

THURSDAY, 1 AUGUST 2002

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

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE**Report No. 53**

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (9.31 a.m.): Firstly, I thank the parliament for the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee in this House yesterday. The committee has referred to parliament for consideration a complaint that I made improper reflections against the committee in comments attributed to me following the release of the committee's report No. 52. Those comments that the committee considers improper relate to the tabling of a report on a non-sitting day of the parliament and the fact that the committee was dominated by government members. I will deal with each issue separately.

The committee's report No. 52 was tabled on 23 July, some three and a half months after the matter was referred to the committee and a week before parliament was due to sit. The day the report was tabled I was travelling on parliamentary business on Cape York. I had no knowledge of the imminent release of the report and it was not until late that afternoon that I was able to get a copy faxed to Cooktown and to get there myself to make a response to the numerous media inquiries about the report's findings.

Obviously, honourable members would be able to understand that that was a very frustrating situation for me. By the time I got to see the report the government's spin doctors had been able to put their own interpretations on the committee's findings and those interpretations were being reported by the media. They were able to do this while I was not aware that the committee's report had been released and, even when I became aware of that, I was not able to respond adequately to the misleading statements being made in the media about those findings.

Notwithstanding the frustration I was feeling at the time when I made those statements, I accept and understand from the committee's report yesterday that my comments have given offence to the members of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. That offence was unintended and I only became aware that the statements had caused offence yesterday when this report was tabled in the House.

I now accept from the information provided to the House yesterday by the committee chair that it is not an unusual practice for the committee to table reports out of session. However, I was not aware of that fact at the time I made the comments in question. I hope that the committee and the parliament can understand the frustration caused by not being able to adequately respond to such a report because of the unexpected timing of its release.

I hope the committee can consider, in the interests of fairness, providing any future member of this parliament who is the subject of such a report with some advance warning that findings concerning them are to be tabled in parliament. I believe that, irrespective of who that member might be, it is fair and reasonable that they be in a position to respond to media inquiries about those findings when they are made public.

I turn now to the second statement that the committee made in its report. The committee considered that I was questioning its impartiality when I made the statement to the effect that its report was the best that I could expect from a committee dominated by government members who had to respond to a political stunt by the Premier. I regret that the committee has taken that statement as an accusation of political bias. I was not aware until yesterday when the committee chair told the House that its report No. 52 was a unanimous report.

The findings in the report relate to a matter referred to the committee on 9 April after I spoke in this House on a matter of privilege regarding an accusation that was made by the Premier that I lied to this parliament. That is a very serious accusation. In that matter of privilege I challenged the Premier to refer his accusation that I lied to this parliament to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee so that I may have the opportunity to prove its falseness.

I will always maintain that this accusation that I lied to the parliament is, and always has been, demonstrably false and without foundation. If there was the slightest shred of evidence to support the allegation that I lied to the parliament, it would have been presented previously in the public debate and it certainly would have been presented in the submissions received by the committee. No such evidence has ever been presented, because no such evidence has ever existed. The committee found that accusation to be unfounded and the Premier has not withdrawn the accusation or apologised to me since the committee's report was tabled.

The committee's recommendations in report No. 52 were all I could reasonably expect when I challenged the Premier to refer the matter to the committee. I regret that my honest appraisal of the harsh reality of this parliament with its 66-seat majority has been taken as an attack on the committee's integrity. That was never my intent. I made an honest statement that recognised the political reality within which the committee must operate.

In making both of those statements referred to by the committee yesterday I had no intention to impugn the reputation of the committee or the important role it plays in this parliament and I had no intention of giving offence to the members of that committee. However, quite obviously from report No. 53 tabled yesterday in this House my comments have caused offence to the committee. I therefore apologise unreservedly to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for any offence those statements referred to in report No. 53 have caused, and I withdraw those statements.

I want to make it very clear that the matters raised in report No. 53 are very distinct from the matters raised in report No. 52. In report No. 52 the committee also suggested—and I have no doubt that it chose that word carefully—that I consider my duty and what appropriate response I should take upon myself to ensure the accuracy of the parliamentary record and the reputation of this House.

My first duty is, and always will be, to the people of the Callide electorate who sent me here to represent their interests. When the interests of my constituents are impugned, as was clearly so in this case, my duty is clear and unequivocal and I will not be diverted or bullied from pursuing that duty. However, in line with the committee's report No. 52 I have considered the committee's suggestion and reviewed again the statements that I made in this House and the question that I asked. I strongly contend that there is nothing in what I said that threatens the accuracy of the parliamentary record or impinges upon the reputation of this House.

The question that I asked on 8 March referred to concerns that had been raised with me by a constituent relating to the manner in which financial incentive payments had been made to Berri Limited to the detriment of a small farmer owned cooperative in my electorate. Rather than address the issue of how the government has administered \$65 million worth of taxpayers' money paid out in cash grants to a range of corporations in the last two years—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We are getting away from the reason for this statement. The only matters that you can refer to are the matters the committee has asked you to refer to. You cannot go back into history on other issues and you cannot debate the issue.

Mr SEENEY: I will not debate the issue, Mr Speaker, and I am almost finished the statement that I wish to make. Rather than address the issue of how the government has administered \$65 million worth of—

Mr SPEAKER: No. The order is that the member cannot debate the issue and go back into history.

Mr Johnson: He's not debating it; he's explaining it.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, he is. He is debating the issue. I suggest that the member skip over that little bit and move on. That might be easier.

Mr SEENEY: Can I say in conclusion then that I first raised this issue in the parliament at the behest of my constituents who have been adversely affected by grants given by this government to their competitors. I will never apologise for that. I have refused to be put off this issue by the accusations and the implications that the Premier has deliberately created as a diversion to the issue of accountability, and I make no apology for that. The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee had to deal with part of that diversion when the Premier's accusation that I lied to the parliament was referred to it. I am gratified that the committee found that accusation to be unfounded and I note again that the Premier has neither apologised nor withdrawn that

accusation. I have apologised to the committee for any offence my statements to the media inadvertently caused it, and I am sincere in that apology. I will, however, never apologise for strongly pursuing in this parliament an issue of accountability that was raised with me by my constituents. That is the job of every one of us in this House.

PETITIONS

Discoloured Water, Bowen Shire

Ms Jarratt from 1,645 petitioners, requesting the House to support the Government in assisting the Bowen Shire Council to solve the problem of discoloured water without causing a major impact on the water rates paid by the residents of Bowen.

Food Irradiation

Miss Simpson from 897 petitioners, requesting the House to (a) prohibit the establishment of a nuclear irradiation facility or X-Ray or electron beam irradiation facility at any location in Queensland, (b) ban the import, export and sale of irradiated food in Queensland and (c) call on the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council (ANZFSC) and the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) to amend Standards A-17 and 1.5.3 Irradiation of Foods in the Food Standards Code to ban food irradiation outright in Australia and New Zealand.

PRIVILEGE

Families Department, Delay in Medical Treatment of Children

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (9.42 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. On Tuesday morning the Leader of the Opposition tabled a letter from the Kalwun Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency which queried the timeliness of the treatment of a number of children in care at the Hervey Bay Hospital. I have already discussed those issues. The document tabled contains the names and addresses of several children in care and raises serious concerns as to whether the Leader of the Opposition breached the Child Protection Act—if not the actual legislation then certainly the spirit of the legislation.

In December 1999 an all-party Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee recommended that the procedures of this House be changed to prevent the identification of children in care in questions without notice or in questions on notice. The committee believed the Legislative Assembly must balance the right to ask questions and air grievances against the rights of others, such as the right to privacy of vulnerable children. The committee said the Legislative Assembly should introduce and adopt procedures to recognise the spirit of the laws it has passed, such as the Child Protection Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. This was moved and agreed to by the House. The Leader of the Opposition presents himself as a significant person in this parliament. He is the Leader of the National Party. He cannot sit here today and claim that he did not know of this ruling. He cannot in all decency say that he has not deliberately ignored this prior ruling in his chase for a cheap headline.

I would not support any action that served to prevent the free flow of debate on public policy in this place, nor would I suggest that members be prevented from raising legitimate issues in parliament. However, we should not tolerate the identities of some of our most disadvantaged children being revealed in parliament because the Leader of the Opposition sees some political gain. He has tabled this document without having first removed the names and it is now freely available to any member of the public.

The provisions of the Child Protection Act were not introduced to stifle public debate. They were introduced to prevent further harm being inflicted on children in the care of the state through the publication of their individual circumstances and names. The Leader of the Opposition has exposed the fact that these children are in care, something that they may not want their classmates and their friends to know. In some cases, the identification of these children could jeopardise their personal safety.

If we do not act now, when will the next reference be—in a speech? Many of us here are parents. We value our children's privacy, and I have no doubt that we would do everything possible to protect our children from harm. I ask for nothing more but the same rights and considerations for children in care. Mr Speaker, I am therefore asking you to consider this issue

and, if appropriate, to refer it to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for consideration.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)—

Letter, dated 30 July 2002, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament referring to correspondence received by the Premier from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding amendments to National Interest Analyses for the following treaties:-

- (a) Timor Sea treaty between the Government of Australia and the Government of East Timor, done at Dili on 20 May 2002; and
- (b) the Exchange of Notes Constituting an Agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and the Government of Australia concerning Arrangements for Exploration and Exploitation of Petroleum in an Area of the Timor Sea Between East Timor and Australia, done at Dili on 20 May 2002

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford)—

Report by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford) in compliance with section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PETITION

The following response to a petition was tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines (Mr Robertson) to a petition presented by Mr Robertson from 2,050 petitioners, regarding the sale and keeping of domestic rabbits in Queensland—

31 July 2002

Mr R. D. Doyle
Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

I refer to your letter of 25 June 2002 forwarding a copy of a petition lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly requesting the House to allow the sale and keeping of domestic pet rabbits in Queensland.

An Issues Paper, entitled *The Review of the Proposed Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Regulation 2002*, has been the subject of community consultation. Approximately sixty submissions were received, many regarding pet rabbits. These submissions are being considered as part of the Public Benefit Test review of the proposed regulation. All arguments for and against the keeping, ownership and sale of domestic pet rabbits in Queensland will be considered during the course of the review to arrive at a decision that is best for our State.

The Principal Petitioner, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the body that represents pet shops, is part of a Stakeholder Reference Group providing information to the review.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Princess Alexandra Hospital; Spinal Cord Regeneration Project

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: A clinical trial resulting from the Queensland spinal cord regeneration project is a perfect example of what we are seeking to achieve through our emphasis on turning Queensland into the Smart State. On 12 July, the Health Minister and I attended the announcement of this significant breakthrough. I congratulate the scientists of Griffith University and the medical team from Princess Alexandra Hospital for this world first—a clinical trial into spinal cord regeneration surgery in paraplegics. Such a trial has been no more than a dream in the past. Now this Queensland project is about to make it a reality, with up to eight volunteer paraplegic patients. The eyes of the world will be on the progress of this trial, but there is obviously a long way to go as we watch how the patients fare during the three-year trial.

In drawing up our Smart State strategies, the state government has placed particular emphasis on the need to ensure that the results of our research are increasingly developed and put to use in Queensland instead of seeing them disappear overseas, which has tragically been

the history of this nation. It is one thing to have wonderful intellectual property such as this, but it is then essential to be able to put breakthroughs like this into practice. So I am delighted that the intellectual property developed at Griffith University is being put to such wonderful use by the Queensland spinal regeneration project team in a Queensland public hospital. I am proud that the state of Queensland is a joint developer of the research.

Queensland has great research people and facilities and that is why we are the Smart State. This achievement confirms that standing. It is the result of a collaboration of nearly a decade between one of our most innovative universities, Griffith, and Queensland Health. It was the pioneering work of Professor Mackay-Sim at Griffith University that made it all possible. Professor Mackay-Sim worked with Dr Francois Feron of the state government's Queensland Centre for Schizophrenia Research to examine ensheathing cells. These are nerve cells from the nose and, unlike other cells, are regenerated throughout life, helping nerves grow from the nose to the brain. The ability to extract these cells from biopsy was a novel discovery and thus a patent was sought and granted to Queensland Health and Griffith University. Professor Mackay-Sim and Dr Feron pioneered a method of harvesting and cultivating these cells.

Implanting these cells in paraplegic rats induced the injured spinal nerves to regrow and assisted recovery of movement behaviour in the rear legs. Applying this research to patients is where the skills of the medical team at Princess Alexandra Hospital come in. Dr Tim Geraghty, Dr Paul Licina, Dr Chris Perry, Dr Adrian Nowitzke and Dr Susan Urquhart are responsible for patient selection, the clinical procedure and patient care. The entire project is managed by Julie Cochrane, a registered nurse. I wish the project team and the patients—the anonymous heroes in this—every success in the phase 1 trial.

This is not the only major achievement at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. The Princess Alexandra Hospital is making a major contribution to Queensland's Smart State strategy through its new Centre for Health Research which I opened on 15 July. I was joined there by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Innovation. The multimillion-dollar research centre is the third-largest health research facility in Queensland and forms part of Queensland Health's \$2.8 billion Statewide Health Building Program. It will house more than 140 scientists from a variety of disciplines who will undertake world-class research in a diversity of fields.

The Centre for Health Research is the umbrella organisation for research activities on the hospital campus and provides a unique location and environment to take research from basic science to clinical applicability. The opening marks another significant step in the development of a vibrant biomedical and health research environment in Queensland. Expert clinicians are attracted to centres like this because they make it easier to do research. A vibrant medical research environment in a hospital is crucial to the recruitment and retention of the very top level of medical, nursing and allied health staff. Because of the time, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

By having the research centres located in the hospital, bench-top research is just a few steps away from bedside results. We also have a pooling of intellectual and physical capital. The long-term results are better patient care for Queenslanders and more jobs for Queensland through exporting our medical expertise. There are already four commercial organisations collaborating with hospital research groups at the hospital and there is hospital-based research across the whole spectrum of medical research, from basic biomedical research through to ground breaking clinical research. Prominent among the groups will be:

- Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research
- Liver Transplant Research Group
- Bowel Cancer Research Group
- Urological Cancer Group
- Liver Research Groups
- Therapeutics Research Group
- Renal research Group

Research groups are from University of Queensland, Princess Alexandra Hospital, and other Queensland universities. Already, scientists at the Centre have been involved in major research that has both national and international relevance. Currently, researchers in the United States are conducting human trials into the world's first vaccine for cervical cancer, initially developed at the Centres for Health Research by Professor Ian Frazer. Significant funding for the facility has also been provided by University of Queensland, Department of State Development, the Australian Cancer Research Foundation, Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research, and the Mylatt Bequest.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cleaner Coal Technology

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: Queensland is already the largest supplier of high-quality coal to the international market, but there are opportunities to expand this trade by using smart technology. More efficient energy production and cleaner technologies are being developed to significantly reduce coal's pollution and greenhouse drawbacks. Research in the United States is aiming to find ways to use coal for emission-free electricity generation and transportable energy. Technologies have already been developed for removal of sulphur, nitrogen and dust pollutants from the coal burning process. However, new 'clean coal' developments are now targeting the removal of carbon dioxide, a primary source of greenhouse gas and consequent global warming.

Queensland is also making a positive contribution to this research effort through one of its Smart State research centres. The Cooperative Research Centre for Coal in Sustainable Development at CSIRO's Pullenvale precinct is funded jointly by government and industry. The centre's current power generation program will provide information for coal users to enable informed choices on fuel and operating practice consistent with operating and environmental standards. It has developed a scientifically based model to predict boiler performance of any coal. Traditionally, Asian electric utilities have purchased higher quality Australian coal to blend with cheaper coal from Indonesia and China in order to minimise costs. The model developed by the centre will allow for the 'smart' blending of coals with complementary properties for electricity generation to produce cost efficiencies and improved environmental results.

Recently, the government provided funding for research into co-firing gas and coal in power stations. Research to develop cleaner coal technology is as important as finding renewable energy sources on a commercial scale. Coal seam methane is also viewed as an alternative energy source because of its lower level of greenhouse gases and is planned for use in the proposed Townsville power station.

There are also opportunities in Queensland to develop plantations to establish carbon credits which in the future may provide a valuable offset in meeting global greenhouse expectations. New thermal coal combustion technologies such as improved operation of conventional pulverised fuel plants, advanced steam cycle pulverised firing, fluidised bed combustion and integrated gasification combined cycle are expected to enhance power station efficiency and deliver environmental benefits over the next 20 years. This technology based approach to improving the application of coal in our power stations will help the state maintain its competitive advantage in electricity prices and maintain coal based generators as a significant component in our energy portfolio.

During my visit to Japan in June this year, I met with executives of major industrial groups involved in the power supply, steel and coal trading sectors. Interest was expressed in the large central Queensland reserves of environmentally friendly thermal coal, which could lead to us capturing a share of this future niche market. The government is establishing an interdepartmental task force involving representatives from my department and the Departments of State Development, Natural Resources and Mines, and Transport. This task force will work in conjunction with coal mining companies to examine ways in which railway access to an export coal loading terminal and water, which is required to wash the coal as part of the production process, could be provided. This initiative will lead to the greater economic development of central Queensland and expand this regional economy.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Multicultural Assistance Program

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: I am inviting community groups with proposals for fostering multiculturalism to apply for state government funding. The Multicultural Assistance Program is available to not-for-profit registered community organisations for ventures that will encourage engagement between people of different cultures. A fund totalling \$380,000 is available to be shared among organisations with proposals in the categories of multicultural festivals, projects, events and community development. We want to support proposals that will deliver tangible benefits to Queensland by fostering understanding and positive relations between people of different cultures. Last year, organisations that received funding included Austcare, to coordinate a tertiary preparation

program for refugees; the Ethiopian-Australian Community Association of Queensland for Ethiopian New Year; and Annerley and District Community Centre Inc. for the African and Latin American Festival 2002.

Mr Foley: A very fine festival, too!

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed. This program is part of the government's \$3.4 million Community Engagement Grants Strategy which helps involve all Queenslanders in government. Multicultural Affairs Queensland, part of the Community Engagement Division in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, administers the Multicultural Assistance Program. The aim of the program is to support access, participation and cohesion—the core principles of the multicultural Queensland policy—in community life.

The Multicultural Assistance Program is part of the government's continuing support for the promotion of multiculturalism. It also encourages community initiative and creates new opportunities for more communities and organisations to work with government on policy issues and service improvements. Applications for the Multicultural Assistance Program grants close on 30 August. I ask members to draw this to the attention of relevant groups. Copies can also be obtained from the grants coordinator on 07 3224 5322, or 1800 679 763 for callers from outside Brisbane.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Commonwealth Games

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: Over the past seven days we have all enjoyed watching the performance of our Aussie athletes at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. The efforts of our competitors have been spectacular, and we have raced to the lead in the medal count. As the Minister for Sport I wanted to take this opportunity to inform members of the achievements of our own Queensland athletes at the games.

Seventy-three Queenslanders were selected to compete in 14 of the 19 sports showcased at the games. In the pool last night Grant Hackett won a silver medal in the men's 200-metre freestyle. He also won a silver medal in the men's 400-metre freestyle and was in the team with Ashley Callus that won gold in the men's 4 x 100-metre freestyle. Nicole Irving won a silver medal in the women's 50-metre butterfly, and Tarnee White won bronze in the 50-metre breast stroke. On the track, Krishna Stanton and Jackie Gallagher secured second and third in our historic marathon trifecta, and Matt McEwen locked up silver in the decathlon. Paul di Bella won a bronze as part of the Australian men's 4 x 100-metre team, and Justin Anlezark won gold in the men's shot-put with a games record. Shooter Diane Reeves joined her Victorian partner, Nessa Jenkins, to wrap up victory on the last shot of the competition in the women's pairs trap event, and Bruce Favell took out bronze in the men's 25-metre rapid fire pistol pairs. Anne Marie Forder won bronze in the women's 10-metre air pistol pairs, and Susan Trindall won bronze in the women's double trap pairs. In addition, cyclist Kerri Meares took out gold in the women's 500-metre time trial, and Nathan O'Neill won bronze in the men's road time trial. Gymnast Damien Istria won a silver medal in the men's individual horizontal bars as well as joining Dane Smith to win bronze in the men's team all-around competition. I am sure all members will agree that this is a wonderful effort, and in the coming days hopefully more Queenslanders will take their place on the victory dais.

I am also pleased to report that 48 of the athletes representing Queensland at the games are scholarship holders at the state government's Queensland Academy of Sport. Now in its 12th year, the QAS plays a vital role in helping our local sporting heroes compete successfully on the world stage. In addition to financial support for competition and training costs, QAS athletes receive world-standard coaching and support services, such as sports science, strength and conditioning and career education. It is the success of our athletes at events such as the Commonwealth Games, as well as recent Olympic and Paralympic competitions, which reinforces the wisdom of the Queensland government's decision to support elite sport through the academy. However, it is also important to note that the state government is supporting all Queensland members of the Commonwealth Games team—regardless of their association with the QAS—through the bonus grant scheme.

While many of us envy our elite athletes, the reality is that reaching that level invariably involves a great deal of dedication and sacrifice and, in many cases, financial burden. By providing \$5,400 to each Queensland athlete who meets the selection criteria we can help ease that burden and let them concentrate on performing to the best of their ability. It is gratifying to know that with a little help the state government can play a role in helping so many Queenslanders reach the top of their chosen sport. Congratulations again to all those Queenslanders competing at the games, and I am sure the members of the House will join me in wishing them every success over the coming days.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Resource Planning

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.00 a.m.), by leave: Given the undermining by the National Party of Queensland's water resource planning processes, I would like to update the House about ongoing work to ensure that our planning is based upon the best available science.

Earlier independent scientific reviews have shown that the environmental flow assessment methodology used by my department in the development of water resource plans has been recognised as one of the most advanced, transparent and comprehensive applied to water planning in Australia to date. These reviews have concluded that the use of the department's integrated quantity and quality models provides a sound basis for investigating relationships between the flow regime and ecological conditions and impacts. This modelling framework is widely used in eastern Australia and has been adopted by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission for its basin-wide modelling after an extensive international review of available models. The reviews also supported the benchmarking methodologies pioneered by Queensland, and encouraged the department to continue its investigations into river health and stream flows as a research priority.

Queensland continues to lead in important areas of research in partnership with scientists from across Australia. Two research projects are under way in the Condamine-Balonne and Fitzroy catchments to determine important information about the linkages between river flows, water quality, landscape factors and river health. They take into account a wide range of environmental factors. These leading-edge research projects are being undertaken in collaboration with other scientists from CSIRO, Griffith University and other specialist research institutions.

The department is rigorously applying nationally accepted ecological sampling protocols and assessment methodologies throughout its river health assessment programs. Sample collection and processing are subjected to nationally accepted quality assurance and control procedures, and strategies are in place to obtain formal accreditation under the National Association of Testing Authorities. Findings from the wide array of groundbreaking research projects in this area are also routinely subjected to independent peer review to ensure that the highest scientific standards are rigorously maintained. In addition, departmental research and monitoring projects are typically undertaken collaboratively with expert scientists from other agencies and universities to ensure that the latest ideas, findings and techniques are properly assimilated into the department's research.

The department also strives to ensure that its catchment hydrologic models reflect the best information and assessment techniques presently available. For example, the Condamine-Balonne hydrology model was subjected to one of the most comprehensive independent audits undertaken in Australia. Of the 62 recommendations made by the independent auditor PSM, 44 have already been fully implemented and the remainder will be implemented as flood flows occur in the catchment over the coming years.

The IQQM model used by my department has received recognition and support from a wide range of interests in water resource planning. For example, one commentator had this to say about the model as far back as 1996—

The model we are putting together is a very sophisticated model of world standard.

I think what we are doing is using the best data we have got when you consider a lot of systems around Queensland and around Australia use a lot less data than that.

Who was that astute commentator? It was none other than then Minister for Natural Resources Howard Hobbs before the 1996 estimates committee.

I am sure the House will agree that the government is committed to ensuring that its water planning processes are founded in the best available scientific information and will continue to invest in new knowledge in this important area. I am sure all members now appreciate the rank hypocrisy of the Queensland National Party, which has once again been caught out.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fanfare 2002

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: Tonight Queensland's premier state school bands and orchestras will vie for the honour of being crowned 2002 Fanfare Grand Final Winner. Fanfare is a statewide festival which showcases and celebrates emerging young talent in Queensland's state school instrumental music programs. More than 15,000 students in 560 music ensembles performed in regional festivals across the state from May this year. A number of external musicians who assessed these performances were themselves products of Education Queensland's internationally acclaimed instrumental music program.

The 560 bands were whittled down to 11 state finalists, who this week entertained the Brisbane public at daily performances in the Queen Street Mall and also at the Queensland Orchestra Studios in West End. These 11 bands then underwent another round of judging by Queensland Conservatorium of Music lecturers and eminent performers Ralph Haultgren, Elizabeth Morgan and Don Lebler over two days this week. I understand that all three adjudicators were glowing in their praise of the 11 ensembles, which made their task yesterday of selecting five grand finalists even more difficult.

I am delighted to inform the House today that the following five bands have made it through to the grand final and will be performing in concert tonight at the Brisbane Performing Arts Complex. They are Mansfield State High School Concert Band, conducted by Marg Overs; Brisbane State High School Percussion Ensemble, conducted by David Adelt; Blackwater State High School Concert Band, conducted by John Evenhuis; Cairns State High School Orchestra, conducted by Bob Favell; and MacGregor State High School Stage Band, also conducted by David Adelt. An adjudication panel will select from tonight's performances the 2002 Fanfare Grand Final Winner.

I congratulate all the band members, their parents and their dedicated teachers on their hard work in getting to this point. I also acknowledge the hundreds of other bands across the state. Our music program is recognised nationally and internationally. I also acknowledge the work of our instrumental music instructors and the Fanfare organisers for their dedication to and promotion of music excellence in Queensland.

Word has obviously spread about the calibre of these fine young musicians in Queensland state schools. Tonight's concert at the 1,600-seat Concert Hall is sold out—and so it should be. I am delighted that a number of my parliamentary colleagues, both government and non-government members, will be joining me tonight as I celebrate with these young achievers. Local members will no doubt be barracking for their local schools. I wish each school good luck tonight. I am sure their performances will exceed all of our expectations.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Millennium Arts Project

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: One of Queensland's great cultural strengths is its regional diversity. This government respects and supports that regional diversity in the arts. The regional program of the Millennium Arts Project is beginning to have a profound impact on the lives of people in communities where the projects are now taking shape.

The regional program of the Millennium Arts initiative is providing \$15 million for 16 regional projects. These include the recently opened cultural and entertainment centre in Logan City—I attended that centre with local honourable members a few evenings ago; a mining heritage project in Mount Isa; and the expansion of the Gladstone Art Gallery where, incidentally, tomorrow evening I shall be opening a fascinating exhibition of the life and voyages of the explorer Matthew Flinders. All honourable members are welcome to come.

The Millennium Arts initiatives also embrace arts and craft facilities in indigenous communities. Among them is a project at the far-north Queensland indigenous community of Yarrabah. The Millennium Arts regional program is contributing \$180,000 towards the cost of developing an arts and craft workshop centre situated in the grounds of the Menmyny Museum and adjacent to the high school and the old people's home at Yarrabah. The ATSIC Community Development Program will also provide \$77,000 and the local government bodies capital works subsidy scheme will provide \$15,500. The centre will support local artists and educate and inform visitors about the creation of indigenous artworks. The centre will be linked to the existing Menmyny Museum to provide a total experience for visitors. Being centrally located, the centre will provide an ideal meeting point for four distinct groups—elders, students and artists, along with visitors and tourists.

Students and elders will come together and use the space for art modules where cultural and traditional stories related by the elders will be transposed from verbal history to visual art. The purpose-designed arts and crafts centre will provide workshop facilities for artists in at least six specialties: pottery, basket weaving, painting on canvas, lino printing, screen-printing and paper making. Included is a retail gallery where the works will be showcased, building on retail skills and professional development. It will provide a practical way for visitors to gain an insight into and appreciation of the finished products and the culture of the Yarrabah community while complementing the existing museum as an overall cultural showcase. Construction of the new centre commenced in April and is now nearing completion. The opening is anticipated around September or October.

Not only do projects like this maintain and enhance the local arts industry; they also create local jobs and provide opportunities to increase cultural tourism. They are also important in preserving the identity of local communities. Of the 16 projects under the regional program, four have already been completed and another six will be completed by mid-year. Construction on the rest of the projects will be rolled out progressively over the next 12 months. These projects will ensure that rural and regional Queensland has quality arts and cultural facilities available to all.

A number of these projects are being jointly developed with the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. These include the construction of a mining heritage centre at Mount Isa, the development of heritage tourist facilities in Mount Morgan and the Customs House interpretation project in Rockhampton. This partnership approach to the development of cultural facilities between the regional program and the Queensland Heritage Trails Network ensures the maximum benefit for Queensland communities.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Riversleigh Management Strategy

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (10.11 a.m.), by leave: The Riversleigh world heritage area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994. Riversleigh is located about 250 kilometres north-west of Mount Isa and is a 10,000 hectare portion of Boodjamulla—Lawn Hill—National Park. Riversleigh is clearly one of the most significant fossil deposits in the world. It is truly a national treasure. It dates back to a period some 15 million to 25 million years ago when this now semi-arid area was covered in dense rainforest. These extensive fossil deposits are encased in hard, rough limestone that was formed in lime-rich freshwater pools.

Riversleigh has already provided the first records for many distinctive groups of living mammals, such as marsupial moles and feather-tailed gliders. It has also provided us with an insight into many other unique and now extinct mammals, birds and reptiles such as marsupial lions, diprotodontids and huge pythons, together with the early ancestors of bats, crocodiles, the platypus and the Tasmanian tiger.

Mr Schwarten: The thylacine.

Mr WELLS: Yes, I take that interjection of the honourable member: the thylacine. The Riversleigh site is unique. I visited Riversleigh last November and announced a number of measures to increase fossil protection. One of these measures involved the appointment of a full-time ranger and an \$800,000 capital works program designed to showcase the rich fossil reserves to tourists and also to guard against possible damage.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has received no confirmed reports of any acts of vandalism since the new full-time ranger has been in place. May I emphasize that point. Everything that honourable members may have seen on the

7.30 *Report* last night is true. However, we fixed it. There have been no confirmed reports by my department of vandalism to the fossil sites since I announced those initiatives.

The Queensland government has injected more than \$1.5 million over the past five years to protect this national treasure. In order to provide a more transparent basis for meeting our obligations under the world heritage convention, the state and Commonwealth governments have jointly prepared the Riversleigh Management Strategy, which I will table. This is being launched jointly now by my federal colleague the federal Environment Minister, David Kemp. He is attending a conference at the Sheraton. We both take the view that this world heritage site is too important to play politics with. This document represents the willingness of both the Commonwealth and the state governments to work together to preserve this incomparable treasure.

Its preparation involved considerable community consultation, particularly with the traditional owners. The stated purpose of the strategy is fourfold: to provide a management framework for maintaining the integrity of the world heritage area; to present clear information concerning Australia's obligations in relation to Riversleigh and identify other values; to establish new community consultative arrangements; and to present strategies for managing the world heritage area.

Part of the management plan is to maintain the world heritage area, monitoring uses and impacts, developing a tourism/visitor strategy, and preparing a five-year research plan, including on-site and off-site facilities for researchers. Many of the actions in the strategy are well advanced. Emphasis has been placed on better visitor education and control, particularly at the primary public access point, known as D-site.

Already the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has increased monitoring and surveillance. I urge honourable members opposite to monitor and survey very carefully the ministerial statement that I am making, because I am sure that they would have a great deal of empathy with the fossils. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has now completed a detailed map of each of the sites and will be able to use that to substantiate any future complaints of disturbance that are not a result of genuine research. Anyone found to cause damage to the site will face severe penalties under the Nature Conservation Act. These penalties will be robustly administered. I commend the Riversleigh Management Strategy to the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane Housing Company

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: I want to advise the House that the directors of the Brisbane Housing Company held their first full board meeting yesterday. This is an important milestone in the development of social housing in Queensland and demonstrates the Beattie government's commitment to finding real housing solutions for low-income families and individuals.

The Brisbane Housing Company is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established to provide affordable housing in Brisbane. The company will create approximately 600 new dwellings over four years for people who cannot afford the escalating rents in Brisbane. There will be a mix of boarding houses, units and houses to meet the needs of a variety of residents. Using initial funding from the Department of Housing and the Brisbane City Council, the Brisbane Housing Company will work in partnership with community groups and the private sector to build or buy housing for low-income families and individuals. The state government has committed \$50 million over the next four years to establish the company and the Brisbane City Council has provided \$10 million over the same period.

The board appointed to oversee the company has a total of 10 members, consisting of five members announced at the opening of the \$7 million Bowen Hills Housing Complex in July—the first development proposed for inclusion within the Brisbane Housing Company. I might add that it was opened by the Premier. A further five community shareholder representatives were voted to sit on the board last Friday. Members of the board include Kevin Seymour of the Seymour Group; Leanda Cooper of Citimark Properties; John Gallimore of Allens Arthur Robinson; Jan Williams of Jardine Developments; Mike Myers, the executive director of the Queensland Community Housing Coalition; Joanne Besley, a practising architect nominated by the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre; Ken Gough, nominated by the Metropolitan Association Towards Community Housing; John McAuliffe, nominated by the Australian Property Institute, who is a

private property/commercial consultant and chairperson of the Australian Property Institute; and Ann Langley, nominated by the Queensland Public Tenants Association.

Housing for the company will be acquired primarily in the inner and middle suburbs, but the constitution of the company will allow it to operate anywhere in the city. The company will use income from rents to manage and maintain its properties and any surplus will be used to fund further expansion. The charitable status of the company minimises GST payments and enables it to receive charitable contributions.

Although the Brisbane Housing Company is a great initiative of the Department of Housing and the Brisbane City Council, it is not the position of first choice. It has been forced upon us by the reduction in federal funding for housing construction programs and the Howard government's shift towards direct rent assistance. I am determined that the Howard government will not escape its responsibilities to fund new housing construction. Capturing rent assistance payments through a structure such as the Brisbane Housing Company is one way that I can see that we can do that.

Over the past 15 years, inner-city Brisbane has experienced a serious reduction in low-cost rental housing. About one-third of all boarding houses in Brisbane have closed since 1987 and rents in the inner city have risen at above-inflation rates. As a result, housing options for low-income tenants have been greatly reduced and the Howard government's decision to cut funding for housing construction is exacerbating this situation.

The first proposed site is the Bowen Hills Affordable Housing Project, which will accommodate more than 100 residents on low to moderate incomes. I have been advised that at the first meeting the board discussed the company set-up, staffing of the company and the operational plans for the future. Feasibility studies are currently being undertaken for other sites within the inner and near city to determine their suitability for inclusion by the Brisbane Housing Company. This is a totally new initiative and marks a new era in delivering social housing in Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cole Royal Commission into Building Industry

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.19 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise the House that I have been requested by the Cole royal commission to attend and provide information regarding certain issues pertaining to the matter of this government's policy on enterprise bargaining agreements in the building industry. It is my intention to cooperate fully with this commission and, accordingly, I will present myself to the inquiry when I am required.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Families Department, Funding

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (10.20 a.m.), by leave: An article in the *Sunday Mail* last Sunday, 28 July, reported that the Department of Families will spend \$12 million on a high-tech computer network. The journalist chose to compare what is actually a \$12 million investment, over the next four years, in information technology systems and infrastructure with the additional money that we are providing to our non-government partners to implement trial prevention and early intervention programs this year. The opposition's families spokesman, true to form, jumped in and claimed that Families funding was being 'misdirected' and that it was 'disgraceful that money should go to information technology when abused children needed help'. This from Mr Copeland, despite the fact that he had previously criticised the department and the government for our lack of computer systems. He complained to Susan Mitchell on 16 July that we were using manual systems to collect information, rather than computer systems. The concept of having it both ways does not apply in this case. Let me clear this matter up now.

The \$12 million investment in improved information technology and communication systems, as opposed to the 'computer' in the *Sunday Mail* headline, is a four-year investment. Of that \$12 million, this year \$3 million will be spent upgrading and improving a range of technologies to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our case management systems in child protection. \$750,000 will be spent on the development of smart tools for service delivery staff. It is worth

members taking a moment to listen while I tell them how that \$750,000 will assist family services officers who work in the field assessing child protection cases and responding to them. Using a handheld PC-phone, we are developing a prototype that will enable staff to voice record case notes of visits or initial assessments. That will then be translated to text and be available for editing from either a desktop personal computer or a handheld device in the field. Our staff in the field will have the latest technology at their fingertips as they work to protect vulnerable children and families. It is estimated that front-line family services officers spend up to one-third of their time inputting data. Our new smart tools will mean less time on data entry and more time devoted to clients.

The rest of this year's \$3 million investment in improved communication and information systems will be spent planning and developing an integrated system to ensure that if, for example, a child protection officer inputs data in the Gold Coast office it is also easily accessible to workers elsewhere in the state and in the central office. Extracting data from the current system is difficult and very time consuming.

The *Sunday Mail* also referred to our \$6.7 million investment in trials of early intervention and prevention projects and claimed it represented our total expenditure on child protection this year. It is, in fact, just part of \$14.9 million in new funds provided by the Beattie government for child abuse prevention, as opposed to child protection, this year and reflects the future direction of the department. The Department of Families is allocating nearly \$167 million for child protection and out-of-home care this year. This is a 96 per cent increase from the 1998-99 financial year and it is 56 times the amount we are spending this year on new information technology and communications systems improvements.

The *Sunday Mail* also got it wrong when it said the \$5.1 million allocation for new staff was not 'specifically in the child protection area'. In fact, we are putting on 90 new staff this year. Seventy-six will work in the child protection area and the remaining 14 will work in child protection support roles.

The Beattie government is investing in a major overhaul and update of the Department of Families' antiquated information systems that we inherited when we came to office in 1998. The department is continually being scrutinised and criticised in the media and by the opposition because we do not have the information systems to produce instant and detailed data on child protection. Systems need not only updating but also integrating. Workers in the field are frustrated because they have to enter and re-enter information, and staff in the central office experience problems in accessing data that journalists and, in fact, ministers would expect to have readily at hand. Our front-line workers need good data entry systems and our managers need reliable and accurate information about our service delivery and clients. That is what we are delivering over the next four years. In the meantime, our spending on child protection will be of record proportions and is a true testament to our commitment to Queensland families and children.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I table the annual report of the Public Accounts Committee for 2001-02. This report outlines the activities of the committee during the year. On behalf of all committee members, I thank our staff for their hard work and commitment, and I take this opportunity to thank the other committee members for their contributions and especially acknowledge the committee's deputy chair, Dr David Watson, in this regard. I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Public Works Committee's annual report for 2001-02. I thank my fellow committee members for their assistance and support. Thanks also to the committee staff for their assistance. I commend the report to the House.

OVERSEAS VISIT**Report**

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (10.26 a.m.): I table a report on my recent study trip to the United States and Canada which culminated in my attendance at the Biotech 2002 conference in Toronto.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**State Government Performance**

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.26 a.m.): As the weeks have unfolded, we have seen more and more evidence of the industrial and financial mess that the Beattie Labor government has put Queensland into. We are coming to the conclusion of the debate on this budget, a budget which has seen another massive operating deficit of \$486 million. We have seen the industrial chaos that has unfolded around this state with the nurses strike, the action by public hospital doctors, the public sector unions, the ambulance service, the police union, and the forthcoming negotiations for the teachers. All we have seen from this government is ad hoc and knee-jerk reactions. Nothing is planned. Previous governments have managed enterprise bargaining negotiations and wage rises in a planned and budgeted way. Now, every time the government is put in a position of having to negotiate—and it should be a planned negotiation—all we see is ad hoc reactions.

Land tax will go up by \$30 million. Payroll tax will go up by \$75 million. The Transport Department is reviewing all of its charges, fees, fines and levies. Every time the government is in a tight corner, we see this ridiculous situation of another 1,000 jobs lost. Now it is 2,000 jobs lost. What will happen if there are any more demands? How many more jobs will go? Is it the fact that this government has been presiding over a system where 2,000 people have had nothing to do, or is it the fact that these people have actually been providing back-up for doctors, nurses, teachers and police, and the contracts for the Transport Department, Family Services and everybody else?

They reckon that EB is finished because it is not possible to cut any more meat off the bone, but suddenly the public sector unions are asked to take a cutback of 2,000 jobs. They will be asked to prune back their particular efforts. All we will see from this financial mismanagement—

Time expired.

Water Pollution Control Centre, Logan City

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): Recently, I was honoured to open stage 6 of the Logan water pollution control centre in Loganholme in my electorate, along with the mayor of Logan City, Councillor John Freeman. This centre's waste water treatment facility is cutting-edge, world-class design in waste water treatment technology. Through oxidation ditches that are now bioreactors, the biological nutrient removal process featured in the plant ensures that harmful levels of contaminants are prevented from release into the environment.

This is the kind of biotechnology that the Beattie government loves to see in Queensland. The centre is also an achievement in terms of innovation and responsible city economic management. A smart city is Logan! Logan is the epicentre of the fastest growing region in Australia, and the problem of dealing with increased waste water flows without further impacting on the region's waterways has been a major challenge. A conventional but less cost-effective approach would have involved the building of a completely new plant; however, some smart engineering resulted in the existing plant being expanded and adapted at a considerable capital cost saving to the city. The plant also represents a great achievement in terms of cooperation between the different tiers of government, namely, the Logan City Council and the Beattie state government. The Department of Local Government and Planning supported the project with a grant of 40 per cent of the plant's capital costs.

The project was also supported by the EPA through the Healthy Waterways partnership. Enhancement of the plant will also incorporate the Logan Water Laboratory Service—a service that is responsible for testing the quality of drinking water and monitoring the waste treatment process for biological nutrient removal. I would like to thank the staff, especially Chris Lane, the

senior technology administrator, for showing me this great facility and for providing me with the knowledge of this extremely important process. The centre impresses me as a very smart package of measures designed to protect the natural values of the city. I think these outstanding achievements are testimony to the innovative and enterprising spirit of Logan City. This centre will contribute to the enhancement of the local environment and to the sustainability and valuing of the Queensland environment. I congratulate the government—

Time expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Transport Charges

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the government's desperate attempts to prop up its second consecutive deficit budget with another \$30 million land tax grab, a \$10 million transport charges slug, a \$75 million hike in payroll tax, a planned doubling of traffic fines and the sacking of 2,000 public servants. I refer him also to the latest rejection of the government's 3.5 per cent pay offer, this time by the Public Hospital Staff Association. I ask: does this mean that the Premier will have to sack another 1,000 public servants to increase the pay offer? Does the continuing purge of the Public Service backup mean that surgeons will be required to answer telephones, that teachers will be required to organise school maintenance and that police will be tied to the desk instead of getting out on the beat?

Mr BEATTIE: Let us deal with one matter that the member raised in relation to transport fees, because I have already answered the question about employment on a number of occasions in this House. I have also incorporated in *Hansard* my letter to caucus in that respect. All of those issues have been answered. Let us deal with the issue concerning transport fees.

Five of the eight increases in transport fees either involve optional services or are designed to prevent taxpayers being forced to pay for people's carelessness, bad luck or misfortune. Two more increases involve attempts to prevent taxpayers' money being wasted by learner drivers not taking written tests seriously and by people not turning up for vehicle inspection bookings. For the average motorist who holds a five-year drivers licence, who pays his or her registration bills on time and who does not lose any registration or licensing documentation, there will be no change in what that person pays to Queensland Transport. Let us be clear about that.

I will go through the changes individually. If someone is careless, unfortunate or unlucky enough to lose a drivers licence, why should all taxpayers help to pay for the cost of a replacement? The current cost of \$14.60 does not cover the cost of replacing lost licences. The new fee of \$22 does. If someone is careless, unfortunate or unlucky enough to have a lost a vehicle registration label or to have had it damaged, why should all taxpayers help to pay for the cost of a replacement? There is no fee at the moment. The \$10 fee will cover the cost of this carelessness or bad luck. If someone ignores or forgets to renew their vehicle registration and it lapses, why should all taxpayers be forced to pay for it? Why should all taxpayers pay more than \$400,000 a year to cover the cost of reinstating these registrations?

The fact is that unregistered vehicles are also uninsured, which puts other road users at risk. If a motor vehicle's registration lapses, so does the CTP, which means that the car is being driven uninsured. That can affect other people. It is also a fact that unregistered vehicles are also uninsured, which puts other road vehicles at risk. At the moment there is no fee. A fee of \$40 for motor vehicles and \$10 for boats and trailers will cover costs. It will also have the effect of encouraging people to pay on time. There is evidence that learner drivers are not preparing for the written test to obtain a drivers licence.

Mr HORAN: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Premier has been given two and a half minutes to answer the question. The question was about the government having to sack another 1,000 public servants to pay for this increase. The question was: what backup will the government have for frontline public servants?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked the question.

Mr BEATTIE: I have already answered the question. I have said no. I spelt out the answer yesterday, and I will not repeat it again now. More than 60 per cent of learner drivers failed last year, resulting in their having to resit the test. We need to follow the example of every other state and to charge people for the cost incurred so that there is no cost to other taxpayers.

Transport Charges

Mr HORAN: I refer the Premier to the ministerial statement that he made in this House on 19 June in which he said—

We must take full advantage of the fact that we have secured Australian Airlines' headquarters in Cairns.

I also refer the Premier to both the Australian Airlines web site and the May edition of the Qantas magazine, which both state that Australian Airlines will be headquartered in Sydney. I ask: why has the Premier perpetrated a cruel confidence trick on the people of Cairns? The Premier just cannot help but gild the lily. It is great if more visitors come to Cairns, but if it is an operating base in Cairns, why does the Premier not tell the truth and say that it is an operating base in Cairns instead of wheeling out more deceit by going too far with the PR?

Mr BEATTIE: Here is another example of the opposition trying to undermine Queensland. Let us be really clear. Members of the opposition undermine Queensland at every opportunity. They did it with Virgin Blue and they did it when I went to Norfolk Island. What happened yesterday? We announced Alliance Airlines. The chairman acknowledged that visit and its importance at yesterday's announcement. But let us look at what members opposite undermine. They were critical of AMC, Comalco, Australian Airlines, Alliance Airlines and Virgin Blue.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Opposition Leader undermines everything he can.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: Look at the wreckers! We want builders; we want a vision for Queensland. Let us go through what the opposition has undermined. The opposition attacked the expansion of Warner Bros in terms of the movie industry. What has the opposition done? It has attacked the movie industry, the light metals industry in regard to AMC, Comalco, Australian Airlines and Alliance Airlines. There was criticism in relation to parliament being held in Townsville. Let us look at it. The opposition has attacked Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Gladstone. Where else does the opposition want to attack? Get the long list out.

The opposition is now trying to undermine our strategy to save the bush from salinity. Is nowhere in Queensland safe from one of the opposition's attacks? Is there nowhere in Queensland that anyone is safe from the National Party? The answer is no. Then we had attempts to undermine Berri and to undermine every company that invests in this state. The National Party is considered a joke amongst the business community. It is considered as a joke amongst cattle producers—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: What is going on here is—

Mr Horan: Where are the headquarters?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: It is their question time. If they want to continue to wreck this House, that is fine. I am entitled to courtesy. When the member for Beaudesert was Speaker, he ensured that ministers were entitled to be heard. I ask for nothing more than what the member delivered when he was Speaker. Do not be hypocritical about it. The reality here is that we have a—

Mr Horan: Time.

Mr BEATTIE: Oh well, if the member does not want to hear the answer, that is fair enough.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Albert, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from the Moorooka State School in the electorate of Yeerongpilly.

Riverfiesta; Australian Airlines; Mr B. Green

Ms KEECH: I refer the Premier to the clear need for Brisbane to have its own multicultural festival, and I ask: what steps has the government taken to fill this void in Brisbane's event calendar?

Mr BEATTIE: Is it not good to talk about positive things—the sorts of things that are giving Queensland a direction and vision for the future? A multicultural Riverfiesta is a colourful addition to this year's program for the 2002 Riverfestival to be staged in Brisbane over 10 exciting days from 30 August to 8 September. The state government is funding the Riverfestival as part of its \$750,000 contribution to the overall Riverfiesta and the Riverfestival itself for 2002. The Riverfiesta will fill a major void in Brisbane's events calendar. It will be a truly multicultural event to celebrate the music, dance, cultures and theatres of the world in one dynamic day—Sunday, 8 September—at three outdoor venues.

Local ethnic communities are being invited to participate in festivals at the three venues along the Brisbane River at New Farm Park, Orleigh Park at West End, and the University of Queensland at St Lucia. Each festival will operate beside a ferry stop, with multicultural entertainers travelling by ferry from one stop to another to entertain the crowds. It will also have those traditional events that Brisbane has taken to its heart—Riverfire, Riversymphony and Riverfeast.

The most serious side of the Riverfestival involves the river science management initiatives of the Riversymposium and the Riverprize. The Riversymposium brings together river managers, scientists, politicians, industry and community groups to tackle river management issues, while Riverprize recognises community organisations that show outstanding achievement in river management. For example, from June 2001 to July 2002 more than 220,000 pieces of litter were collected from the Brisbane and Bremer Rivers through the Healthy Waterways campaign. As part of that campaign, 53 initiatives are being implemented from the 2001 South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy to improve water quality in the Brisbane River and its tributaries.

The state government is committed to the Riverfestival and has allocated \$750,000 to the event this year—\$250,000 more than last year. There is no doubting Riverfestival's popularity. Last year more than 750,000 people attended and this year's is shaping up to be even bigger and better.

I seek to incorporate into *Hansard* an early brief in relation to Australian Airlines, because it answers the questions. I am aware that there has been some speculation about the head office being in Sydney. The reality is that the major operations will be in Cairns. Whether there is some notional small office in Sydney—and I have seen some reports to that effect—is a matter for Australian Airlines. We are interested in the jobs—the 350 jobs in Cairns—and the 350,000 tourists coming to this state and this country, and the 15,000 flow-on jobs. I seek leave to incorporate that answer in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

TOPIC: Australian Airlines Start-up

RESPONSE

Australian Airlines will commence operations on 27 October 2002 and will phase in services between Cairns and Osaka, Fukuoka, Singapore, Taipei, Hong Kong and Nagoya.

Australian Airlines estimates that it will employ approximately 300 people at its Cairns operational base.

An incentives offer was made to Australian Airlines to attract its operational hub to Cairns. The composition of this incentives offer was payroll tax refunds, training assistance and joint funding of marketing activities with Tourism Queensland.

It is expected that the spin off effects from the project will be significant, and far outweigh the value of the incentives package.

Once fully operational, the airline is expected to bring in around 10,000 tourists into Queensland. Contracts, for example catering and cleaning, let to local suppliers, are expected to exceed \$25 million in value.

The Office of Small Business and the Cairns SDC are working with local firms to assist them to prepare bids for contracts to be released by Australian Airlines.

The proposed entrance of Virgin Blue into the international market should have no impact on Australian Airlines proposed operations. Virgin Blue is looking at servicing the Trans Tasman and Pacific Island destinations whilst Australian Airlines is looking at South East Asian destinations.

Mr BEATTIE: Finally, in relation to Brisbane City Council and the Riverfestival, it is with some sadness that I indicate to the House this morning the tragic news that Bernie Green, the executive officer to the Lord Mayor, died tragically last night of a heart attack. He worked very closely with the government on Riverfestival. He was a lovely human being. On behalf of all members, I express my sympathies to his family.

Hospital Bed Numbers

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to the discovery last week that up to a dozen patients were forced to lie on trolleys—yes, they were on trolleys—in the Mater Hospital emergency department for up to four days waiting for a bed in a ward. I refer also to the incident reported this morning on ABC Radio where a man with emphysema was left in the spinal ward of the Princess Alexandra Hospital because there were not any beds free in any other wards. His nephew said that there were many patients in the emergency department also on trolleys waiting for beds. I ask: will the minister apologise to this gentleman and all of the public patients being forced to wait in emergency or other departments for days on end because they are unable to receive a bed in a ward, and what efforts is she making to rectify this dilemma? When will the situation of public hospital patients waiting too long in emergency departments and other departments for placement in a ward come to an end?

Mrs EDMOND: This time of the year, as other members would know but the member for Maroochydore clearly does not, is often a busy time because a lot of elderly people with winter ills and chills turn up in emergency departments. In recent times this has been extremely exacerbated by a lack of GPs, particularly in the city fringe areas of the state, such as Logan, Caboolture and Ipswich. Recently, I was surprised to see that the federal government, having made a commitment at the last federal election, that it would look at redressing the situation at Caboolture—

Miss Simpson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, I know that you are interested in this because this is an issue in Redcliffe and you have raised it with me in the appropriate way. The federal government announced that it would address the issue of a lack of GPs in these areas by providing a higher rebate to those who worked in city fringe areas. Imagine my amazement when it decided that it would use 11-year-old statistics to determine what were city fringe areas with high growth. That excluded areas that were not in existence 11 years ago where we now have whole cities. However, it did include Kenmore Hills. I am sure the member for Moggill knows that there is a huge problem in Kenmore Hills with GPs! It included some of the most affluent areas of our city but excluded Logan, Caboolture, Redlands, Redcliffe, Ipswich and Townsville, where there has been huge growth and it is impossible to get GPs.

What are we doing about this? We have been talking about the issue of emergency departments for some time. In 1998 we put \$5 million into improving emergency departments and in this year's budget we have recently put another \$2 million into emergency departments to address this issue, which is really being caused by the Commonwealth. I have been interested to see recent media reports that the Commonwealth is finally reviewing its \$2.5 billion subsidy into private health funds, because it has failed completely to reduce workloads on the public hospitals and particularly the emergency departments. I understand that it has blown out now by over \$1 billion and that is growing. Every time the health funds jack up their premiums, this creates another blow-out for the Commonwealth government. They have now decided to have a look at it. At the same time, if they put that funding into the public health systems, Queensland would receive \$500 million extra each and every year to put into our emergency departments. This would assist us to attend to all those things that the member opposite bleats about constantly. I hope that all members sitting opposite are lobbying their federal colleagues so that when it reviews this it gets it right and starts putting funding into the things that it should be funding—the public hospital system—and redressing the \$100 million that it does not give us for the HOCl, the oral health program and so on. All of those could be addressed.

Liberal Party

Mrs CROFT: I refer the Premier to the media reports in today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* that show the fierce infighting in the Liberal Party hierarchy has now spread to Gold Coast electorates, and I ask: what implications does this have for politics in Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: We are not quite sure. I read this report in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* with some interest. The article, headed 'A stack of woes for warring Libs', stated—

But sources told *The Gold Coast Bulletin* the battle at Robina, one of three state branches within Mr Quinn's electorate, first erupted three weeks ago when Brisbane newspaper journalist Jeff Sommerfeld challenged the incumbent chairman, Aaron Debattista, a Bond University law student who works as a volunteer in Mr Quinn's office.

Mr Sommerfeld and Gold Coast Young Liberal Michael Gattenby, who ran for vice-chairman, were successfully elected but the result was overturned and a new meeting called when it was discovered some of the voters were not financial members of the party.

...

Mr Sommerfeld yesterday refused to comment on internal party matters.

However, he has been a bit vocal this week. He wrote articles headed 'No pie in the sky' and 'Beattie defies outraged developers' in the *Courier-Mail*. I saw his by-line on those articles. I look forward to seeing this article in the *Courier-Mail* at some point. Interestingly—and this worries me—

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Just be a bit patient; I am coming to National Party members.

In the same article, Rob Borbidge—and I wonder how many other members opposite want to put up their hand—stepped out of the National Party side of things to try to help a good mate in the Liberal Party. By the way, I want Bob to know that we are with him. I know he is in trouble with the leadership. If we were in his caucus of three, we would vote for him.

There was an article in the press under the headline 'Quinn vows to reform Libs', which states—

Mr Quinn has also vowed he will reconsider his leadership position if his party ignores his calls for a major constitutional revamp.

We are terrified that Joan will come back, so we are with you, Bob! I have to say, though—

Mr Mackenroth: They are going to be unique: they are going to have a leader outside the parliament.

Mr BEATTIE: That is not a bad idea—a leader outside the parliament. We will do the American system. David, I want you to understand that there is nothing personal in our support for Bob. There is nothing personal. We like you, too, but—

Dr Watson: I support him too!

Mr BEATTIE: I have to tell you—

A government member: You've got the numbers now, Bob!

Mr BEATTIE: You will win two to one. So Joan is in trouble. All we can say to Joan is this: do not come home. You do not have the numbers.

A government member: So that's how the saying goes.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right; she cannot win. By the way, judging by the state of the Liberal Party we know why you are voting for him as well. Let me get back to Rob Borbidge. He said—

The evidence is pretty clear that, when political parties kneecap their leader, which is essentially what happened to me, that comes at a terrible political price.

All we can say is this: Bob, good luck, mate. We are with you.

Transport Charges

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Premier.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I am his No. 1 supporter.

Mr QUINN: With supporters like him, I do not need enemies. I refer the Premier to the confirmation that a range of new fees and charges will be levied by the Department of Transport on motorists and that the government did not disclose these new fees and charges in the current budget. I ask: other than a call to talkback radio by an informed listener, how will the public know whether or not the government has plans for further new fees and charges which it has not yet announced?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question, and I will take it seriously because he is a person with enormous potential.

Ms Bligh: That's all he's got.

Mr BEATTIE: No, I have to treat him with respect because I am his No. 1 supporter. There are from time to time submissions made from departments. These proposals were part of the Aligning Services and Priorities (ASAP) process and would have been announced as part of the ASAP process at the appropriate time, and that was our intention. There was a call to 4BC; the

member is quite right. When that happened the minister consulted with me and the Treasurer and we decided that they would be announced at that point. The minister would have announced them at an appropriate time and that would not have been far off.

Mr Bredhauer: I wanted to make sure that the customer service centres had all the information.

Mr BEATTIE: What the minister has basically indicated and what he told me yesterday is that he wanted to make sure that the customer service centres had all the information before the fees and charges were announced so that when people called they would get the right information.

Let me finish what I was saying before. Taking the charges themselves, members can understand why these are quite reasonable. Let us take, for example, the learners fee. More than 60 per cent of learner drivers failed last year which resulted in them having to resit the test. We need to follow the example of every other state and charge people for this, because there is a cost to the taxpayer. This costs money. There is no fee at the moment and taxpayers' money has to be diverted to pay for this waste. In future there will be a charge of \$15 which will cover costs and encourage learners to take the test more seriously. The fifth point—because I made some of these before—is that commercial vehicle operators do not have to pay when they make a booking to have their vehicles inspected. This results in many operators failing to turn up for the inspection. This means that taxpayers' money has to be diverted to pay for this waste. To cover costs and to stop this waste, there will be a \$20 fee. Basically, we believe that if there is a fee people will turn up for the inspection. Why should the taxpayer pay if people do not turn up? This is fair. This is reasonable.

The sixth point is that it costs Queensland Transport the same amount to issue a drivers licence no matter how long the licence lasts. The five-year drivers licence will not increase in price. It will remain the same. Only if people choose to ask for a licence for less than five years will they face an increase in fees to cover costs—that is, \$14 plus \$8.95 for each year of the licence. The seventh point is that, in relation to the optional 18-plus card, at the moment all taxpayers subsidise the cost of this card and their taxes have to be diverted from other areas. To cover costs the price will rise from \$8.60 to \$20. The eighth point is that at the moment all taxpayers have to pay for the transfer fees for recreational ship registrations. A fee of \$16.95 corrects the anomaly of having no fee and brings boat registrations in line with motor vehicle and trailer registration transfer costs.

Many changes are about encouraging the community to choose the option that imposes least cost on the taxpayer, and I want to make that point. In most cases the costs are less than those in other states. A strong focus in these fees has been ensuring that services continue to be provided at the lowest possible cost but that those who use the services pay for the services, not other motorists. If members look at what I have said in the answers to the honourable member for Robina and the Leader of the Opposition they will see that I have comprehensively dealt with every one of those items. This is about a fair go for all taxpayers.

Water Resources, Condamine-Balonne Catchment

Ms NOLAN: I refer the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines to comments by the member for Warrego on ABC Radio last Wednesday who, when asked for his solution to water resource challenges facing the Condamine-Balonne catchment, said—

Well, okay, the solution to the problem is issue the licences that are presently there.

I ask: what impact would Howard's way have on the future of the Lower Balonne River system if irrigators were allowed to develop their water harvesting to full potential?

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrego, we are going to hear the answer.

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. Is it not amazing that, given the week we have had, the only questions I get in this place about natural resource management come from government members? Does that not say everything? Before I deal with Howard's way, I think it is useful and instructive to understand where we have come from, and I just happen to have an assistant here in the form of a graph. In 1995-96 when the honourable member opposite was minister, flood harvesting in the Lower Balonne equated to just over 100,000 megalitres per year. That is when Mr Hobbs told the parliament, and I remind honourable members, that—

In terms of water allocation, Queensland has been far more conservative than in other parts of the Basin, and as the flow management plans are finalised, there should be an opportunity for some further development of water use in Queensland.

However, when a reasonable upper limit to the use of water is set, it will be important for all parties to operate within the limits so that users' rights are fulfilled all the way down the basin and the rivers are healthy.

What we saw was a significant growth up to around about 300,000 megalitres a year before my predecessor, Rod Welford, called a stop to it and established a moratorium. That moratorium caps current extractions from the Lower Balonne at 350,000 megalitres. But what would happen if all the licences out there were enacted? What would happen with Howard's way? What would happen would be an explosion to around about 590,000 megalitres. It would reduce natural flows in the system from the current 46 per cent to what—31 per cent, making it one of the most degraded river systems in Australia and comparable to the worst river systems in the Murray-Darling Basin. This is Howard's way.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. The minister is misleading the House. The questioner did not give the full context of what I said. We still have the highest end of valley flow of any catchment in the whole Murray-Darling system.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego will resume his seat.

Mr ROBERTSON: May I just help the member opposite. Susan Mitchell asked, 'Could you just come back to my question,' because Howard had been waffling a bit, as he does. She said, 'Could you just come back to my question though. What is the solution to the problem?' He responded, 'Well, okay, the solution to the problem is issue the licences that are presently there.'

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: That is what he said—580,000 megalitres and a 67 per cent increase on current extraction levels. This is the solution promoted by the National Party.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: It is why I say, as I have been saying all week—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrego! That is my final warning.

Mr ROBERTSON: As I have been saying all week, the Queensland National Party is part of the problem. It is not part of the solution. Until it faces up to some facts, the future of Queensland's natural resources are in dire danger.

Single-desk Selling of Sugar

Mr ROWELL: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities: does he or his government have any intention of changing their support for the single-desk seller for sugar; and is he prepared to give a ministerial direction to change the pricing of domestic sugar from export parity to import parity pricing to increase returns to the industry at this critical time?

Mr PALASZCZUK: In response to the first part of the member's question the answer is no. Single-desk selling for export is here to stay under our government. In relation to the second issue, namely import and export parity pricing—as all honourable members would know, it was under the member's government and its review that that recommendation was made to government. As minister, I will wait for directions from Queensland Sugar Limited, but as far as I am concerned that direction is there to stay, as well.

Sunday Trading

Mrs SMITH: I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations: can he give an assurance that shops in south-east Queensland will not be forced to trade or existing employees forced to work on Sundays from 4 August?

Mr NUTTALL: Sunday is an historic day for south-east Queensland because we will have Sunday trading for the first time covering a single zone between Noosa and Coolangatta and, of course, west as far as Amberley. Under the new zone all retailers will have a choice of opening between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. not only on Sundays but also on public holidays. Most importantly, those tenant retailers cannot be forced by shopping centres to open if they currently do not trade. In other words, if they are being pressured they should contact the Retail Shop Leases Tribunal. Existing employees, of course, in non-exempt shops, that is, shops that are covered under the act, also cannot be compelled to work on Sundays. Written consent must be obtained from existing employees for them to work on Sundays.

A new award has been agreed upon by both the shop union and the Retailers Association of Queensland. There is a clause in the award that states—

The employer will not draw a working roster which is contrary to the election of a current employee who has elected not to work the extended trading hours. Neither will the employer alter a working roster to the disadvantage or prejudice of an employee who has made such an election.

Not only can existing employees now refuse to work the extended hours, it is important to note that they cannot be penalised for such a refusal by a reworking of the roster to their detriment.

The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission has powers to deal with any dispute over the implementation of the voluntary work provisions. Where an employer is in breach they can be ordered to reinstate an employee's work hours and may of course be subject to substantial penalties. Honourable members should be aware that this applies only to employees in non-exempt shops. There are exempt shops, such as service stations, video stores, bakeries, bookshops, bait and tackle shops, hairdressers, newsagencies and the like, that are not covered and which have had unrestricted trading hours on Sundays for quite some time. Sunday is a new era for people in south-east Queensland. Again, it is another initiative of this great Labor government.

Local Government Litigation

Mrs PRATT: I direct a question to the Minister for Local Government and Planning. Local governments in my electorate have concerns about the increasing number of law suits against local government authorities for personal injuries, and I ask: is the minister considering a cap on the amount that a person may claim against a local government authority? As many local governments are struggling because of a small or reducing rate base, will the minister consider some form of assistance for these rural local governments?

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Those issues are being discussed through a national panel. I suggest that any further questions the member has on that issue be addressed to the Attorney-General.

Mobile Phone Coverage

Mr RODGERS: I direct my question to the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. The federal government seems to be announcing new programs almost every week on how it is improving mobile phone communications in Queensland. Could the minister please explain how these programs are helping and when we are ever going to get to the point of having proper mobile phone coverage in the bush? This is something that the federal government has been neglecting for a long time.

Mr LUCAS: That is a very good question from the honourable member, who has a keen interest in mobile telephony. The simple fact of the matter is that the people on that side of the House who purport to represent the people in the bush have once again sold out the people in the bush. At the present time—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I am glad that the member for Warwick talked about that. In fact, I am happy to table an article from the *Queensland Times* of 14 May in which the member for Warwick said that the Queensland government should put some money into telecommunications in the bush. The Court government in Western Australia put \$7 million into mobile telephone towers to match federal funding. What happened straight after that election? The federal government then took it off the next allocation. That is what happened in Western Australia. That is the National Party view: a straight transfer of money from the state to the Commonwealth. The Labor government got ripped off by a deal that the Court government did.

The federal coalition got \$30 billion from the sale of Telstra. It had all these inquiries about what it was going to do for mobile telephones in the bush. What has it done about it? We still do not have continuous mobile phone coverage. That is an absolute disgrace. Here is a map. Look at the western highways going to Mount Isa, Charleville and Longreach. There is no continuous coverage. Senator Boswell is quoted in an article in today's *Courier-Mail* as saying that 97 per cent of Australia's population is covered. That might be right. That is fine. But I say to members opposite: talk to those 60,000 tourists who drive along rural roads in Queensland every day; talk to your constituents who have to drive on those roads for business or safety reasons. Now the

National Party has the cheek to roll over to the Liberal Party. The simple fact of the matter is that the National Party should be saying to the Liberal Party, 'Before you sell Telstra, and before you do anything, you do the job that you were supposed to do.'

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The Leader of the Opposition ought to get out there and tell the federal Liberal Party that it is about time that the National Party stood up to it and said, 'No longer are we going to accept a second-rate deal.' The federal government got \$30 billion from the sale of Telstra, but we still do not have continuous mobile coverage. It is about time that people in the bush got a better deal. It is an insult. What Senator Boswell has done so far is a half job, but he expects a pat on the back. It is about time that he did not get a pat on the back. He needs a kick somewhere else for the job he has done thus far. Telstra belongs to the people of Queensland and the people of Australia. He should do the job properly first. Members opposite should tell their mates in the federal government to get in there and provide decent services to the people in the bush, because they need it; and members opposite ought to know that, because they purport to represent those people. But if they are not going to do the job properly, we will keep up the pressure on the federal government. We will say, 'You provide decent coverage in the bush for mobile telephones before you talk about selling Telstra, because it is about time we got a fair deal.'

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Cunningham, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students and teachers from the Moorooka State School in the electorate of Yeerongpilly.

Families Department, FOI Applications

Mr COPELAND: I refer the Minister for Families to two recent FOI applications from the opposition to the Department of Families. These applications deal with children under the care and protection of the Department of Families being housed in commercial accommodation facilities and the training records for the family services officers who have handled a number of tragic cases involving the Department of Families. This week the opposition office received a telephone call from the manager of the freedom of information section of the Department of Families advising that these applications could not be processed on time as there is a backlog of FOI applications in the department and asking for reasons why these FOI applications from the opposition should be given priority. Apart from the fact that the FOI act specifies that FOI applications must be processed within strict statutory time frames, why have insufficient resources within his department been dedicated to ensuring the department's commitment to openness and accountability on issues critical to the proper care and protection of Queensland children?

Ms SPENCE: I appreciate that it would be difficult for the opposition to understand, but the FOI officers in all government departments are quite separate from the government itself. I do not have any control over the actions being undertaken by my FOI officers. They are completely independent. I have no knowledge of the fact that the FOI officer rang the member and questioned why he was making those applications.

I think the member's question raises a number of issues. First, there are an inordinate number of requests to the Department of Families for information—from individuals, from media organisations and indeed from the opposition. Obviously the officers are very hardworking, but they have to prioritise those requests. I know that they do that as efficiently as possible.

The opposition cannot have it both ways, and that is what it is trying to do all the time. On the one hand the opposition does not like the fact that the Department of Families is upgrading its IT systems. It is critical of that. On the other hand the opposition is critical of the fact that resources are not going into front-line child protection workers. With this new money—the biggest budget increase the Department of Families has ever seen—we are attempting to upgrade our information systems and our front-line child protection workers over the next few years. The constant criticism, lack of understanding and jumping to conclusions of the opposition is certainly not helpful in that process.

The opposition cannot help but use children for its own political purposes at every opportunity. We have seen that on a number of occasions this week. On every occasion it attempts to misrepresent the facts. It ignores the facts for its own political purposes. In this last week we have seen the folly of it jumping to conclusions without the necessary facts. I would ask the opposition in future to take some time out, find out the facts and stop using Queensland's most disadvantaged children for its own cheap political purposes.

Elliott the Dinosaur

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Minister for The Arts to reports that scientists from the Queensland Museum have unearthed more bones from Elliott the dinosaur in western Queensland. Can the minister say how extensive this discovery has been and how significant it is?

Mr FOLEY: Elliott the dinosaur is being gradually discovered after 100 million years. The palaeontologists from the Queensland Museum have discovered more bones. Elliott was a big fella. He was a sauropod who roamed western Queensland 95 million years ago—the largest dinosaur ever discovered in Australia and, as one would expect, discovered here in Queensland. Elliott would have stretched the length of five cars and would have weighed as much as five African elephants.

Who is leading the excavation? It is none other than Young Australian of the Year Scott Hocknull, who I am proud to say is employed by the Queensland Museum. The dig has turned up many more bones from the tail region of Elliott, including fragments of vertebrae, haemal arches and ribs. It is significant that many other fossils have been found in addition to the Elliott bones, including the first tooth from a large carnivorous dinosaur in Queensland, which may have been feeding on the Elliott carcass. This only goes to show that however big you are there is always someone able to eat you up.

I am informed by Queensland Museum palaeontologists that they are very careful when removing the bones from the earth to ensure they remain intact. Part of this process requires cocooning the bones in plaster of Paris to protect them from potential damage when they are being transported. Elliott was discovered in 1999 on a remote sheep station near Winton in outback Queensland. The discovery was announced last October at the Queensland Museum.

I am sure that members of the National Party will be interested to learn that sauropods were gigantic, four-legged plant-eating dinosaurs characterised by extremely long necks and tails and disproportionately small heads. The four-week dino dig excavation involving 60 people saw the removal and sorting of more than 400 cubic metres of earth and proved that dinosaur sites in Queensland will yield more completely preserved material when excavated. Many fossilised plants were also discovered. These provide valuable information about the environment of the site some 98 million years ago.

This latest dig serves to reaffirm the Queensland Museum as the centre for dinosaur studies in Australia and underlines the fact that Queensland remains the home of the country's largest and most important dinosaur finds.

Atherton Ambulance Station

Ms LEE LONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Atherton was promised a new ambulance station in last year's budget. Can the minister advise when construction is expected to commence on this project?

Mr REYNOLDS: I thank the member for Tablelands for that question. The Queensland Ambulance Service has provided a record number of new ambulances to the state of Queensland in the four years of the Beattie government. I am very proud to be able to say that we allocate ambulances on the basis of priority. In regard to the detail for Atherton, I will make sure I get back to the member by the close of business today in regard to her particular question.

Bundaberg Food Precinct

Mr STRONG: Can the Minister for State Development provide details of any further developments in relation to the Bundaberg food precinct?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for Burnett for the question. Last Wednesday morning the member was present with the Premier, the Minister for Local Government and Planning in her capacity as the member for Bundaberg and me when the Premier turned the first sod on this new industrial estate and food precinct in Bundaberg and announced that a Hervey Bay company, Bellerio Constructions, has won the civil works contract for the construction of major site infrastructure at the Bundaberg industrial park and food precinct. This \$3.7 million project is a major investment by this government in the city of Bundaberg and the region, because many of the growers in the Burnett region will in fact supply produce to this food park. This demonstrates the Beattie government's commitment to further developing the regions.

The Bellerio company has significant construction experience in the region, including in Bundaberg city. It was one of seven tender applicants. The awarding of this important contract will breathe life into this exciting food precinct, which is stage 1 of the Bundaberg industrial park development. It brings us one step closer to creating more jobs for the local community in the food processing sector, a priority industry for Queensland because it is a smart project for the Bundaberg and Burnett regions. Construction work can now begin on drainage work and water and sewerage reticulation. We are continuing to work closely with Bundaberg City Council to bring this important industrial precinct to fruition. The Bundaberg council is a partner with us and is providing some of the infrastructure.

The awarding of the contract to Bellerio will enable construction to commence in time for scheduled completion of the park early in 2003. Seventy-four hectares of land are available for development into lots. Fifteen industrial allotments will be available in stage 1 to industry. That first stage comprises some 18.3 hectares. The food precinct as part of the industrial park has town planning approvals for commercial food processors and allied industries, a research and development facility, a food innovation centre, a training facility and a transport and logistics hub. The Bundaberg industrial park and food precinct is an integrated cluster development with potential to deliver cost savings and efficiencies through shared service infrastructure.

This is a great project for the Bundaberg and Burnett regions. I encourage all of those producers who are interested in becoming part of this great project to talk to my State Development Department now because my department's Property Services Group, a commercial unit within my department, is running this project. It is a great initiative. It is a Smart State initiative that will create many jobs, value adding to our great agricultural production.

Transport Charges

Mr HOPPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. I refer to the minister's confirmation that he is breaking yet another election promise by introducing millions of dollars of new fees and charges across his department's services. Will it not be the people who can least afford it who will be slugged the most by his late payment fee for vehicle registrations? I note that the minister justifies this tax grab on the basis that it will enable him to cover the cost of providing services that the government was elected to provide. Will the minister tell the taxpayers why the Labor government misled them at the last election by stating that no new taxes or charges would be introduced?

Mr BREDHAUER: I thank the honourable member for his question. Basically, this is designed to make sure that the people who use the service are the ones who pay for the service. At present, other motorists and taxpayers are cross-subsidising those people who are using services but who are either not paying for them at all or are not paying the cost of recovering those services.

I will talk briefly about the reason why the announcement was made yesterday. When we announce initiatives like this in my portfolio, there might be a bad headline for the minister or the government for a day or two, but the people who work in the Queensland Transport customer service centres or in the call centres are the ones who are at the coalface—who have to answer the phones, who have to answer the inquiries about the fare increases or the fee increases and why they are going up. They are the people who sometimes get angry callers on the other end of the phone. So I decided that we would get the information out to the customer service centres first so that when the announcement was made those people were prepared to handle the calls that came through. In fact, I suspect that somehow along the line that is how the information got into the media yesterday. Nevertheless, I think, on balance, that was the right thing to do—to try to advise our people in the customer service centres and the call centres first so that they were forewarned that people might start ringing them.

In respect of the charges, many of them relate to optional services. For example, it is voluntary as to whether people get an 18-plus card. In fact, only a small number of people—people who do not have a drivers licence, for example—who are over 18 years of age get an 18-plus card. That is completely voluntary.

As the Premier said today, over 60 per cent of young people who take the learner theory test to get a learners permit fail that test and come back repeatedly—in some cases three or four times. Everyone in Queensland is paying for that. I think that it is reasonable that, if those people pay the \$15 fee, we give them an incentive to actually do a little bit of work before they come

along for the test to make sure that they do the test once and get it out of the road and do not create an impost on taxpayers.

The primary reason for the increases that I announced yesterday are on that basis. They are road safety issues. The member referred to motor vehicle registration. It is a person's responsibility to make sure that their vehicle registration is paid in full and on time. As the Premier said, if a person has not paid their motor vehicle registration, their CTP expires. If they are involved in an accident, any other motorist or person who is involved in that accident could be exposed by that person's failure to have CTP insurance. It also costs taxpayers \$400,000 a year to provide that service. I do not think that it is reasonable to load that impost onto other taxpayers. I think that the people who act that way are the people who should bear the cost.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Stafford, could I welcome two schools to the gallery. The first one is St Kiernan's School in the electorate of Sandgate. Welcome. The other school is the former school of the Treasurer, Mr Mackenroth, and it is the Carina State School in the electorate of Chatsworth.

Chain Letters

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: I direct a question to the Minister for Fair Trading. I am aware, from complaints from constituents and reports in the media, that chain letters are doing the rounds again. What advice does the minister have for people who receive such letters?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the honourable member for the question, because chain letters are out there at the moment. The best advice that I can give to anybody who is tempted by receiving any form of chain letter is to throw it in the bin if it is posted to them, or to delete it from their email if it comes to them in that form. Many people do not realise that chain letters are illegal in Queensland. Participants can be fined up to \$40,500 for an individual and up to \$202,000 for a company.

In fact, recently a Maryborough schoolteacher was fined \$1,200 after becoming the first person in Queensland prosecuted for distributing an illegal chain letter. Jeffrey Stanley Hughes pleaded guilty in the Maryborough Magistrates Court to breaching the Queensland Fair Trading Act by distributing the notorious David Stein chain letter. He was given five months to pay the fine and no conviction was recorded. Hughes had posted almost 200 chain letters in Queensland government envelopes. The letter told recipients that they could make \$279,300 for an outlay of just \$30. They are told that all they have to do is to send \$10 to each of the three people whose names appear at the top of the letter and to make and distribute 200 copies of the letter. Hughes used a telephone book to randomly get 200 names from Maryborough and Nanango for his mail-out. But instead of bringing riches, the letters alerted Fair Trading investigators, who received dozens of complaints. Investigators easily traced the source of the letters and Hughes readily admitted his involvement.

As I said, chain letters are illegal in Queensland. The David Stein letter is being circulated widely. Just like a whole range of other popular scams, such as a variety of pyramid schemes, it can be tempting, but there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This is simply a con to trap the unwary. The only thing that this letter will bring is lost time and money and the possibility of a fine for participating in this scam.

The best way for people to prevent themselves being burnt in such scams is to throw the offer in the rubbish bin where it belongs. People should not pass it on to friends if they value that friendship. Unfortunately, most of these chain letters are distributed by post either to other family members or through friends. For more information on scams, I ask people to contact their local Office of Fair Trading or visit the web sites on www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au or www.scamwatch.qld.gov.au.

Vegetation Management Act

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I direct a question to the Minister for Natural Resources. When the Vegetation Management Act came into force, it included a mechanism for compensation to be paid to affected landowners. Is the process for applying for compensation in place? If so, how many landowners have been compensated for loss of use incurred as a result of the exercise of the powers under this act?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am unable to assist the member with respect to the specific details of the question that she asked but I make this point: Queensland's Vegetation Management Act is

working. As a result of the recent release of the State Land and Tree Survey—or the SLATS survey—for the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, we see that there has been a significant reduction in tree clearing in that part of the state. The remainder of the state's figures will be released later this year.

However, the figures for the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin showed that Premier Beattie's comment a couple of years ago in the lead-up to the passing of the legislation that the bush was burning proved to be absolutely correct. During the year in the lead-up to the passing of that legislation, we saw a significant increase in the amount of vegetation that was cleared in one of the most vulnerable parts of this state.

The fact that the member for Callide in particular has been running around the state and in the media somehow putting some strange kind of spin on the fact that there was a significant increase in clearing in the lead-up to the legislation suggests to me that he is absolutely grossly irresponsible.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I think that the question was quite genuinely about the compensation issue. The minister is not even attempting to answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER: That is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr SEENEY: He is not even close to answering the question.

Mr ROBERTSON: I just make this observation that natural resource issues in this state have been front-page news right throughout the state for the past couple of weeks now. The best that the honourable member opposite can contribute is an intervention—a very rude intervention. I suggest that if the member for Callide has anything to contribute to this debate he should get up on his feet and ask me a question rather than hide behind the litany of irresponsible and misleading media statements that he has been making over the past month or so.

As I was saying in terms of vegetation management, particularly in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin—

Mr SEENEY: I find the minister's comments that my statements have been irresponsible and misleading offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. I also take this opportunity—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member is not going to debate this.

Mr SEENEY: The question is a very genuine one about an issue this has been raised.

Mr SPEAKER: The member is not going to debate this.

Mr ROBERTSON: Could I give this bit of advice to the member for Callide: when his IQ reaches 50, I suggest he sell.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, you were asked to withdraw a comment.

Mr ROBERTSON: I withdraw it. I am sorry that the honourable member has such a glass jaw. I mean, is this bullying behaviour, or what?

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

ARCHITECTS BILL

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (11.30 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for the registration of architects, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (11.31 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Registration of architects and the practice of architecture were first regulated in Queensland by the Architects Act 1928 and are currently regulated by the Architects Act 1985. All legislation since 1928 has provided for the legislation to be administered by a Board of Architects of Queensland constituted under the act. Similar legislation currently exists in all states and territories of Australia.

In accordance with obligations under the national competition policy and in view of the fact that legislation governing architects is in existence across Australia, a review of all architects legislation was undertaken by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission. In broad terms, the Productivity Commission made a primary recommendation for all architects legislation to be repealed and an alternative recommendation for the adoption of certain principles in legislative enactments in individual jurisdictions, which require all building practitioners to be registered.

A working group comprising representatives of all state and territory governments was formed to consider the Productivity Commission's recommendations and to prepare a draft response on behalf of all jurisdictions. Again, in broad terms, the working group rejected the Productivity Commission's primary recommendations as not being in the best public interest and recommended adoption of the alternative approach. The working group then provided advice on implementation action, having regard to consistency across all jurisdictions.

The working group's recommendations and advice offered a practical approach to the regulation of architects within national competition policy principles and were adopted by this government. The recommendations allow for standards to be set for the provision of architectural services by an architect which gives protection to consumers, while allowing for overseas business opportunities to be promoted. The outcome of the national competition policy review was, therefore, support for the continued regulation of the profession and elimination of anticompetitive elements which cannot be justified on public interest grounds.

The Architects Bill 2002 presents the results flowing from the review. The bill provides for the registration of architects. The bill does not set out to regulate the practice of architecture, except insofar as it is necessary to do so for the purposes of providing for registration. In order to become registered, an applicant architect must demonstrate a fitness to practise and possess a sufficient level of proficiency in the practice of architecture. As with the existing and all previous legislation, the bill provides that it be administered by a Board of Architects of Queensland.

The required levels of proficiency for registration will be established by regulation following recommendations from the board. Accredited professional organisations will be responsible for assessing applications for registration against the established proficiency levels. Following a successful assessment and a demonstration of a fitness to practise, the board will register applicants. In effect, the state will set standards for registration, accredited professional associations will assess applications for registration against the set proficiency standards and the board will register those applicants who have been assessed as meeting those standards and have otherwise demonstrated a fitness to practise.

The title and use of the word 'architect' is restricted to persons registered under the bill. This restriction on title—apart from being a normal part of professional regulation—allows the consumer of professional architectural services to know that the person using that title has a known level of professional skill. Similarly, on grounds of public interest and consumer protection, a person who is not an architect must not use the words 'architectural services', 'architectural design services' or 'architectural design' to describe any services provided by that person. Apart from this, the bill does not set out to restrict the use of derivatives of the word 'architect' (such as, for example, 'architecture' or 'architectural') or the use of the word 'architect' when used in conjunction with another descriptor to form a specific title (such as, for example, 'landscape architect'), provided that in all circumstances the use of the derivative or descriptor is not misleading to the public. To avoid being misleading, the use of the derivative or descriptor must reasonably identify the expertise that is being offered to the consumer of the services.

The bill provisions cover the conduct of investigations, the conduct of disciplinary proceedings and the penalising of those who default with proceedings being taken before the Queensland Building Tribunal. The aim of the bill is to ensure that architectural services that are provided by an architect are provided in a professional and competent way commensurate with national and international standards of practice. This affords the public a level of health and safety protection while enhancing or promoting overseas business opportunities in every way possible. The Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects has expressed support for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS BILL

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (11.37 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for the registration of professional engineers, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (11.38 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Registration of engineers and the practice of engineering were first regulated in Queensland by the Professional Engineers Act 1929 and are currently regulated by the Professional Engineers Act 1988. All legislation since 1929 has provided for the legislation to be administered by the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland, constituted under the act.

Queensland is the only state that comprehensively regulated the practice of engineering. In accordance with the national competition policy legislative review program which requires amendment or repeal of all legislation that restricts competition, a review of the Professional Engineers Act 1988 was undertaken. The outcome of this review was support for the continued regulation of the profession with elimination of anti-competitive elements which cannot be justified on public interest grounds. The review identified a preferred approach for the continued regulation of professional engineers as being by means of co-regulation, i.e., joint administration by the engineering profession and a statutory governing body.

The Professional Engineers Bill 2002 presents the results flowing from the review. I have previously introduced into this House an Architects Bill 2002 which presented the results following from a national competition review of existing architects legislation. The results of the review of the architectural profession are significantly similar to the results of the review of the engineering profession. Consequently, proposals for legislative enactment are very much the same for both engineering and architectural professions. The Professional Engineers Bill provides for the registration of engineers. The bill does not set out to regulate the practice of engineering except to the extent necessary to ensure that professional engineering services are only provided by registered engineers. In order to become registered, an applicant engineer must demonstrate a fitness to practise and possess a sufficient level of proficiency in the area or areas of engineering (such as electrical, mechanical, civil, et cetera) for which registration is sought.

As with the existing and all previous legislation, the bill provides that it be administered by a board of professional engineers of Queensland. The required levels of proficiency for registration will be established by regulation following from recommendations from the board. Accredited professional organisations will be responsible for assessing applications for registration against the established proficiency levels. Following a successful assessment and a demonstration of fitness to practise, the board will register applicants. In effect, the state will set standards for registration, professional associations will assess applications for registration against the set standards and the board will register those applicants who have been assessed as meeting those standards and have otherwise demonstrated a fitness to practise. The title and use of the words 'Registered Professional Engineer', 'Registered Professional Engineer of Queensland', and the derivative 'RPEQ' is restricted to persons registered under the bill. This restriction on title—apart from being a normal part of professional regulation—allows a consumer of professional engineering services to know that the person using that title has a known level of professional skills. The bill provides that a person must not offer, hold out or provide a professional engineering service unless a registered professional engineer, registered in the area of engineering for which the service is offered, held out or provided, carries out or is responsible for the carrying out of those services. The bill provides a definition of the term 'Professional Engineering Services'. The bill provisions cover the conduct of investigations, the conduct of disciplinary proceedings and the penalising of those who default

with proceedings being taken before the Queensland Building Tribunal. The aim of the Bill is to ensure that only competent persons provide professional engineering services. This will afford the public a level of health and safety protection while enhancing and promoting overseas business opportunities in every way possible. The Institution of Engineers, Australia—Queensland Division—has expressed support for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Committee (Cognate Debate)
Estimates Committee E
Report**

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee E be adopted.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (11.43 a.m.): It is with pride that I rise to speak as the committee chairman of Estimates Committee E. Our committee scrutinised the 2002-03 state budgets for the departments of Natural Resources and Mines, the Environment, and Local Government and Planning. I sincerely thank the relevant ministers, their departments and departmental staff for what I believe were clear, succinct and detailed responses where practicable. My gratitude also goes to the members for Warrego, Callide, Noosa, Gaven and Pumicestone. The member for Maryborough tabled his apologies for his absence from the majority of the process due to illness.

Rachelle Stacey, our research director, Carolyn Heffernan, our executive assistant, and other relevant parliamentary staff did an exemplary job for which I am very thankful. They supplied us with information which included organisational charts that provided details of the structure of the various departments, a list of names of the senior departmental officers and a list of the statutory authorities and government-owned corporations administered by the various ministers. I believe it is far better to speak with a person than to or at a person.

I admit that prior to the committee meeting there were some sleepless nights on my behalf because I realised that sometime bad boys Mr Seeney and Mr Hobbs were on my committee. I must commend their attitude through the process. The member for Callide did ask numerous intelligent and probing questions that I acknowledge show his utilisation of the Estimates process. The member for Warrego could be a little more courteous and respectful when addressing a lady, and I obviously am disappointed in his need for a dissenting report but acknowledge that that is politics. I also acknowledge the member for Keppel and his valuable import as a non-committee member attendee obviously in his position as shadow spokesperson for the environment.

The decision to structure the order of questions for the hearings for the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Mines was inconsequential as non-government members seemed not to utilise the full time anyway to scrutinise the government-owned corporation SunWater. *Hansard* will clearly outline this fact.

Issues of specific interest to me and indeed my electorate that were addressed in the process included the quality of the water in the Mooloolah River which at certain times has been poor due to effluent overflow occurrence, et cetera. We clearly realise now that the Environmental Protection Agency and the Caloundra City Council have been working in partnership on the development of the SEQ regional and the Mooloolah River catchment water quality management strategies and have been proactive in addressing issues impacting on water quality. Under the 2001 SEQ water quality ecosystem health report, the rating for the Mooloolah River was a B minus. I would like to see that rating rise by ensuring that sewage outfall is not allowed to be pumped into the river, and I thank the minister for working with me to achieve this.

The EPA and the council are working in collaboration with industry and community stakeholders to address the issues associated with achieving sustainable catchments and waterways for both the fresh water and marine reaches of the Mooloolah River. The recent and possible future additions to the Mooloolah River National Park add to the area of catchment reserved from urban and industrial development and contributes to the maintenance of the water quality. Again, realising that this is my electorate, I am very grateful. I also was very interested in the Queensland water recycling strategy, realising that Caloundra City Council has a commitment to reusing 50 per cent of the city's effluent water by 2003 and 100 per cent by 2005. The report

was to be presented to council on 11 July. I am not sure that it has come up and we do realise that recycled water will never be used for potable uses.

In local government, questions were asked about where we are going with the IPA and how our state government is helping councils with their IPA planning schemes. Questions were also asked about Lyngbya outbreaks in Moreton Bay. While I was in council I was a member of SECROC, which I believe Jim Soorley chairs, and was very proactive with all the councils of south-east Queensland in attempting to address Lyngbya and other outbreaks. The Minister for Environment addressed various issues relating to tourism on the Sunshine Coast, realising that they go hand in hand, and the feasibility of promoting cycling through state forests.

Time expired.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (11.48 a.m.): I thank the secretariat and members of Estimates Committee E. We had a robust committee process and this has produced benefits. As I say every year, I believe the estimates process can be improved. Ministers in many portfolios often read lengthy statements that are only remotely related to the question asked. Half the time of estimates is usually taken up with Dorothy Dix questions, which are responded to with prepared answers by ministers. Ministers should have to demonstrate genuine knowledge of their portfolios. Perhaps if they spoke off the cuff they might give better answers. A new practice this year was that, if ministers were interrupted, they could seek an extension of time. If a minister was answering the question, there would be no need for an extension. Either way, the process can be improved. I do not deny that members interject, but if the minister is waffling we need to counter that.

We should be able to demonstrate to the public that the estimates process works. I do not believe that the estimates process works as well as it could. It probably costs somewhere between \$5 million and \$9 million each year. We need to see some value for that expenditure. The departmental officers should answer more questions. The practice in the Senate appears to be better, although I have not examined it closely. I am a bit surprised that the committee chairman said that I should not have included a statement of reservations—

Mr Cummins: No, I said I was disappointed.

Mr HOBBS:—and also that he was disappointed that I was not more courteous. I am a little surprised by that. If a minister has the ability and knowledge to answer questions there should not be a problem. I am a little bewildered by that. There are a lot of issues that could be discussed. My reasons for including the statement of reservations were several. The objective of the estimates process is to allow members of parliament the opportunity to scrutinise the actions of executive government and public servants. In my opinion, in this case it did not work as well as it could have. That is why I included a statement of reservations. We need to examine more closely some of the things that happen throughout the year.

One question that I put on notice to the minister was not responded to. I had to put it on notice again. Other ministers answered my question about what aspects of funding go to local governments from other departments. I felt that I allowed the minister reasonable time. I asked that question last year and, if I am still in this shadow portfolio next year, I will ask it again. I should probably put it on notice now.

The real—accounting for inflation—per capita expenditure for the Department of Local Government and Planning for 2002-03 experienced a reduction of 9.8 per cent. I appreciate the fact that there are fluctuations and that grants and subsidies do not all arrive at once. However, there is a reduction in the per capita funding.

The important question, which the minister did not manage well, related to the public liability costs to local government. The minister's answer to my question was that there was no—

Time expired.

Ms MOLLOY: (11.54 a.m.): I am again very proud to address the House regarding Estimates Committee E as the member for Noosa. The estimates committee process allows for the scrutiny of expenditure of this government by both sides of the House. By participating in this process I am personally able to explore and investigate the spending by this government. I congratulate the government on its high level of accountability and transparency.

I congratulate Ministers Stephen Robertson, Dean Wells and Nita Cunningham on their cooperation and commitment to their portfolios. It was clearly evident that they have an exemplary grasp of their portfolio areas. I congratulate also the host of departmental officers who have dedicated so much time and effort to preparing for this year's budget estimates. I place on

record also my congratulations to our chair, Mr Chris Cummins. Mr Cummins was more than generous in the time he allowed the opposition to ask questions. I thank Mr Cummins for conducting the proceedings so well.

This year's estimates was especially interesting for me. The first portfolio to be scrutinised was the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. I have a keen interest in this area, which includes the government's SunWater. Today, more than at any other time in this state's history, the issue of water usage is paramount. SunWater became government owned on 1 October 2001. Customer councils have been formed across the state to enable community input into scheme management issues.

Funding of \$2.7 billion has been allocated for the refurbishment and replacement of water infrastructure. Further to this, the minister and his staff were able to discuss a broad range of issues pertaining to this portfolio—for example, coal deposits in the Surat-Dawson basin, funding for the Explosives Inspectorate, and an overview of the Department's Safety in Mines Testing Research Station, or SIMTARS. The list goes on.

Mr Robertson dealt with the matter of the Condamine-Balonne River system and addressed the need to put the issues pertaining to that matter to rest. Mr Robertson was also able to answer my question regarding the government's rural water use efficiency initiative and tell the committee that this initiative is on track to meet its stated objectives.

Those community members who want to know how their money is being spent in this state should read the budget estimates and do themselves a favour. I understand that the Liberals want to win Noosa back. Apparently it is some kind of tribal initiative. That begs the question: what would Mr Quinn and his squabbling factional branch-stacking mates say about those wonderful Labor government initiatives? I suggest that it is a worrying thought. Thank God that is merely a fleeting notion. I congratulate the Labor government and ministers such as Stephen Robertson, who heads the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

I turn now to the environment. The environment is of enormous importance to my community so I would like to refer to jobs for new rangers and trainee rangers. The Queensland government's commitment to enhance park maintenance has resulted in a further \$10 million per annum being allocated for this purpose. This will result in an additional 140 ranger positions being progressively filled over the 2001-02 and 2002-03 financial years in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to protect and maintain Queensland's world-class system of parks, forests and reserves.

Eighty ranger positions programmed to be filled during 2001-02 have now been appointed. A further 60 permanent ranger positions will be filled during the 2002-03 financial year. This is of enormous benefit especially to areas such as Noosa, where we value our environment greatly.

Mr Cummins: All of the Sunshine Coast.

Ms MOLLOY: Yes, all of the Sunshine Coast. The public advertisement of ranger positions in early November 2001 resulted in more than 3,800 applications. This demonstrates the volume of people wanting to join the QPWS to become part of the enthusiastic team whose vocation is the conservation and presentation of Queensland's magnificent natural and cultural assets and wildlife.

Additional indigenous rangers will be appointed as part of the next round of 60 new rangers. Currently, QPWS has more than 550 permanent rangers. The rangers are based at 139 locations throughout the state, both on and off parks.

I turn now to the Local Government portfolio. Mrs Cunningham answered questions regarding the revenue review of local government, management guidelines for complaints, and the subject of funding—\$1.3 million over three years for a review of the SEQ 2001 regional planning exercise titled SEQ 2021: A Substantial future and what is hoped to be achieved through this process. This is a responsible government planning for Queensland's future—a concept very close to the minds and hearts of people from Kin Kin in my electorate right through to Coolumb Beach. This is the sort of government that public policy people crave. I commend the budget estimates 2002 to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (11.58 a.m.): I rise to participate in debate on the report on the Appropriation Bill of Estimates Committee E. The people in my electorate and those who reside in Cape York Peninsula have serious concerns about the state's acquisition of huge tracts of land in the cape, particularly in the last 10 years. Managing these large tracts of land—and members should remember that Cape York Peninsula is about the same size as the state of

Victoria—requires adequate funding and proper resourcing. However, everyone knows that getting funds for such necessities is like getting blood from a stone.

As we have already heard this morning, this Labor government is about to severely cut its Public Service personnel by about 1,000 to 2,000. We have a very simple situation: more and more land and fewer and fewer staff to manage it. This is not a smart way of managing either the land in an ecological sense or of providing protection and awareness as a defence against the incursion of pest plants and animals. Almost invariably, when this state acquires land in these areas the former occupiers—that is, the station families and workers—are removed. Time and time again this government falls short when it comes to actually doing the grassroots stuff. This terrible understaffing and underresourcing is real-life evidence of that. It should have been addressed in previous budgets, and it certainly should have been addressed in this one.

I also want to speak about the Barron draft water resource plan. This planning process is intended to identify whether or not additional water supply is needed for the Tablelands and the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area. This process involved public consultations earlier this year. As part of this process, many irrigators made submissions on their situations. For some, this included outlining how their existing water licences did not meet the irrigation practices which have developed over the past decades. This was identified as a matter that they felt should be taken into consideration in the assessment process. I have to say that I entirely agree with them. There is no use having a consultation process which people are afraid to participate in.

In this case, the irrigators I am aware of changed their watering practices as demanded by changing crops, changing business practices and so on. At no stage were there any demands made or concerns expressed by the various government agencies involved in managing the resource, yet I now find that irrigators who made submissions to this public consultation process have received warning letters informing them that they must use only their allocation. Not only that, but the letter goes on to point out that the maximum penalty—by simple multiplication of the penalty units and their value—is a whopping \$124,000. I am afraid that I find this a gross abuse of the public consultation process. The first piece of information made available is a warning letter. This is not, to my mind, anything like an acceptable approach to engaging stakeholders and the public.

I am also concerned about the eventual results of this process, because it has already taken, in one form or another, most of the past decade. It is supposed to finish within the next two years, yet a highly experienced local government representative in the area has already stated that a new storage facility is needed now. His claims are backed up by agricultural lobby groups in the area. What consideration has been given to the potential impact of national competition policy, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and potentially the General Agreement on Trade in Services, because it appears that the use of water will be governed by some highest value? If that is to be measured by market forces—and that is what so many of our decisions seem to be based on—it would be entirely possible for, say, an urban area or industrial user to squeeze out irrigators.

I do not want to hear anyone opposite telling me that GATT or GATS cannot force anything on us. I think it will but, even if I am mistaken about that, it does not mean that our federal government will not give it away willingly. If it believes in negotiation it will get something it wants more in return. The willingness of globalisation-mad governments to sell out the bush is evident in decision after decision they have already made. For my electorate on the important issue of future water supply, the process has been abused and I fear that the result, whenever it comes down, will cripple the region. Not smart at all. Not smart at all.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.03 p.m.): I was pleased to be able to ask a number of questions to Ministers Robertson, Cunningham and Wells in Estimates Committee E, all of whom are very dedicated ministers in their portfolios. I must say that I was extremely delighted with the most detailed and relevant responses to the questions that I asked on the day. I also offer my sincere thanks to all those involved in the process, especially to the diligent staff who work so very hard behind the scenes. Since time is limited, I will concentrate on a few issues that I raised which are very important to the electorate which I represent, Pumicestone.

As a former councillor, I am aware of the important roles councils have in a community. They handle many issues that are closest to the people and are therefore the ones that come under the closest scrutiny. Of the \$473 million in grants and subsidies provided by Minister Cunningham's Local Government Department, the Caboolture Shire Council received \$1,513,786, the majority of which was for capital works programs. This is a considerable

contribution from the state government to a council presently under fire because of increased rates and excessive water charges, and these issues will be hotly debated in the upcoming council by-election in division 1. If Bill Allison is successful in his bid to become the next councillor for division 1, I will be delighted to work with him for the betterment of the community to resolve many of the ongoing council issues that have been brought to my attention over the past few years.

Mr Shine: Good luck, Bill.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It will not be luck; it will be very hard work. I compliment the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Environment and their departments on a number of initiatives relating to water quality and water conservation. The release of the state government's south-east Queensland regional water quality strategy report at the end of 2001 has placed greater emphasis on water quality and strategies to improve it. It is critical that we maintain healthy riverine habitats and make sure that residential and rural activities do not result in any further degradation of them by unnecessary pollution. Councils must also do their bit. The ministers know how keen I am to see water tanks in everyone's backyards. That is why I was delighted to see that the Environment Department had subsidised a scheme with the Brisbane City Council to encourage the return of the household tank. Obviously the benefits are enormous.

Although councils may be concerned that they will lose revenue because of a reduction in the use of treated water, there are many long-term benefits. Brisbane council has undertaken two tank trials—one in the inner city and one on the outskirts. The financial contribution from the council is \$400,000 and the state government is assisting with up to \$100,000. Benefits include access to rainwater, the deferment and/or possible elimination of future building infrastructure and a significant reduction in stormwater damage and stormwater run-off into rivers and oceans—obviously a win for everyone. It will save money and water will be readily available and eventually cheaper.

Another initiative by the Environment Department is the Queensland water recycling strategy which was developed to aid councils and communities to better use treated waste water. The state government knows it is essential that councils are encouraged to consider water recycling as part of an integrated water management approach. The Wide Bay council has already made a commitment to recycle its water, and I applaud it. I only hope that other councils will have the foresight and follow Wide Bay council.

I turn now to the wild dog problems which spread across all three departments. The tragedy of a young boy's life lost on Fraser Island highlighted the dangers of human intervention with regard to any wildlife. Had people not been encouraged to feed the dingoes this tragedy would never have happened. Unfortunately, places like Bribie Island have a mixture of pure dingoes and pet dogs. This is because people have allowed their pets to roam freely. They have mated and produced a dog that is mostly wild and roams the streets, often foraging for food close to residential areas. Unfortunately, the council's compliance officer, Geoff Pitstock, has had to euthanase 12 wild dogs as they have posed a threat to the community. I congratulate all state departments on assisting local councils with this problem. Finally, I compliment Mr Chris Cummins, who chaired Estimates Committee E. I imagine that it was a very rewarding experience for him, as it was for me.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.07 p.m.) I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution to the consideration of the report by Estimates Committee E, which dealt with the Department of Environment, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Department of Local Government. I support the comment made at the end of the address of the member for Pumicestone in congratulating the chairman of this committee, the member for Kawana. In each of the estimates committee reports I have spoken to in this House I have made the point that the estimates process can be beneficial or a farce depending on the approach taken by the chairman.

In at least one of the committees I participated in—Estimates Committee A—the process became a farce. To the credit of the chairman of this committee, we had a valuable interchange of information. It was especially noteworthy because this committee, as in Estimates Committee A, dealt with a subject that was always going to be contentious. Rather than use the committee process to stifle discussion of that contentious process, the chairman allowed the committee to discuss the subject. That is the way estimates committees should be run. I congratulate and thank the member for Kawana, even though he is not in the House.

Mr Lawlor: I will pass that on to him.

Mr SEENEY: I do thank him quite genuinely. I also thank the committee staff who assisted on the day. Their efforts certainly should not go unnoticed.

I would like to restrict my comments to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines because that is my role as the shadow minister. We certainly had a contentious issue to deal with on that particular day at the estimates committee hearing. I compliment the minister on the way in which the issue was discussed. I believe that it is noteworthy that the minister's attitude towards the salinity issue has changed between the estimates committee hearing and this week in the parliament.

During that estimates committee hearing I complimented the minister on his understanding of the issue and the contentiousness of the maps that had been released. On a number of occasions I was surprised by the reasonable approach that the minister was prepared to take, in contrast to the somewhat provocative approach that was being taken by the Premier. Regrettably, the minister has now chosen to adopt the approach of the Premier and throw fact and science and commonsense to the wind to join with the Premier in this provocative approach, which I can only conclude is aimed at engendering some sort of a panic, and that is regrettable.

I want to mention also that, for the third year in a row, the minister's Department of Natural Resources and Mines is grossly underfunded. We explored that issue at the estimates committee hearings. That underfunding and non-performance is no better illustrated than the progress that has been made on the water resource plans and the river operation plans. The department not only failed to achieve its targeted number of completions; it did not complete any at all—none at all, zero. We certainly will be holding the minister to the assurance that he gave the committee that this year there are enough funds allocated to the department to progress that water reform process. When we get to the estimates committee hearings next year it will be interesting to see how much of that program has been progressed.

We also spoke about SunWater and what I consider is the inevitability—although that inevitability is denied—that the government and the department are setting up SunWater to produce a dividend; that they are setting up SunWater as an income stream for the government. I place on record again my intention to resist that move and to resist at every opportunity the intent of the government to make money out of the sale of water to water users in this state.

We also examined the mining side of the minister's portfolio and the issue of exploration permits. Once again the government has completely failed to meet its targets. I have spoken many times in this House about the importance of those exploration permits to the mining industry and to every Queenslander. Once again we will continue to monitor that issue at next year's estimates.

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (12.12 p.m.): I thank all members of Estimates Committee E from both sides of the House for their very worthwhile contributions to the analysis of my department's budget. I thank in particular the members for Noosa and Pumicestone who have spoken today about their experiences during the estimates committee process, and in particular the member for Noosa for her clear interest in issues dealing with water resource planning. However, I thought I would spend my time addressing a number of issues, some of which were raised by the member for Callide and one in particular that was raised by the member for Tablelands. Unfortunately, although the member for Tablelands asked a number of questions she is not here to hear my responses. That disappoints me, because in some respects it perpetuates some of the lack of understanding that parts of the Barron catchment community have about the water resource planning process in that part of Queensland.

With respect to the Barron water resource plan, obviously we have been through the initial round of community consultation. As part of that we have received some 480 submissions from the community on a wide range of issues in that particular catchment. Obviously, one of the issues that is talked about regularly is whether there will be a future dam on the Walsh River, usually known as the Nullinga dam. Some submissions have disputed the preliminary project costs. We have costed the preliminary stage of the Nullinga dam at some \$120 million, which would provide a storage of some 364,000 megalitres. Some interests have suggested that we do not need a storage of that size and that perhaps \$70 million would suffice.

Part of the water resource planning process involves, for the first time in Queensland, actually understanding in a long-term planning framework whether or not storages on our river systems are ecologically sustainable. Right throughout the world at the moment governments of whatever persuasion are looking at their existing storages and in some cases are actually bringing those

storages down, acknowledging the ecological devastation that has occurred as a result of the construction of some of those dams in some river systems. As a result we—and in fact the coalition before us—put in place this water resource planning process so that rational decisions that are economically, socially and ecologically sustainable can be made in terms of whether any future storages—wherever they might be in Queensland—should be built. So I have to say that I think it is irresponsible for a member of parliament to be running around the place promoting the construction of a dam on a river without having this planning process completed.

Mr Hobbs: You were going to build a Suez Canal.

Mr ROBERTSON: The water resource planning process in the Barron does contemplate in one of the scenarios whether a storage can be built. But before we spend \$70 million or \$120 million of taxpayers' money, I will just make this observation: the water users in the Mareeba-Dimbulah water supply scheme have never used more than approximately 60 per cent of their existing allocation from the Tinaroo Falls Dam. This would seem to suggest that there is room for further development without expending taxpayers' funds to build a new dam. The water resource planning process has a 10-year framework. If a dam on the Walsh River cannot be accommodated under this round then it would have to be looked at in the next round.

The member for Callide spoke about a certain change of attitude or approach by me to the issue of salinity. My approach to the issue of salinity has not changed except in regard to one particular issue, and that has been the unfortunate politicking by the National Party which has been designed to undermine the sound scientific processes underpinning the information we have released to the community through the salinity hazard map. Yes, my attitude has changed—to the National Party and its unrelenting, irresponsible undermining of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. As far as the community is concerned, my attitude has not changed.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.18 p.m.): In rising to speak to Estimates Committee E, I note that \$6.4 million is allocated in the budget over four years to continue the satellite monitoring programs that support the vegetation management framework. I asked a question specifically about this this morning because this legislation achieves much but it also impacts much, and I was looking to see what money had been allocated in the budget to compensate landowners who were affected.

The management of our resources has a positive and a negative impact, and these impacts must be acknowledged by government, and government must take responsibility for them—not just the positives, not just the good news. In fact, it is unclear in the budget whether any money has been allocated to address the impacts. As I said, \$6.4 million has been allocated to continue the satellite monitoring programs but nothing to compensate those people who are dramatically affected. The bill contains a compensation process, although that process in itself is not clear.

Under the Vegetation Management Act land has been identified in regional ecosystem maps as endangered. I have a couple in my electorate. One landowner who has had a significant portion of his property listed as endangered has been told that he has to pay \$250 to apply—knowing that he is going to get knocked back—to go into the next stage of the process. That is a lot of money for someone to pay knowing that they are going to get a negative result.

Mr Robertson: In that example you don't compensate people for not allowing them to knock down endangered vegetation. It is in everyone's interest that endangered vegetation be retained.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The legislation states that if a person's property is significantly affected so that their production is affected they are eligible for compensation on that basis. Around 90 per cent of this man's property is affected. Therefore I am interested to know what moneys have been allocated in the budget to address exactly those sorts of situations, where a loss or expense has been incurred because of the exercise of powers under the Vegetation Management Act.

Mr Robertson: Perhaps I can offer you a briefing from my department.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I will look forward to that. Thank you very much.

The other area I wish to speak about is the Environmental Protection Agency. I note that \$1.2 million has been allocated to continue mining industry environmental auditing. I know that the agency has had quite an active life in my electorate—justifiably, I might add. I certainly look forward to the department's continued interest in looking after not only the environment but also the quality of life of people living there and impacted on by industry.

As I understand it, there is also funding allocated to offset the cost of regulating industry pollution. Townsville is industrially developing, as are the Gladstone and Calliope regions. I look forward to the EPA being adequately resourced to ensure that officers can be there on the ground to take note of the impacts of industry. It is something that cannot be done from a distance. Officers need to be there on the ground actually indicating the level of impact on our community of airborne emissions in particular—odour and so on.

There are a lot of programs under the EPA umbrella. Many of them are to do with looking after existing national parks. I am not suggesting in any way, shape or form that that is not important, but I would encourage the allocation and expenditure of adequate funding to ensure that as industrialisation progresses in our regions the people in the department can administer their responsibilities. I wish the minister well in that.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (12.22 p.m.): Referring immediately to the remarks of the honourable member for Gladstone, I can give her the assurance that the audits she referred to will continue. I can assure her that the Gladstone Region Sustainability Project which has been undertaken is one which will be prosecuted most enthusiastically by my department.

Gladstone will be an industrial powerhouse of the future. It is already an industrial powerhouse, but it will go from strength to strength. It is important that we not only deliver industrial output but also deliver industrial output that is clean and green. That can be done. The achievements we have already recorded in Gladstone can be capably built on.

My department is configured into a number of different roles. There is the regulatory part of my department, which has the task of ensuring that industrial emission levels are complied with, ensuring that pollution is minimised and going to the extent of prosecuting those who do not act in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act. Another section of my department, the Sustainable Industries Division, does not proceed by means of coercion but rather proceeds by means of encouragement and partnership with industry. It is that section of the department that has been working in the honourable member's electorate in order to achieve this outcome. And what can be achieved in Gladstone can be achieved elsewhere.

My department is concerned to achieve quality of life. The overall objective is quality of life. That is what an environment department is there for. It is possible to get the quadruple bottom line. It is possible to get an improvement in the productive output of the economy, an improvement in the human capital, an improvement in the natural capital and an improvement in the social capital. Very often economic advance is not antithetical to an improvement in quality of life. Very often an improvement in the quality of life indices leads to an improvement in the economic bottom line as well.

I take this opportunity to thank those who were involved in the committee. I found it a very constructive experience. I thought the honourable member for Keppel behaved in a very constructive and statesman-like way. He has surpassed himself today. The skill at delegation he is demonstrating today and the extent to which he has emulated the strong, silent type of many statesmen before him have been exceeded by no-one in recorded history. I thank the honourable member for Keppel for his comportment on the occasion of the estimates hearing and for his demeanour today.

I also thank the staff of the estimates committee. I particularly thank the chairman and the members of the committee. They all, I thought, asked interesting questions to which I was able to give less than interesting answers. That, after all, is what a minister aspires to in an estimates committee. I thank the honourable member for Kallangur for assisting me with research for certain of my remarks. I thank all those who were involved.

I would like to say something about the process of the estimates committees themselves. They are beneficial from the point of view of open government. I remember saying when referring to the freedom of information legislation, when I had the honour of introducing it into the House, that the presumption that information held by government should be secret unless there is some overwhelmingly good reason to the contrary needs to be replaced with the presumption that information held by government should be available unless there is some overwhelmingly good reason to the contrary.

Our parallel process operates with respect to the estimates process. The estimates process requires public servants to actually sort out the rationale for the projects they are undertaking. That rationale then gets an airing at the estimates hearings. This goes to the reasons for action of a government. With the estimates process, institutionalised as it now is in the parliament, we are

able to say that we have replaced the presumption that the reasons for governments doing something are generally unknown with the presumption that the reasons governments do things are now to be generally known. I thank honourable members, particularly the honourable member for Maroochydore for her forbearance.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.28 p.m.): I rise with pleasure to speak on the aspect of this estimates committee relating to the environment. I acknowledge my colleague the member for Keppel, the Hon. Vince Lester, who has asked me to participate on his behalf as he is currently on a government trade delegation with the Police Minister, Tony McGrady, and other members of parliament.

The Fraser Island dingo management strategy has been revealed to be flawed in its approach, with a ludicrous attempt at feral animal management in national parks. There are still a number of incidents occurring on Fraser Island despite the much-lauded Fraser Island dingo management strategy. In the past year the Department of Environment has received reports of five nips, two bites and seven other incidents that show aggressive behaviour of dingoes. Currently there are approximately 160 dingoes on Fraser Island and in the past year nine dingoes have been destroyed for aggressive behaviour. Minister Wells commented in estimates—

We cannot respond ... until the incident occurs, and until we have evidence that there is a likelihood of an incident we cannot respond proactively.

This demonstrates that there is little being done by the government to pre-empt the situation. Greater measures should be taken to prevent further tragedies on the island.

The whole of Queensland remembers the Clinton Gage tragedy. All the warning signs that were ignored by the authorities so many times eventually resulted in the tragic death of an innocent child. Minister Wells informed us that there are warning signs and brochures available on Fraser Island, as well as 15 camp ground rangers and four dingo management rangers, to increase education programs for visitors about dingoes and to warn them of the dangers of dingoes. However, during the estimates hearing the minister commented that people are still confusing dingoes with dogs, which is a sure admission that the education program is failing and the message is not getting through.

Dingoes are dangerous animals and they should be treated as such. The government has a responsibility to ensure that every visitor to a national park is aware of the possible risks posed by dingoes and how to minimise those risks. During the estimates committee hearings, Minister Wells also commented that it was the task of the rangers to tell each tourist about the dangers of dingoes and to monitor the public education programs. Rangers are supposed to make special arrangements for overseas tourists and are charged with checking on them personally. Considering that the visitors to Fraser Island number more than 360,000 a year, it is not feasible to expect the 15 rangers to monitor the vast numbers of tourists who visit the island and even less feasible to expect those rangers to be multilingual.

As an admission of the failure of this campaign, Minister Wells recently advised people that children should remain inside the designated camping areas for their own safety. That is not a solution. The education program and the effectiveness of the Fraser Island dingo management strategy need to be re-evaluated.

I want to address also the lack of funding for the clean-up, research and rejuvenation of Moreton Bay and its surrounding rivers and estuaries. Water quality in Moreton Bay remains a critical issue and one that continues to put at risk the lives of dugongs, loggerhead turtles and bottlenose dolphins. The health of Moreton Bay and its surrounding rivers and estuaries is an important public health matter for everyone who resides in south-east Queensland. The recent detection of *pfiesteria* algae—dubbed the 'cell from hell' by scientists—is a grave concern for every Queenslanders. Despite that, Minister Wells admitted in estimates—

Since the tests were negative, we do not see any point in continuing it.

There is a continual theme of apathy and lack of vigilance on the part of the Beattie government with regard to Queensland's water quality. The government has failed to allocate adequate funds to the clean-up, monitoring and research of the Moreton Bay area.

Mr WELLS: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member just said that the tests were negative.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: Under the Moreton Bay partnership, the Beattie government allocated \$5 million in total from 1998 to 2001—a pitiful amount on a per year basis. No figure has ever

been provided for after 2001. I do not think any more money has been allocated to the partnership. As for the clean-up of the bay—surely a most important part of the program—only a cumulative amount of \$50,000 has been allocated over the past few years. The state cannot expect the Commonwealth or local government to bear the brunt of its responsibility in the bay area.

I will now address the lack of adequate funding for the acquisition and maintenance of national parks. This is certainly a concern in my own area. The national park areas have been extended, and still I cannot find out how much has been budgeted for those areas. The state government invested \$5.50 per hectare in the management of terrestrial protected areas, which is roughly one-third of the amount spent on parks in most other states. For example, New South Wales spends nearly \$25 per hectare. In answer to a question on notice, it was revealed that in the past two years there have been 16 closures of various kinds of national parks, mostly occurring in the Carnarvon National Park. Most of these closures were due to poor maintenance or the inability of the park to cope with increased visitor numbers.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.33 p.m.): I would like to join in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee E because there are a number of important issues that I would like to raise. In common with my colleague, I acknowledge that our shadow minister for the environment would have liked to have been here today, but he is overseas on a government trade delegation.

There are a number of important issues in terms of the funding of the three departments that were examined by Estimates Committee E. The first thing that springs to mind is the shortage of staff in some of those departments. In terms of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, I understand that there are something like 100 staff vacancies. Obviously there is a serious funding problem in terms of providing those staff. This is one area where staff are needed. We need only look at the current and recent debate on issues to do with the Condamine-Balonne river system and issues to do with salinity to see that if there was a need for staff and a prioritising of work anywhere, it was in that department.

The water resource plans—or the WAMPs as they were called previously—for that particular river system were commenced four years ago. There have not been enough staff and scientists provided to do that job. When we consider all the river systems of Queensland, the one that is claimed to have been stressed—or parts of it to have been stressed—is that particular system. Yet with the proper allocation of funds and resources, that river system could have been given priority and the water allocation management plan for that river could have been undertaken.

Many of the river systems where water resource plans have been undertaken did not have the urgency of the Condamine-Balonne river system. I acknowledge that some did. The Burnett and the Fitzroy are examples. But this one had an absolute priority. Good management and good funding through the budgetary process would have ensured that enough staff were provided to undertake that process. This whole issue of the water resource plan, the accurate detailing of the various flows in the river at different points so that there is some consensus and some cooperation, could have been in place and many of the problems avoided.

We hear of 2,000 VERs being offered, yet we have all of these departments that are short of workers. Those departments have had restrictions placed on their staff numbers. But on top of that, there are these 2,000 VERs that will just make things harder. So here we have a very clear example where the obligation and responsibility of the department to undertake vital water resource planning has not been done accurately or in a timely fashion. The Condamine-Balonne resource plan should have had an absolute priority.

There are a number of issues in terms of that river and its flow rates. I understand that the minister released the infamous red maps as a diversion to the closing down of Cubbie Station. On the release of those maps, the scientists involved spoke about the water flows in the Condamine-Balonne and said that there are some very healthy flows as part of the average, normal flow of the river. In places like Cecil Plains, it is around 76 per cent; at the Weribone Weir towards Chinchilla, it is around about 86 per cent. So obviously there are some very healthy components of the river. People want accuracy in the way in which these measurements are undertaken. They also want them to be done in a timely fashion. I could compare that system with the Lachlan River and the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales, which have an end-of-valley flow of around about 25 per cent of the average.

I understand that at these estimates hearings there was an admission that native title legislation had failed. There is a backlog of hundreds and hundreds of exploration permits. Mining

is the biggest and most important industry in this state and there is this logjam. If we do not do something about it immediately then mining projects, which take a number of years to come to fruition, will certainly suffer.

National parks need money for capital expenditure and management. When we consider these VERs that are being offered, we know that behind all of the spin, every single department is going to lose a few more people—the people who do the organisation, the people who issue the permits, the people who compile the reports, the people who type the letters and all the rest of it. Bit by bit, there is going to be less and less support for the frontline staff in all of these departments. We do not have enough people to run the national parks now. We do not have enough people to keep the pigs, the weeds and all the other pests out of the national parks. Yet staff numbers in those departments are going to be cut a little bit further.

I know that there is a problem in the world heritage area. People in that area have spoken to me. The minister is probably aware of the massive numbers of wild pigs in the world heritage area, particularly around the Daintree. The damage that pigs are doing to the flora and fauna of that area is a serious problem. Something needs to be done, because there are literally tens of thousands of these animals in that area. There is a problem in being able to handle them whilst not disturbing the cassowaries that live in the same region. People from the Daintree have spoken to me about that. There is some good local knowledge of what to do and how to do it.

Time expired.

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.39 p.m.): I will start by thanking the members of Estimates Committee E and, in particular, the chairman, the member for Kawana. I was asked a substantial number of questions, covering a wide range of subjects. The questions asked by government members of the committee certainly displayed a keen interest in the Local Government and Planning portfolio and I thank them for that interest.

The objective of the estimates process is to allow members of parliament the opportunity to scrutinise the actions of government and the Public Service. I was disappointed that opposition members did not make full use of that opportunity. In fact, I was disappointed at the unprofessional way in which they conducted their part of the proceedings. There appeared to be no preparation, only two of their committee members attended, only one member asked any questions of me, and when the hearing closed almost 20 minutes earlier than scheduled, they clearly had no questions left to ask.

However, the hearing was amicable. On the day, I was asked 53 questions and I took only four on notice, so I am surprised at the reservation statement submitted by the member for Warrego. It is perhaps a bad week for the member for Warrego to criticise anyone else for being unprofessional.

As I outlined during the hearing, this year's budget is a positive one for my portfolio. Some of the budget highlights for my department are \$2.6 million over three years to complete the full implementation of the Integrated Planning Act, \$1.3 million over three years to continue progress on the SEQ 2021, \$600,000 for the City West master plan, and \$500,000 to conduct training seminars on new fire safety legislation for the budget accommodation sector and to identify cost-effective ways of making other high-risk buildings safer. This year, some \$437 million will be available for local governments in grants and subsidies.

I turn now to the issues raised in the reservation statement by the member for Warrego, the only opposition member to question my portfolio at the hearing. Mr Hobbs has complained that a number of pre-hearing questions on notice submitted by him were incompletely answered. In fact, those questions did not comply with the sessional order adopted by the Legislative Assembly for the estimates committee 2002 process. Sessional order number 26(5) stipulates that each question is not to contain sub-parts or, in effect, to ask more than one question. A number of questions from Mr Hobbs contained multiple sub-parts and, in effect, were complex, asked much more than one question and would have required an unreasonable level of research work by my department.

For example, the response provided to Mr Hobb's question on notice no. 6 identified that there are at least 140 different departmental activities falling within the scope of that question. That represented only one part of the question on notice, which had numerous other sub-sets. In another instance, the information required to answer one of Mr Hobbs' written questions on notice dated back to 1998. The Department of Local Government and Planning was not established until 22 February 2001.

However, despite these obvious issues, all other responses to the questions on notice were provided within the time frames requested by the committee, including the response to pre-hearing question on notice no. 6, which the committee itself extended to Monday, 29 July. In fact, it was provided to the research director on Friday, 26 July. The 'errors' referred to in the response to one of the questions on notice simply related to a transcription error.

I will clarify the intention of a statement I made in the fire regulations debate in April which Mr Hobbs raised again during the estimates process. I said that no council complaints had been received since I had written to all mayors clarifying the details of the legislation—and no new complaints were received. However, it has been brought to my attention that some of the pro forma type letters that we had been receiving from some councils and associations did actually arrive after that date.

On a quick look, it might appear that the Department of Local Government and Planning's expenditure in 2002-03 will reduce by \$24 million. However, excluding the one-off items such as the carry-over of \$16 million from the previous financial year and the budget reductions for NDRA programs, there is in fact a further \$27 million in funding available to local government grant and subsidy programs over and above that available last year.

Finally, in relation to there being no contingency plan in place for councils which may not be able to meet the March 2003 deadline for the implementation of IPA plans, I remind the member for Warrego that councils have had five years to get their plans in place. I am confident that councils will have their own contingency plans in place, even if they are anticipating problems. I find it hard to believe that any council would allow itself to be in the position of having no lawful planning scheme in place after that date.

In closing, I take this opportunity to thank my Director-General, Dr Campbell, and his staff for the very professional way in which they prepared for the estimates hearings and for the outstanding way they conducted themselves during those proceedings.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee F Report

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (12.44 p.m.): I am pleased to say a few words about Estimates Committee F. I have had an opportunity to read the report which was tabled in parliament today. I believe all members who propose to speak on this matter today have also read the report. It covers in great detail what occurred during the time of Estimates Committee F hearings. I take this opportunity to thank the staff for the effort and work that went into the preparation of this report. It certainly provides a very good, broad overview of the portfolios of the ministers who were involved in Estimates Committee F, namely the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Main Roads, the Minister for Public Works and the Minister for Housing, and the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. If members take the opportunity to read the report they will find those portfolios are dealt with in some detail.

A dissenting report was produced by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Gregory, Mr Johnson. He dissents in a number of areas. I am sure the minister will take an opportunity later to speak to that in some detail.

I note that many of the committees' reports this year have dissenting reports attached. As a member said earlier, dissenting reports do not have the sort of impact now that they may have had when this process initially started. I think most members would agree in their heart of hearts that these dissenting reports are often based on a simple matter of politics, with members taking an opportunity to parade, in many cases, what they do not know rather than what they do know.

I take this opportunity to raise a couple of issues which I think are important to Queenslanders. One of them comes through the Minister for Public Works and the Minister for Housing, and that is the concern with the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Of particular interest to me was the Howard government's decision to continue to cut funding in capital investment in public housing; instead, funding rental assistance for people to live in private accommodation. While we have a commitment from the Beattie government to boost spending on housing assistance of around \$330 million to \$462 million a year in just over four years, the Howard coalition government continues to cut funding.

Since the end of World War II, the major source of social housing has been the federal government through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, and successive federal

governments, both Labor and coalition, have honoured this responsibility. It was important to the success of Labor and coalition governments and they have honoured that responsibility for over 50 years until this federal coalition government came along. The simple fact is that under the current terms of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement the federal government has cut \$90 million for housing assistance. That is a sad reflection on the Commonwealth, but it also places our state in a more difficult position when it comes to housing people.

I was particularly interested to read about what the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy and his department are doing to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Innovative thinking knows no boundaries. What is also pleasing about many of the initiatives is that they are not all Brisbane based. Many programs are under way through that department. Importantly, for people such as me and the member for Pumicestone, an information centre was recently opened at the Sunshine Coast University. The technology incubator owned by the Sunshine Coast University was built, with the state government providing \$500,000 over three years. It is very important to recognise that the centre has just recruited its first two tenants, Allegro Systems and Flametree Software. I am sure that it will grow to great things from there.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.50 p.m.): I am delivering this speech on behalf of the member for Darling Downs who is attending a very important meeting, Vision 2000, which deals with the most precious commodity this state and the Darling Downs region in particular requires—a secure, safe and consistent water supply. The member for Darling Downs asked me to say—

Before I start I must firstly congratulate the member for Hervey Bay for the way in which he chaired the Estimates Committee meetings and the public hearing, although I must say I thought it quite strange to see the time clock immediately go back to three minutes each time a comment was made to the minister.

This matter must be resolved before the next Estimates Committees. I also ask that whoever looks at these procedures look at the procedure of who starts the question and whether it is the government or the opposition. The member for Darling Downs continues—

The reason I mention this is I believe I have a good relationship with the minister and we seem to operate well on a one-to-one basis, which leads to good interaction and discussion. That is clearly the way the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing operates, and others are comfortable with his ability to interact. To have the time clock returning to three minutes each time a comment was made by a member of the committee certainly gave the minister plenty of time to answer questions, and it is probably an operational procedure for all Estimates Committees' public hearings that needs to be examined further. Estimates Committee F covered a lot of issues pertaining to my shadow portfolio, and I can say it is a good thing to assess what is happening from the budget and how the funds are distributed and expended.

The most important thing that has happened since the Estimates Committee hearing is the collapse of Stockport. Recently I travelled to Mackay and met with a number of subcontractors who were working on the Queensland government's rail crossing project and are nervously waiting for payment. As we all know, we have passed legislation to try and help situations like this and these people are owed over \$600,000 and some of them are owed over \$150,000 each. How can they possibly cover costs like this? They may well go broke and the thing that annoys me the most is that that project was a Queensland government project, a job that should be so sure and secure that subcontractors should have their money guaranteed.

I note with interest that Q-Build will employ between 90 to 100 apprentices again this year. I hope you will continue to work with the master builders association to develop an area where we can make sure our apprentices are put into real jobs following the completion of their respective apprenticeships. I also note the minister spoke of encouraging females into the trades, and I commend him on this initiative. It is a very good thing. Q-Build is the leading employer of apprentices in Queensland, and I congratulate Q-Build for this, and we all must make sure that that employment and training initiative continues.

Recently in Mackay it was drawn to my attention by industry representatives that there was a skilled labour shortage, particularly in the engineering fields, in this district caused by the job opportunities currently occurring in Gladstone and surrounding areas. We must be mindful of this imbalance and set about addressing the situation. I note the Housing Industry Trade Training Program and the target to provide 1,000 apprenticeships over five years, and I hope the targets are reached. Perhaps consideration should be given to a similar program targeting the engineering trades as well. Another initiative that is worthy of further development is the Aboriginal apprenticeship training scheme in housing. I note there are 20 apprentices in training at the moment and I hope this number increases. I note Q-Fleet is using 10 per cent ethanol in government cars, and this is another good initiative.

As the House knows, an ethanol plant will be constructed at Dalby, and I am very proud of that fact. I have worked very close with Mr Bill Elliott and I can say I am very proud that Dalby will have the largest ethanol plant in Australia. The point I bring out is that government must—and I say must—mandate a 10 per cent ethanol mix in all petrol used. If this became the case, every agricultural town could have an ethanol plant. Imagine the employment this would create. You can make ethanol out of bushes. Up north, they are experimenting with prickly acacia in their developing power and ethanol plant. What a wonderful thing. Prickly acacia is an absolute pest in north Queensland. The member for Nicklin mentioned rainwater tanks. The minister mentioned research being undertaken and he also mentioned that we need to look at every way we can conserve water. This is a meritorious initiative and it is another that is worthy of further pursuit.

I would like also to wish Boystown Link Up all the best in their program of purchasing 10 surplus public housing dwellings from the Department of Housing. This is a project where they will use young people involved in Link Up to renovate these houses and sell them on the open market. I know that in the Eagleby-Logan area there are plenty of houses not being used by the housing commission at this time.

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (12.56 p.m.): I take this opportunity to speak about Estimates Committee F and to inform members of a few of my observations from the experience. I speak to this report with pleasure because of the professional manner in which the committee was conducted. I thank the member for Hervey Bay for chairing the committee in his trademark fashion—firm but fair. I also commend the staff—Rob McBride, Maureen McClarty and Lynn Knowles—for the professional manner in which they carried out their duties. This being only my second estimates committee, I still saw a positive improvement not only in the style with which it was conducted but also with how new portfolios such as Innovation and Information Economy are maturing. The first minister and department in the spotlight was the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, with appropriations totalling \$451 million.

The minister and his department answered all questions, bar one, put to them within their session. I believe that the answer to that question was provided the next morning. The member for Darling Downs asked the bulk of the opposition's questions. The questions varied from state purchasing policy, Commonwealth-state housing agreements—which highlighted the withdrawing of badly needed federal funding to the public housing sector and the people who need this help the most—Roma Street Parkland, unlicensed contracting investigations, and the Brisbane Housing Company, which shows a lot of promise as a model to be used elsewhere—and hopefully and successfully in the Burnett. The member for Darling Downs seemed to concentrate a fair portion of his allotted time on the sale of houses at Azalea, Abelia, Buddleia and Crocus streets, Inala, to Liberty Homes Pty Ltd. The member's questions were of a fishing trip nature and to no avail. The minister and his department performed their duties at estimates extremely well.

The Minister for Innovation and Information Economy was next and, again, showed the committee a couple of examples of the latest technology. Aerated, light-weight concrete is something I could have done with some years ago. Queensland companies are progressively moving along and helping Queenslanders get up to speed. The member for Southern Downs asked the minister a number of pertinent questions which I found not only interesting but informative. Being a member of a rural electorate, I found that Mr Lucas's portfolio is unfortunately not a high priority and does not receive the attention in my electorate that it definitely deserves. The member for Southern Downs did inquire about Cutting Edge Post Pty Ltd and any transactions that may have taken place between it and the department. This line of questioning was also followed during hearings into the previous portfolio. Again, it was another fruitless fishing trip that amounted to nothing.

The Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads' proposed expenditure in Transport, \$1.2 billion, and Main Roads, \$1.7 billion, showed the size of the commitment of the minister and the Beattie government to servicing the huge Queensland transport network. I commend the minister for his knowledge of both departments in being able to field all questions, bar a few. I know the director-generals and the staff take pride in the fact that they have a well up to speed department and a very well briefed minister. Therefore, I find it difficult to understand the reasoning behind the member for Gregory's dissenting report. As the member for Bundaberg mentioned in her report, it was a matter of the opposition running out of questions before they ran out of time. Therefore, I commend the report to the House.

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

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (2.30 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee F on the proposed expenditure set out in the Appropriation Bill. I note that the committee examined a wide range of issues in this regard. Those issues ranged from questions to the Minister for Main Roads and Minister for Transport about the safety of Queensland trains to more low-key issues, for example, including a request for motor vehicle registration concessions for Queensland antique car club members involved in community events.

The Sunshine Coast Antique Car Club's request for concessional registration for Queensland club members who own and use these antique and vintage cars for hundreds of community events around this great state is a reasonable request, and I thank the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads for his interest in this matter.

Mr Bredhauer: I wrote to one of those organisations yesterday, and I'll follow it up.

Mr WELLINGTON: I thank the minister.

I thank also the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing for his frank answers to my questions about government assistance for crisis accommodation on the Sunshine Coast. The population of the Sunshine Coast region is growing rapidly and, unfortunately, it appears clear that state and federal government funding for improved services has not kept pace with this spiralling increase in population growth. I hope that as a result of the estimates committee process the various ministers and departmental staff are now better informed of the continuing real needs of our region. I am pleased that this government is continuing to hold estimates committee hearings.

I congratulate the government and its ministers on their support of the use of ethanol as a fuel blend in state government vehicles. We on the Sunshine Coast see the manufacture of ethanol as an opportunity for a brand-new major industry to replace the current troubled sugar industry. I commend the report to the House.

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.32 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the report of Estimates Committee F. I congratulate Ministers Bredhauer, Lucas and Schwarten on the tremendous job they do in their portfolios. It is not possible in five minutes to cover even just a few of those areas, so I will speak only about housing.

The new Leichhardt Community Centre has started in my electorate, thanks to the great work being done by Robert Schwarten and the Beattie government. Minister Schwarten has approved almost \$940,000 in funding to establish the new centre at Leichhardt. The centre is to be established as part of the community renewal activities in the Leichhardt area. Almost \$900,000 was provided to purchase the land and for design and construction costs for the centre. This funding also includes the cost of installing airconditioning and setting up a telephone network. A further \$26,000 was approved to landscape the surrounds of the centre and to establish a community gardening tool shed library that provides local residents with the opportunity to borrow tools to improve their gardens.

The new Leichhardt Community Centre will link local residents with local services, resources and information. It will also provide a much-needed and cost-effective venue for community organisations to meet, including the Leichhardt Community Group. Since community renewal began in Leichhardt, the state government has provided more than \$3 million for 37 projects to improve the appearance of and services in the local community.

The Community Renewal Program is a state government initiative coordinated by the Department of Housing and delivered in partnership with the local community, the Ipswich City Council and other state and non-government agencies. Certainly this whole program is a credit to this government. It has done a tremendous job in that area. We have received more than our share of funds—something that did not happen under the coalition government.

Although the Queensland government is doing a great job, it is a shame that the federal government is not able to pull its weight. Earlier, the member for Kallangur touched on some of the problems we are experiencing at a federal level. Queensland, in common with all other states and territories, faces rising demand for affordable housing. While the Beattie government has lifted spending on housing assistance, our efforts to expand the availability of affordable housing have been handicapped by the uncaring attitude at the federal level.

The major source of housing funding remains the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, yet through the agreement the Howard government is continuing to walk away from its responsibilities by cutting funds. It is a demonstrated fact that the Beattie government has been lifting funding while the Howard government has been doing the opposite.

Under the Borbidge government in 1997-98, Queensland Housing funding was \$330.4 million. This year, with Robert Schwarten as minister in the Beattie government, it is \$461.9 million. That is an increase of \$131.5 million, which is tremendous. Over the same period, the federal funding pool under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement—funds split amongst the states and territories—has gone from \$975 million in 1997-98 to \$938.5 million this year. That is a disgrace. The federal government should hang its head in shame.

While demand is increasing, the ability of the state government and housing groups to respond is being severely limited by funding cuts instigated by the Howard government. Demand for assistance from clients with a disability continues to grow. For example, in 1999-2000 the Department of Housing modified 2,432 public housing dwellings for clients with a disability—a 595 per cent increase on the 353 dwellings modified by the department eight years earlier.

In attempting to meet increased demand for accommodation for older persons, the Department of Housing now devotes almost 30 per cent of its construction program to seniors units. However, due to decreasing numbers of commencements—itsself a product of funding cuts from the federal government—in real terms this has seen a reduction from 149 units in 2000-01, which were built at a cost of \$22,206,000, to the forecast for this year of just 85 seniors units at a cost of \$13,246,000. That is an enormous reduction. The federal government should be ashamed of itself.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant growth in the private rental market but a decline in the supply of low-cost housing. There is a shrinking supply of low-rent housing in Queensland—a problem that also affects the other states and territories. The position is worsening as the private rental market focuses on high-rent priorities.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.37 p.m.): I wish to make some remarks on the report of Estimates Committee F on behalf of my colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Gregory, who has had to attend an Isolated Children's and Parents Association annual conference at Charleville in his electorate today.

Mr Bredhauer: He put in a dissenting report and he can't be bothered being here.

Mr HORAN: It is important for him to attend that meeting in relation to children in western and isolated areas. I intend to speak for him and give some details concerning his dissenting report. The minister is probably feeling a bit tender, because the dissenting report addresses the lack of suitable responses during the estimates process. My colleague has said that it is not his usual practice to submit a dissenting report but that this year he feels very strongly about the shortcomings in the policy goals in Transport and Main Roads, about the way in which expenditure is being administered and the unwillingness to submit to proper scrutiny through the estimates committee process. This avoidance of proper scrutiny has been of real concern. A number of members from this side of the House have referred to this issue. During the estimates process we hear prepared answers to dorothy dixers from the government side, yet we have great difficulty in getting a straight and honest answer to our questions.

The structure of the budget documentation and some of the responses to the questions on notice were calculated to avoid accountability and to prevent the committee from being able to determine if taxpayers' funds were being properly acquitted. It is interesting to note that we are going through the estimates process trying to find out what is in the budget and just this week we learnt about all the new fees and charges in relation to the Transport Department. This is yet another broken promise of no new taxes and charges. Many charges are being jacked up almost week by week. It would have been proper to put these new charges in the budget in order to discuss them and for the minister to answer questions during the budget estimates process. Instead, they were deliberately hidden and kept out of the budget until after the budget process. The people of Queensland only got to know about them through a radio comment which then forced the minister to be honest and to admit to it.

Mr Cummins: It doesn't say much about the opposition.

Mr HORAN: It was all kept secret. The government went to great efforts to keep it secret and therefore there is not much that we can ask about it. It is not in the budget papers, is it? It was not in any regulations brought into the parliament. It was kept secret and leaked by staff within the department.

These new fees and charges mean that learner drivers will have to pay \$15 to do the written test. The transfer of recreational ship registration used to be free. Previous governments could do it for free, but now it will cost \$16.95. Replacement car registration and reinstating registration where payment is made after the due date and booking a commercial vehicle inspection also used to be free. They will now cost \$10 to \$40, with \$10 for boats and trailers and \$20 respectively. It is a tax grab on top of the \$30 million for the extra land tax, the \$75 million for the extra payroll tax and the 2,000 public servants who will be pushed out of a job. Goodness knows who will do their work. It will affect the minister's department because his staff will be reduced. I have seen the queues when people have to line up to get their drivers licences and various other permits. How long are those queues going to be now as the minister's department starts to shed staff to try to help the Treasurer out of his black hole with the budget?

There was great concern expressed by my colleague about the refusal to provide complete details in relation to the first couple of questions on notice. Importantly, there is also the extent of

the gross mismanagement in the reporting of Queensland Transport's capital infrastructure. During the hearing the minister claimed to be unable to respond to questions comparing budget allocations and last year's capital statement to actual expenditure in the 2002-03 budget documents. That would seem to be an attempt to disguise an obvious underspend, although the minister eventually conceded that the Department of Transport had in fact underspent last year's capital budget allocation in excess of \$175 million. In response to another question on notice he advised that the stopping patterns and fare structures in relation to the Cairns tilt train were not available because it was the subject of an extensive consultation process which the government was yet to undertake. Contrary to the recommendations of the parliamentary Public Works Committee, the Cairns tilt train project continues without appropriate financial analysis and with the real costs being hidden.

Time expired.

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (2.42 p.m.): What a farcical situation we have here today where the member for Gregory lodges a dissenting report to the estimates committee's findings and then cannot even be bothered to be in the parliament on a parliamentary sitting day to talk to his dissenting report. Instead, he sends the second string out here, the member for Toowoomba South—the temporary Leader of the Opposition—to fire his guns for him. But what is even more farcical are the reasons he has given for the dissenting report. He claims that we were secretive. Let me tell members what the member for Gregory said at the end of the estimates committee hearing for the Department of Transport and Main Roads. He said—

To you, Minister, your departmental staff, Queensland Transport, Main Roads and also Queensland Rail staff, a very sincere thanks from the opposition members for a job well done.

That is what he said on the night of the estimates. But then a week later after he had time to sleep on it and think about it and get John Lamont to write a few lines for him, all of a sudden it is a crisis and we have to have a dissenting report.

The member for Gregory also said that this government hides from scrutiny. This is the man who put in an FOI request to my department 12 months ago. He was advised that he could pick up the material. Has he ever been to get it? Almost \$10,000 was wasted by my department putting the FOI request together and he never bothered to show up. Do members know the things I hid from scrutiny? He asked me, 'How many timber bridges are there in the southern Queensland region of Main Roads?' I admit that I did not know off the top of my head how many timber bridges there were, just as I do not know how many concrete railway sleepers there are between Townsville and Mount Isa. But I got the information for him, and before the estimates committee process was over we were able to tell him that there were 211. If he wants to, he can go out and count them.

Mr Schwarten: Are you sure about that?

Mr BREDHAUER: Yes, member for Rockhampton, I am sure about that. These are the things that I was hiding from the member for Gregory—how many timber bridges there are in the southern region of the Department of Main Roads! What about the serious financial problems with the Department of Transport and the capital works budget? He talked about a \$175 million underspend right across the entire capital works budget of the entire Transport portfolio, including all of the GOCs, QR and all the port authorities. I am here to advise members that when he was the minister in 1997-98 there was a \$150 million underspend in the capital works program for Queensland Rail alone. He comes in here and criticises this government when he, when in government, was absolutely no better.

The member for Gregory asked a question about the diesel tilt train, as to whether we had decided what would be the stopping pattern and fare schedule. I answered him honestly, 'No, we haven't decided. We are about to embark upon a process of public consultation.' I left the estimates committee and two days later I went to Cairns to launch the process of public consultation as I told him I would do. I told him that we would launch a process of public consultation. He has accused me of hiding this from the scrutiny of the estimates committee, but it is nonsense. I told him that the decision had not been made because we were going to go out to consultation. Lo and behold, we went out to consultation and he has accused me of hiding it after I told him and then publicly launched it on the railway platform in Cairns two days later!

The member for Gregory's criticisms of the Transport and Main Roads portfolio budget are an absolute nonsense. He accuses us of reducing funding for Main Roads. We increased state funding for Main Roads in this budget by \$37 million. It was his Tory mates in Canberra who cut

\$58 million from the roads budget in this year's federal budget. That is why there is less money for roads this year, because the \$37 million extra we put in was more than counteracted by the \$58 million he and his National Party mate John Anderson ripped out of the federal budget this year. So do not come in here and talk to me about reducing the Main Roads budget.

Then the member for Gregory referred to the Tugun bypass. The hide! We have \$120 million on the table for the Tugun bypass, yet in the *Gold Coast Sun* the other day the Deputy Prime Minister said, 'We will not commit,' and that is the federal government, 'until we see New South Wales commit.' We have put our money on the table. It promised half the cost of the Tugun bypass. It is the one who is squibbing. It is no wonder the member for Gregory hightailed it out of town today. It is no wonder he was not here to present his minority report, because it is an absolute nonsense. He ran and hid.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (2.47 p.m.): In rising to speak to the report of Estimates Committee F, I acknowledge the importance of the road and rail network in my electorate and in Queensland. I know that the minister is familiar with some areas of the rail and road network in the Gladstone area. I note that during the estimates hearing the rail corridor safety fencing program was raised. There is an allied issue to that—that is, rail crossings. Even though there is a significant capital investment in boom gates at railway crossings, there are three in the Gladstone city area that require boom gates, and I have sent photographs of them to the minister's office. They are at Witney Street, Mercury Street and Scenery Street. Unfortunately, Witney Street was the scene of a recent fatality where boom gates would have saved an older gentleman's life. He misjudged the speed of the train and misjudged the timing. Even though there were lights flashing, he proceeded across the railway line and was subsequently killed. It was after that incident that I sent the photographs to the minister requesting those boom gates. I understand that it is a significant capital investment but certainly one that is worth while.

I have written to the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing on a number of occasions. I know that the minister has responded to a number of letters about the availability of departmental housing within my electorate. The estimates committee hearings included discussion of the sales of and protocols for the sale of departmental housing and the sale of what have been deemed as unwanted Department of Housing houses. Given the development issues in the electorate of Gladstone, I ask the minister that there be no further sales of departmental houses; and if the department does not wish to look after the houses or to have their direct jurisdiction any longer, that he make them available for crisis and emergency accommodation. Quite a number of private dwellings that were available to the crisis housing sector have been removed from them and put into the private rental market because of the increased returns that are available at the moment. If there are any additional state government houses, I ask the minister certainly to consider that option of making them available to Anglicare and the like so that they can be made available to people. Some families have nowhere to go because the price of private rentals has increased quite markedly and those houses are just not available for people who want to support themselves.

There is another issue in regard to housing. I know that the minister has spoken on a number of occasions in this chamber about the federal government's removal of funding. That is certainly a concern. However, I ask again that funds be allocated for additional housing in my electorate. The minister has very effectively allocated some accommodation units that are currently being constructed by the Group Apprenticeship Scheme. That is certainly valued. But again I draw to the minister's attention the need for additional housing units in the electorate to accommodate not just the Comalco growth but the Aldoga growth which is imminent. There is talk about construction starting in the second quarter of next year. If that backs onto the Comalco development, there will be a huge amount of pressure on housing in the electorate and more and more hardworking families will be unable to find suitable accommodation within commuting distance from their workplaces. I bring that issue to the minister's attention.

The reinstitution of rainwater tanks in backyards is a novel program. A lot of people do not like rainwater. They find it difficult to understand how the water can taste so good when there are probably some Kamikaze rats or toads in the bottom of the tank.

Mr Cummins: It gives it flavour.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It does. It adds to the flavour. It also helps the immune systems of those of us who have to live on rainwater.

Mr Cummins: It kills the cockroaches.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Too right it does! I think a lot of people would welcome rainwater tanks in their backyards. They were cleared out in Gladstone. For some reason, with the industrial development some years ago, it was made illegal, if you like, to have a rainwater tank. But many people would welcome that initiative to be able to collect some water and have a decent cup of tea.

The Housing portfolio and the Transport portfolio in relation to my electorate are two very important infrastructure sectors, and I certainly welcome any investment that the government would wish to make in the Gladstone-Calliope area to better improve the services available to my constituents.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Information Economy) (2.53 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to contribute to the finalisation of the budget process in relation to the overall debate and the report of Estimates Committee F. I firstly thank the chair, the member for Hervey Bay, and also the deputy chair and other members of the committee. I enjoyed the estimates committee debate, and I was pleased that members from both sides of the House took an interest in the matters that concern my portfolio and other portfolios. My portfolio can sometimes be a difficult area to explain. That is why I enjoyed estimates, as members were prepared to engage in looking at how we see ourselves as a state in the future, not just today. As honourable members know, my portfolio was set up by the Premier more than a year ago to help Queensland become the Smart State, to be a smart leader in the knowledge economy by developing and applying the state's strengths in ICT and the life sciences. My portfolio is dedicated to ensuring that all Queenslanders can participate in and benefit from the information age. We want to ensure that it is not just big business reaping the benefits—and it is not just the south-east corner, either.

An important item of expenditure in my department's budget is \$16 million for Smart Services Queensland. This is about how we are developing 24-seven, round-the-clock service delivery. This is about using technology to ensure Queenslanders can obtain better access to services tailored to meet their needs. Smart Services Queensland is already enabling Queenslanders to book camping permits and renew vehicle registrations on line, and more services will be added over the next few years. This is not just about posting information up on the government website—anyone can do that; and might I just say that many of our counterparts seem content merely to do just this. What the Queensland government is doing is providing integrated services, making services available over the Net, over the phone, by mail or over the counter.

Of course, by providing integrated services, we have to ensure that all Queenslanders have the opportunity to be equipped with the skills of this information age we are now in. My department has a range of programs that are doing just this, and the two key programs are the Community Skills Development Program in ICT and the ICT Skills Training and Role Models program. A total of 86 community groups and organisations have benefited since these programs began in 2000, with projects ranging from an innovative community website in the Murilla shire to the Wired Women in the West project that provides ICT and career training for mothers and home tutors. But it does not end there.

I have just announced the new Tech Survival Skills Program dedicated to helping people who are disadvantaged, or who are over 55, indigenous groups, people with disabilities and women re-entering the work force become tech savvy. The other side of my portfolio is to foster and support the development of emerging technologies. A large part of this is biotechnology, and this government is positioning Queensland as the biotech hub of the Asia-Pacific. My department has a range of funding programs to help our industries at home and is getting the word out to the rest of the world that Queensland is the biotech place to be with our mega-diversity, world-class facilities and terrific lifestyle.

A major initiative this year has been the release of a tropical science discussion paper. I launched this in Cairns recently, and what this is about is examining Queensland's existing capacity, our strengths in tropical science, and identifying actions that we can take to ensure we are internationally competitive in this area. We have tremendous biodiversity in our tropics. In one hectare of the Daintree there are more tree species than in the whole of North America. In these trees, and in our flora and fauna, there are unique compounds that may hold the key to a new drug that could treat diabetes, cancer or heart disease. But we have to ensure our flora and fauna are not simply being shipped off overseas, never to be seen again. We want Queenslanders to receive the maximum returns and have the chance to value add. We also want to very seriously protect our biodiversity and our unique environmental values.

We want to be more than a place where the plants grow and people knock off the plants. We need to be serious about biodiscovery. That is why our biodiscovery policy is so important. It is about ensuring a reasonable return to the people of Queensland for what are our assets; it is about ensuring our flora and fauna are protected; and it is about ensuring that when biodiscovery does take place as far as possible those downstream activities occur for the benefit of the people of Queensland. Getting it right is crucial. That is why my department is heavily consulting with industry on this matter, as well as through the tropical science discussion paper, which is actually part of a statewide R&D strategy—a first for Queensland. That is bringing together industry, research organisations and the Commonwealth to maximise government investment in R&D.

Total R&D spending in Queensland has increased by 13.6 per cent to \$1,340 million from 1999 to 2001, and we want to ensure we are taking the right steps to maximise investment by government, both state and federal, as well as industry and academia. Already we have dedicated \$270 million for a 10-year biotechnology strategy that builds on Queensland's biodiversity, addresses our R&D infrastructure and skills needs and communicates to the nation and the world that Queensland is a natural choice for biotech partnering and investment. In June, at the world's biggest biotechnology conference, BIO 2002, the Premier and I and others announced a number of recipients for the \$100 million Smart State Research Facility Fund. This initiative is providing funding that is vital to ensuring our knowledge industries remain in Queensland. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Recipients include \$22.5 million to help create a \$70 million Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation at QUT, and \$7.8 million towards a \$33 million Australian Tropical Forest Institute in Cairns. Already we're seeing great results from the Government's commitment to the bioindustries, with employment in the State's biotechnology sector rising from 1,225 in 1999 to 2,040 in 2001 and we expect another 981 jobs by mid 2003. We're also harnessing Queensland's human capital.

In this year's Budget I announced a new "Smart Fellowships" scheme which will receive \$2 million over four years to help keep our smart minds in the Smart State and attract the best and brightest from overseas. We want the next generation to be fully prepared for the jobs of the future. That's why my Department is raising community awareness and interest in the knowledge industries through a range of sponsorships and events.

Next year the Government will fund Australia's first mobile biotechnology travelling exhibition—the BioBus. This will be a mobile biotech classroom, and will travel across the state. I'm also a strong supporter of initiatives that promote science to students, such as the Siemens Science Experience and Biofutures Forum. My Department is also developing a science and technology careers website aimed at 14 to 17 year old Queenslanders to give them information about science and technology jobs, courses and careers. This will build on a similar project that I launched last year, of an IT careers kit for young Queenslanders that's been a great success. This is a very exciting portfolio to lead.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (2.58 p.m.): I take pleasure in joining in this debate in regard to Estimates Committee F and particularly with regard to Transport, Main Roads and Public Works and Housing. First of all, I would like to put on the record again how we are still waiting to see plans and capital funding put in place to upgrade the north coast line—the railway line to the Sunshine Coast—to the extent that it needs to be upgraded. I do not think we should be overly grateful that, because we have always had a railway line since the 1890s, that is sufficient. Only in recent years has the Gold Coast been given a hinterland railway service, but it has a service that runs regularly. It is time that the 1890s alignment for the north coast railway line was upgraded.

Currently trains can travel at only about 50 kilometres per hour through certain sections because they are running on an 1880s system. It is time the system is upgraded so we can get benefit from the tilt trains that go to Brisbane. We currently get no benefit from the speeds trains can reach on proper track because of the alignment through the Sunshine Coast. There must be better coordination with bus services and a duplication to enable us to get the services that this major region needs, certainly as a link through to Brisbane.

There are other ongoing issues related to better linkages of public transport with the rail network and the network of buses throughout the Sunshine Coast. The CAMCOS study was started under the coalition government and was continued by this government. There is a plan, but we are still waiting to see dollars attached to its implementation. There is no doubt that much better services than we have seen to date could be provided with buses. If the same level of subsidy applied to public transport in Brisbane was applied to the Sunshine Coast, I am sure we would not have the problems we are facing. This is a social equity issue. There are many people who cannot afford to run a car and a lot of elderly people who are unable to drive their own cars. In fact, access per head of population is getting worse. I draw that matter to the attention of the Transport Minister.

I am concerned when the Beattie Labor government is warning that it will cut up to 2,000 jobs and possibly more. How many of those jobs will be cut from the Sunshine Coast? How many of them will be cut from the departments of Transport and Main Roads and other important departments? We already know that there are not enough transport officers to deal with compliance issues on the road. While there is legislation currently before the House relating to car noise issues and hooning, we know that there are not enough transport officers who are highly skilled in the area of compliance. I am concerned that the government is cutting jobs. Is this one of those areas in which we will see more jobs slashed?

In regard to Main Roads, there are a number of key priority areas that need funding. While there is some indicative funding in the future for the Sunshine Motorway—a planning study is under way currently, which I welcome—we want a firm commitment from the state government that there will be funding to upgrade the Sunshine Motorway, particularly a duplication of the area between Buderim-Mooloolaba Avenue and Maroochydore Road, which is carrying far in excess of the traffic it was designed to carry. The interchanges at Buderim-Mooloolaba Avenue and Maroochydore Road, and certainly one back towards Mooloolah River, are beyond their capacity and need desperate upgrading. We want a firm commitment that that funding will be in the next budget. This particular budget deals only with planning funding.

With regard to housing, I urge the state government to provide assistance to help relocate the youth shelter at Maroochydore. We know that this is also a Families Department issue, but it is inappropriately located. It is a problem in that there are too many young people in a confined space with no play area. That shelter is beyond its use-by date. The shelter people would agree. That shift cannot take place without assistance from Housing. I also raise the issue of aged and disabled housing. I certainly welcome the high-rise at Maroochydore which will assist in that regard, but we still have an ongoing waitlist for those people in need.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.03 p.m.): I rise to speak on the report of Estimates Committee F. I thank Estimates Committee F for granting me leave to participate in that committee to question and interact with the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy.

One of the real issues the 12 members of the National Party opposition face is that a number of us shadow multiple portfolios. Because of the nature of the make-up of the parliament we cannot all be standing members of the committees. I thank members of Estimates Committee F for their indulgence in providing me the opportunity to scrutinise the estimates for the portfolio of Innovation and Information Economy.

I commend the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy for the competent way in which he handles his portfolio and the enthusiasm he brings to the job. I was very pleased to be able to attend the international biotechnology conference recently with the minister, the Premier, the member for Lockyer and the member for Robina.

Earlier today and at the estimates hearing the minister mentioned the need for additional investment in mobile telephony in Queensland. He went on to lambast and blame the Commonwealth government for this particular situation. It is very easy to stand up in this place and posture and carry on about these sorts of things, but he could put some of his money into this as well.

The local authorities in my area are putting money into mobile telephony towers to bring mobile telephone services to rural and regional areas of Queensland that would not otherwise have them. Where is the minister? He stands up in this House and blames the Commonwealth government and says, 'We are not going to loosen our purse strings.' Earlier this year I challenged the minister to put some state money into attracting a greater proportion of Networking the Nation money. That is something he did.

It is not our fault that the Gallop government—this government's Labor mates in Western Australia—was not competent enough to take that on when it took over the government post Richard Court. The fact that that government was not able to proactively and positively argue is not the fault of the Commonwealth government; it is a fault of the minister's Labor mates in Western Australia who were not able to effectively agitate.

Where was the minister when his Labor mates in the Hawke-Keating government removed the analog system without making provision for a new system of mobile telephony? He has not

mentioned that as part of the issue the Commonwealth government has to address at the moment. When the government freed up that bandwidth it created a significant issue.

In my electorate we have a situation whereby, whilst there were some problems earlier with the increasing uptake of CDMA technology, mobile telephony is better than it was under the analog system.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: This is a tad inconsistent. On the one hand the minister is complaining that we do not have good enough mobile telephony—I am indicating to him that it is getting infinitely better—and on the other hand he is saying that it is pretty good. He cannot have it both ways. We will keep agitating the issue.

The local governments in my electorate are very happy to contribute to bringing this to the area and assisting in upgrading mobile telephony. Instead of crying crocodile tears, the honourable minister opposite might be able to contribute some state money to upgrading mobile telephony. That is crucial. We know that. I work in my area with the federal member. Another couple of mobile telephone towers are coming on stream in the not-too-distant future around Bungunya and north on the Gore Highway. That will provide a much greater footprint of mobile telephony in that area, particularly for CDMA coverage.

There have been significant increases. The Commonwealth government has a part to play. Local government has a part to play. They are playing their parts. It is all right to cry crocodile tears as the minister has done, but he could put in some state money, as the Court government did in Western Australia. That the subsequent Labor government was not competent to carry that through is not the fault of the federal government.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (3.08 p.m.): I join with other ministers in thanking committee members, staff and of course my personal staff, including Mr Johnston, who is observing proceedings in the chamber, for the work they put into making this process very successful. I would describe the estimates committee as taking on more or less a cabaret atmosphere from time to time. It was quite an enjoyable experience.

On a serious note, I always welcome estimates hearings because I see them as a very good ruler to run over the department's activities. I congratulate both departments and both directors-general on the very robust way in which they conducted themselves. It is clear to me that all the public servants who were asked questions were on top of their subject. It is heartening to know that we have people such as that who are committed and who work hard in the departments. The whole process went without a hitch.

At the outset, quite obviously the shadow minister was given a series of questions to ask by somebody who was a competitor to what is happening in Inala. I have now sent over to the shadow minister all the details that he wanted and he is man enough to say that there was absolutely no issue within any of it. Again, the reality is that there will always be somebody out there who thinks that there is a deal that they are missing out on, they are crooked on that other person about it, and they will choose to use politicians to pump up their own case. That was clearly the case in that regard, but it gave us an opportunity that we had never had before to showcase the great work that is happening in Inala. Inala is one of our great success stories. I compliment the media on picking up that issue and running with it. The people of Inala have been showcased in the due way that they should be. I thank the shadow minister for his very generous comments and I thank him for his cooperation.

The member for Gladstone made a number of points about public housing in Gladstone. I say this again—and I do not know how many times I have to say it—money does not grow on trees. We have kicked over \$100 million extra into housing. Come the end of this CSHA, the federal government will have robbed us of \$200 million. It is simply impossible to do the sort of thing that the member for Gladstone is suggesting—absolutely impossible.

Of course, I am not going to acquiesce to her suggestion that I stop selling houses in Gladstone because we sell them for a very good reason. We have to turn over our stock. The other point is that this is the harsh reality that I have been talking about for nearly two years now. I have never noticed the member for Gladstone out there bagging the federal government over it. That is where the issue can be resolved. I will do everything that I can, including moving houses from Amberley to help, but at the end of the day the Commonwealth government is going to drive us further and further down this path. Now they are talking about providing rent assistance on a

public housing tenant capita basis. That is absolute lunacy. If there was a lunatic idea, there it is. It will see more and more people in Gladstone and elsewhere living on the streets. Members can bet their bottom dollar on that.

In terms of fairness, the member for Gladstone has her fair share—as indeed has every electorate. I cannot do any more than that. I cannot be any fairer in ensuring that we try to deal with homelessness or potential homelessness wherever we can. To that end, I bought the houses out at Amberley to shift out to the bush to provide housing out there. There is no money in it for us. It is not a money-making exercise; it is a practical way of trying to deal with some of that housing shortage in those areas. Again, I say that it is going to get worse and worse and worse. Anybody who thinks differently, anybody who thinks that suddenly this situation is going to go away, is dreadfully, dreadfully wrong.

I again say to the member for Gladstone that she has a federal coalition minister in her electorate. It is about time that the federal government started to own this problem. It is no good getting up in this place and whingeing and whining and moaning and calling on me to do things when the money is simply not there. As the member for Ipswich West pointed out, this government has kicked in over \$100 million extra to housing since I have been the minister.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Poole): Order! I would like to welcome to the gallery the year 7 students and teachers of Glennie Heights State School in Lawrence Springborg's electorate of Southern Downs.

Estimates Committee G Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Poole): The question is—

That the report of Estimates Committee G be adopted.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (3.14 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak in support of the Estimates Committee G report to the House. The committee report is a summary of the detailed examination of the proposed expenditure of the Department of Primary Industries and Rural Communities and the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading. I would like to thank the deputy chair, the member for Hinchinbrook, the honourable Marc Rowell, and all members of the committee for their support and cooperation throughout the process, but in particular I would like to thank Ms Meg Hoban, Research Director; Mr Zac Dadic, Research Officer; Ms Sandy Musch, Executive Assistant; the Hansard staff and other parliamentary staff for their assistance and cooperation throughout the process.

The Department of Primary Industries and Rural Communities has an appropriation for this financial year of \$258.415 million. The activities of the department are quite diverse, ranging from food and fibre science and innovation, market access and development, rural community development, fisheries, policy analysis and industry development. The report included a statement of reservation from the opposition spokesperson, the member for Hinchinbrook. No doubt, the minister will address these issues when he speaks. I would like to thank the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities, the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, his staff and the departmental staff for their cooperation throughout the process.

The Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading has an appropriation for this financial year of \$85.316 million. The activities of this department are also quite diverse, ranging from the regulation of the racing industry to tourism promotion and consumer protection. The report also included a statement of reservation from the member for Warrego. Unfortunately, the Minister for Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading has leave to attend a ministerial meeting in Adelaide. She has asked me to address the issues raised in the statement of reservation.

The minister has informed me of the following. In relation to the matters raised by the member for Warrego pertaining to racing, the minister has outlined in great detail and on many occasions the appointment process for the QTRB. The process was simple and transparent. It was easily understood by everyone, with the notable exception of the member for Warrego. During the estimates hearing, the minister said that she even spent 40 minutes explaining to the member point by point—very slowly—the whole process that resulted in the appointment of the QTRB chair. Yet the member still seeks to score cheap points. Queensland's racing industry is facing challenges, but it now has a skills based, independent board that has taken the reins. The

minister challenges the member to take the politics out of racing. She challenges him to be supportive of the work being done by the QTRB—work being done in the best interests of the whole thoroughbred racing industry.

In relation to the Department of Fair Trading, the member for Southern Downs, who was given leave by the committee to question the minister with regard to Fair Trading matters, raised the issue of non-convictions against property marketeers. The minister has asked me to restate her determination to bring the crooks to justice. As the minister explained to the committee, there are complex legal issues in securing convictions against well-resourced defendants. However, the Office of Fair Trading's anti-marketeering Compliance and Enforcement Unit is gathering evidence that we feel confident will bring these people to book. The minister assures me that no stone will be left unturned to bring charges against those who have ripped millions of dollars out of the pockets of ordinary Australians. The activities of the major players are being monitored and immediate action will be taken if they emerge to conduct any other illegal or unconscionable activity.

The member for Southern Downs also raised the issue of debt collectors. The minister has asked me to put on the record the fact that collection agencies are regulated by a code of conduct under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act. The Victorian government's moves along these lines are simply following the example set in Queensland. The Minister asked me to thank the member for Southern Downs for the cooperation that he has shown in exhibiting a spirit of bipartisanship on important fair trading issues.

The issue of funding for tourism raises its head at every estimates hearing. The minister has asked me to highlight the fact that Tourism Queensland this financial year is operating with a record base budget. On top of that, there are special purpose allocations for conventions marketing and for a massive marketing campaign being conducted in conjunction with the take-off of Australian Airlines in October. The minister also asked me to highlight the work being done by the government in support of an industry worth more than \$14 billion a year: the Growing Tourism Strategy, our aviation task force, our cruise shipping plan, our ecotourism strategy, and others; and our great work through Queensland Events and government support for the Gold Coast Indy Carnival. On top of this we have our massive investment in tourism or tourism related infrastructure, such as the \$109 million Gold Coast Convention Centre and the extension of the popular tilt train to Cairns.

Tourism reaches in some way into every corner of Queensland and almost into every community. The Beattie government's commitment to a rapidly growing industry that offers enormous job growth potential cannot be questioned. That commitment will remain rock solid.

I would like to thank the Minister for Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading, the Hon. Merri Rose, her staff and the departmental staff for their cooperation throughout the process. I believe that the estimates committee process provided the committee with the opportunity to examine and scrutinise a wide variety of issues pertaining to the Department of Primary Industries and Rural Communities and the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading. This process certainly improves the accountability of executive government.

Time expired.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.19 p.m.): In rising to speak about Estimates Committee G, I acknowledge the cooperation of the chairman, Tim Mulherin, and that of the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries, Warren Hoey, the other committee members and the work that was done by the secretariat, particularly Meg Hoban, Zac Dadic and Sandy Musch. Their assistance during that whole process was greatly appreciated.

I put in a reservation statement in relation to the primary industries portfolio and I will quickly deal with a number of those issues because I believe that they are important. The primary industries budget has increased, largely due to the rural community and development expenditure to eradicate the Red Imported Fire Ant. That was funded by all the states and by the Commonwealth. In the initial stages, the budget was in the order of \$123 million. It has now blown out by another \$17 million to \$140 million.

Unfortunately, the whole process has been only about 80 per cent effective. Regulations have now been introduced to quarantine the area, which should have been done much earlier. The minister mentioned that there has been considerable growth in the returns to people involved in primary industries. I believe that has a lot to do with the cattle industry, which has experienced substantial increases in the value of stock over the last year. That may not necessarily be the

case in this next year because we are experiencing a decline in sales and there are difficulties resulting from the drought.

Of course, the issue of exceptional circumstances must be addressed by the minister. He appears to be unprepared to make the necessary contributions to bolster up the additional capacity of the exceptional circumstances fund. One can only hope that the minister will get together with the federal government and that they will deal with this particular issue. It is very important to people on cattle properties out in the western areas and certainly in the dry reaches of the state.

I also raised concerns about SunWater. When I asked the minister how much funding was being approved by QRAA, he simply said, 'I will pass it over to you, Colin.' Colin Holden is the manager of QRAA and was present during the hearing. We found out that no loans will go to SunWater clients. No funding will be provided to people in the Burdekin region who have SunWater issues and had to pay an excessive amount of money. The minister is doing only an assessment, as far as this particular issue is concerned, and those people who paid \$28 a megalitre have had to pay an increase of \$8 a megalitre and will now be paying in the order of \$36 a megalitre.

Of course, we do have the sugar industry crop replanting establishment scheme. Going back a few years, \$10 million was provided for that particular scheme. However, the federal government developed a much superior scheme and, as a result, very little money was taken out of the state scheme—in the order of \$60,000. Recently, the minister has announced another scheme through QRAA for \$20 million. Unfortunately, this scheme will not adequately serve the industry because the industry has an enormous debt problem and very few people have the capacity to take on any additional funding. While the scheme may look good to the average person, to people in the sugar industry who are desperately looking for funds it is not a solution to the problem.

There was a fishing loans scheme worth about \$10 million for concession loans to trawler fishermen. There were only two successful applicants for that particular scheme. The minister said that there was a 100 per cent result, but only \$57,164 was actually lent to those people.

The other issue I raised was black sigatoka. There was certainly some support from the state and federal governments. The contribution by the state was in the order of \$3.186 million. Of course, the federal government and the other states put up the rest of the funds, coming to about \$12.7 million. It has had a successful outcome. It is extremely disappointing that the state bowed out in mid-February and the reason given that it bowed out—

Time expired.

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (3.24 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G. I acknowledge the due diligence of Meg Hoban and her team, without whose expertise I am sure it would not have proceeded so smoothly. To the chairman of Estimates Committee G, the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, what can I say? He was a very calming influence and showed great leadership.

The portfolios covered have a great bearing on the electorate of Clayfield, remembering that it boasts two racecourses and a paceway—and a number of inert fire ant nests. The racing industry is facing changing times. It is tough but someone has to do it, and I acknowledge the minister for her work in this area.

A review of the governance of the greyhound and harness racing code commenced in October 2001. The review arrived at a similar conclusion to that of the thoroughbred racing code review, that conclusion being that control bodies for greyhound and harness racing should be based upon a company structure. The government has also approved the transfer of Albion Park Raceway to the boards covering greyhound and harness racing in Queensland as tenants at no cost to the GRA and QHRB. Albion Park is valued at up to \$20 million and is the major venue and most significant asset used by both codes—and it is in the electorate of Clayfield. This transfer will fulfil the government's commitment to transferring previously Racing Development Corporation-owned assets back to the racing industry. Importantly, it will also provide both the greyhound and harness codes with ownership of their most significant product-producing asset for the first time in their histories. Aligning the ownership and management of key venues is critical for the ongoing viability of these two codes. It is obvious that the racing industry is going through a challenging period, but the Queensland racing industry is healthy and, with the support of the government, will prosper in the future.

Tourism is akin to arts and culture; it is about our identity. I congratulate Tourism Queensland for its initiatives in supporting Queensland tourism and seeing Queensland and Australia as a major export.

An important issue raised in the estimates committee's deliberation was that of promoting the role of women in primary industries. The minister highlighted the government's commitment to encourage and support women and young people in the state's rural sector. Through the work of the Women in Rural Industries Unit, the DPI is encouraging women and young people to become more involved in rural industries, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles. We want more of that for women! The unit's current programs include industry support to women's networks in primary industries, including women in dairy, training and skills development in leadership and business management and publications. This year, the DPI, through the unit, will also sponsor 10 leading women in agriculture to attend the third Congress of Rural Women in Spain. In addition, the minister chairs a committee that consists of industry and public sector representatives. The committee reports on the strategies and activities they are undertaking to encourage the greater participation of women and young people within their organisations.

The second FarmBis agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland was signed in July last year. FarmBis 2 has \$30 million over three years to 30 June 2004. This is a 40 per cent funding increase from FarmBis 1. The minister explained that the FarmBis program enabled participating producers to manage change, particularly in the area of industry adjustment; participate more effectively in value chains—for example, fruit and vegetable and beef sectors; manage natural resources sustainably; take full advantage of new marketing opportunities; and increase self-reliance through more effective risk management practices. FarmBis plays an important role in the DPI's response to these issues and assists all participants, including women, youth and indigenous people, to gain skills to enable them to more effectively participate in the management of the businesses, industry organisations and regional communities.

Mr BELL (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (3.30 p.m.): I support the report of Estimates Committee G. The report itself seems to be quite sound and reasonable and does not contain any particular matters that require my comment. It is practice to thank the ministers, ministerial staff and parliamentary staff. I repeat and emphasise a comment of the previous contributor, the member for Clayfield, who expressed thanks to the chairman of the committee. The committee chairman performed his duties in an exceptionally friendly, professional, helpful and cooperative manner. I will move to something a little more controversial.

I heard a number of comments around the ridges during the hearings of Estimates Committee G—and I am sure that this relates to other estimates committees as well—about how the whole process was a tremendous waste of time and energy. There were ministers, members and staff members galore sitting around for a great deal of time for a procedure which did not achieve a tremendous deal. Certainly, there was the opportunity to ask questions on notice earlier. There was a very structured question time orally. With the nature of its structure, there was great limitation upon being able to ask penetrative questions. In all, the procedures seem to me and to others with whom I spoke to be somewhat pointless, because at that point in time, apart from eliciting a little more information, nothing could be changed. The budget had been brought down and adopted and the estimates committee process, even if it had shown up some defects, could not cause anything to be changed.

Mr Terry Sullivan: No, it has not. It has not been adopted yet. It has to go through the committee stage and then the third reading, and the Speaker presents it to the Governor next week.

Mr BELL: In that case I have learnt something from the member for Stafford. I appreciate that. I am glad that I made that mistake, otherwise I would not have done so. However, I still believe that the procedure could be greatly improved. It could be made much more efficient, perhaps with additional questions being asked, without being so structured and perhaps with an informal meeting between interested members, ministers and a limited number of staff. Call me naive, but I do believe there is great capacity for reform.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (3.34 p.m.): I support the report of Estimates Committee G, which examined the proposed expenditure set out in the Appropriation Bill 2002 for the organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities and the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister and Fair Trading. At the outset, let me record my thanks to the secretariat, Meg Hoban, Zac Dadic and Sandy Musch. As

is usually the case with parliamentary staff, they were efficient and conscientious and pleasant at the same time. The same can be said for the Hansard reporters, and I also thank them. I thank the ministers and their departmental staff for the professional manner in which they approached this hearing. Thanks also to fellow committee members and to our chairman, Tim Mulherin, who conducted the hearing with fairness and efficiency and who maintained his sense of humour throughout. I intend to comment on only a few issues covered in the hearing.

In relation to the Department of Tourism and Racing and the Office of Fair Trading, I refer to the reservation statement of the shadow minister for Racing, Mr Hobbs. Mr Hobbs objects to the minister's refusal to answer certain questions relating to matters being investigated by the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Yet the minister's refusal to comment on issues before the commission is entirely appropriate, and the shadow minister should appreciate that. But, of course, some months ago the member did rely on a forged document which purported to be a signed letter from the former chairman of the QPC to attack the minister and to attempt to malign the Toowoomba Turf Club. The member might have checked with the former chairman, Mr Sandy Bredhauer, as did I, to confirm that the document on which he was relying was a forgery. So much for the credibility of the member for Warrego, and his reservation statement should be treated with the contempt it deserves. No matter what aspersions the member for Warrego wants to cast on the new Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board or on the selection process, I can assure all that these gentlemen—and I do know two of the five members—are of the highest calibre and expertise and will not be afraid to make the tough decisions that may be required to reinvigorate the industry. Tourism is certainly an industry which is near and dear to the heart of any Gold Coast member, and I am no exception.

Tourism employs almost 150,000 people, generates \$2.4 billion annually as an export earner and accounts for 11 per cent of Queensland's overseas exports. As explained by the minister, the department is well positioned to meet the future challenges and emerging trends relating to this vital industry, including: continuing to focus on the need for strategically diverse products and markets to minimise the impact of external forces on the industry such as we saw with the September 11 incident; changing consumer trends and barriers to travel; addressing the impacts of growth in tourism; seizing opportunities arising from the rapid development of online technology applications; and recognising sustainability as a core lever in achieving competitive advantage.

Other outcomes from the department included launching the Make Time campaign to boost the tourism industry following the events of September 11 and the Ansett collapse. The campaign was extremely successful. Eighty to 85 per cent of operators involved reported a very positive increase in bookings. The department launched the national visitor safety program to educate international visitors on visitor safety. Key initiatives included an in-transit safety tips for visitors video and an accompanying multilingual booklet. The program includes the four key areas of visitor safety, with particular emphasis on beach and water safety, which is important for the Gold Coast where unfortunately a number of foreign tourists drown every year. It also addressed the issue of marine stingers, road safety, bush and outback safety, and maximised the potential to Queensland of the Chinese market from making a bigger commitment in the coming year. Between 1989 and 1999 the number of Chinese visitors to Australia grew at an average of 32 per cent. The most promising segments are incentive travel and the student market. Amongst other things, they also hosted the Australian Tourism Exchange, again in Brisbane—

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.38 p.m.): I acknowledge the leave the committee provided me to question the Minister for Fair Trading. As I indicated previously, it is not possible for all shadow ministers to be standing members of the committee scrutinising the expenditure of portfolios relevant to them. I do thank the committee for the opportunity to do that. I also acknowledge the genuine interest and interchange from the Minister for Fair Trading and the committed way in which she undertakes her role.

I raised a number of issues in the committee that I would like to address today. There has been a bipartisan approach to addressing the predatory behaviour of two-tiered property marketeers throughout Queensland. We know that this is a particular problem in some areas, namely the Gold Coast, where through the process of what I will call vertical integration marketeers prey on those extremely vulnerable to investing in property and make an absolute motser out of them by skulduggery. Last year we passed legislation designed to address this issue and there has been subsequent amendment. No doubt there will be further amendment as we seek to address this issue.

Although we have this new armoury in Queensland, there has not been one successful prosecution to date. The minister indicated in her response to my question that it takes time to gather evidence to bring about a successful prosecution. My concern was whether there were sufficient officers in this arm of the department to ensure that these people could be pursued and that sufficient information could be gathered to bring them before the tribunal.

During the estimates hearing it was admitted that the first major attempt at a prosecution of such people fell over in the pre-hearing stages. No doubt the department will revamp its evidence and present its case again. Interestingly, the individuals who appeared before that directions hearings are now taking an action for costs against the government.

There are a couple of aspects to our response to marketeers. The first is having legislation that actually works, because that will ensure that people who rip off other people are prosecuted. That has the effect of deterring those who might want to be involved in that industry. We have to be somewhat sober and introspective towards its success to date. The minister has indicated that this practice is probably already slowing down. Although that might be the case, I think it is important that we have a proper legislative regime that is able to prosecute these characters. We will be keeping an eye on this, and I look forward to seeing further amendments.

I raised the issue of having a code of practice for debt collection agencies. In her response the minister indicated that people concerned about the actions of debt collectors should take those concerns to the Office of Fair Trading. There is no indication whatsoever on the department's web site that there is anything in Queensland that operates to regulate debt collection agencies. These people prey on vulnerable people like vultures and harass and harangue them, unfairly in a lot of cases. This is not about standing up for people who will not pay their debts, it is about ensuring a proper approach by those who collect debts. We need a proper code of practice. I understand that Victoria is heading this way and I think that will serve as some form of template.

Subsequent to that, I was contacted by a private organisation in Brisbane called Debt Help Line. It has six telephone counsellors and hopefully will extend that number to 10 or 20. It operates as a commercial agency. It has been providing assistance to people requiring debt help for some time. Its representatives said that they have experienced these sorts of problems with debt collection agencies. I think they run a pretty good operation. When people contact them, they come up with a solution that can be implemented by callers. It costs them nothing to prepare a plan themselves, but it costs \$110 if they want the help line counsellors to do one for them. They have about 4,500 people on their books. It is doing a good job.

Time expired.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (3.43 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the reports of Estimates Committee G, which covered the portfolio areas of Fair Trading, Racing, Tourism and Primary Industries. The estimates committee process is an important one and I found my first estimates experience interesting and informative. The committee process is an important one for guaranteeing scrutiny by the parliament of the government in relevant areas. It enables public exposure so the community can be satisfied with the government's expenditure and policy direction.

I express my appreciation for the contributions made by Ministers Rose and Palaszczuk to the estimates committee process. I acknowledge the hard work done by our committee chairman, the other committee members and the parliamentary staff who assisted on the day. I was impressed by the performance of both ministers and their departments. In the available time it is not possible to cover all of the wonderful initiatives and projects being supported in these two portfolios. However, for the benefit of the electorate I will comment on a couple of positive projects being undertaken by these departments that I discovered during the estimates process.

The Office of Fair Trading intends making the Queensland marketplace a better and more secure place to do business for consumers and investors. I might add that a more secure marketplace is one that will generate more and more secure jobs for Queenslanders. Nowhere is this clearer than with the work the minister and the Office of Fair Trading are doing to stamp out two-tier marketing and prosecute perpetrators. The establishment of the Compliance Enforcement Unit in 2001-02 is expected to yield dividends in 2002-03 in terms of bringing to book the shonks who have done so much to damage the reputation of the Queensland property market among investors.

The minister told the committee that although the new legislation appears to have shut down marketeering, the lure of easy money and ill-gotten gains will always tempt some to emerge in another guise. I was heartened to hear the minister say that, if they do, Fair Trading will be waiting with the full force of our legislation and will use every weapon in its arsenal to destroy it.

Queensland now has the best legislation in Australia to protect consumers from being ripped off by two-tier property marketing schemes. The minister has urged her colleagues in other states to follow Queensland's lead, and I look forward to positive results on that front at the ministerial council meeting she is attending in Adelaide tomorrow.

I turn now to some other areas where Queensland, under the minister's stewardship, has taken the lead in advancing consumer rights in cleaning up the marketplace. The Office of Fair Trading is leading the development of AUZShare—a national complaint information sharing and scam alert system. The system will provide controlled access via the World Wide Web to provide advice and information about potential new scams and traders investigated by consumer affairs agencies in Australia and New Zealand. There is currently no information exchange process in place between Australia and New Zealand consumer protection agencies. This Queensland developed system will use communications and information technology to put fair trading agencies one step in front of scam merchants and con artists.

In view of the time, and with the Minister for Primary Industries with us in the House today, I wish to reflect on one of the initiatives that I discovered during the estimates process from the Department of Primary Industries. I understand that the largest area of the Department of Primary Industries is the Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences, and much of the estimates hearing focused on some of this groundbreaking science and innovation.

The estimates committee heard about the way the Department of Primary Industries is contributing to the Smart State vision of this government. I was interested to hear the minister refer to the work in reducing the use of conventional chemicals, particularly through the \$6.2 million investment by DPI in research into biopesticides and integrated pest management. This research will encourage the move towards clean and green farming and reduce conventional insecticide use. For example, as part of this investment the Department of Primary Industries has established a Biopesticides Unit to research new approaches to insect pest management in cotton and grains. The unit operates in concert with the existing team of field entomologists and a network of extension staff who are researching and developing an area-wide approach to managing insect pests and to ensure understanding and adoption of complex technology and processes.

This research will encourage the move towards clean and green farming and reduce conventional insecticide use. I congratulate the Department of Primary Industries, because I found its estimates extremely informative and very interesting. Through that process I was able to discover that the Minister for Primary Industries knows his department and portfolio very well. I congratulate him on that.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.48 p.m.): Although not part of the consideration of Estimates Committee G, rural areas and their future, and any threat to that future, are of great interest to me. I wish to take this opportunity to reinforce my concerns and those of my electorate on several issues. Both of these portfolios—Primary Industries and Rural Communities, and Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading—are the subject of concerns in my electorate, and current instances are relevant to not only these two ministers but also others and are interrelated.

The Minister for Primary Industries would be well aware that there are several threats to the future of rural areas in the form of drought, diseases and markets. Nobody could be unaware of the drought which is currently causing such havoc throughout Queensland. There are 36 shires that are currently totally drought declared and another 400 individual properties in 40 shires are partly drought declared. That is 76 out of 125. That alone tells the enormity of the problem. I recognise that Queensland still has—and is in fact the only state which has—maintained drought relief assistance, but I ask the minister not to make it too hard to obtain.

Unfortunately, drought is not the only problem. There is a very severe water shortage in the Nanango shire and many other shires in the Nanango electorate, particularly at Blackbutt where water shortages are becoming critical. It has been requested that a dam be considered on Cooyar Creek which would be of assistance to many of the very small towns in that area. The reliability of water is essential to ensuring the future growth of industries in these areas, and I would ask the minister to ensure that any negative effects of deregulation and NCP are offset by

having enough water to take on new industries. I would also ask that the construction of the Paradise dam not impact adversely on water allocations in the South Burnett.

Although I realise that water comes under the Natural Resources portfolio, the Minister for Primary Industries must communicate across portfolios. Whether in rural towns or cities, it is essential that water is preserved. To that end, I would ask the minister to talk with the Local Government Minister to pursue the need to ensure that all new dwellings be instructed to install water storage facilities with enough capacity to support a family for a year. It is recognised that more than 95 per cent of water runs off through our drains or down our streets in urban areas. The preservation of water may limit local shire revenue, but this minister's job is to ensure the continuation of primary industries, and water preservation is essential to the long-term viability of rural communities and their industries.

Although the minister's desire to ensure the security of our shores from foot-and-mouth and other infectious diseases is commendable—in fact, essential—I ask the minister not to forget the tick eradication areas where graziers have put their money on the line and offer those in the protected and tick-free areas some security and give the legislation some real teeth. Cattle producers in the tick-free and protected areas do in fact suffer from the possibility of heavy losses when cattle are subjected to reinfestation. The minister would be aware that red water can inflict a very heavy penalty. At the community cabinet meeting held in Kingaroy the minister met with members from the Wondai, Kingaroy, Coolabunia, Moffatdale tick eradication committees, as well as representatives from other places, to discuss the importance of the tick situation. FMD and BSE are very important to keep out of Queensland, and I support any move to ensure that outcome. But we must not forget that tick eradication is also a major factor in protecting our beef export market.

I want to touch very briefly on racing in rural areas and the decline of picnic race meetings as more and more towns pull out for various reasons, with the threat of litigation being the main one. Blackbutt did not hold its picnic races for the first time, and this broke a long tradition. Many other picnic races are going the same way and there is a threat that picnic races at Linville will never be held again.

I ask the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading to be aware of the worry and stress being placed on the elderly who live alone with the recent upsurge of door-to-door salesmen preying on them. I urge her to begin a campaign to inform the elderly once again of their rights, as they are easy prey to those unscrupulous persons who are often under pressure to make the required number of sales.

Although I am often informed that the elderly discuss their issues with their families, pride and independence often find these elderly citizens trapped into buying products they do not really want or need and are therefore saddled with a debt they can ill afford. I have had several people come to my office in the last fortnight with concerns over people preying on their families, families which have in fact been almost crippled with a debt that they can no longer afford to pay. These people are terrified that they will be taken to court and stripped of any assets they have. I thank both ministers for any help and assistance they have offered throughout the year. I invite both to come to the Nanango electorate to talk first-hand with residents about their concerns. That is something I would ask the ministers to take on as a regular occurrence. I know they are strapped for time, but rural areas feel that, to some degree, their concerns do not seem to be as relevant as many others.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (3.53 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G. Even though I was not a member of this committee, the portfolios of Tourism and Primary Industries go to the heart of economic development in the electorate of Whitsunday. Tourism is the third largest employer in the Mackay-Whitsunday region, with 7,600 people employed in the industry. That is 11.7 per cent of full-time equivalent employment in our region. Tourism also has a very positive flow-on effect to other industries such as accommodation, restaurants and cafes as well as retail and wholesale industries and transport and communications businesses. It goes without saying that government money spent in support of tourism in Queensland is an investment in jobs and an investment in the wellbeing of our local communities.

I am therefore delighted to note that the high level of support for Tourism Queensland is set to continue with base funding of \$39.5 million in 2002-03. As a consequence, our local regional tourism organisation, Tourism Whitsundays, can continue to perform its crucial role promoting the Whitsundays to the world. On that note, I put on record my congratulations to John Dean and his

team and the board of TW for their outstanding performance and ongoing dedication to the promotion of tourism in the Whitsundays. As an example of the great work being done through TW, I note that it was responsible for attracting \$8 million worth of media publicity to the area, including 15 travel shows screened on national television. Another \$8 million worth of convention and incentive business leads were generated for TW's 330 members. It also coordinated approximately 10 major marketing campaigns to promote the Whitsundays. This type of activity went a long way to saving our local tourism industry in the difficult post-Ansett and September 11 climate.

These two catastrophic events were not the only hurdles faced by the tourism industry in the Whitsundays last year. Unfortunately, the area experienced a much more intense stinger season than in previous years with a dramatic increase in irukandji incidents. Sadly, one of the two fatalities from irukandji occurred in the Whitsundays. I therefore thank the minister for her part in responding to this threat. Tourism Queensland is coordinating a whole-of-government response to the irukandji jellyfish threat. This action has resulted in the formation of two working groups that have considered issues such as public awareness, education, and research and development. The meeting of the working groups in May this year was charged with developing a more detailed action plan to address the irukandji threat. I welcome this initiative and thank the minister for her prompt action.

Prior to the budget this year I lobbied the minister on behalf of the local tourism industry for ongoing financial support for the Whitsunday Convention Bureau. There was some concern that, as the original funding commitment had expired, the Whitsunday Convention Bureau and other regional bureaus would be wound up. Fortunately, Minister Rose and the Beattie government recognised the very important contribution made by convention bureaus and announced a huge ongoing funding boost for these organisations. In part, this was in recognition of the fact that in 2000-01 business tourists spent almost \$40 million in the Whitsundays. This is becoming a major part of our tourism market, and I am very pleased that the minister has seen fit to continue the funding that supports this sector of our local industry.

While many of the budget initiatives have a direct impact on my electorate via the local RTO, other initiatives are set to have a positive if indirect effect. Support for the fledgling Australian Airlines is a good example of how this government is demonstrating commitment to an initiative that, while based in far-north Queensland, will benefit the entire state. Obviously I am keen to explore avenues that will maximise benefits to my electorate, such as strengthening links that will encourage Asian visitors to explore the Mackay-Whitsunday region. I have spoken in some detail about the positive initiatives in the area of tourism, but I turn now to the other major revenue generator in the electorate of Whitsunday—primary industries and specifically the sugar industry.

We all know about the serious difficulties confronting the sugar industry in this state. The sugar-growing area in my electorate stretches for some 150 kilometres—almost literally from one end of the electorate to the other—and so the problems facing the industry are causing a great deal of angst amongst my constituency. The government cannot make it rain and cannot influence the scale of production in Brazil or the prices available to growers. However, we can listen, and have listened, to industry and reacted in a positive way. In May of this year I attended a rally in Mackay where we were given the message that what was needed was immediate assistance by way of assistance to growers to ensure that next year's crop was put in the ground. This was delivered in the budget via a \$20 million sugar cane crop scheme that provides growers access to low-cost loans to replant and fertilise the 2003 crop. This scheme offers low-cost loans of up to \$100,000 per farming enterprise. While I acknowledge that this will not solve the problems for all growers, I place on record my gratitude to the Minister for Primary Industries for listening to the messages coming from industry and for acting to implement an immediate assistance package. I commend the report of Estimates Committee G to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (3.58 p.m.): It gives me pleasure today to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G. I, too, want to extend my thanks to the secretariat and to the membership of that committee. We were able to have some quite reasonable discussion in relation to the budget estimates. As I have always said, I think that the estimates system can be improved. That is something that we have to try to work on to get genuine benefit out of the estimates process for the community in general.

I suspect that the estimates process probably costs somewhere between \$5 million and \$9 million each year. We have to make sure that we get good value from that process. I was disappointed to hear the Minister for Transport quite loudly mentioning the fact that his shadow minister, Vaughan Johnson, was not here in the House. Vaughan is away. He has a very

legitimate business commitment to meet. We all want to be here, but sometimes that is just not possible. It is a bit unfair when this process is used to denigrate members. We can do the argy-bargy, and we can do the political thing in relation to the facts and figures and the way a minister handles his or her portfolio, but it gets a bit rough when ministers make personal attacks on members who cannot be here.

In relation to the Racing portfolio, I felt the need to submit a statement of reservations, acknowledging that it is the government's responsibility to apportion expenditure to programs within each portfolio. I hold reservations in relation to the 2002-03 budget for the Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading. The objective of the estimates process is to allow members of parliament the opportunity to scrutinise the actions of executive government and the Public Service. I am of the opinion that the Minister for Racing hid behind that process and refused to answer legitimate questions referred to in the MPS for 2002-03.

The selection process of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board and other matters, as a consequence of the minister's handling, is currently the subject of a Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry. If it gets to the stage where a major part of a portfolio is tied up in some sort of an inquiry, something is going wrong. Therefore, I think it is quite reasonable for a member to ask some questions in relation to that particular issue. The minister refused to answer the questions on the basis that she had answered them before. But the reality was that some of the material was new—plus the fact that we needed to be able to talk through those issues for the betterment of racing, particularly here in this state.

The CMC inquiry has been a key issue within the Racing portfolio and for the minister responsible. I believe that the opposition has a legitimate right to scrutinise the decisions made with respect to the selection of the board and these other particular matters. If the estimates process is to work effectively and to its original intention, the relevant minister and department need to be prepared to respond to questions that relate to areas of the portfolio rather than using the standing orders to hide behind. That is what I believe the minister did.

However, there are other matters that I would like to mention. In relation to country racing clubs, we have all heard that the Gympie race club is facing closure or some dramatic cutbacks. Obviously I do not want to see any changes like that, but I believe that that does seem to be the way it is heading. I think we are going to see other country race clubs bite the dust because of this minister's handling of the portfolio and its structure and the direction in which it is heading. That needs to be considered very, very carefully, because I do not believe it is fair and reasonable.

I believe that racing is for everybody. It appears that the TAB is virtually in charge of racing here in Queensland, and I believe that will be to our detriment. The minister has talked about the old boys club and how the industry was controlled by race clubs. Hell! They are the race clubs. They are racing people. Now they are controlled by the TAB. I think we are going from the fat into the fire in this particular instance. Surely it would be better to have grassroots people in charge of the industry. That is something that the government has to manage, but I do not believe that it has been handled well. A lot more work needs to be done. We need to understand the complexities of these industries. It is not simple. None of these are simple issues, because the people involved have different opinions and different ideas.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.04 p.m.): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G and to comment in particular on the Tourism portfolio. The information provided by the Tourism Minister was most concerning, because it showed that in regard to the \$10 million rescue package the scheme had barely been touched. This was at a time of great distress in the tourism industry. In fact, only five per cent, or \$525,000, of the rescue package that was available was taken up by 11 operators. When I asked the minister about this and the fact that there was a lack of detail available as to why the rescue package had been so poorly used, her attitude was that obviously people in the tourism industry were not doing so badly and they did not really need it.

I asked the minister why she had not looked into the details more. I am concerned that when we know that tourism operators are still doing it tough, particularly in regard to the impact of the indemnity insurance crisis upon the tourism industry, adventure tourism and ecotourism, there has been no real commitment to providing appropriate support to those operators who are carrying the greatest burden of the problem. We find that many people do not want to take on an extra layer of debt, or the rescue package as constructed really was too hard to access and was not appropriate to deal with the real problems in the industry.

Funding for marketing also highlights the real failure of the Beattie Labor government to put its money where its mouth is in regard to one of the key industries here in Queensland. In a question on notice to the minister, the figures showed that there will be a significant decrease in funding allocated to marketing in 2002-03. There has been a \$4 million fall-off in government funding and a \$2 million fall-off in industry support. I believe that that \$2 million of industry support is a key indicator that industry has had cash flow problems and has not been able to provide the matching funding in that regard.

But it is disappointing when the state government has fallen off the pace as far as its real contribution to marketing. When pressed about this issue the minister claimed that there had been no decrease in base funding for marketing and that the drop was the result of a decrease in special purpose funding for marketing. This is true; but again it highlights the minister's lack of interest in tourism in this state. The fact that there are no new special initiatives in the pipeline—or certainly funded ones—illustrates that this minister really has failed to deliver for tourism and its special challenges.

I want to talk about legislation dealing with shonky inbound tourism operators. This is an issue I raised in last year's estimates process, and the minister told the committee that legislation dealing with shonky inbound tourism operators would be in place by June this year. Well, it is August now, and still we have not seen the minister deliver on her promise. What we are seeing is a failure to commit and drive through key initiatives. Again, I brought up this issue at the estimates hearing this year, but all the minister could say was that she will be taking the legislation to cabinet soon. That is not good enough. The minister promised that the legislation would be in place by June. Her time is up again. This is yet another example of how the minister provides only lip-service to the needs of the tourism industry in Queensland.

I want to come back to the issue of public liability insurance for tourism operators. This is the biggest area of inaction by the Minister for Tourism. This is an issue that threatens the entire viability of tourism in Queensland but particularly adventure tourism operators. The minister stated during the estimates process that any solution to skyrocketing insurance premiums for tourism operators is only in the very early stages. What is more concerning is the minister's statement that any solution may be accessible to adventure tourism operators. 'May' is not good enough for a sector of the tourism industry which, by its nature, has been the hardest hit by increases in insurance premiums. We need to make sure that tourism does not lose the fun because of the impact of the indemnity insurance crisis. This is something on which other states have acted, but we have seen a failure in Queensland.

Let us look at Irukandji funding. The Irukandji jellyfish is a subject that strikes at the very core of the tourism industry in Queensland. Once again the minister has played dumb—and very convincingly so. As with the \$10 million rescue package, the minister obviously has very little interest in real funding in regard to the Irukandji jellyfish given that she has taken a lead interest in this. There has been no funding to the state for real research.

Time expired.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (4.09 p.m.): I thank all members of the committee. It is interesting to note that when the Beattie government first came to power just over four years ago the total gross value of primary industries was around \$6.2 billion. Late last year, as honourable members would know, I reported to the parliament that the Department of Primary Industries had forecast an \$8.2 billion result for this financial year. Since then we have revised this forecast upwards, after amenity horticulture was surveyed, and finally we have a realistic value of primary industries in Queensland. It is forecast to be around \$9.3 billion. However, this has been downgraded to \$9.2 billion because of the problems we are currently facing with drought.

I will now deal with the reservation statement of the member for Hinchinbrook. If the member for Hinchinbrook is anything, he is a recycler. I will go through his reservation statement and refute the points he makes. In terms of his comments on the budgetary position, the member for Hinchinbrook failed to mention that the operating budget for the DPI had increased by \$15.2 million this financial year. That is in addition to the \$42.6 million in funding allocations from all the states and territories and the Commonwealth government for the national fire ant eradication campaign this financial year. It is about time members opposite realised that primary industries rely on confidence. The more those opposite shoot down primary industries, the less confidence they will have in themselves. It is about time those opposite stood up for primary

industries in Queensland instead of whingeing, whining and knocking primary industries all the time.

The member for Hinchinbrook again raised the issue of the Sugar Industry Crop Replanting and Establishment Scheme announced by the government in 2000. As the member knows, the federal government actually discouraged growers from accessing our scheme if they accessed its scheme. It was just a matter of sour grapes on behalf of the federal government, and the opposition supported it. Our government has allocated \$20 million for our sugar industry crop scheme this year. I urge growers to contact the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority about it. For the benefit of members opposite, the QRAA number is 1800 623 946. The member sought to criticise the government for providing this scheme and announcing it in the budget. But how much money was in the May federal budget for the sugar industry? Zero! That did not stop the opposition leader going out there saying, 'What an excellent budget the federal government's budget is.'

This morning the honourable member raised with me the issues of the single desk and export parity pricing.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The member is a short-term leader of the opposition. He should resign himself to that fact and take it easy. Even Warren Truss is sabotaging the opposition leader by giving him false maps to bolster the claims of Lawrence Springborg.

The single desk and export parity pricing have been agreed to by the industry in the past. Export parity pricing was a directive under the former Borbidge government at about the time it and the Howard government agreed to the removal of the sugar tariff. The single desk and export parity pricing are issues currently being debated by industry. As far as I as minister and this government are concerned, we are prepared to talk to industry on these important matters for the sector. But industry has to come to government. Government is not going to place those impositions on industry. I as minister believe that we stand in a better position on the export market against Brazil with single desk selling powers as they pertain to our exports. I believe that the single desk and export parity pricing should be retained as long as industry wants them to be retained. That is in line with this government's approach to the sugar industry—giving it greater control of its own affairs, whether it is in the formation of industry owned marketing company QSL or Sugar Terminals Ltd.

As far as the member's criticisms of our government's contribution to the exceptional circumstances scheme are concerned, he should be ashamed of himself. We have supported the exceptional circumstances scheme in the form it has been in since 1992. Nothing has changed. The only problem with the scheme is that the federal government wants to reduce its fair share. We in Queensland will not accept that.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bills, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, by leave, read a third time.

PRIVILEGE

Withdrawal of Letter Tabled by Leader of the Opposition

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (4.16 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege and I ask leave of the House to withdraw the letter I tabled in the House on 30 July from Rosemary Pratt to the manager, Department of Families, Browns Plains area office. I understand that this letter has not been accessed. I undertake this action for the genuine reason of providing anonymity to the children mentioned in the letter. I thank the Speaker for his assistance and for the advice provided to me in this matter.

Leave granted.

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**Second Reading**

Resumed from 30 July (see p. 2337).

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (4.17 p.m.): It is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. The bill amends several acts administered by the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities including the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Stock Act 1915, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Meat Industry Act 1993.

Primary Industries and Rural Communities Minister, the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, is to be commended for the bill, which is evidence of a proactive approach to the threat of exotic terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases. The member for Gregory summed it up yesterday when he said that this is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before this House. It seeks to ensure that our economy is protected from an outbreak of exotic diseases. If we are proactive we can prevent the issues that have confronted other nations such as Britain and Japan.

Our trade partners need to have confidence that our products are clean and safe. Enhancing Queensland's legislative capacity to prepare for and respond to disease outbreaks demonstrates the foresight of the Beattie Labor government. The minister recently returned from a beef promotion mission to Japan. The discovery of mad cow disease on the island of Hokkaido during the minister's visit did not hamper his efforts to promote the safety of Queensland beef.

I was also pleased to hear that the minister led by example, lunching on Australian beef at a Japanese McDonald's restaurant and enjoying a traditional Aussie barbie at the Australian Embassy. To his credit, the minister strongly advocated for our beef industry, aiming to rebuild the export market, which has been hurt by previous outbreaks of BSE in Japan. Although disastrous for Japan, the outbreak serves to highlight the incredible value of our healthy beef industry. In this light, the benefits of the amendments proposed in the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill become obvious.

Diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease, foot-and-mouth disease and white spot syndrome virus pose a serious threat to Queensland. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry helps to ensure that Australia is maintained free of BSE through several measures. There is a complete ban on importing live cattle from all countries that have reported cases of mad cow disease. There also exists a compulsory ban on feeding ruminants on feedstuffs containing the meat and bonemeal of other cattle, sheep or goats and other specified mammals.

BSE is caused by an abnormally folded prion, or protein, occurring in the brain and nervous tissues of infected animals. Although there remains a few theories about the origin of the epidemic in cattle, it is known that the spread of the disease is increased through the feeding of meat and bonemeal derived from infected cattle. A national surveillance strategy is also in place through which hundreds of cattle and sheep brains are scientifically examined each year.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics has indicated that an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Australia is likely to result in the immediate loss of export markets for beef, sheepmeat, pig meat, live animals, dairy products and greasy wool, leading to large falls in prices received for livestock products.

For the 2001-02 financial year, the Queensland cattle industry is worth an estimated \$2,750 million. Pigs are forecast to be worth \$210 million this year, with sheep valued at \$68 million. It is obvious that a disease outbreak could be potentially devastating for Queensland.

The Mackay Department of Primary Industries project leader, Ross Dodt, estimates that the 300-kilometre radius known as the Mackay region accounts for four per cent of the surface area of Queensland. He says that our cattle production accounts for 12 per cent of Queensland's cattle. Borthwicks meatworks in Mackay is the third biggest abattoir in Queensland and it is almost as big an employer as Mackay Sugar. Mr Dodt estimates that approximately 160,000 head of cattle pass through Borthwicks each year. The cattle industry in Mackay is very export oriented, with our two biggest customers being Japan and the US. Borthwicks have also extended markets into Korea and the Philippines. Our market must compete with US subsidies and, as mentioned earlier, we must combat the Japanese mad cow phobia. I believe that our strongest selling point is our clean, green image, which must be maintained.

The Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill will introduce welcome additional safety measures. The bill will help to ensure the future of Queensland's cattle industry and, in turn, protect regional jobs and economies that rely on enterprises such as Borthwicks meatworks. That was the point that the honourable member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, raised yesterday.

Mackay is a coastal city with excellent potential to develop an aquaculture industry. As demand increases for aquaculture prawns the growth of the industry in our region could be significant. Without adequate protection offered by legislating now, the industry could be destroyed before it has had time to establish. A number of surveys have been carried out that have detailed sites where aquaculture could be developed. There is already a developed industry in our region and as the demand increases for aquaculture, growth in the industry in this region could be quite significant. Without adequate protection being offered by legislating now, the industry could be destroyed before it has time to establish.

The white spot syndrome virus has already been found in green prawns imported into Australia for human consumption but redirected to the bait market. These prawns originated from Asian countries. The virus could destroy the prawn farming and the wild caught prawn industries in Queensland. This would have a devastating effect on the Mackay region, with both the trawl industry and the aquaculture industry operating around Mackay. Wild caught prawns are worth approximately \$200 million to Queensland, and aquaculture is worth an estimated \$50 million to Queensland.

In his second reading speech for the Exotic Diseases in Animals Bill 1981, the then Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Mike Ahern, stated that the bill would streamline procedures for controlling and eradicating outbreaks of exotic disease. In addition to the effect of an outbreak on our export market, Minister Ahern stated—

It must be borne in mind that the adverse effects would be felt throughout the entire community, particularly small businesses in country areas and those support industries involved in the processing and marketing of livestock products.

Although communities such as Mackay would be directly affected by a disease outbreak in cattle, aquaculture or wild catch, it is also true that other industries not automatically related to animal and plant health would be affected.

Britain experienced a significant downturn in tourism after FMD was discovered in that country. Tourism is a major employer in Queensland and the third largest source of employment in the Mackay/Whitsunday region. Earlier this year the Hon. Merri Rose released the results of a report titled *The contribution of international and domestic visitor expenditure to the Queensland regional economies 1998-99*, which provides estimates of the economic contribution of tourism expenditure to each Queensland region. The results showed that tourism employed 7,600 Queenslanders in the Mackay/Whitsunday region, accounting for 11.7 per cent of full-time equivalent employment. The Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill will help protect our tourism industry, which is clearly vital to our state's economy.

In light of this, the Primary Industries Minister's recent trip to Japan is important on another level. As many of our foreign tourists come from Asian countries such as Japan, the minister's trip showed the confidence that our state has in the quality of our meat products. This helps to bolster the image of Queensland as a safe tourist destination.

The bill is in the interests of ensuring confidence in our domestic market for Australian consumers. It is also in the interests of general public health and safety. The risk of contaminated food is frightening and the amendments provided by this bill will also help safeguard Australian consumers. The bill provides precautionary measures and an increased power to monitor and inspect possible disease or pest outbreaks and also increased penalties for those who fail to comply with control and eradication measures. The current penalties that exist under the act are now inadequate considering the enormous impact that a disease outbreak would have on Queensland. Especially important is an amendment to the penalty under the Stock Act 1915 for swill feeding animals—allowing them access to animal matter or animal contaminated food. Considering what is known about the spread of BSE, the increase in the penalty for this practice is justified.

Currently, this action is not an offence under the Stock Act 1915 and is covered only by the general offence against a regulation, the penalty for which is 20 penalty units. Under this bill, the penalty will be 400 units, which represents a \$30,000 fine. Other important changes to penalties under the bill include a significant rise in fines associated with the issuing and presentation of

travel permits and waybills. In most cases, the penalties for not issuing or possessing the correct documentation have been increased by five to 10 times the original amount, resulting in fines of \$15,000 to \$30,000 and, in some cases, \$75,000.

In the event of an outbreak, a clear paper trail will be essential to determine the origin of the disease and to implement the right control measures. Agents and drovers involved with the movement of cattle will be more accountable under this bill. The Stock Act 1915 introduced the need for stock entering Queensland from another state or country to have a clean certificate and then be inspected again at Queensland's border by a Queensland stock inspector. The Stock Act highlighted the importance of ensuring that people understood their obligations to the state and the risks involved with cattle, particularly with reference to the spread of disease.

The Stock Act is one of a number of acts amended by the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill. The intentions of the act still ring true, but the growth of industry and the threat of diseases have surpassed the provisions of the original legislation. This is true of many of the acts that will be amended under this bill. The Stock Act 1915, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1994 and the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 have been reviewed with a number of perceived deficiencies identified. It is important in the context of the disease threats that Queensland now faces for these acts to be brought under one amendment bill that comprehensively rectifies the potential problems. This bill is the best solution to ensuring that we are prepared and can function at optimal capacity in the case of any outbreaks.

The Plant Protection Act 1989 will also be amended under this bill. This act has been used in the past to respond to plant pest and disease emergencies. Amendments proposed under this bill will be of particular benefit in controlling the fire ant infestation, which has occurred in heavily populated, urban metropolitan areas. In the past, pest spread usually occurred in an agricultural environment. Through the review process it became clear that the Plant Protection Act did not provide sufficient powers to combat the fire ant with regulatory based surveillance, control or eradication programs.

Amendments in this bill also create the capacity to repeal sections of the Meat Industry Act 1993, which will no longer be required once food safety schemes for meat are enacted under the Food Production (Safety) Act 2000. Despite Australia's strict quarantine regulations, the state government recognises that an outbreak of an exotic disease in Australia would still necessitate a swift and coordinated response within Queensland. Queensland needs a uniform act covering the potential weaknesses that have been identified in our relevant animal and plant health legislation to ensure that we have the capacity to effectively deal with diseases and pests. The government has chosen to act decisively to protect the interests and safety of the public, farmers, graziers, industries and Queensland's export and tourism markets. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (4.30 p.m.): I rise to participate in the debate on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. I do not intend to repeat many matters already raised by other speakers during this debate. However, I do wish to speak about clause 14. I note that clause 14 inserts into the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 a new section 24A. Section 24A effectively removes any capacity of a person to legally challenge a decision of the minister under section 22 of that act when he has ordered the destruction of an animal, animal product, carcass or other thing, or ordered the removal or destruction of an animal pathogen or biological preparation.

I note that the minister's explanatory notes state—

Whilst the amendment contemplates powers that override rights of ownership, pre-emptive slaughter is intended to reduce the total number of animals slaughtered and the total cost of eradication by ensuring that the eradication program proceeds ahead of the disease spread. In order to be successful, eradication must remove infected premises more quickly than new infections occur.

I have reservations about this section, yet at the same time I fully understand the minister's intent and motivation. Sometimes ministers and bureaucrats do not always get it right the first time. I understand how quickly some of these diseases can be spread, either by feral animals, by wind or by other means. My concern is this: if the minister is, for want of a better phrase, a nervous nelly or a panic merchant, nowhere in the second reading speech or explanatory notes could I find any reference to the minister needing to receive approval or support for his proposal from either the Premier or cabinet—or anyone else.

I have raised these matters with the minister's senior officers and I have suggested to them a range of possible amendments in the hope of clarifying that a nervous nelly will not be making these decisions at will. I have been assured by departmental staff that the minister will allay my

concerns when he responds, so I await his response before moving any amendments in the committee stage. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (4.32 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. At the outset, I would like to say that I commend the primary aim of this bill, which is to achieve the best possible legislative capacity to respond to outbreaks of disease in our primary industries. Diseases such as FMD and BSE would devastate our industries and the excellent reputation that Australia has for its clean, green food production. This bill is vitally important to all Queenslanders, not just to our primary producers. I was pleased to see the opposition's recognition of this and their support.

In my electorate of Glass House, there are any number of industries which would be devastated by the decimation of the livestock and fruit and vegetable industries if there was an outbreak of an exotic pest or disease. Obviously, the farmers would be hit first and hit hardest. However, the economic downturn would then affect all the associated industries and we could see some of our small towns die.

The importance and value of our primary industries to the economy can be further seen by the predictions of losses in the case of a FMD outbreak. Firstly, there would be an immediate loss of export markets for beef, sheep meat, pig meat, live animals, dairy products and greasy wool, and the resultant fall of prices could lead to a loss of \$5.8 billion in the first year alone. We have seen the devastating results of outbreaks of FMD and BSE in other countries. We have also learned from the mistakes that other jurisdictions have made in their response.

There are many important aspects of this bill which the government has to implement to fulfil its responsibility to protect the livestock industry. One aspect is the expansion of classes of persons who may be appointed as inspectors. Currently, only persons employed under the Public Service Act 1996 may be appointed as inspectors under the Stock Act 1915. Any person may also be appointed as an honorary inspector, while all police officers are honorary inspectors under the Stock Act 1915. A person who is an inspector under the Stock Act 1915 is, by virtue of the definition of an inspector in the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, an inspector under the Exotic Diseases Act. Therefore, it is desirable that the classes of persons that could be appointed as inspectors be expanded to address the urgent need for a large number of inspectors in an emergency response to an exotic disease. This would be particularly necessary in the case of a foot-and-mouth disease incursion where it would be necessary to provide for the appointment as inspectors, under both the Stock Act and Exotic Diseases in Animals Act, of Public Service officers or employees, employees of the Commonwealth or another state or territory, employees of a local government authority, veterinary surgeons and individuals in a class of persons declared under a regulation, provided the chief executive is satisfied that they have the necessary experience or expertise for appointment.

I agree with the extension of the power of entry by an inspector to monitor compliance with stock feeding restrictions and stock food formulation and labelling requirements. As we are all aware, the feeding of animal matter or animal-contaminated matter to stock and feeding stock feeds containing meals of animal origin poses a risk of introducing and spreading serious exotic diseases of stock, particularly FMD and BSE. The current powers of entry under the Agricultural Standards Act 1994 provide a power of entry to investigate an offence or gather evidence of an offence, but do not provide an express power of entry to monitor compliance. There is also no express power to allow an inspector to take copies of documents at premises under the Stock Act 1915.

Both the power of entry and authority to inspect and copy documents are essential in monitoring compliance with the ruminant feed bans imposed to prevent, control or remove exotic diseases. I am satisfied that the safeguards provided, which will require an inspector to identify him or herself and obtain consent, are entirely reasonable.

Further, the pre-emptive slaughter of stock is another vitally important aspect of this bill. Experience in controlling foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom has identified a critical need for the ability to pre-emptively destroy susceptible host animals which have been exposed to an exotic disease or the disease pathogen as a means of preventing or controlling spread of the exotic disease. This would extend to the destruction of animals that may not be infected or are suspected of being infected, taking into consideration the animal being a known host of the disease or pathogen, the proximity of the animal to an infected premises, any known exposure of the host animal to the disease or pathogen, the ability of the disease or pathogen to spread, and the way that it spreads.

The effectiveness of any exotic disease control program relies upon being able to keep ahead of the spread. Absence of symptoms in stock that have been exposed to an exotic disease is not a reliable indication of freedom from disease. Delays caused by a court granting injunctive orders which prevent the pre-emptive destruction of stock to control an exotic disease are likely to compromise the capacity for prevention or control. I understand that fair compensation for this type of destruction is payable at market value, which I am sure is welcome.

Other amendments include the increase of inadequate penalties to reflect the gravity of non-compliance with control and eradication measures and to create parity for offence penalties across jurisdictions. The further discovery and notification of the two species of exotic fire ants that have been introduced to Queensland, so as to facilitate a speedy eradication process, is also of importance to farmers and to suburban and urban residents alike. A range of amendments will help this process, and particularly the change to the powers of inspectors to enter land to inspect, survey, monitor, take samples and treat pests, as well as widening the notification obligation, will be vital in our fight against the spread of fire ants.

I commend the minister and his ministerial and departmental staff for their foresight in preparing and introducing this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (4.38 p.m.): I have looked forward to joining this debate on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. The National Party will be supporting this very important legislation, which protects the animal, plant and marine industries in Queensland. We will look at some matters more closely in the committee stage.

The shadow minister for primary industries and my colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have already outlined to this House the importance of effective and responsible animal and plant health laws. I will just add to their comments and reinforce the point that the government must assume the same responsibilities which are expected of the land-holder.

As we all are well aware from the graphic images on television of the foot-and-mouth disease and BSE outbreaks in Britain, Europe and Asia, this has had quite an impact on the beef industry. We all sincerely hope that this will never occur in Queensland or, for that matter, Australia. The recent scares in Japan have had a quite substantial effect on many of the meat purchasing industries in Queensland. Abattoirs that have a quite outstanding record, such as those on the western side of Toowoomba, have some wonderful markets and package some quality products. The recent discovery in Japan's domestic herd of four cases of mad cow disease has created a perception that has dramatically reduced the amount of beef we export to Japan. Of course, that has flowed on to exporters who have had to seek other opportunities and to sale yard prices. This shows how something not even in our country can affect the market.

If we were to suffer a foot-and-mouth outbreak in the remote and unpopulated areas of far north Queensland, where there are feral pigs and cloven-hoofed animals, it would be an incredible task to try and stop its spread throughout the state. Let me say how important Queensland's primary industries are to the economy of the state.

In 2001-02 the wholesale market value of Queensland's primary industries commodities was forecast at \$9.3 billion, almost 10 per cent more than the estimates for the previous financial year. Of the 35 per cent of Queenslanders who live in rural towns, 560,000 are employed in a variety of ways in primary industries. The past growth and economic contribution of primary industries to Queensland is largely as a result of strong commodity prices and exports.

I do not think we can talk too much about the value of exports to our state. That money gives us economic growth, income to local, state and federal governments and money in people's pockets. That is what provides the economic stimulus to any nation or state which wants to grow and which wants to provide prosperity and a good standard of living for its people. However, we cannot say that these figures are testament to the people in this state who drive our primary industries. We cannot say the same about the Beattie government. Over consecutive budgets the government has ripped hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars out of the Department of Primary Industries, affecting its ability to provide services for our primary industries.

We need to consider the jobs that were promised but not delivered and add that to the number of potential VERs. Every single department in this state has to face the black hole of the state budget, because there is a target to cut the number of public servants by 1,000. That target figure has now been doubled to 2,000, but it may increase because the PricewaterhouseCoopers report identified some 15,800 people working in various corporate services of different departments throughout the government. So, 2,000 jobs will go, but someone will have to do that

work. If positions continue to be stripped as a result of the cuts to the DPI budget and if we keep seeing this system of VERs being applied, no-one will monitor what is coming into the country. We need a strong system of stock inspectors. It is all very well to have an act, but we need the people to do the monitoring, to process the forms and to do the things that need to be done to ensure that all the time there is compliance or reporting. If something happens, we will then be in a position to combat such a situation.

With regard to the various diseases that this bill seeks to prevent, we need only look at the lack of stock inspectors around the place. Stock inspectors are crucial to disease control. It is all very well to have the legislation, but we need stock inspectors. We can swing them into action when a particular disease erupts. They have the required general knowledge and are well trained. If there were an outbreak of foot-and-mouth, we would want a whole team of experienced stock inspectors—

Mr Palaszczuk: Under the new funding an additional 14 stockies are going to be employed.

Mr HORAN: How many have you thrown out over the years? Hundreds! The minister is thinking about bringing in 14. If one goes anywhere around the Downs people will say that they used to have a stock inspector in the district but that he is no longer there and that it is difficult to know what are the arrangements in relation to stock inspectors. For example, tick control is an important way of managing not only ticks but any particular disease. For those people below the range who supply cattle to Toowoomba, there is a wet curfew such that cattle have to be in the yards 12 hours beforehand.

There are sales throughout the week, but the Monday sales are the big day. If we take people who sell six to 12 head of cattle at a time, as an example, at the Toowoomba market—because the Moreton market is not close enough—previously stock inspectors would be at the Helidon dip on Sundays at 3 p.m. for inspection and dipping. There are new fees from 1 August 2002. All out of hours inspection and dipping fees will be \$168 an hour, with a minimum of a one hour charge. From 1 July, the Monday to Friday fees are \$28 an hour. From 1 July next year, the fee is \$56 an hour. From 1 July 2004, the fee is \$84 an hour, plus a callout fee to inspect on property, plus travelling costs.

Someone trying to sell six to 12 head of Murray Gray vealers at Toowoomba on the big Monday sale has to dip their cattle on Sundays to be able to sell, but they will pay an absolute minimum fee of \$168 an hour. Add to that the freightage cost from the property to the Helidon dip to the Toowoomba sale yards of, say, \$80, together with yard fees, weighing fees, levies and commission, and what is left? We wonder why people are starting to get angry about all these increased fees and charges being applied for these services and systems.

I know that this bill is about trying to prevent disease and about ensuring that we have a healthy industry via the inspectorate system. The figures for the various primary industries, be it cattle, horticulture, fisheries, cotton or sugar, highlight just how important they are and how the economy of our state would be affected without tough laws to ensure the health of animals and plants. As I have just demonstrated, we need people on the ground to ensure that these tough laws are in place.

As my colleagues have noticed, this bill proposes a number of amendments to different acts that will seek to ensure better compliance by land-holders and effective response capability for the government should we ever have to deal with a pest, plant or an animal disease outbreak.

The first part of the bill deals with the Agricultural Standards Act 1994. The critical need to provide a general power to an inspector to monitor compliance to the stock feed manufacturing and supply chain as well as on a farm was identified. Monitoring for compliance requires the power to enter, search and inspect, examine, test, take samples for testing, question a person and require the production of documents and inspect and audit documents. Parts of the bill refer to the entry of an inspector into a place where people reside to ensure that these provisions of the act are being carried out.

The National Party does support the need for an inspector to carry out these checks so long as the inspector makes all reasonable attempts to make the occupier aware of this authorisation and carries this out in an orderly responsible manner. That is normally the way DPI officers have operated.

Another part of this bill proposes amendments to the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981. The clauses within this part of the bill refer to the powers of inspectors to eradicate and prevent the spread of exotic diseases. As the explanatory notes have outlined, the current provisions of

this act provide the power to an inspector to order the destruction of infected animals by the owner. The power of an inspector to carry out this task is necessary to ensure that the affected animal is destroyed, and any failure to do so could compromise the control of this disease.

This amendment has the intention of preventing unacceptable delays by an owner in responding to a disease outbreak. The opposition strongly supports these amendments, and it is just as important for the government to be responsible for state owned and unallocated land. This is an important point that I will discuss at a later stage in my contribution to the bill.

Recently, I have had discussions with people in the Daintree area. Although there are some agricultural areas in the region, there are thousands of feral pigs roaming through parts of the heritage-listed area. We have to consider not only the immediate threats to farming operations and wildlife, including cassowaries and other protected flora and fauna, but also the risk that if ever some of these diseases get into that vast remote area of the cape they will not be able to be contained.

In putting forward this legislation as a stronger and preventive approach to exotic diseases it is most important that the additional officers employed by the Department of Primary Industries to fill these roles are adequately skilled and equipped to perform the role of inspector. It is necessary for people undertaking the role of inspector to be aware of the responsibilities bestowed on them and the penalty for failing to meet these responsibilities. The failure to carry out this responsibility would be detrimental to our export markets for beef, sheep, pigs, other live animals and dairy products, resulting in the large falls I have spoken about previously in the prices received for livestock products.

We have all spoken at length about the importance of this bill. The minister needs to have the strength in cabinet to be able to get his fair share so that he does not have to cut back on staff. The department should not engage in the VER exercise, which would see one in 20 staff lost from the corporate areas. Who will deal with permits, waybills, brand issues and the myriad administrative tasks in the minister's department? Over the years, the minister has cut back to the bone the departmental staff through job losses and a failure to deliver on his job promises. What will now happen if about one in 20 of his staff goes under this VER process? It is becoming obvious that this government is in trouble. The government is going to try to get out of trouble by pushing out people who have been doing important jobs. Who will do the work? The non-existent stock inspectors? They have gone. This legislation requires people to do the work. They will not be there. More jobs will be lost in trying to fix up the black hole caused by the financial mismanagement that has created a massive deficit in this budget, the previous budget and which is likely in the budget for this financial year.

The matter of the government being a responsible land-holder is an issue that the National Party has addressed firmly in the debate on the Land Protection Bill, which sought to distance the state government from its responsibility of controlling pest weeds and plants in national parks, conservation areas and other unallocated land. We do not wish to see another occurrence where this Beattie government neglects its responsibilities while land-holders are diligently adhering to the laws of the land.

These newly proposed laws that address the Plant Protection Act and Stock Act place tough requirements on private land-holders to guard against any exotic pest or disease outbreak. The opposition is in full support of the stance being taken by the minister. However, the government is noticeably silent in containing that risk itself. As the shadow minister mentioned, there are in the order of 50,000 feral pigs in the Cooktown area alone. We can only imagine what would happen if foot-and-mouth disease were introduced into this type of area in the wet season. It would be a disastrous result. It would be very difficult to contain the spread of any such disease. There is a major problem on state controlled land, in national parks, forestry areas and unallocated lands.

The amendments that will be introduced by the National Party will ensure that public servants such as park rangers and forestry officers will be obliged to monitor and report any notifiable disease or pest outbreak on a state controlled area that comes under their jurisdiction—that is if there are any staff there. This responsibility of the state government and its employees is critical, as early detection is the key to the success of any eradication program—hence what I have been saying about staff and stock inspectors.

Queensland must do everything in its power to prevent and stop the outbreak of exotic diseases and pests that come under the Plant Protection Act and the Stock Act, otherwise we will have a situation not dissimilar to that we saw with the recently passed Land Protection Act, where the government is all too willing to legislate against private land-holders but remains at arm's

length to ensure that state departments and their employees have an equal responsibility placed on them in dealing with state control land, including national parks and crown land.

The second issue of concern that we have flagged—and which again I believe it is important to raise—is that of the amendment of the period of a quarantine declaration from two months to three months. This legislation will move the time from 21 days for a ministerial notice of a regulation to three months, and the National Party does not agree with the intention of this amendment. The amendment we will be moving is that in the event that a property is cleared of a pest beyond any shadow of a doubt—and that could possibly occur within a month—the declaration should be lifted off that property. Putting a declaration in place against a suspected pest outbreak is critical, but it would be unfair to restrict the use of the land if scientific evidence proves that the pest or disease has been eradicated or there was no threat to begin with. This simply highlights the need for the government of the day to act strongly in the first instance with the appropriate course of action prior to a regulation being passed into law. I believe my shadow minister has provided a few relevant examples of how an immediate response by the government is crucial to success in controlling and eradicating an infestation or incursion.

In my remaining time, I wish to raise a couple of further issues in relation to primary industries, for example, disease and the general management and oversight of primary industries generally. The sugar industry has experienced a lot of problems with disease over recent years. It has spent some three out of four years in drought and has had reasonable prices in one out of four years. That one year was a drought year and the industry was hit by some of the diseases that hit the sugar industry. This is a good illustration of the checks that need to be put into our systems to prevent diseases, for example white spot in prawns and also plant diseases.

The sugar industry is facing an incredibly difficult time. Recently, we had a forum in Mackay and some positive ideas were generated about value adding in order to address the challenges that the industry faces, for example competition from Brazil, which produces 350 million tonnes a year compared with our 35 million tonnes a year. Some of the ideas generated were very good.

In some of my trips to the north, I have been critical of the minister. People in the sugar industry do not need more debt. They are drowning in debt at the moment. That industry serves many towns and generates 25,000 direct jobs in the northern and coastal areas of Queensland. It needs breathing space over the next two seasons, with plantings that have to be undertaken. They do not need more debt at six per cent. They need breathing space.

The government provides somewhere in the order of \$30 million to \$35 million a year to businesses, many of them large international companies, that want to expand or grow their business in Queensland. What about looking after our own family—the Queensland sugar industry—which needs this helping hand for the next two years and to meet the challenges of the future.

We are facing extremes of drought across the state, from the coast to areas west of the divide. It is essential that there is cooperation between the state and federal governments. I know the federal government is endeavouring to address this through exceptional circumstances. There needs to be cooperation between the two levels to bring in better methods.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (4.58 p.m.): The threat posed to Queensland and Australia's primary industries by exotic diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy cannot be underestimated. Analysis by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics indicates that an outbreak of FMD in Australia is likely to result in the immediate loss of export markets for beef, sheep meat, pig meat, live animals, dairy products and greasy wool, resulting in large falls in prices received for livestock products. A loss of \$5.8 billion in export revenue in the first year is predicted. This estimate is in addition to the containment and eradication costs and the collateral impact on rural communities. It would cause a fall of about 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product and a one per cent increase in unemployment, with the main impact on the meat and dairy industries. As the British experience demonstrates, management of an outbreak of FMD would be technically, logistically, financially and politically on a scale never experienced before in Australia.

The amendments contained in this bill, particularly to the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 and the Stock Act 1915, in relation to increasing penalties is long overdue. It cannot be underestimated that penalties do have a deterrent effect. Hopefully the increase in penalties that the minister has put forward in this bill will deter irresponsible primary producers from behaving in that way. Quite often in society we need to balance rights and responsibilities. The risk posed by an outbreak of these exotic diseases requires an increase in powers for inspectors to monitor and

to take action to limit the effect of any possible outbreak. Again, the increase in powers contained in this amendment bill are much appreciated. It could be said that our primary industries sector, particularly our beef industry, has benefited from the chaos caused by FMD and BSE outbreaks in other parts of the world. Australia might have increased its market share, but that is because our primary industries have a clean and green image. The British and Japanese industries have fallen apart because of BSE and FMD outbreaks. We cannot afford the same risks to our primary industries. Our primary industries are too valuable to risk.

Previously, the legislation allowed for a standstill zone in relation to the outbreak of a disease. This is a commendable action. If the outbreak of a disease is notified in an area, the minister can prescribe a standstill zone. However, the existing legislation was weak in a number of areas in that it failed to address issues relating to stock in transit to or from the area and how to manage that issue. This bill seems to amend that so as to provide greater clarity and protection to all primary producers. The Stock Act 1915 only requires notifying of an outbreak of exotic disease. This amendment bill highlights the fact that there can be a delay between a disease being notified and symptoms occurring, because sometimes diseases take time to diagnose.

This bill now requires primary producers to notify the department at the start of any indicated symptoms. To delay further could risk the destruction of our primary industries. This bill requires primary producers to monitor their animals. If any of the indicated symptoms occur, even before a confirmation diagnosis has been made, they must notify the department. Again, this might seem overly harsh, but the risk posed by exotic disease outbreaks is much greater than the cost of notifying for symptoms.

The Fisheries Act will also be amended under this bill. It should be noted that as Queensland has such a large coastline the fisheries industry is a very important area of primary production in Queensland. It also has a flow-on impact not just in the primary production area but to recreational fishermen. As other members have commented, Queensland has a very large tourism industry. If our clean and green image and our beautiful reef is seen by the international media to be infected, of course that would have flow-on effects. While talking about exotic diseases in the fisheries industry, there is a current proposal by a company called Sun Aqua to build fish farms in our beautiful Moreton Bay. A number of constituents have passed on to me their concerns about aspects of this proposal. I must admit to the House that I also share these concerns. The current environmental impact statement process will assess these areas of concern. I hope that we get clear and unambiguous answers to the potential risks posed by this development. I along with many other members of this House have strong concerns for the environment of Moreton Bay.

In the electorate of Redlands the poultry industry is a very large employer, as the minister is well aware, in terms of broiler growing, egg production and of course the Golden Cockerel chicken processing plant. It employs a significant number of people in my electorate. As such, I would hate to see that significant industry put at risk by an outbreak of exotic diseases. The amendments contained in this bill, as I have already mentioned, are aimed at protecting jobs and the environment. I do compliment the minister on his work.

The Redlands is also leading the way in the amenity horticulture area. The risk posed to the amenity horticulture area is not to be underestimated by exotic diseases. The plant and fibre industry is extremely important to Queensland's economy, and it is certainly important to the Redlands. Unfortunately, we have recently had an outbreak of fire ants in the Wellington Point area. The minister and the Queensland government together with a contribution from the federal government have been very quick to respond to the threat posed by fire ants. I commend both levels of government on their cooperation. Given that Redlands is the centre for amenity horticulture in Queensland—

Mr Palaszczuk: Mr English, I have given a commitment to the people of Queensland that I shall remain Minister for Primary Industries until the last fire ant is terminated.

Mr ENGLISH: Hear, hear! The people of Redlands are pleased to hear that. I thank the minister for that. It is important to note that the risk posed to the Queensland way of life by the fire ant cannot be underestimated. Yes, it is a risk to our primary industries, but even more than that it is a risk to the Queensland and the Australian way of life, such as taking our children to the park and going into the backyard to have a barbie on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. All of these things can be put at risk by this cursed little ant. I encourage all people of Queensland to help stamp out the fire ants. There was a very successful Find the Fire Ant Day last Sunday. I know that I got out in my backyard and had a look. On the Saturday before Find a Fire Ant Day I and

the member for Springwood, Barbara Stone, held an information stall at the Chisholm Catholic College.

Ms Stone: A very successful stall, too.

Mr ENGLISH: Yes, it was. On the day we had a range of information provided by the Department of Primary Industries and the minister's office in relation to fire ants. We had a phial of fire ants on display. At times the people were stacked two and three deep because they were interested in the fire ant problem and wanted to view the fire ants. They were concerned about what we were doing to solve this problem. I commend the minister on the amount of information he is providing to the people of Queensland about this horrendous problem.

Another threat posed by exotic diseases and exotic animals which has not been mentioned so far today is the threat to our burgeoning biodiversity industry. The Minister for Innovation and Information Economy is working extremely hard at developing the biodiversity and biotechnology industry within Queensland. I was lucky enough to accompany the minister and a few other members of the House on a visit to far-north Queensland where we looked at both the marine and rainforest areas and what we are doing to harvest chemicals in those areas. If any exotic diseases or pests were to be introduced into this area, this expanding market could be quashed very rapidly overnight. Without further ado, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (5.10 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. My electorate is one of many in this state which would be devastated by the outbreak of any of the terrible diseases such as foot-and-mouth and BSE—mad cow disease. Generally, any legislation aimed at keeping such exotic threats from our shores is very welcome. Certainly no-one is more concerned than the people who live and work in Cape York Peninsula and those in my electorate of Tablelands, which is on the doorstep of the cape. We are all extremely concerned about the possibilities of these diseases entering this state through the most vulnerable part not only of Australia but of Queensland—that is, Cape York Peninsula.

As more and more properties in the cape are being resumed by the Labor government under the guise of national parks, conservation areas, native title areas and so on, the extreme concern in the north is that there are not enough capable people left on the ground in that most vulnerable area to detect the early entry of those devastating diseases that I have already mentioned. The impact of these diseases would be enormous, with losses not only in the beef industry, which is a major industry in the cape and in the Tablelands electorate, but also our dairy industry, which is struggling to resurrect itself after deregulation, our pork industry and all other live animal industries that people in the north are diversifying into as our traditional industries crumble around our ears one by one.

Further south, the sheep, meat and wool producers could be hard hit also. Not only would there be devastation at the mass destruction of the animals but the loss of family incomes would be huge—not to mention the costs of containment and eradication, which would impost on the community at large. The effects would be felt across-the-board—in the towns, the state and the nation as a whole. Certainly we have not yet forgotten the devastation in Great Britain, some Asian countries and in Europe recently caused by these diseases. Foot-and-mouth disease is highly infectious and spreads in saliva, mucus, milk and faeces. A local outbreak could require up to 500,000 animals to be slaughtered. If it got into our feral pig population, which is exploding in the cape and in the north generally, the situation could be very serious indeed. How terrible it would be to have your whole herd, your livelihood and even your pets destroyed because of lack of quarantine or people on the ground to detect an early outbreak.

A couple of days ago, when speaking to this bill, the members for Rockhampton and Fitzroy described in detail the dilemma of the meatworkers at Rockhampton who have just lost their jobs. Let me tell those honourable members that, while my sympathies go out to those families who have lost their jobs and livelihoods, we in the far north are getting used to seeing one industry after another go down, not because of the likes of Kerry Packer but because of government intervention. Firstly it was world heritage that was declared by government, which effectively closed down our best practice timber industry with the direct loss of hundreds of jobs. No amount of lobbying convinced it to change its mind. Then a few years later the government imposed native title on us and effectively closed down most of our mining industry, particularly small miners, with the loss of many more jobs. Since then we have had national competition policy and the signing of the GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. We have lost our tobacco industry. Many in our dairy industry have left, and those remaining are struggling. Our lychee

growers cannot use electric grids to protect their crops. The banana growers have just had the biggest battle to keep Philippine bananas out of the country. However, governments have just allowed pineapples and grapes to be imported into this country. Now our sugar industry is in crisis. Maybe our beef industry will be next. The people down south ain't seen nothin' yet. Just wait until the GATS—the General Agreement on Trade in Services—kicks in, when our governments start horse-trading in our services in March next year.

Getting back to the bill, however, any legislation aimed at keeping such exotic threats from our shores is very welcome indeed. However, I will repeat here what I have said about other bills proposed by this government. It is all very well to make up a nice set of rules and solid policy documents, but it is a waste of time if we do not spend the money needed to put those things properly into action at ground level. Let me repeat, as an example, some detail about the inspection station at Coen which operates for only eight hours a day. This is what I mean by failure to fund vital activities at grassroots level. This government and any other can legislate all it wants, but if it does not spend the money on resources then all it is really doing is wasting time.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I support real measures aimed at protecting this state and this country from pests and diseases, but they have to be measures that make a difference and not just sound good in theory. Other pests we have recently had to contend with have been black sigatoka in bananas, the papaya fruit fly and the red-banded caterpillar. I am concerned about the way the burden of compliance is swinging further and further towards the land-holder and to local government. A quick flick pass to someone else is one way for this government to avoid paying the bills. However, there is no sense in protecting our agricultural sector from sudden decimation via disease and pests if we slowly cripple it with burden after burden.

In conclusion, the cost in lost revenue from an outbreak of serious disease is tremendous and would be a terrible impost on the entire state. Therefore I do not think it unreasonable to expect the state as a whole to protect against it and to contribute to the prevention process. I support the bill.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.15 p.m.): Before speaking on the main aim of the legislation before the House I intend to make some remarks concerning the very minor mention contained in clause 43 which simply repeals the Meat Industry Act 1993. I note that, in his second reading speech, the minister makes mention of the fact that in addition to some sections dealing with food safety provisions becoming redundant the remaining provisions of the act need to be repealed on the winding up of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation, which is expected on 1 January 2003. I ask: is this the end of state enterprise in the beef industry?

I refer to recent closures of the Toowoomba abattoir and the imminent closure, I think, of the Cannon Hill abattoir and the one at Churchill near Ipswich. If this is the case then it draws the curtain on some very proud Labor government history in the form of state enterprises. I think it was on Tuesday that the member for Mulgrave spoke about the Babinda State Hotel and made reference to the State Enterprises Scheme.

In 1915 one of the Ryan government's immediate concerns was to break the meat monopolies and sugar monopolies and industrial relations reforms. In the early part of the 20th century the Labor Party was very concerned about monopolies in general and in the meat industry in particular. As Murphy writes in his chapter on Ryan in *The Premiers of Queensland*—

Turning to the major problem of wage earners, high living costs, Ryan was to argue here and again at the 1913 referendum, that these were due to the operations of trusts and combines, middle-men and monopolists, who stood between the producer and the consumer. He saw the solution lying in either the Commonwealth Government's being given power at a referendum to regulate monopolies or in the State Government's establishing competitive State enterprises and using its producer to 'grapple with price rings'.

Honourable members will recall that at the time of the Ryan-Theodore government most of the meat processing was carried out by an American owned abattoir at or near Brisbane. It was because of this monopoly in the processing side of things and a desire to provide competitively priced meat to all Queenslanders that the state owned abattoirs were set up as well as state owned butcher shops. If this section in this bill heralds the end of that era then it is indeed a sad day for those interested in Labor history.

It is perhaps ironic that even today, 87 years later, the chief meat processor in the south-east portion of the state is also American owned and that the major meatworks in central Queensland—as we know—is owned by Australia's most wealthy man. It is ironic also that the week when we are discussing this bill is the very week that that abattoir closed down. I reiterate the comments that were made so well on Tuesday by the members for Rockhampton and Fitzroy.

In his second reading speech the minister explained that this bill is essential to correct a number of deficiencies identified in the legislative framework that underpins emergency response to serious exotic diseases of livestock and fisheries resources and pests of plants. He went on to indicate that this bill is probably the most important primary industries legislation introduced into this House for a considerable period, that he was proud to bring it into the House, and he implored the House to give it its full support.

I must confess that when I first learnt of this legislation, and indeed when I first became aware of the problem of mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease overseas, particularly in England, I did not give the issue any great thought. So far as the legislation is concerned, I took the view that it would probably be of limited interest in the city that I am honoured to partly represent. And so far as the problems overseas were concerned, well, that was a long way away and Australia did not seem to be affected one way or another. It was only after doing some research into the legislation and the subject matter in preparation for the debate in the House that I became aware of the enormous significance that the introduction of exotic diseases into our country could have. The adverse consequences would be of monumental proportions, causing grave economic havoc and hardship throughout the entire Australian economic fabric. It is therefore with confidence that I must concur with the minister when he says that this is probably the most important primary industries legislation introduced into this House for a considerable period.

Time permitting, towards the end of my speech I will make some remarks concerning the aims of the legislation and its contents. In the meantime, I would like to justify my remarks concerning the importance of this legislation by referring to the extent of the problems experienced overseas—how they occurred, what cost is involved, the likely cost to Australia in the event of the introduction of the problems here, and not only how we can improve things by way of legislative changes but also how our farmers can improve their farming in the future.

Thank God Australia has been free of foot-and-mouth disease for over 120 years. Minor outbreaks occurred in 1801, 1804, 1871 and 1872. However, this insidious disease is relatively close at hand, particularly in south-east Asia where it is endemic in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Indeed, Malaysia has had outbreaks and our nearest neighbour, Indonesia, has also had outbreaks but has been free of foot-and-mouth disease since 1983. Bearing in mind our concern over boat people coming across the seas from our near north, one can easily see the real and present danger associated with the introduction of this disease into Australia.

What is so bad about it? FMD's virus infects hoofed animals, causing painful mouth and foot blisters which lead to lameness and loss of appetite. The virus is spread from burst blisters and as few as 10 are enough to infect a cow. Britain's current crisis is the latest, triggered by a particularly infectious strain of the virus. The pan-Asian toposotype is a variant of the 'O' strain. This was first discovered in India in 1990 and spread westward through the Arabian Peninsula, reaching Europe in 1996. It also travelled eastward to Mongolia. There have recently been outbreaks in countries that have been free of the disease for a long time, such as South Korea, Japan and South Africa. Even exotic species such as rare Asiatic camels have succumbed. The British outbreak began at a pig fattening farm just outside Newcastle. Experts say that the most likely origin of the virus was infected swill—waste food from hotels and restaurants fed to the pigs. It has been suggested that a meat product from the Far East could have been the source.

Likewise, unfortunately there have been increasing occurrences of the disease BSE, or mad cow disease. The latest BSE concerns follow a rise in the year 2000 in the number of cases detected in France, where 161 BSE cases were confirmed, and in Germany, Denmark and Spain, where the first cases in native-born cattle were detected. More cases have also been confirmed in 2001 in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. As of June 2001 BSE had been found in the Czech Republic.

What is BSE or mad cow disease? It is a fatal, degenerative disease of the central nervous system first diagnosed in cattle in the United Kingdom in 1986. The incubation period in cattle can range from two to 12 years. Symptoms include decreased milk production, weight loss despite a continued appetite, poor coordination, abnormal posture and a possible display of nervousness or aggression. BSE is believed to be spread by the recycling of BSE-infected cattle in meat and bonemeal. This disease can be passed on to humans.

I would like to indicate how foot-and-mouth disease can spread remarkably rapidly by referring honourable members to an article in *Queensland Country Life* of 6 December 2001. A

Mr Peter Allen, Cumbrian sheep and beef producer, told a conference in Toowoomba that the best defences, planning and resources in the world are of little value if they remain untried. He said that it was all very well to have a contingency plan but that it must be regularly tested and updated. He indicated that the failure to immediately suspend livestock movements, inadequate resourcing, logistical oversights and bureaucratic bungling saw FMD spread like wildfire across England and into Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and France.

From 18 February until the epidemic breathed its last on 30 September 2000, 30 cases were recorded, 3.9 million animals had been slaughtered and the UK's agriculture and tourism industries lay in ruins. Mr Allen advocated that a contingency plan in Australia be comprehensively tested in the field as well as in the boardroom. The article in *Queensland Country Life* indicated that the Queensland government is reviewing several key acts and that the state FMD response manual is being overhauled. I take it that what we are discussing today is a result of that review.

Several FMD training exercises have been held, and more are in the pipeline. Local emergency disease response plans will be developed with councils, and the DPI has cracked down on swill feeding and instituted ruminant feed bans, with at least one successful prosecution to date. Perhaps in his speech in reply to the second reading debate the minister can inform the House about more of the training exercises and the results of the preparation I have referred to.

I return to what Mr Allen said about the effects of the disaster in England. He described it as a diabolical shambles. Resources that were in place at the time meant that the 24-hour identification to slaughter plan was physically impossible to carry out. Some people could not get through to their vet within 24 hours. For one month there were only three phone lines into the FMD operations office. Then farmers had to deal with rotting carcasses in their sheds for up to three weeks after confirmation, plus a proposal to slaughter all animals within a three-kilometre zone of an infected site at a time when the slaughtermen were struggling to kill infected animals.

On the same page of that article one of Britain's former military men, Brigadier Alex Birtwistle, recounted his experiences. He was only 10 days away from retirement when Prime Minister Tony Blair, on a mid-March visit to the ravaged Cumbrian region, charged him with tackling the herculean task of disposal and clean-up. Brigadier Birtwistle said that, alone in a car park, armed only with a mobile phone and a copy of the Yellow Pages and with a plan mapped out on the back of a cigarette packet, he started mounting England's counterattack.

It is extraordinary that in England only within the last year or two this was the situation so far as preparedness was concerned. England, along with other parts of Europe, has had far more recent experience of this disease. Let us in Australia learn from the difficult lessons the English and others have had to learn the very hard way. It has been estimated that the cost to the British economy of the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak was in the vicinity of \$US5.9 billion. It is estimated that the disease adversely affected a quarter of all British businesses. It created distress and difficulty for many, threatening livelihoods and the very fabric of rural life.

Of some note is the fact that the tourism sector of Britain appears to have suffered more than agriculture, particularly as a result of the reduction in overseas visitors. This is of particular significance to Australia, and Queensland more so, bearing in mind the already greatly significant importance of the tourism industry here and its growth rate. It has been estimated that there will be more bankruptcies and fewer jobs and that rural communities in England will suffer for years to come. The effects of the disease in England have been far reaching. Farmers were faced with the prospects of having to pay soaring insurance premiums well before the 11 September crisis. That can be coupled with the HIH public liability insurance crisis in Australia.

As I indicated earlier, it is not only the farmers who have been adversely affected. An example is a small business owner in Cumbria who runs a guesthouse which provides accommodation for hikers and climbers who flock to the beautiful countryside around Cumbria. The business of that guesthouse during the popular summer months was reduced by 50 per cent. The downturn affected employees, some of whom were put off or had their hours reduced. Another example is of a lady who sold outdoor clothing and equipment to shops in rural areas in Cumbria or Derbyshire for over a decade. As walkers are not visiting, the shops have been crippled. This lady in turn has not been able to survive in her business of supplying the shops. Anger is growing because, whilst farmers have been offered and are paid compensation for their destroyed stock, businesses such as the ones I have indicated, who have suffered equally or worse, are not eligible for compensation.

One of the ways in which economic loss has grown has been through the decline in the export market, quite apart from the meat exports, in that dairy products such as cheese have

been restricted from entering the US. The US also moved to restrict meat products coming from Europe, which obviously has had a huge economic effect on a great number of European countries.

What would be the effect of the introduction of an exotic disease such as foot-and-mouth disease or mad cow disease to Queensland? Recently, a study has been undertaken by Ms Siobhan Dent of the Department of Primary Industries. She prepared a model over a seven-year period indicating the short- medium- and long-term effects. In that study she indicated that the effects of such a disease would be more far reaching than just impacting on the pastoral industry. She indicated that her modelling highlights that more than half the impact of a major FMD outbreak would occur in industries, for example, construction, financial business services, retail trade and hotels. She indicated that in year seven alone GDP was projected to be \$2,400 million below the base case while employment was projected to be 22,000 people below the base case.

As Queensland is the largest beef producer containing about half the national herd, the impact of such a disease would be felt the greatest here. On that modelling, Queensland's employment was projected to be 33,900 below the base case and real GSP—that is, gross state product—was projected to be \$2,340 million below the base case in year seven alone. Added to this would be the actual control cost. It has been estimated by the DPI that, if there were a major FMD outbreak in Brisbane, the control cost of \$500 million would be incurred. Added to this the ongoing effects beyond year seven, bearing in mind that the national herd would have been greatly reduced, would have to be taken into account.

No doubt it will be argued that cattle that eat grass do not catch mad cow disease. Cows that wander over paddocks eating grass are less likely to catch foot-and-mouth disease than herds standing flank to flank in muddy pens. Compared with Europe, Australian beef farming is much less dependent on intensive feedlots. Nevertheless, things are changing in Australia in terms of the increasing popularity of feedlots. Australian farming has benefited from its status as a biological island, which has conferred a degree of immunity from the diseases of the rest of the world.

However, global forces are threatening disadvantage. For years, Australian chicken farmers fought demands from the US, Thailand and Europe to lift bans on chicken meat imports for fear of importing Newcastle disease. As chicken farmers around Sydney have discovered, even mild strains of the virus can devastate flocks. Likewise, Tasmanian salmon farmers are fighting a rearguard action to allow imports of salmon products into Australia.

Australia has enjoyed a marketing advantage because it retains a clean, green image, it has a relatively low density of stocking and, with the exception of the pork industry, the limited development of intensive farming contributes to the naturalness of Australian agricultural commodities. But it would take only a few outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, of chemical contamination of beef exports, to see that advantage lost forever. It is argued by Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss in the April 2001 edition of *Australasian Science* that this clean, green image has always been something of a facade.

Finally, I indicate that when I read the legislation, from the point of view of being a lawyer, initially I had concerns about the rather tyrannical power being given to inspectors and others, for example, entry powers monitoring the order of destruction, the fact that there is a prohibition against court interference by way of injunction and, of course, the very drastic increase in penalties. However, having done some research and read widely in relation to the topic, I am convinced that what is embodied in the legislation is what is needed and that the balance between the individual's liberties and rights versus the greater good of the community faced with the possible absolute disaster of one of these diseases were it introduced has been struck correctly.

Before concluding, may I reiterate the remarks of Mr Allen, emphasising the need for any contingency plan to contest the spread of the disease to be tested. I commend the minister and his department for the tremendous amount of work that has gone into this bill.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.33 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. I certainly support the comments that have been made by a number of speakers about the importance of this legislation to the economy of Queensland generally and especially to those animal and plant industries that have traditionally and will for a very long time to come form a very big part of the economic base of this state.

They are incredibly important industries. In one sense, we are very lucky to be isolated geographically. The member for Toowoomba North referred to us as a biological island. I have not heard that term before, but it very well encapsulates the great advantage that we in Queensland, and Australia as a whole, have in terms of remaining free from some of the terrible diseases that are unfortunately the subject of outbreaks in other parts of the world.

The images that we all saw from the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in England and the mad cow disease outbreak in Europe generally and through to Japan and the other Asian countries are something that none of us ever want to see in Queensland. I think that even people who are not involved in those industries, and do not have the close involvement with animals that people involved in the industries do, understood from those television images just how heart wrenching and difficult those outbreaks must have been for those people who had their entire herds destroyed in an effort to contain the disease.

Of course, that type of disease outbreak in Queensland would not just have an impact on individuals; it would have an impact on the economy as a whole. We have to take every step that we can to ensure that we make the most of our geographical advantage. We have to take every step that we can to ensure that the biological island that Australia is is used to its maximum advantage to prevent the incursion of those types of diseases. If we were ever unfortunate enough to suffer an outbreak, containment in our environment would be many times more difficult than containment in an English, a European or an Asian environment—many times more difficult.

It is almost impossible to overstate the difficulty of containing such a disease were it to enter Queensland at any point along our coastline. To my mind, it would be almost impossible to contain one of these major diseases were it to enter Queensland through what I consider to be the most likely point of entry, and that is our north. Were one of these diseases able to enter Queensland through our northern border—and that is not an unlikely scenario given the fact that these diseases are part and parcel of life in some of the countries to our immediate north—the task that would be involved in trying to contain that disease defies description in this forum.

More and more of that northern area is being turned over to national parks and World Heritage areas. I have said many times—and I know that the shadow minister has spoken about this many times—that there are a range of problems involved in ensuring that there are mechanisms in place, there are plans in place and there are resources in place in that state controlled land to ensure that, firstly, the outbreak would be noticed and reported in due course and, secondly, that steps could be taken to contain the outbreak. How on earth that could be done in the environment of north Queensland, the cape and the peninsula, given the extent to which those areas have been allowed to degenerate in terms of feral animal population, is almost impossible to imagine. A couple of weeks ago, together with a number of other shadow ministers, I spent a few days travelling in Cape York. We looked at a number of areas that have been gazetted as national parks. We looked at them in terms of the management that is being put in place there.

During our very brief visit, just driving down the main access road, we constantly saw large numbers of feral animals. We saw greater numbers of feral pigs than I have ever seen anywhere else, and feral cattle. It was not hard to imagine that away from those main access roads the feral animal population would be many times larger. That number of feral animals combined with the isolation of those areas would seem to make it almost impossible to contain a disease incursion from that direction.

Another reason it would seem almost impossible to contain such a disease incursion is this government's attitude towards those areas. As we debated at length on the land protection bill, the state government is a major land-holder in Queensland. Whether or not it likes to see itself in that way, it is a major land-holder and, therefore, it has the same responsibilities as other land-holders. I tried to convince members of that point during the debate on the land protection bill. Those same arguments apply to this Animal and Plant Health Legislation Bill. I think everyone in this House would agree that the requirements imposed on private land-holders by this bill are right, proper and necessary in order to protect the industries which are so important to this state. If those requirements are right and proper for private land-holders then they should be recognised as right and proper for the state's biggest land-holder—the state government. If that is not the case then there is no requirement on the very few people on the ground to report the types of things that this legislation requires private land-holders to report.

The shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, has drafted some amendments aimed at addressing that particular issue. I urge members to listen carefully to what the member has to

say when he moves those amendments and to give them due consideration. There are already few enough people on the ground in those areas and there are few enough people charged with managing that state land for the state government. It is somewhat of a problem just to manage an asset such as a gazetted national park, let alone to deal with all the other issues that every land-holder needs to address such as feral animals, vegetation control and weed control, which need to be controlled on any piece of land.

As I have said before in this House, it is nonsensical for the government to think that a large area of land anywhere in Queensland can be set aside and left alone and it will somehow revert to an idyllic, natural state where everyone will be happy and the kangaroos will hop around with smiles on their faces and everything will be wonderful. That is unrealistic. In the real world, a range of management tools need to be part and parcel of managing a particular piece of land. There is no part of this state where the threat of feral animals, weeds, pests and diseases does not have to be considered.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr SEENEY: In north Queensland it is even more important that all of those things are considered. As the member for Hinchinbrook quite rightly points out, a lot of the traditional methods of managing the land—such as poisoning, shooting feral animals and strategic burning for the control of weeds—are no longer allowed. They are not accepted as part of an authentic land management regime. That is a real shame and it is a real problem. I urge the Minister for Primary Industries to do whatever he can to get the message across to the government that those areas of land must be managed otherwise they will be a disaster for a whole range of reasons, not the least of which will be this issue of containing any disease incursion from our northern boundaries.

I will make some comments about the department's capacity to respond to a disease outbreak. The extent to which the Department of Primary Industries has been run down across the state has concerned me for quite a long time. I refer in particular to stock inspectors. There used to be a network of stock inspectors right across this state.

Mr Copeland: Skilled people.

Mr SEENEY: Skilled people, exactly, as the member for Cunningham said. They were skilled people who played a very important role in every district. They could respond to anything. They were on hand and they were the front-line of defence in identifying not only major diseases but localised outbreaks of all sorts of things. The DPI has been gutted—the minister cannot get away from that. The minister has done a great job of hiding the fact that the department has been gutted.

Mr Palaszczuk: Where? Where?

Mr SEENEY: Nowhere has it been gutted more thoroughly than in this area of stock inspectors, whose main role is to address disease outbreaks or to be the front-line in responding to any disease outbreaks. In my electorate, there used to be a stock inspector in every community.

Mr Palaszczuk: How long ago was that?

Mr SEENEY: Now in the whole electorate there are probably three stock inspector positions in 14 communities. How many of them are vacant? How long has the position at Mundubbera been vacant? Perhaps the Minister for Primary Industries can tell us how long the position at Mundubbera has been vacant. The Mundubbera stock inspector has to cover that area right up to Biloela. It is an impossible task. The minister cannot run down the department to the extent that it has been run down and then come into this House and say all the right things about how important this legislation is and how it is important that we have the capacity to respond. That is fine. We do have to have the capacity to respond, but that capacity has to be built and maintained over a period of time and over a period of budgets—budget after budget after budget—rather than have this continual erosion of a department which has been the backbone of maintaining those capacities in rural Queensland and in those agricultural industries.

If ever there was an example of why we need that capacity in the Department of Primary Industries, it was the anthrax outbreak at Wandoan in my electorate in recent times. The anthrax outbreak occurred at a time when it was very topical because a different version of the same disease or something with the same name that was very distantly related was used by terrorists in other parts of the world. The minister can imagine that when an anthrax outbreak was reported in Wandoan it certainly caused a response in the urban media that would not otherwise have

occurred. The departmental people who responded to the anthrax outbreak had to come from Toowoomba. It is just as well that that outbreak was not everything that the urban media tried to portray it to be, because there were not the people on the ground to effectively respond had it been that way.

Most of the response to that situation was carried out by the Taroom Shire Council. I commend the Taroom Shire Council for its effort in going to a great deal of trouble to contain not only any potential disease outbreak—and there was not; I do not want to overstate the danger of the disease outbreak—but the story, the hysteria, driven by the urban media. The minister would agree that people such as Don Stiller, the Mayor of Taroom shire, did an enormous job in containing that hysteria and ensuring that it did not get out of hand. That really was a role that the department should have been playing. The department should have been spearheading that, but the departmental people were so thin on the ground that the capacity was not there.

The other issue I wanted to mention concerns the tick line. It is a good example of how, with concerted effort, pests and diseases can be controlled and isolated. Over the years, the tick line has been very successful in ensuring that the southern part of the state remains free from a pest that costs the northern cattle industry a large amount of money. Over the years there have been a number of efforts to get a transport corridor through that 'clean country' from Taroom south to Toowoomba. I am pleased to acknowledge the minister's assurance that that will not happen. It is of particular importance to the cattle industry in that Wandoan-Taroom area. I know that there is continual pressure from transport operators who want to carry ticky cattle through that area. It is a nonsensical situation. There is no way that the protocols can ever ensure that there is not an escape of cattle in the event of a truck rollover.

The cost of an outbreak in that situation would be such that a lot of the effort put in over the years to ensure that those areas remain tick free would be lost. The tick line is a good example of how we have to isolate areas. What we have done with the tick line over the years is what we need to do with the entire national border not just for ticks but a whole range of pests and diseases. This legislation gives the state government the necessary powers to act when that border is breached. In that respect the provision cannot possibly be too strict. The member for Toowoomba North said that, when he first looked at it from a lawyer's perspective, he was concerned about some of the bill's powers. If that border is ever breached—and pray, God, it never is—by one of these major diseases of which we all are aware, the power that will be necessary to control that breach will never be too strict. The authorities need every option open to them to control such a breach.

I said at the start of my speech that the problems inherent in controlling such a breach of our border cannot be overstated. This bill is very necessary. I note that in the minister's second reading speech he said it was a most important bill. I endorse those statements and support the bill.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (5.55 p.m.): This tough new legislation has been designed to deal with the possibility of outbreaks of devastating animal and plant diseases such as foot-and-mouth and mad cow disease. As members would no doubt be aware, an outbreak of one of these diseases in Australia has the potential to cost us billions of dollars in export revenue and thousands of jobs. It is vital that we do everything we can to prevent these diseases in the first place. We need a whole-of-government plan to control and eradicate them should there ever be an outbreak.

The bill seeks to amend key provisions within a number of existing acts and to introduce vastly increased penalties. This new legislation is a result of a number of reviews by government animal health authorities across Australia that recognised that the seriousness of the issue needs to be reflected in the penalties. The government is serious about providing appropriate deterrents to practices which have the potential to give rise to an outbreak of foot-and-mouth or BSE. This legislation does just that. Many penalties under the Stock Act and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act have been increased by more than 1,000 per cent. The general penalty for swill feeding—for example, the feeding of foodstuffs containing meat or other animal products to livestock—is currently an inadequate 20 penalty units, or \$1,500. New penalties will be up to 1,000 penalty units, or \$75,000, or one year in prison. Penalties for corporations will be five times those of individuals.

We all have seen the devastating effect of livestock diseases in Britain, Europe, and now Japan. An outbreak of either mad cow disease or foot-and-mouth disease would have a similar impact on Queensland's regional and rural communities, animal production industries and the

economy. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics estimates that an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease is likely to result in the immediate loss of export markets of beef, sheep meat, pig meat, live animals, dairy products and greasy wool. This loss for Australia is estimated at \$5.8 billion in the first year alone and does not include the cost of containment and eradication. This is a conservative estimate if we consider the effects two to five years after an outbreak. In addition, the bureau predicts a fall of 3.5 per cent in gross domestic product and a one per cent increase in unemployment. Clearly, these are predictions no government can afford to ignore.

The anthrax scare on a property in the state's south-west some months ago serves as a good example of just how easily disease can spread. In that case, the swift action of the Department of Primary Industries ensured no further detections. This legislation will vastly increase Queensland's preparedness and response to these and a number of other potentially devastating diseases. Importantly, the legislation provides a mechanism for the minister of the day to declare a pre-emptive slaughter of susceptible animals within the immediate affected area and to remove any legal and legislative impediment to carrying out such an order.

While we all hope that this component of the legislation will never have to be called upon and will remain dormant, it is vital to ensure that we can act immediately in the event that we do face a potential outbreak. Proudly, Australia is free from such exotic diseases, but recent experiences in the UK show that we can never afford to be complacent, particularly when so much is at stake. The Attorney-General's recent changes to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which imposes substantially higher penalties for the practice of cattle duffing, is also part of a multipronged strategy to address the potential for disease outbreak. I am sure members on both sides of this House recognise the importance of these changes and will agree that the substantial boost to penalties constitutes an important step in the fight to maintain our disease-free status. I congratulate the minister and his team on the bill and commend it to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.58 p.m.): I doubt there would be anyone in this House—in fact, very few outside this House—who would not support the intent of this bill. Those who would not support the intent would be people whom we as a nation should be very afraid of, for they would risk all for their own selfish purpose. Often that purpose is satisfying their own whim of procuring a foreign pet or plant for their garden.

The devastation experienced in England and across Europe with the recent outbreak of FMD and its effects on the entire population of the world can never be discounted. To say all peoples 'of the world' may sound a bit of an exaggeration, but all those who heard those words, with regard to the outbreak, were affected in some way.

The landowners and near neighbours were devastated with the loss of their livestock and had to stand by and watch entire herds slaughtered. Other land-holders were not exempt as the disease travelled and consumed herds and flocks everywhere. The towns and villages were constantly shrouded with the smoke and stench of burning carcasses. The effect on businesses and jobs was enormous and the cost of the outbreak on businesses throughout Great Britain alone can still be counted. Tourists stayed away in droves, and that alone would cause any country to grind down.

It is perhaps strange that one would associate hospital services and the threat to people in Australia, who are so distant from the UK and who were totally devoid of contact with FMD with an outbreak of this disease, but the donation of blood became a casualty of this disaster. After the FMD outbreak in England and Europe, Australia banned the donation of blood from any person who had lived in Britain for more than six months between 1980 and 1986. It also endangered lives in that there were concerns that organ donors may unwittingly be the carriers of the human variant of mad cow disease.

Our clean green status is recognised throughout the world and we must be grateful for being isolated from the rest of the world in this instance. Australia is only one of five countries in the world recognised by the European Union as being very unlikely—its words—to have BSE in our herds.

Tourism is affected because people will not travel. The number of jobs lost in the domino effect of infectious diseases is phenomenal. People's fear is very real. The anthrax outbreak at Collingwood, near Wandoan, and the rapid addressing of that situation shows us how essential it is that trust when an honest chain of communication is maintained between graziers and the DPI. I believe the situation in that circumstance was handled extremely well by the department and property owners.

Pigs are a major threat with FMD and in a wet season are a major concern as they travel. We are told, 'You can't shoot in national parks' and that there is a potential to have one of the most disastrous outbreaks in extreme situations, as is in an outbreak of any infectious disease, if some exemption to shooting in national parks is not permitted during these times. Japanese encephalitis in the north is perhaps the greatest threat, with it being a real possibility with our land mass being so close to our northern neighbours. With a large and developing pig industry in the Nanango electorate, the thought of such a disease in Australia and the rapidity of its travel is very frightening.

There is life and land outside the metropolitan area, and I can only wish that members of the government who primarily live in urban areas and have only a minimal knowledge of rural areas take the time to look into the reality which is Queensland outside the cities. Growing up on a farm, although helpful, does not ensure a full knowledge of every facet of rural industries' diverse activities. Growing up in the city would not make one knowledgeable in all of the facets of city industry. I find it unacceptable when members treat rural industries as all being the same. They are not. They are wide and diverse, just as industries are in the city. Queensland is big and beautiful and, if diseases do enter it, there is the potential for an outbreak unlike any seen previously. Queensland is unique in that there is more population outside the cities than within them.

During the debate many members have refereed to the effects on our meatworks and mentioned the struggle to keep our meatworks open. This is something I can relate to after the recent fight to keep the Kilcoy works open. There is no guarantee that a meatworks will remain open. If a business is viable, it will continue. If the circumstances become unreasonable and/or unsustainable, they will close. There always has to be a compromise position reached. When both parties' positions become intractable, disaster ensues.

Kilcoy was threatened, but the workers and management managed to work through their difficulties, and only time will tell whether their choices were the right ones. Up north, compromise was not reached and the result is 700 people are now out of work. Other businesses in the surrounding area might lose one or two workers, given that they relied on the custom of those 700 families.

Mr Palaszczuk: A domino effect.

Mrs PRATT: Yes, that is right.

Name-calling and laying blame does not resolve any issues. It might make someone feel good to say that someone is a rotten mongrel or whatever, but it does not solve the issue. It is to be hoped the task to reopen the Lakes Creek meatworks will be achieved to the satisfaction of all and soon.

Government members interjected.

Mrs PRATT: I must admit that I call a spade a spade.

It is always harder to open the doors once shut, as the producers and workers move on to other meatworks or move on to new careers in other industries. Therefore, a huge loss in experience is incurred to the industry's work force. That is a shame. I had to smile about the intensity of the government's attacks at the Packer's impact on 700 jobs, yet the government has put in place moves that will see thousands out of work. The distress experienced at this time will be nothing compared with the disaster that would ensue if infectious diseases were to strike and not be addressed quickly and effectively.

When FMD broke out in Zimbabwe it had the potential to cripple that small financially strapped country by curtailing its exports by almost \$80 million—a sizeable amount of money for that country, and anybody else for that matter. When these outbreaks affect other countries they affect our own beef industries, which was seen during the outbreak of mad cow disease in Japan. That saw many of our meatworks close for longer periods over the Christmas break. As was stated at the time, the concern was not so much for the availability of livestock—although we know they were limited—but about the availability of markets. Japanese beef consumption dropped by 10 per cent at that time.

The concern expressed by some scientists is that mad cow disease might already be in Australia, as it can take up to 10 years for the disease to show up in a sick animal. We have to be—and I believe it is the intent of this bill—eternally vigilant. Fire ants have shown how hard it can be to control pests once they have hitched a ride on ships' cargoes and other forms of transport. I believe a large spider once hitched a ride on a bunch of bananas.

The combined efforts of world researchers experienced in fire ants still have had limited impact, although I believe most Australians are right behind the government in wanting to rid our backyards of this biting little pest. The banana industry has been impacted with the emergence of black sigatoka and the apple industry with the fear of fire blight. There are many examples of the potential devastation diseases can cause. There are many questions that have already been asked by other honourable members, and I look forward to the minister's responses to their concerns.

I have earbashed the minister twice during this sitting on the issue of ticks and I have emphasised the importance of tick control for our export markets and to combat production losses in beef and dairy cattle. So I will not go into great depths again. In conclusion, I wish to address the issue of baiting. A letter from a constituent adversely affected by the dingo and dog baiting laws states—

I am writing to ask if it is possible to have some changes made to the Dingo and Feral dog baiting laws.

We have had problems losing stock to dogs for a number of years but this year was worse than the previous years. After spending weeks trying to shoot and trap them I made enquiries to the local councillor who told me I could get a permit to lay Strychnine baits, however permission was refused as the location where we wanted to lay the baits fell within the 2klm radius from the nearest dwelling ...

...

It appears to me that the baiting laws have been written to protect straying domestic dogs or to appease their irresponsible owners and to hell with graziers trying to make a living. Our problem here isn't so much with controlled domestic dogs but with feral dogs but because there are people living 1.7 klm away who may or may not have a dog we have to try to deal with the situation as best we can ...

Our farm is approximately 185 hectares and we virtually can't lay a bait on it without notifying 40 households in the area. It is not hard to see why the feral dog population has exploded in the South Burnett as most farms are only about 65 hectares and those landholders would have a hard time getting permission to lay baits.

Baits are only set for 7 days and since they may only be put out a couple of times a year it would be highly unlikely that a dog who only gets out occasionally would pick up a bait.

...

... at present you have to give 72 hours notice before laying baits but I believe that if you can lay the bait at the fresh carcase then you will be 99 percent sure of getting

the culprit ... this could be done under strict supervision by the local council or DNR ... If only dog owners would give me 72 hours warning that their dog would be out killing my stock. The government has told us that we are now responsible for controlling feral pests on our land but I think it is a bit unfair to ask us to do it with one arm tied behind our backs.

The legislation currently in place does work effectively for large rural properties, but the frustration of this constituent is experienced by many small property owners in rural areas. I ask the minister to look at the legislation once again to address difficulties experienced by those small property owners. Although this issue again covers two portfolios, I would ask the minister to pursue it on my constituent's behalf. I support the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.09 p.m.): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this very important bill, the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill. Many residents of the electorate of Mount Ommaney reside within declared fire ant areas. Approximately 15,000 residents are affected or are in the surveillance zone. In particular, the residents of the Centenary suburbs take a great interest in all matters relating to fire ant eradication and the fire ant control facilities at Oxley. Some members of this House have heard appalling stories of victims of these deadly fire ants—people, dogs, cats, ordinary family pets—and I still support any reasonable measures to stop this menace. As the local member, I have been impressed with the level of consultation and communication about the fire ant problem undertaken by DPI staff, particularly in the electorate of Mount Ommaney.

I have attended many of the meetings arranged by fire ant community liaison staff in which the process was explained in detail. This has resulted in a prepared and well-informed community, an essential ingredient in the success of the fire ant eradication program. The third round of the eradication program commenced on 12 February 2002. I, along with many other residents of Westlake, was entertained by the aerial application of the baits over the McLeod Golf Course and the Peter Lightfoot Oval. I believe that a further aerial application of baits will occur shortly over the areas of Oxley, Sinnamon Park, Riverhills and Sumner Park. There are some residents who fear the consequences of having a barbecue or relaxing in their nearby parks and open spaces due to the presence of these dreadful little creatures.

This bill is a proposed mechanism to provide surety and security to those wholesalers, suppliers and machinery contractors who are performing their duty as honest citizens by

preserving the fire ant free areas within Queensland. These people will be able to set their minds at rest that there is now more disincentive for plant sellers, potting mixture and garden soil suppliers to flout the recommended practices aimed at containing the ants. A \$75,000 maximum penalty should be sufficient deterrent to those thinking about moving plants, soil or appliances without a fire ant declaration.

Some nursery suppliers and wholesalers have been lobbying for this legislation for some time and will no doubt be pleased to see that their efforts are not in vain. The major nurseries within Mount Ommaney have approved risk management plans and, in fact, they proudly display their certificates to reassure prospective customers. I congratulate the minister, Mr Henry Palaszczuk—

Mr Palaszczuk: That's a change, but thank you.

Mrs ATTWOOD: That is okay; the minister is welcome. I thank the minister and his staff at the control centre on the old Oxley Secondary College site in my electorate for the efforts they have made in attempting to allay the community concerns. Keith McCubbin, Pip Hanrick and the other 500-odd staff have alleviated most concerns through public consultation, information sessions and displays at events such as the recent Oxley Creek Water Festival. Their patience in explaining the process to ordinary residents is a credit to their minister and the training they receive. I also congratulate the minister for increasing the number of DPI field officers to combat this menace.

I commend the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, for his foresight in managing the drafting of this bill and for his concern for his staff when undertaking this important work. As both a member of this House and a resident within a declared fire ant zone, I again extend my appreciation for the dedicated and competent manner in which DPI field officers approach the task of assisting to beat this menace throughout south-east Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (6.14 p.m.): I rise tonight to support the bill before the House, the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. The objectives of this legislation are to amend a number of acts administered by the Minister for Primary Industries—the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act 1915. The primary objectives of the bill are to enhance Queensland's legislative capacity to prepare for and respond to potentially devastating exotic terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases and the exotic economic and environmental pest, the red imported fire ant. This is probably one of the most important bills that we can debate at the moment in this House. I get lots of inquiries from my constituents about it because they are absolutely terrified of the consequences should there be one of these disease incursions in Australia.

We have all seen the TV news footage of what happened in Great Britain with the foot-and-mouth outbreak and the bovine spongiform encephalitis outbreak in Japan and its consequences. I can honestly say that, even though everyone who has taken part in this debate has spoken about the dire consequences for Australia should there be an outbreak, I do not think any of us can possibly imagine the consequences should it happen in Australia. Australia has an economy that is very much based on primary production and the export of primary products. Our economy is still based overwhelmingly on primary production. Regardless of the efforts and the developments in other areas of our economy, it is still based overwhelmingly on primary production. Should we have an FMD outbreak or a BSE outbreak, or an outbreak of any one of the other numbers of diseases that are possible, then our economy and our way of life—both economically and socially—would be totally destroyed. It is beyond our imagination to foresee just how bad it would be should one of these outbreaks happen in Australia.

Such an outbreak would have a huge economic impact. In Queensland the beef industry alone is worth approximately \$3.2 billion. That would be the direct cost if the beef industry was closed down. But it is not just the beef industry. It is the dairy industry. It is the sheep industry. It is the live export industry. It is the tourism industry. It is the thoroughbred racing industry. In the UK thoroughbred racing was stopped during the outbreak of the disease. The whole industry closed down, and that would certainly happen in Queensland. The Cunningham electorate is the very centre of the thoroughbred breeding industry in Queensland. It would have dire consequences for my area. Then there are the intensive dairy industries, the piggeries, beef production and fat lamb production. It goes beyond what any of us can possibly imagine. We can do economic modelling and all sorts of things to try to guesstimate what the consequences are going to be, but we really have no idea of just how badly such an outbreak would affect us.

It would affect our individual farmers. It would affect the businesses that associate with them. It would affect the communities around them. It would also affect those communities whose livelihoods depend on all sorts of related industries in tourism, thoroughbred racing and primary production. It is something that I shudder to think of. Members of parliament do not have to rely on these industries for their living, but I have a brother who has a cattle property at Taroom. If there was a disease outbreak, what would happen to him? Would we consider paying people compensation if their herds had to be destroyed? Would we look at helping them to restock? Would there be any point in them restocking if we were declared a foot-and-mouth affected area? Would we have an export market? Would there be primary production? All of the consequences of this issue are enormous. We need to legislate now and legislate very definitely to make sure that we have every possible alternative at our disposal to try to address an outbreak should that horrible event ever occur, and we certainly hope that it does not.

Obviously foot-and-mouth disease and BSE are the most notable of these diseases, but they are certainly not the only ones. A number of members have referred, for example, to the anthrax outbreak in south-west Queensland at Wandoan. It received a lot more media attention than it probably should have. The member for Callide referred to it. It happened at an unfortunate time when white powder was turning up in people's mail, especially in the US but also here in Australia. So the media attention given to it was more focused than perhaps it should have been and more sensationist than it should have been. The resultant focus on it was very considerable indeed and a lot of people were quite frightened about it.

That goes to show what can happen. Many people have said how great the response was from the DPI. We were able to respond so well to that outbreak because of a very talented vet on the ground who lives in that area, a bloke by the name of Bevan Peters, whom I happen to know. He is one of the most experienced and certainly one of the best large animal vets that I have ever come across. I think we were just lucky that he was the vet who responded to the call. He was able to diagnose the problem. He sent the samples off to be tested, and they agreed with his initial diagnosis. It is probably realistic to say that some people were sceptical of his diagnosis. If he had not been such a direct person, the response probably would not have been quite as adequate as it was.

Because Wandoan is in his electorate, the member for Callide mentioned the response of Don Stiller and the Taroom Shire Council. They did a very good job under fairly difficult circumstances. The media scrutiny was enormous. They handled the situation extremely well. They closed down the airspace around the property to stop media helicopters flying in. They did everything right, and I think that they deserve very big congratulations. It probably would not be unfair to say that the response that the state was able to provide was in large part due to the response of those people who were on the ground in Wandoan doing what they did and the fact that we were just very lucky that there was a vet there who knew what he was doing and that he was a specialist large animal vet who was able to diagnose straight up what the problem was. I do not think that that would be the case right across Queensland. There certainly would be pockets where that may not happen. That is something on which we also have to focus.

Mention has been made of the DPI staff throughout Queensland. We must make sure that we have enough DPI staff to respond to these things as they happen. The anthrax problem may have existed for some time in south-west Queensland on that initial property. It is my understanding that there had been a number of deaths of cattle on that property in the past. Who knows whether or not they are related. I certainly hope not. We must ensure that these things are investigated as they arise so that we do not overlook something that could possibly go wrong.

The fire ant problem is another issue to which reference has been made. This is another example of how difficult it is to respond to threats as they arise. Over several years we have seen a reduction in the number of specialist field officers in the DPI. The number of DPI inspectors who are trained to look after animals, diagnose all sorts of things and respond to various issues has certainly reduced. That is of great concern. It may be okay to tick along with normal day-to-day duties on a skeleton staff, but when something goes wrong it really does require a pool of staff with specialist knowledge who can respond immediately and be mobilised to address the issue.

The fire ant containment, certainly within Brisbane, has been very, very difficult. Obviously the circumstances which face the fire ant problem are probably different from most of the containment issues that we are going to face, because the fire ants are not in vastly populated areas where the biggest issue is livestock. In the greater metropolitan Brisbane area the greatest issue is people and the movement of people and machinery. Perhaps we could have moved

more quickly on quarantining the area, for example, when the outbreaks were identified a number of months ago—probably even 18 months ago, from memory. I think we probably should have moved more quickly in quarantining the areas where those outbreaks existed. It is going to be an extremely difficult pest to eradicate. I think this serves as timely advice as to what we should be doing within the DPI to make sure that we have the response capability not only to respond to outbreaks like the fire ant but also BSE or foot-and-mouth disease.

The shadow minister has foreshadowed some amendments to this legislation. I am very glad that he is doing that, because I believe that the state should take responsibility for land management issues on lands controlled by the state. That refers to national parks, state forests and crown land of all descriptions. I certainly do not think that enough focus has been placed on land management by the government of government owned land. It is something that many people talked about when the Land Protection Bill was being debated in this House a couple of months ago. We saw exactly the same issue there: responsibilities being placed on private landholders for what they do on their own land but that same level of responsibility not being placed on the government to make sure that it also does what any good landowner should be expected to do.

My electorate does not contain large areas of national park but it does contain large areas of state forestry. In many cases the land management practices are far worse on government owned land than they ever could be on privately owned land. We should make sure that the responsibility for managing that property is placed on the government, which is the owner of that property. We hear good neighbour policies being bandied about and we hear the word 'responsibility' being bandied about, but we do not see it on the ground, making sure that the government is doing what it should be doing. Crown land—whether it be state forest or national park—can be an absolute haven for feral animals, noxious weeds and all sorts of things. Because of the large areas of land that are controlled by the government, there simply are insufficient numbers of personnel or resources to make sure that those areas of land are managed adequately and are not havens for feral animals and noxious weeds.

North Queensland has been widely quoted during this debate as a potential disaster area because of the large numbers of feral pigs, feral cattle—scrubbers, horses, donkeys and all sorts of animals that are running wild in vast areas of Queensland. However, they are not being controlled in national parks, and that is a real concern. They need to be controlled, especially in the north of Australia, where many of these incursions may well come from. Once the disease gets into the feral animal population, then you can almost kiss it goodbye. There is no realistic chance of being able to control it once it gets into, for example, a wild population of pigs in northern Queensland. But this is not just a problem for northern Queensland. For example, in my electorate we have feral pigs and everything else that we can poke a stick at and which we really wish we did not have.

Mrs Edmond: Poking sticks at them? What else are you going to do to them?

Mr COPELAND: Well, I do not think I have kissed them.

Mrs Edmond: You were saying you'd kiss them goodbye.

Mr COPELAND: No, I was saying that we can kiss the economic future of Queensland goodbye. If that is what the government wants to do, then that is fine. If the government wants to continue letting our national parks be undermanaged and underresourced and become havens for feral animals, then that is fine. If the minister wants to continue to do that as part of the government and the cabinet of which she is a member, then that is her choice. Obviously it does not concern her—being in Brisbane—but it is of concern to the vast numbers of people whose livelihoods rely on these industries and those associated with these industries, because it affects their profitability and viability well into the future.

Our primary industries could certainly be assisted to prevent disease incursions by setting up some sentinel crops and sentinel herds in the cape where they could be looked after and treated for Japanese encephalitis or anything else that might come into the country. They could be kept in very remote areas of far-north Queensland that do not have a large rural industry or a significant beef industry. If we had sentinel crops and sentinel herds in isolated pockets, they could be used to provide a heads-up if one of those diseases entered Queensland. This is something that I hope the minister considers, because it is certainly something on which she could be proactive.

I pay tribute to what AQIS has done in the past 12 months or so. The federal government has significantly increased the numbers of staff that are now on inspection services with AQIS. I

think traditionally we have been underresourced in that area. I am glad to say that the government has actually responded. That is largely because of the foot-and-mouth and BSE outbreaks in various overseas countries. The government has realised that the one big advantage Australia has is our clean, green image. It is something we have to protect at all costs. I am glad that after some time, under governments of both persuasions, AQIS has finally been increased significantly. It is not a small, token increase. Hopefully we will see that it works. We do not want to see any incursions. Perhaps the best measure of whether it works is that we do not see these diseases come into Australia. I think the federal government needs to be congratulated on doing that.

The clean, green image I referred to is one of our major advantages. It is something we quite rightly protect with great fervour, and we will continue to do so. As other countries find themselves in difficulty with diseases—we have seen it with exports, especially from the UK, of beef products, sheepmeat, wool, dairy products and everything else—we will be able to take advantage. I guess we all hope that it will turn into money in the coffers through increased exports. The concern is that when these things happen consumption in general decreases. We saw that with the BSE outbreak in Japan. The member for Nanango referred to the difficulties into which that outbreak put our beef industry and our meatworks.

Not only do we need to be doing this in Australia; I hope that overseas countries recognise that we are doing it. I hope that they recognise that we are still clean and green and that we do have a good quality product that is disease free and that is worth not only importing but also promoting. We need to make sure that we are doing what we can at this end to promote our product into overseas markets to ensure that we continue to get whatever we can from our primary sector.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, primary industry is still our largest sector. We are still overwhelmingly dependent on our primary sector for our export income. It is something we must strongly protect and we must advance our opportunities. An outbreak of any kind would be a real threat to our opportunity. I hope that it does not happen. I am very pleased to support this bill as a pretty big step in the right direction—to make sure that should it ever happen our response capability will be much better than it has been in the past.

I hope that the government will support the amendments to be moved by the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook. I think they are worthwhile amendments. I think what we expect of our private land-holders should also be expected of the government as a land-holder. That will generate some goodwill in the private sector because they will be able to see that there is an obligation on all land-holders within this state. I am sure that they will be willing to cooperate as much as they can, because it is their livelihoods that depend on it as well.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (6.33 p.m.): The Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 amends five existing acts, with the primary objective of providing the state with powers to act decisively in the event of an outbreak of exotic animal disease or environmental pests. Importantly, many of the proposed amendments will actually lie dormant, to be activated only in the unfortunate event of a potentially devastating outbreak of exotic pests or disease. I welcome these amendments as they provide the necessary legislative power to respond appropriately to protect our important livestock industries.

Two industries of great importance to the Bowen and Whitsunday regions are wild prawn harvesting and aquaculture. Having recently attended the Australian Prawn and Barramundi Association conference in Sydney, I am keenly aware of the vast amount of effort currently being put into research and development in the field of aquaculture. One of the biggest threats to this industry is the introduction of exotic disease. White spot syndrome is one such threat.

White spot syndrome was first detected in Asia in 1992-93 and is now believed to be widely spread throughout most of the prawn growing regions of Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Acute infections of the viral syndrome result in rapid reduction of the prawn's capacity to consume food, causing the animal to become lethargic. Death within three to 10 days is inevitable. Significantly, there is currently no known method of prevention or control of this devastating disease.

This bill enhances our power to respond to a suspected outbreak of white spot syndrome or similar disease in two ways. Firstly, it extends the emergency quarantine period from two months to three months. Secondly, it confirms the power to instigate quarantine measures before a diagnosis is confirmed. This second amendment is very important, as a delay in action caused by the need to wait through a lengthy diagnosis period could conceivably result in the establishment and spread of the disease such that it would be impossible to limit or control the devastating

consequences. I welcome these amendments as an important step in the protection of both our wild and our farmed prawn industries.

I am also keenly interested in the amendments aimed at protecting our livestock industries from the devastating consequences of an outbreak of diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and BSE. It is true to say that I owe much to the beef industry as I was raised on a wheat and cattle property at North Dulacca. In fact, my father, Keith, brother, Allan, and sister-in-law, Julie, still live and work on the farm. I am actually very grateful that I was not expected to stay on the land, because it is one of the hardest lifestyles imaginable. I have great respect for the sheer perseverance of these people who, for as long as I can remember, have struggled with the elements and fickle wheat and cattle prices to stay afloat. The one thing that would certainly finish them off is an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. And they would not be alone.

Foot-and-mouth disease is a highly contagious febrile disease of cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, camels, buffalo and deer. The disease is characterised by a sudden rise in temperature followed by an eruption of blisters, usually on the mouth, feet or udder. These blisters grow larger, eventually erupting and exposing raw, eroded surfaces. The animal has difficulty eating, and standing becomes difficult due to the inflammation of the feet. While death can follow as a result of the infection, especially in young animals, the side effects may include weight loss, reduced milk production and spontaneous abortion in pregnant animals.

I am sure we all have vivid memories of the consequences of the recent outbreak of FMD in the United Kingdom. That type of outbreak in Australia would be catastrophic for our livestock industry, given the potential for feral pigs to contract the disease. Control under those circumstances would be very difficult. While we hope it never happens here, this amendment bill provides clear power for immediate response.

In the first instance, amendments to the Stock Act 1915 seek to ensure early notification of symptoms and conditions that may be associated with diseases such as FMD and BSE. Once a person is aware of the existence of prescribed indicators, they must report the incidence to an inspector. Early identification of the presence of a disease such as FMD has obvious benefit in terms of isolation and eradication of infected animals.

Further amendments to the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 provide for the expansion of classes of persons who may be appointed as stock inspectors, provision for the pre-emptive slaughter of stock to control exotic disease and removal rights to obtain injunctions. These amendments not only ensure the availability of a work force large enough to respond immediately and effectively; they also ensure that pre-emptive measures are not held up in the courts. While these measures have the potential to see stock unnecessarily slaughtered in the event of a false alarm, they also give the power to act immediately and prevent the spread of highly contagious, industry-destroying exotic diseases.

There are further amendments to various acts that all seek to obtain the same goal—the protection of our livestock industry and the protection of the incomes of people such as my father and my brother. I reiterate my earlier statement that these measures would largely lie dormant in legislation unless threat from an exotic disease were identified. I hope that we never need to enact the powers inherent in this bill, but if the time comes I feel sure that the passing of this bill will place us in a far better position to respond to the threat. I congratulate the minister and his staff and department officers who have worked exhaustively to bring this bill to fruition. I have much pleasure in commending the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.39 p.m.): In rising to speak to this legislation, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of graziers and horticulturists both to the economy and to the social infrastructure in my electorate and in other parts of Queensland. I also support other speakers who have said that the protection of those industries is essential.

A number of new powers have been incorporated into this legislation, including a new power of entry without warrant. I wonder if the minister could clarify whether he has an intention to review the use of those powers over time or whether he is going to respond only to complaints about the use of those powers. As I said, will there be some proactive monitoring? Perhaps the minister is expecting that the power of entry would be used only in exceptional circumstances. I think history shows that new administrative powers inevitably can bring problems. I seek clarification on the monitoring process that the minister is going to put in place.

The bill also gives a significant power to inspectors to destroy infected animals or suspected animals without appeal. Whilst I understand the rationale for it—it is explained clearly in the explanatory notes and it is easy to understand, given the speed with which foot-and-mouth and

similar types of diseases spread—the explanatory notes also state that the amendment reflects actual practice in that an owner invariably requests the inspector to perform the destruction. If there has been good cooperation from landowners in the past, I wonder why the open power is being conferred. The bill also talks about removing the right of injunctions to enable the destruction to occur. Again, I can understand the rationale for that, but if there has been general cooperation between landowners and the departmental inspectors, I wonder why the very far-reaching powers have been introduced.

The bill talks about the ability of inspectors to include baiting as a means of destroying vectors of exotic diseases. A number of members—and the member for Cunningham spoke in a very informed manner—have spoken about the problems that we have with the national estate and the infestation of it by wild pigs in particular. We also have feral cattle, brumbies, wild dogs and rabbits, although recently rabbit numbers have been knocked around a little bit because of diseases. However, I want to talk about the baiting that has been allowed. The member for Nanango discussed the constraints on baiting. It is a very effective method of controlling feral pests.

In my electorate—and I know this is occurring in a lot of other electorates; Beaudesert is another one—in a lot of areas small rural subdivisions are occurring. In a lot of ways that impedes the ability of the Department of Natural Resources and, indeed, local authorities to use baiting programs effectively. In my electorate, we are still in a position where a number of baiting programs can be put in place relatively close to town providing they use tied and grid baits. But it is becoming a problem. There is no more effective way of controlling wild animals, particularly dogs and pigs, than through the baiting program—unless, of course, people are allowed to shoot them, but with these areas being close to houses and the town, it is definitely not something that could easily be allowed. So I wonder whether the minister is going to review the baiting prohibitions and the baiting controls to recognise the fact that rural subdivisions are encroaching into rural areas and making those baiting programs much more difficult to implement. I would be interested to know of any review that the department might be carrying out in relation to those baiting options.

This legislation also removes the power of the court to pursue an injunction to prevent the carrying out of an order to destroy animals. Along with that removal, there is an obligation on the department to pay fair compensation at market value to those landowners who lose beasts as a result of the provisions of this legislation. I know that in a small sense the government has been used to recompensing people for lost stock. QR regularly pays for beasts that for various reasons get on railway lines and are killed. Other departments also have to pay small amounts of compensation for one beast, or a couple of beasts, or maybe 10 beasts.

The sort of compensation that the minister is talking about in this legislation is significant. I wonder how that compensation process is going to be implemented. If it is contained in the legislation, I apologise, because I have missed it. I know that the Vegetation Management Act does not come under the minister's portfolio, but the same quantum of compensation would not be required under that act as could potentially be required under this act. When we consider the amount of slaughtering that was required in England because of foot-and-mouth disease and mad cow disease, we realise that the level of compensation is significantly higher than the level of compensation that the department faces currently. The Vegetation Management Act stated that there would be compensation for landowners who were affected detrimentally by the operation of that legislation. To my knowledge, even though there have been people who have been significantly affected, nobody has received compensation. Indeed, the compensation process is not even clear.

In terms of this legislation, it would be an absolute tragedy to talk about compensation without having a clear path by which to receive that compensation. Whilst it can be said that it is hoped that a situation never occurs where compensation might be required, the fact is that it could occur. It is cold comfort to landowners who lose their entire herd, including all their breeding stock—they have to have their property sterilised completely—to be told after a number of years of this legislation being in place that it was not foreseen that compensation would be payable and, therefore, a path had not been determined. I seek clarification from the minister as to what process is actually being put in place to allow for compensation to be paid in the event of one of these significant infestations. I, along with many others, pray that it never occurs; however, if it does, the mechanisms must be in place.

Other speakers have talked about the risk of disease in Australia. We are an island; we have the protection of that isolation. However, we also trade internationally, and that is where our major

exposure lies. Other speakers have talked about the likely spread of the infection through feral animals on allocated state land, national parks and forestry. The government places in this legislation—and in other legislation—significant obligations on landowners in regard to the management of their property. Again, the member for Cunningham and others have talked about the fact that, although governments—irrespective of who is in government—place these obligations on landowners, they do not place the same level of obligation on themselves. It is often argued that the government manages a significant quantity of property. That is true. However, the government of the day still has an obligation to be a responsible land manager and to adopt a 'do not do as I say, but do as I do' attitude in relation to the management of this resource.

In my electorate, there is a man whose property adjoins a river. He has noticed that the river has salvinia on it. He contacted me because he wanted work to be done before the salvinia got out of control. I contacted DNR, who responded very positively. They said that they would contact somebody in the council to whom they have devolved the management of this pest. The council was contacted. The council stock routes inspector came out and had a look at it. He turned around to the landowner and said, 'You have to spray and get rid of that.' It is not on this man's property; it is in a river. The river abuts this man's property. Natural Resources were expected to manage the pest, as they would be expected to manage any pest on the national estate. In this instance, they said, 'Talk to the council because they do it for us and they send us a bill.' The council came out and had a look and said to the bloke, 'Well, you had better get rid of it.' Is that what the government is intending to do when it comes to the management of pests on crown land? Will they say to the adjoining private landowners, 'You had better manage it, otherwise it will detrimentally impact on your own investment'? That would be completely untenable and completely unacceptable. Landowners do not have those resources. They used to be able to get subsidised chemicals, but now they have to pay full price.

Mrs Pratt: They are not cheap.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: They are not cheap at all, as the member for Nanango says, and one has to use a lot to get rid of some of these pests. In this case we are talking about exotic diseases, but it is not cheap to get rid of plant pests. This government declares plants 'weeds' and then says to landowners, 'You have to get rid of them'. In this instance, the landowner was told that he had to get rid of a pest that was not even on his property, but was in the river.

I seek a clarification from the minister that it is the DNR's responsibility to manage government land and that it will not be passed on to landowners with no assistance, support or subsidy from the government. It is essential that there is resistance in our country to some of these exotic diseases that are absolutely appalling. There is not a member here who would oppose that. However, it must be done responsibly and in a timely manner, recognising the rights of land owners to be treated fairly, justly and equitably.

Debate, on motion of Ms Stone, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (6.50 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Health Workers

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.51 p.m.): I rise to speak on an issue which is very topical at the moment. I place on record my support for the health workers in my electorate. The problems currently faced by the Industrial Relations and Health Ministers are not just about dollars. I have talked to health workers in my electorate and to their families, and the issue of wages is one of the last to come up. They have raised with me matters such as the ratio of staff to patients. They are concerned because staff numbers are reducing and patient numbers are increasing. In wintertime particularly, as the Minister for Health reminded us, when people get the flu and pneumonia and need to be hospitalised, the staff to patient ratio burgeons and the small numbers of staff are asked to give quality and responsible care to an increasing number of patients. That is just not possible.

I believe that the number of nursing vacancies in Queensland has reached 800. We keep being told that the vacancies just cannot be filled—that there is a worldwide shortage of nurses. That telegraphs a problem with attracting people into the nursing profession and with the way in which nurses are trained. Perhaps there needs to be more options as far as training paths are concerned, or perhaps there just needs to be a review of nursing training.

Another issue raised with me by health workers is hours of work. From as far back as I can remember, nurses can work up to 11 o'clock at night and be required to return at 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning. If a nurse lives five minutes from a hospital, that might be achievable. However, some nurses live half an hour or three quarters of an hour from a hospital. They will get home, they might have three or four hours sleep and then they have to go back to work. Surely this is not a difficult situation to review. Shiftwork has long been practised in the work force. My electorate has a number of workplaces employing shiftworkers and the shifts can be organised to ensure that staff have sufficient rest.

Another issue is overtime. Health workers are required to do more overtime because of the staff shortage. It is good for their pay packet, but it is not good for their health, their family or their ability to be vigilant and attentive in the workplace. The nurses I have spoken to are very responsible, effective and dedicated people. They just want to be able to do their jobs well. They want to know that there is sufficient staff to cover the demands of the hospital. They want to know that their nursing practice will not be compromised in any way by being asked to do more with less. It is not a job where a person can continually be challenged to stretch themselves.

Riaps Pty Ltd

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (6.54 p.m.): For a number of years, the Building Services Authority has pursued an accountability agenda in relation to failed building companies where there is evidence of impropriety or illegality. Today I bring to the attention of the House the activities of Stephen and Angela Thomas, who can best be described as phoenix developers. Their modus operandi involves the creation of a new company for each of their unit or resort development projects. To date, they have created seven companies, five of which have been wound up with substantial unpaid creditors. Each time a company has failed, they have emerged phoenix-like, moving onto the next project, showing no regard for the creditors left in the ashes, including subcontractors living in my electorate.

However, the Thomas' phoenix wings will soon be clipped. I am pleased to report that the BSA has provided considerable funding to the liquidators, Bruce Milner and Tony Jonsson of Horwarth Brisbane and Horwarth Cairns, who have commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court in Cairns against both Angela and Stephen Thomas. The proceedings were filed in June this year, claiming more than \$1 million against Angela Thomas, as the director of one of their failed companies Riaps Pty Ltd, and her husband, Stephen Thomas. Angela Thomas was appointed director and secretary of the company on 14 September 1997. Her husband, Stephen Thomas, a bankrupt between 1 August 1995 and 2 August 1998, was disqualified from managing the company during that period. However, the evidence will show that she was just a puppet director and Stephen Thomas was in fact managing the company whilst bankrupt and was responsible for the collapse of the company that developed Newport, a complex of 18 units and a shop in Port Douglas.

The claim against Mr and Mrs Thomas relates to alleged insolvent trading for the period to the date of the appointment of the administrators on 10 June 1999, during which time further debts were incurred, thereby contravening provisions of the Corporations Act which allows the liquidators to recover an amount equal to the loss or damage sustained by a creditor because of the company's insolvency. A separate claim has also been filed in the Supreme Court in Cairns against Mr Thomas, claiming more than \$1 million, alleging that he managed Riaps while he was bankrupt, during which time he negotiated finance for the project with interest rates of up to 154 per annum.

At the time of the collapse, Riaps' creditors voiced their anger that Riaps' director, Angela Thomas, and her husband, Stephen, could not pay creditors in full when they were still involved with other businesses. In fact, Stephen Thomas continues to develop properties in Port Douglas as director of Port Heritage Resort Pty Ltd. I believe there may be unpaid creditors on this development. Yet another Thomas company, Maddison Resort Pty Ltd, is seeking approval for another development in the Douglas shire, repeating the now well-known pattern.

I am assured that the cases in both the civil and criminal proceedings in the Supreme Court against Mr and Mrs Thomas are very strong. I certainly hope so, because they must be made to pay their creditors every last cent of the \$1,079,660.74 that they owe. Just as importantly, I hope that Mr and Mrs Thomas will, at the very least, be banned from being company directors for a very long time so that they cannot continue to profit at the expense of honest subcontractors. They have thumbed their noses at the law for far too long, exploiting loopholes for their own advantage. The time has finally come for them to be held to account for their activities and I look forward to celebrating with the subcontractors when justice is done in the Supreme Court later this year.

Christopher Price; Hope Farm

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (6.57 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House a chain of events that started with the tragic death of a young boy in my electorate. It is a story of tragedy, love, hope and help. A very special young boy, Christopher Price, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was only 22 months old on 9 September 1995. He suffered unimaginable pain between then and when he passed away on 10 September 1998. During those three terrible and painful years, Christopher fought his disease with a courage that very few of us can imagine. The community responded, giving their support and showing their kindness to his devastated parents, Belinda and Neal.

During his short life, Christopher spent a lot of time visiting his friends on family farms and he developed a special interaction with animals. In fact, he derived so much pleasure from animals, he told his parents what a good idea it would be for kids like him, suffering from cancer, to have a special place to holiday where they could experience the joys of farm life with their parents, and ease their suffering. It was young Christopher's hope that this would become a reality. Although young Christopher lost his battle with cancer, his dream is now becoming a reality. His legacy to other young cancer sufferers will be called Hope Farm and his parents are working hard to make his dream come true. Sadly, Christopher's story is one that is being repeated across Queensland, and unless it affects us personally it is one of those issues that we tend to bypass.

Although technology is improving in the fight against this terrible disease, we still have a long way to go. We need to offer more than palliative care. We need to support the parents as well as the children to make their life easier. Christopher's parents sold their family home two years after Christopher passed away and purchased 47 acres on top of the Boobie Range on the outskirts of Kingaroy. It is a magical setting, with fabulous views. But it was not just his parents who took up the challenge to make Christopher's dream come true. The community also joined in, with donations of building materials, labour and money.

Hope Farm will have bush walking tracks, farm animals, crafts, games and activities, a swimming pool—in fact, as little or as much activity as one family member needs or is capable of. A cabin on Hope Farm is being built under the banner of the Children's Leukaemia and Cancer Society, a selfless society formed 26 years ago by a group of parents of children with cancer. Families of a child with cancer have many added pressures above normal everyday living. They have added financial burdens and emotional stress, which in many cases leads to family break-ups. It takes us beyond the loss of just a loved one. In many cases, families totally disintegrate under the pressure. When it is finished, Hope Farm will be a facility for parents to use at no charge. It is a facility that will help keep families together as a unit.

It is beyond imagination the dread and fear of young children who are torn away from close friends and family to travel to a hospital far away for painful treatment. After speaking to the Prices, I now understand the trauma associated with families being devastated by having a child with a life-threatening disease such as cancer. These parents are making the dream of their young son Christopher a reality. We need to show some compassion, as the elected representatives of our communities, for the brave parents out there in every community in Queensland facing the trauma and heartbreak that the Prices have experienced.

State Youth Advisory Council

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.01 p.m.): I would like to bring to the attention of members the success of the State Youth Advisory Council and to put on record my thanks to the SYAC members for their contribution to the Queensland government's understanding of issues important to young people. The State Youth Advisory Council was established in September

2000 for a two-year term. The SYAC meeting held in early July was the last meeting of this council, with a new council to be appointed at the next SYAC meeting in October.

SYAC was established to increase young people's participation in government decision making and community life. It has a membership of 27 people: 15 young people from across the state, five community representatives from youth organisations, one representative from local government, and six representatives from state government agencies. As the first ever State Youth Advisory Council, members had to lead the way and forge a path for others to follow. I am happy to say that they admirably met the challenges and complexities involved in this process.

A highlight for me was SYAC's leadership on the development of the Queensland Youth Charter. The charter clearly outlines this government's commitment to actively seek young people's involvement in the development of government programs, policies and services. It will act as a practical guide for government in involving young Queenslanders in decision making. SYAC members should be proud of their contribution to changing the way government consults and engages with young people. During its term, SYAC contributed to a number of government initiatives, including road hoarding legislation and housing legislation, and it did so without fear or favour. It helped to shape the future of education and training in this state through participating in the consultation process for Queensland the Smart State: Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

The council actively participated in consultations regarding the police move-on powers and the Health 2020 strategy. SYAC raised a number of important issues with me, the minister and other ministers, including: young driver fatalities, the impact of temporary protection visas on the lives of young refugees, media representation of Queensland's young people on radio, and public transport in rural and regional Queensland. SYAC provided an example of competent leadership and responsibility through its response to the September 11 tragedy and its condemnation of violent acts against our Muslim communities. Council members developed valuable networks within their local communities and provided a voice for those young people.

I sincerely hope that members of SYAC got as much out of this process as the government did. I hope that the experience was valuable, that they learnt not only how government operates but also how they can participate in government processes throughout their lives. I know that the friendships and networks they have established will be ongoing. I feel honoured to have worked with such a talented group of young people, and I thank them for their hard work and thoughtful contribution. With the involvement of such young people, I am confident that Queensland's future is in good hands. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the representatives of government and community organisations who played a vital role in representing the various perspectives required to see the full picture. Finally, I thank the Office of Youth Affairs for its hard work as secretariat to SYAC and for its commitment to the young people of Queensland.

Parliament House Security; Public Service VERs

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): I wanted to speak tonight about the potential impact of 2,000 jobs being lost from the Public Service in Queensland and to ask the government what this means for the Sunshine Coast. We do not want to see a loss of jobs, particularly given the fact that we have such a high unemployment rate on the Sunshine Coast and that we need the support of services.

However, first I want to address a matter which has been drawn to my attention and about which I am most concerned: the security breach of the parliamentary complex today. Frankly, I am quite angry to think how easy the security of this complex could be breached. I note that the Speaker said on television that security was adequate, but I urge the Speaker—and I will certainly be writing to him—to follow up this matter, because if security was so easily breached it is not adequate. In this instance the intruder may not have been threatening, but it has highlighted how easily security can be breached. That should be ringing alarm bells in this place about the need to overhaul security.

I would like to think that we still live in the sort of place where we can leave our doors unlocked and where it is safe to walk down the streets late at night, but that is not the case. There is also a very special place that the parliament plays in the life of Queensland. Unfortunately, like other public buildings, parliament does require adequate security for all members, regardless of their political backgrounds, so that they know they can undertake their work in this place and so that staff also can undertake their work without the threat of an unwanted intruder who may have different intentions from the one who intruded today. There must be a security overhaul and

review so that all parliamentarians know that this place is secured in an adequate way and so that they can without fear or favour get on with their job of representing the people of Queensland.

In regard to the announcement by the government that up to 2,000 jobs—and possibly more—will be slashed from the public sector, I call on the state government to reveal where these jobs are going from. We know that in an area like the Sunshine Coast—and certainly in the electorate of Maroochydore, where unemployment approaches 13 per cent or 14 per cent—there are great concerns about the impact of the loss of those jobs in government services. We know that currently most of the district's services are based in the Maroochydore electorate, but private enterprise, being the primary creator of jobs, needs adequate services to get on with the job. We know that the public needs those services, too.

As mentioned by my colleagues, the police need good administrative staff so that they can be out on the beat in the knowledge that there are personnel at the station doing the paperwork. That is practical administration. But where are the jobs going? Do not slash them from regional Queensland. We do not want to see the government slash those jobs that support the good work of the front-line workers, because we need those jobs.

Flexi-shopper Bus Service, Caboolture

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (7.07 p.m.) When Caboolture Centacare personnel Sue Taylor and Jenny Totterdell first came up with the innovative idea of a flexi-shopper as part of an existing scheduled bus run to aid the elderly and disadvantaged in isolated communities, they probably did not realise just how much they would touch the lives of those who use it. Since I had heard good reports about the service, I decided to join some regular users from Donnybrook, Meldale and Toorbul on an excursion to the Morayfield Shopping Centre.

The flexi-shopper, funded by the government's Home and Community Care Service, is subsidised to give users an inexpensive way of getting out of their homes and becoming a bit more active. This aim is important as recent statistics show that an increased number of Australians are insufficiently active, therefore doubling their chances of a heart attack. I was joined on the bus in Caboolture by Centacare volunteer Mr Kerry Smith whose job it was to assist the passengers onto and off the bus and to make sure that they were comfortable. Mr Smith shares stories and events and even gives out birthday cakes when required. His role is shared by Kathy Rosenblatt, and they receive help from Brad Arthur as well. Popular and regular bus driver, David Hartley, is very accommodating, picking up passengers at their front door and helping wherever needed. More than 20 passengers were picked up on that particular Tuesday. It was the best time I have had for a while. Everyone was so happy with the flexi-shopper that I would like to take this opportunity to share some of their comments with members.

Toorbul residents Jeffrey Tanner, Joan Grevell, Pat McAndrew, Eileen Meurant, Barbara Gregory and Jo and Mona Chappell all agree that the service is the best thing since sliced bread. They are regular users and were literally housebound before it. They say that it is a marvellous social outing and that they enjoy it very much. Harry Ovenden and Bill and Dot Lewis, who were the first two passengers, added that the stress had been taken out of shopping. Donnybrook residents Joan Bennets, Evelyn Brodie and Shirley Jackson do not drive. They said that before the flexi-shopper there was no public transport. Bill and Edna Sutcliffe added that they had to catch the school bus, leaving Donnybrook at 8 o'clock in the morning and then having to wait until 3 o'clock to get a lift home. It was too long a day for them.

Joy Greensill summed it up by saying, 'I hope it stays.' The flexi-shopper, which will celebrate its first birthday in October of this year, also visits Beachmere every Wednesday. I commend all those who participated in getting the flexi-shopper up and running and am pleased that a government decision has been so warmly received and has been embraced by the residents living in these small communities.

Expansion of the service is hoped for in the near future. However, this will be possible only if the federal government releases more HACC funding in its next budget.

99-year Lease Agreements; Pensioner Rate Subsidies

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (7.10 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the inequitable situation faced by retirees residing in units under 99-year lease agreements regarding their ability to access the state government's pensioner rate subsidy. Retirement village residents who purchase their units on a 99-year lease agreement have the title to that unit for 99

years or until they terminate the lease. These residents are responsible for paying rates on these residences just as they would be if they owned the unit, even though their units are generally 130 square metres in comparison with a normal suburban residence of approximately 800 to 900 square metres.

In addition to rates, residents are expected to cover all costs associated with the operations of the village, including administration, maintenance and other utilities, through a weekly service fee. Considering that the majority of these residents are pensioners, the accumulated costs can prove a tough financial strain. These 99-year leases have not traditionally been eligible for a pensioner rate subsidy because the resident's name does not appear on the certificate of title under this arrangement, even though under the title they are responsible for all expenses.

A large number of local governments across Queensland have adjusted their individual pensioner rate subsidy schemes to allow residents under a 99-year lease agreement to claim a rebate. These authorities have seen fit to grant a special rebate to 99-year lease residents because they can appreciate how unique their set of circumstances is. However, the state government has still refused to recognise the plight of residents on 99-year leases and will not include these people on the state government pensioner rate subsidy scheme. That is a decision that is causing considerable financial hurt for these residents.

In my electorate I have two large retirement villages that operate on 99-year lease arrangements. Willow Glen and Drayton Villa retirement villages have both approached me with their concerns over the state government's failure to provide a subsidy for their residents. I have met personally with these residents and they have genuinely communicated to me their very legitimate and sensible case for being included in the state government's pensioner rate subsidy scheme.

The Toowoomba City Council has kindly provided these residents with a rebate under its pensioner rate subsidy scheme, which has proved to be of great assistance. However, if they were able to access the state government subsidy scheme it would enable these pensioners to access an additional subsidy of 20 per cent of the gross rates levied by the local government. For a senior living on a modest pension this rebate would make a huge difference to their quality of life.

The newly announced Minister for Seniors has stated that the issue will be monitored and considered in any future review of the scheme. While I am pleased that the minister is willing to keep an open mind on this issue, I believe it is an issue that is too important to wait until a future review. On behalf of the 99-year lease residents of Willow Glen and Drayton Villa, I strongly urge the minister to act immediately to assist our senior citizens. Necessary changes must be made to the state government pensioner rate subsidy scheme to make it more equitable and ultimately improve the quality of life of those retirees.

Childers Multicultural Festival

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (7.13 p.m.): I take this opportunity to speak about the Childers Multicultural Festival 2002. On a negative note, the sugar industry in the region is experiencing one of its worst seasons in living memory. Dry conditions and the low sugar price have created a depressed feeling and people are uncertain about next year's season. Alf Bonanno is the chairman of the Isis mill cooperative. Unfortunately, they have had to lay off a few workers in the last season and are back to working just a five-day week—something the mill has not experienced for a long time. The mill normally crushes 1.5 million tonnes. Its goal is two million tonnes. However, this season it looks like they will be crushing only about 800,000 tonnes.

This will be the seventh year for the Multicultural Festival. It has expanded somewhat considering that at the first Multicultural Festival some seven years ago about 500 people turned up and it spread out over only a small portion of the town. It has come a long way since then. The Premier's visit a couple of weeks ago to the Cadelga State School lifted the spirits of the community. It made a big impact on the local community and got people speaking about the positive things in the region. From that day, people started to look forward to the festival.

Unfortunately, this year's festival had 40 fewer stalls than in the previous year, mainly due to the situation with public liability insurance. The average insurance cost for a stall last year was about \$60 per site. A site consists of about 16 square metres—four by four. Given the recent events surrounding public liability insurance, it now costs from \$180 to \$280 per site. Given the thin profit margins of these sites, which are run by Apex clubs, Lions clubs, craft groups and so

forth, this takes a large chunk out of their profit margin. However, there have been improvements. This is the biggest multicultural festival in Queensland. The state government put \$20,000 towards it.

I commend the mayor, Bill Trevor, and his council. I commend also Nancy Calder, who works 355 days a year in building up to this event. Some 30,000-odd people attended this year's multicultural festival. There was plenty of room because there were fewer stalls. The event was terrific.

School Bus Safety

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (7.16 p.m.): For many months and years the topic of school bus safety has been a great concern in the Beaudesert electorate. The Beaudesert electorate is a special one, because it contains the mountainous areas of Mount Tamborine and also the section of the busy Mount Lindesay Highway running between Brisbane South and Beaudesert.

Many members would be aware that a group of residents led by two determined mothers has formed the Bus Action Committee, which has been fighting for improved school transport safety. I congratulate these women and all those involved. In electorates such as mine it is imperative that school transport safety be improved.

It is frightening to see banana buses crowded with children—both sitting and standing—travelling at high speeds on roads with speed limits of up to 100 kilometres per hour, especially on a highway such as the Mount Lindesay Highway, a single-lane highway. It is not possible to restrict these buses to speeds below 80 kilometres per hour. The highway is hilly and, as the buses go down one hill they speed up to get over the next one. If they are travelling at only 80 kilometres per hour and the traffic behind them is travelling at 100 kilometres per hour, the inevitable will occur. That is a startling scenario. I hope we never see a massive accident involving banana buses.

When the budget was brought down in June, I was pleased to see that funding had been allocated for school transport safety. As I have said, it is a matter of grave concern. I am glad that an attempt has finally been made to address the issue. We were not happy with the trial period and the lack of funding.

The seatbelt trials are to be held in high-risk areas. I will be interested to see which areas are chosen. Obviously, I am hopeful that dangerous areas in my electorate such as Mount Tamborine and the Mount Lindesay Highway will be selected. I acknowledge the fact that in the Mount Tamborine area no standing is permitted on buses. It is amazing to watch the buses being boarded and see the difference in behaviour of students on buses where all students have to be seated as compared with the behaviour on a banana bus, where 30 or 40 students might be standing in the passageways.

While these initiatives are a good start, concerns are still being expressed. A major concern is the fact that some of these initiatives are on a trial basis. I am not sure why a trial is needed, especially when it is obvious. We all know that seatbelts save lives. It really is a waste of time and money to conduct a trial. Part of these initiatives is to replace old buses, and I certainly feel that all new replacement buses should automatically be fitted with seatbelts. That only makes sense. It is obviously a good way to start the process. There are many questions that need to be answered. I know that the Bus Action Committee is planning to relaunch its campaign. I wish it the very best of luck.

Showcase 2002 Awards for Excellence

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.19 p.m.): This year I had the honour of representing the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, at the Showcase 2002 Awards for Excellence for the Corinda district. This major event is celebrated during State Education Week and was hosted by the Corinda State High School in its new state-of-the-art Physical Education Centre. The awards recognise innovation and reward school practice which has been proven to significantly improve educational outcomes for students. They also aim to foster a learning culture and to create professional development opportunities through sharing effective practice with peers and the education community. Participants this year included the Brisbane Youth Education and Training Centre, Centenary State High School, Ironside State School, Kenmore State High School, Middle Park State School, Richlands State School and Toowong College.

The submissions included a Culture of Care, differentiated pathways to achievement for students at risk; An Eye Over Asia, an innovative SOSE curriculum incorporating Web Quest technology; Am I a Part of Energy and the Future for improved student outcomes in science and SOSE through completion of an integrated unit; the German Immersion and Extension Program, a program of excellence in language that has enjoyed continued success since 1991; Positive Outcomes for Students in the Middle Years of Schooling, which provides students with real-life opportunities to practise their academic skills in social and community contexts; and the Foundation Learning Program—the use of play based activities to achieve skill development. There were also static displays by a number of schools in the district.

I was pleased that Centenary State High School in my electorate received an award for its Eye Over Asia program. Eye Over Asia is a unit of study for year 8 students developed in 2001 by teacher Beryl McLachlan. It is another example of the cutting-edge curriculum and use of technology for which this great school is known. The unit takes students through the latest issues impacting on Asia right now, including ethnic conflict, the building of the Three Gorges Dam in China, disappearing rainforest, sand and endangered species. Ms McLachlan reports real improvements in students' technological expertise, teamwork and overall enjoyment of their work. She stated that feedback from the students is very positive. One student said that it made school 'come alive'. Centenary State High School and its fellow district award winners receive \$2,000 for further development of its programs. The Centenary State High School program is an outstanding example of the pursuit for teaching excellence that underpins Queensland's Smart State goals. I was delighted that this school and its staff have been recognised and rewarded for their efforts.

The next step is the state evaluation process from which 12 state finalists will be selected. If successful, the school will then go on to the Showcase state finals, which will take place at a gala event in Brisbane in August. I was pleased to see my local schools participate in the program. All school cultures are different and the individuality of students and teachers means that needs can change. This is why these awards are so important. There is always a better way to improve learning outcomes for students and there needs to be this incentive to urge schools to try new ways to achieve better outcomes in this changing environment.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.22 p.m.