow ministry. These reflect the needs of the school community and include sport, environment, welfare, services, public relations and class representatives. The year 7 students who make up the parliament meet regularly and, like CHOGM leaders and our own state parliamentarians, share ideas and focus on working together on solving shared problems. All year 7 students are involved in their parliament, and while each student can select a committee of interest each student also gets a turn at being a minister for a week. Two class leaders are elected as Speakers of the House, and four school leaders are elected by years 6 and 7 to make up the public relations committee. The cabinet is selected by teachers, and the principal, Ian Morice, gets the final say on newly introduced bills in his role as Governor-General.

While each committee has specific roles, one of the most successful outcomes from last year was a fun day organised by the service committee which raised \$900 for an orphanage in west Bali. Congratulations to the teachers of St Joseph's for making learning about government such an active and fun part of the school curriculum. The students' first parliament for the year followed a visit to state parliament last week.

I also rise to speak on another matter of importance not only to the Sunshine Coast but also to the whole of south-east Queensland. In particular, I understand that the child and adolescent mental health services available between Brisbane and Townsville are minimal. I understand there is a need for improved child youth mental health services in the region, and accordingly I would call on the government to seriously consider the importance of this need and to allocate appropriate new funds in this year's budget to address the problem. I believe the Nambour General Hospital is strategically located to provide an appropriate central location for this service, but of course appropriate funding would need to be allocated to the hospital to respond to this great community need.

I also would like to put on public record my appreciation to the Minister for Health, the Hon. Wendy Edmond, for allocating new money to the Nambour Hospital for the redesign of the mental health ward, which will ensure there is a better opportunity to manage patients. I understand architects are currently working on design options for the unit and they hope work will start in the next 12 to 18 months.

Red Cross Volunteers

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.18 p.m.): We all value the marvellous work done by volunteers in our communities. Red Cross volunteers are one such group of people who deserve

our support. More than 30,000 people across Queensland will take part in the 2002 Red Cross Calling fundraising appeal being conducted from 23 March to 7 April. The target for this year is \$1.8 million. All volunteers will of course be wearing tags clearly identifying them as authorised unpaid volunteers.

Red Cross, along with its equivalent in Muslim countries, the Red Crescent, is the world's largest humanitarian organisation. Queensland alone has 125 branches spread across the length and breadth of our great state. In far-north Queensland we have more than 400 members in 11 branches supporting our communities with services that would most likely not be provided otherwise. They deliver these services in the most cost-effective way—for free. These volunteers, mostly women, give thousands of hours annually to make our communities far better places in which to live.

The Red Cross provides more than 25 different services to Queenslanders, with their work with the Blood Bank having the highest profile. In 2001 almost one in 10 Queenslanders availed themselves of the services of the Red Cross. Besides the Blood Bank, there are a number of activities conducted by the Red Cross. Play scheme programs in hospitals provide enjoyable activities to sick youngsters undergoing treatment. They bring joy to thousands of youngsters who are hospitalised throughout our state.

The medical equipment hire service makes available various medical aids, such as wheelchairs, shower chairs, walking frames, crutches, et cetera, at low cost to patients. First aid training courses, including CPR, are conducted on a regular basis to help make members of the community aware of their capacity to save lives in cases of emergency. Hospital and nursing home visitation teams bring cosmetic care programs and general goodwill to patients and residents. Those with physical and intellectual disabilities are trained in the various activities to enable them to make a contribution as part of the general work force. Centres are located in Brisbane and Gympie.

Disaster registration in times of emergency sees the Red Cross working with the police and SES volunteers to help with the coordination of relief efforts during cyclones, floods and fires. A tracing service to contact family members whose lives have been dislocated through natural disaster or military conflict is another service provided by the Red Cross. In the past 12 months 500 families were assisted in this way. The refugee settlement program enables people to integrate better into the Australian community through practical programs targeting everyday living.

Last year the people of the far north, the state government, Cairns City Council and a generous business community donated more than \$700,000 to redevelop Pat Gosper House, which serves as a medical accommodation centre adjacent to Cairns Base Hospital. The naming of the centre in honour of Pat Gosper is a fitting tribute to a tireless worker who has given a lifetime to our community. The Pat Gosper centre provides affordable quality accommodation to people from remote communities—

Time expired.

Alcohol Abuse, Cape York

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.21 p.m.): I rise to speak about a problem about which both sides of this House should be ashamed—that is, the levels of alcohol abuse in Cape York communities. In an article in the *Courier-Mail* of Saturday, 2 March, Tony Koch makes an announcement on behalf of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy that her parliamentary strategy for this week is to trace the genesis of alcohol supply to the communities. I am extremely disappointed that the minister has chosen to waste valuable departmental resources in an historic muck-raking exercise, rather than focus on positive and proactive measures to improve the situation in these communities. Paternalism is not the answer, nor is it helpful. I trust that the minister takes that on board.

When the opposition asked the Premier last year about criticism from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board over his government's lack of consultation with it as the government's own peak advisory body in relation to the Fitzgerald report the Premier said—

I am not suggesting that anybody is perfect in this, including my government ...

This is one of those times when the Premier and I agree on an issue. Canteens were introduced to indigenous communities as a result of the referendum in 1967 recognising indigenous people as people of the Commonwealth of Australia and as a means of controlling the sly-grog trade,

which is still a blight on these communities today. Clearly, much needs to be done to tackle alcohol abuse in Cape York communities and many other social and economic problems that those communities are subjected to and confronted with.

It needs to be recognised that alcohol abuse and domestic violence are merely symptoms of much larger problems—lack of employment opportunities, lack of educational services, lack of health services, lack of family and youth services and insufficient law enforcement. What the indigenous people of this state need is responsible action by government, not finger pointing and the politics of blame. We need to take these people along with us as we help them secure a positive and beneficial future, not be out there criticising and openly displaying what has gone wrong in the past.

In the House last year I offered the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy bipartisan support on these issues. To date I have not heard from her. I and the opposition are committed to advancing these issues, and we will do it with or without the minister.

CHOGM

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (11.24 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak on CHOGM 2002, held in Coolumb. This gave the Commonwealth heads of government an opportunity to gather post September 2001 and was the largest gathering of heads of government since that date. My community witnessed the state-of-the-art, biggest security operation ever staged in Australia. Congratulations go to all those who participated.

What did the Commonwealth leaders gather to discuss? Put simply, they discussed those issues that affect one-third of the world's population—issues pertaining to democracy, human rights, civil rights, trade and clean water. They also discussed hot issues such as the potential exclusion of Zimbabwe's Mugabe. One can only sit back and be extremely proud of this Queensland government's commitment to promoting this state and being such a wonderful host to such a gathering.

The member for Kawana, Chris Cummins, the member for Glass House, Carolyn Male, and I were delighted to attend the state reception, along with the Premier and Dr Heather Beattie, ministers and other members of parliament. At the magnificent grounds of Twin Waters the CHOGM diplomats and media were able to be welcomed by us. We were able to act as our community's ambassadors.

There were many great benefits as well for my area and tourism. Our state's guests were enthralled by the beauty of the Sunshine Coast and the warmth and friendship extended to them. Our guests were able to make new acquaintances and renew old ones. I draw the attention of the House to the benefits of CHOGM to this state's tourist industry, especially for the Sunshine Coast. Money could not buy the international coverage we enjoyed. I was able to connect with journalists who were excited about the Pacific Islands political scientists conference to be held in Noosaville in December.

The other spin-offs of this gathering were for our schools and for our local communities' education. Our children were engrossed in studies of Commonwealth governments' heads of state and the issues pertaining to those countries. I was able to gather information on the more obscure countries from the Parliamentary Library for those schools.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was extremely important to those Commonwealth countries. Education about all of those participating countries was gained by our schools. Our local university put on its own forum, which was enjoyed by at least 200 people with interstate visitors. On the same weekend our community enjoyed the state surf-lifesaving champion event.

Liquor Appeals Tribunal, Cheers Tavern

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (11.27 p.m.): In the debate on matters of public interest on 19 February I indicated that the decision by the Liquor Appeals Tribunal in the case of the Cheers Tavern appeal was based on flawed logic and thus incompetent. In order to judge the Cheers Tavern decision in the context of other liquor tribunal decisions, I reviewed all of the determinations arising from its hearings from 1997 onwards. I paid particular attention to cases where the appeal was against a refusal by the CEO of the Liquor Licensing Division of an application for a general licence. Eight cases fitted this category. Of the eight cases, five appeals were upheld and three were dismissed.

Of particular interest in each case was how amenity and need were treated and how locality was defined for each of these dimensions. In three of the five cases where the appeal was upheld the tribunal appears to have defined locality consistently for amenity and need. In addition, two of the three had no objections and the other had only two objectors. On the remaining cases—namely, applications at Loganholme and Highland Park—it appears the tribunal has made the same logical mistake as in the Kenmore case, although the extent of the mismatch between locality for amenity and need do not seem as great as at Kenmore. Again, there were relatively few objectors to each application. In the case of Loganholme the written support for the application vastly outweighed the objections. So it is possible these logical errors did not have serious practical consequences for the respective communities.

I now turn to the three cases in which the appeal was dismissed. One is irrelevant as it was based on section 60 of the act and did not address the issues of need and amenity. The other two were applications for licences at Trinity Beach and Kewarra Beach, both near Cairns. In both of these appeals the amenity and need localities appear to coincide and are restricted to suburbs on or adjacent to the beaches. The tribunal considered broadening the amenity locality in the case of Kewarra Beach, but this was not done. In both cases there was a significant number of objectors but well short of the number of objectors to the Kenmore Tavern.

The Liquor Appeals Tribunal decision in the Cheers Tavern Kenmore application differs from the other decisions in two significant ways. The first is the sheer disparity in the number of objections to the respective proposals. The second is the overwhelming distortion of the evidence by the vast mismatch in the definition of locality for each of the dimensions of amenity and need.

These critical differences should have rung alarm bells for any competent tribunal. After all, Ms Lindon was the presiding member on both the Kewarra Beach and the Trinity Beach hearings, as well as the Cheers Tavern hearing, while Dr O'Donnell and Mrs Spender sat on the Trinity Beach and on the Kewarra Beach hearings respectively, as well as the Cheers Tavern hearing. Their previous deliberations simply accentuate their incompetence in this latest decision.

Headway Centre, Parkwood

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (11.29 p.m.): I draw the attention of the House to a new Headway Centre at Parkwood in the electorate of Southport. It was opened on 28 February and I was honoured to represent the Minister for Disability Services, Judy Spence, at the opening. The Director of Headway, Jeanette Carey; President of the Headway Management Committee, Barbara Gregg; the Regional Director of Disability Services Queensland, Anne-Marie Byrne; and the federal member for Moncrieff, Stephen Ciobo, were also in attendance. Headway offers a range of services for people who have an acquired brain injury. These services include accommodation support, rehabilitation programs, independent living assistance, outdoor programs and employment training. It also has a vital role to play in increasing community understanding and awareness of acquired brain injury.

Headway is the only service offering this range of assistance to people with acquired brain injury in the Gold Coast region and has therefore played an important role in the lives of many families in the area. The premises for this new centre was generously donated to Headway in the year 2000 by the Colin and Veronica Probets Foundation. The Probets family has a member with an acquired brain injury and was keen to support other individuals with acquired brain injury to receive support within the local community. The new facility caters for approximately 30 local people from 15 to 60 years of age. The Beattie government is committed to ensuring people with a disability receive the quality services they need to live independent and fulfilling lives as part of the community. In its first term this government injected an additional \$50 million in recurrent funds to Disability Services and has undertaken to increase funding by another \$60.8 million during this term.

The minister is committed to working through a review of the Disability Services Act and a funding reform project which will create a new environment for the Disability Services operation which is sustainable, accountable and consumer focused. This is another example of the Beattie government listening to and working for the people of Queensland. My congratulations go to the wonderful people associated with this most worthwhile new Headway facility.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.31 p.m.