



WEEKLY HANSARD

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E-mail: hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au

Phone: (07) 3406 7314 Fax: (07) 3210 0182

51ST PARLIAMENT

Subject

CONTENTS

Page

Tuesday, 7 March 2006

PRIVILEGE	541
Member for Aspley, Email	541
PRIVILEGE	541
Member for Aspley, Email	541
ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF GAVEN	541
By-Election Dates	541
PETITION	542
PAPERS	542
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	542
Gaven By-Election	542
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	543
Caboolture Hospital, Emergency Department	543
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	545
Health Action Plan	545
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	545
Public Service Workforce	545
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	546
James Cook University, Brisbane Campus	546
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	546
North Bank	546
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	547
Queensland Greats Awards	547
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	547
Petrie, Mr D; Queensland's 150-Year Celebrations	547
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	547
Economy	547
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	548
Invest Queensland	548
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	549
Health System	549
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	549
Electricity Infrastructure	549
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	550
Young Drivers	550

Table of Contents — Tuesday, 7 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	551
Borallon Correctional Centre	551
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	551
Childhood Obesity	551
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	552
Emergency Services	552
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	553
Foster and Kinship Care Week	553
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	553
Environmental Programs	553
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	553
Boarding House Program	553
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	554
Multicultural Queensland	554
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT	555
Caboolture Hospital	555
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	555
Health System	555
Health System	556
Barton, Aunty D	557
Health System	557
Health System	558
Caboolture Hospital, Emergency Department	559
Health System	559
Nambour Hospital	560
Aurukun Bauxite Project	560
Public Hospital Beds	561
Caboolture Hospital Emergency Department	562
Elective Surgery Waiting Times	562
Telstra	563
Maryborough Hospital	564
Dairy Farmers Stadium	564
Queensland Health, Emergency Departments	565
Road Infrastructure, Sunshine Coast	566
MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST	566
Caboolture Hospital	566
Nurses, Pay and Conditions; Bow Tie Appeal Week	568
Proserpine Hospital	569
SunWater	570
Samford Valley, Public Transport	571
Crime Rates	572
Work, Life and Family Balance	573
WorkCover	573
World Oil Production	574
Children Leaving Home	575
Morayfield District Guides Hut	576
MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL	577
First Reading	577
Second Reading	577
FORESTRY PLANTATIONS QUEENSLAND BILL	578
First Reading	578
Second Reading	578
INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	580
First Reading	580
Second Reading	581
ORDER OF BUSINESS	585
RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT BILL	585
Second Reading	585
Consideration in Detail	629
ADJOURNMENT	634
Nundah State School	634
Gladstone, Fishing Industry	634
Toastmasters Week; International Women's Day	635
Advertising Campaigns, Road Safety	636
Avicultural and Poultry Museum, Caboolture	636
Members of Parliament	637
Green Bridge; Cr Leslie Green	637
Chalco, Alumina Smelter	638
Bowelscan	639
Queensland Ambulance Service	639

TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2006

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. T McGrady, Mount Isa) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

PRIVILEGE

Member for Aspley, Email

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (9.31 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. Last week a typist at my Moggill electorate office sent an email inadvertently to the Aspley electorate office. The email was addressed to a third party. Immediately on realising the error a further email was sent to the Aspley electorate office advising of the error and asking that the email be disregarded and deleted.

Government members interjected.

Dr FLEGG: If those opposite do not respect this sort of instruction then they cannot expect the community to. The original email contained the Parliament House disclaimer which says—

This e-mail and any attachments are confidential and only for the use of the addressee. If you have received this e-mail in error, you are strictly prohibited from using, forwarding, printing, copying or dealing in any way whatsoever with it, and are requested to reply immediately by e-mail to the sender and or by telephone to the Parliamentary Service ...

Despite the fact that this email was clearly addressed to another party and the Aspley electorate office was advised that the email had been sent in error, the member for Aspley saw fit to disregard our Parliament House notice and send it on to the Minister for Health, who subsequently used it for a perceived political purpose in the House and tabled the correspondence.

Mr Speaker, I have written to you this morning requesting your ruling in relation to this and asking that you consider referring this matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. These types of errors occur commonly with electronic transmission. In fact, from time to time these sorts of incidents occur and have, on a number of occasions, occurred with ministers, including the minister for natural resources, who sent out his Christmas card list for the Inala seat and asked for its withdrawal.

If the actions of the member for Aspley and the Minister for Health are considered acceptable and members are entitled to totally and contemptuously disregard the notice that attaches to emails then, Mr Speaker, I would take it that this ruling would set the precedent that we are entitled to use any other information sent to us by ministers or other members by mistake and this notice can be disregarded. If the Queensland parliament does not respect such a notice then we cannot really expect the rest of the community to respect these notices which are common with electronic transmissions.

PRIVILEGE

Member for Aspley, Email

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.33 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. I remind the honourable member that the letter was actually addressed to the residents of the Aspley electorate. It was clearly a public document.

Dr FLEGG: I rise to a point of order. That is not correct. The email was addressed to a third party and that is what the disclaimer says.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF GAVEN

By-Election Dates

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I welcome back the Leader of the Opposition. In your absence we did send our condolences to you and your family on the death of your father.

Honourable members, I have to report that I have issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Gaven. The dates in connection with the issue of the writ are as follows:

Issue of writ—Tuesday, 7 March 2006;

Cut-off day for the electoral rolls—Saturday, 11 March 2006;

Cut-off day for nominations—Tuesday, 14 March 2006;

Polling day—Saturday, 1 April 2006; and

Return of the writ—Monday, 8 May 2006.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the said writ.

PETITION

The following honourable member has sponsored an e-petition which is now closed and presented—

Legal Services for Seniors

Mr Sullivan from 228 petitioners requesting the House to establish a specific community-based legal service to deliver legal advice and assistance to people over 60 years of age residing in urban and rural Queensland; undertake community and professional education with the aim of increasing awareness of problems such as the domestic violence and financial abuse confronting older people; undertake case-work that will advance the interests of this sector of the community; and monitor and advocate for law reform impacting on older people.

PAPERS

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Fisheries Act 1994—

- Fisheries Management Plans Amendment Management Plan (No. 1) 2006, No. 25 (Please note: This instrument replaces the previous version of No. 25 tabled on 28 February 2006)

Fisheries Act 1994, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 26
(Please note: This instrument replaces the previous version of No. 26 tabled on 28 February 2006)

Water Act 2000—

- Water Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 29

Environmental Protection Act 1994—

- Environmental Protection (Water) Amendment Policy (No. 1) 2006 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 30

Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Act 2000—

- Drug Rehabilitation (Court Diversion) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006, No. 31

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gaven By-Election

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.36 am): Mr Speaker, like you, I want to inform the House that this morning I requested that the Speaker, pursuant to the provisions of the Electoral Act 1992, issue today the writ for the by-election for the electoral district of Gaven. The by-election is to be held on Saturday, 1 April 2006, which is the first available date 26 days from today. The pertinent dates have already been addressed by the Speaker. I table my letter to the Speaker for the information of the House.

I simply want to say to members that, under the act, 26 days notice needs to be given. That means that the by-election will fall on 1 April. April is a very difficult month because, as we all know, we have Easter, Anzac Day and the school holidays. The only possible dates were 1 April or 8 April. Saturday, 8 April is the day school holidays begin.

I must confess to being terrified by mum power—that is, mums and dads heading off with their children on holidays. The last thing they want is to be worried about voting before they pack the dog in the car, the furniture in the car and all the other things they take away on holidays. The date was either the first Saturday in April or the first Saturday in May. Mr Speaker, I thank you for assisting. I seek leave to incorporate more detail in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

7 March 2006

The Hon T McGrady MP
Speaker
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Tony

As you are aware, Robert Poole resigned to you on 28 February 2006 as a Member of Parliament, thereby creating a vacancy in the electoral district of Gaven.

As the vacancy arose at a time when the Legislative Assembly was sitting and the Assembly has passed a resolution declaring that the vacancy exists and stating its cause, you are authorised to issue the writ for the by-election pursuant to section 79(1) of the Electoral Act 1992.

My preference for the dates required to be specified in the writ, which would allow the by-election to be held on Saturday, 1 April 2006 are:

- (a) the day of issue of the writ: Tuesday, 7 March 2006;
- (b) the cut off day for electoral rolls for the election: Saturday, 11 March 2006;
- (c) the cut off day for the nomination of candidates for the election: Tuesday, 14 March 2006;
- (d) the polling day: Saturday, 1 April 2006;
- (e) the day for the return of the writ: Monday, 8 May 2006.

For your information, when Her Excellency the Governor issues an election writ, the original writ and a certified copy are forwarded to the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland. The Electoral Commission then arranges for its publication in the Queensland Government Gazette. Would you please formally advise me when the writ has been issued today.

I would also appreciate your advice of your receipt of the returned writ, which I understand you will then table in the Legislative Assembly at your the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

PETER BEATTIE MP
PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Caboolture Hospital, Emergency Department

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 am): Today I am pleased to be able to deliver on a very important commitment that the Minister for Health, Stephen Robertson, and I made to the people of Caboolture—their emergency department will again be operating a 24-hour service. From Tuesday, 18 April the service that the people of Caboolture expect and demand will be restored. As an interim measure, from Monday, 27 March the emergency department, currently open between 8 am and 4 pm, will operate until 11 pm each day.

This is a major breakthrough in the grip of a chronic shortage of doctors. The minister, Stephen Robertson, and his department have worked incredibly hard to bring about this result. I thank him publicly for doing so. A national shortage of doctors has robbed the people of Caboolture of a fully functioning emergency department since 16 January. My government has been working hard to find a sustainable solution for the people of Caboolture.

Today we can deliver that solution. This morning, the Director-General of Queensland Health, Uschi Schreiber, will sign a contract with a reputable Australian medical organisation, Aspen Medical, after a closed tender process. Aspen Medical is based in Canberra but has operations across Australia and around the world, specialising in providing health care, particularly emergency medicine, to areas of high demand.

Aspen has current contacts with the Western Australian government and the Australian Defence Force. It also provides surgical services in Northern Ireland and across several districts in England. In addition, it provides services in South-East Asia and the Pacific. As part of Queensland's agreement, Aspen will supply the level of medical staff required to operate the Caboolture emergency department 24 hours a day for 12 months. This approach is also designed to build a new model in the delivery of emergency care that will draw upon strengths of the past administration at Caboolture as well as introduce new ideas based on Aspen's experience in other states and countries. While this service is provided for 12 months, it will enable a service to be provided after the 12 months of the agreement, which is world best practice.

Caboolture's predicted medical staff vacancies are 4.8 full-time equivalent senior medical officers or emergency specialists, including a director of ED, and nine full-time equivalent principal house officers or registrars. That is what Aspen will provide. The contract, which is being finalised for signature today, is expected to be worth \$7.08 million over the 12 months. Aspen will effectively run the Caboolture emergency department on behalf of Queensland Health for 12 months, with an option to carry on for another 12 months if required. If the Redcliffe-Caboolture Health Service District—and we will be up-front about this—were to provide this level of staffing to run the Caboolture emergency department, it is anticipated that it would cost \$3.5 million. The expected variance of \$3.58 million is significant, but what is at stake is a fully functional, sustainable emergency department for the people of Caboolture. To overcome the doctor shortage we have to pay for it. In a nutshell, to overcome the doctor shortage we have to pay for it. So that is why the costs are higher. The other option was to wait until the district recruited enough staff, and while it has been working hard to find experienced people it has met with limited success. Today's contract signing means that Caboolture residents will not have to wait any longer than is necessary.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the doctors and nurses who have worked so hard to keep Caboolture Hospital's emergency department functioning. I also want to place on record my thanks and gratitude to the CareFlight team and to the Mater Hospital for their assistance during a very difficult

time. All senior doctors, including registrars, will be paid by Aspen, as will an additional nurse educator who will focus on skills and professional development for our ED nurses. All other nursing and medical staff will be paid by Queensland Health. Aspen will immediately undertake discussions with current senior doctors who have announced their intention to resign, as well as doctors who have been previously employed at Caboolture, to determine whether they would reconsider their decision and either stay at or return to Caboolture under these new arrangements. The doctors can be part of this plan. They have an opportunity to be part of this plan. We would love to see them be part of this plan.

A project team at Caboolture to manage the emergency department and all emergency department staff will report to Aspen's project manager. In a separate component of the contract, Aspen will engage in a full review of the emergency department worth \$1.7 million. A lot of lessons have been learned from the Caboolture experience. The need for better, smarter, short- and long-term workforce planning and other HR strategies was clearly evident. Aspen will work with Queensland Health to deliver these improvements and deliver a greater investment in education, research and professional development at Caboolture to allow the emergency department to be restored to its former status.

This morning the central area manager and district manager are briefing hospital staff and contacting those ED staff not currently at work. The Minister for Health will be supervising it. The director-general of Queensland Health is briefing key stakeholders, including the Queensland Nurses Union and the Queensland Public Sector Union. Earlier this morning the health minister and I met with Australian Medical Association Queensland President Steve Hambleton, who is comfortable with the plan to rebuild and restore the reputation of Caboolture emergency department to its previous status as a flagship in the Queensland public health system for hospitals of comparable size and Aspen's undertaking to continue to engage with the AMA and the College of Emergency Medicine. The members for Pumicestone and Glass House have also been extensively briefed on the agreement. I want to thank them for making representations on behalf of their constituents. I know this has been a difficult political issue for them but, like the government, they know that the most important thing to look after is patients and the people of Caboolture. That is why the members for Pumicestone and Glass House have advocated fiercely on behalf their constituents, and I want to acknowledge that today.

The agreement that Queensland Health has entered into is unique. Is it the ideal outcome for Caboolture and my government? Is it? The answer to that is that it is not. I would rather be able to recruit doctors to Caboolture on our own. However, Aspen can supply doctors in April, so it would have been foolish to ignore this opportunity. This agreement delivers for Caboolture. It provides an immediate and sustainable solution for the district, the hospital and its staff. Through the review, it will also play a key role in my government's efforts to rebuild our health system. Most importantly, this agreement returns the Caboolture emergency department to a 24-hour, seven-day-per-week service. It is a service the people of Caboolture have demanded be returned as soon as possible, and one they have every right to expect. Again to the people of Caboolture, I regret the loss of a full service over the past seven weeks. Today is about making it right, and I look forward to the full return of services at the emergency department on 18 April.

I would urge everybody to be supportive of this proposal. I know that it has been a difficult time for this community and for this hospital, and both the local members for Pumicestone and Glass House have made that very clear. Stephen Robertson, the Minister for Health, has responded, and so has the health department, as quickly as is humanly possible. We do want the doctors who have resigned to stay. We do want those who formerly worked there to consider coming back and being part of this Aspen arrangement. Of course it is their choice. We want them to. If they do not wish to, of course that is their choice. But I would hope that those who are genuinely interested in providing health services to the people of Caboolture will support what we have done. I know we have had a lot of politics about all of this, and that is fine. We needed to respond to those pressures, and we have. What we need now is to turn the page and move on. As everybody knows, the government has a health plan. Restoring accident and emergency services at Caboolture was part of that health plan. That is one of the reasons why I am appealing to both sides of politics today to give it a go. Do not go out to try to undermine it. Give it a go. Give it a go for the people of Caboolture. Give it a go for the people who need accident and emergency treatment. Give it a go for those people who want to be confident that their accident and emergency centre at Caboolture can look after their needs.

If they continue to go out and undermine the Caboolture Hospital, all they do is undermine the public's confidence in it. This arrangement is the best that we can provide bearing in mind that we have a doctor shortage. Everybody understands the doctor shortage. It is a doctor shortage that is national and indeed international. We cannot create doctors out of thin air. But what we can do is bend over backwards to provide this level of care and service to the people of Caboolture. So I make a direct appeal to all sides of politics to give this a fair go. It will not be easy. It is not the best option. We would have preferred different options, but it is the best option that we can come up with bearing in mind that there is a doctor shortage. That is why it is important that we give this as much support as we possibly can. The people of Caboolture deserve no less.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Action Plan

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.47 am): The national doctor shortage is placing extreme pressure on all states. As members would have seen, the AMA says that it has led to deaths in New South Wales emergency departments and the closure of theatre services at a local hospital and 14 maternity or obstetric services in Victoria since 2002. That is why we have come up with a plan. Our \$6.4 billion health action plan is helping to build the best public health system in Australia. I announced the health action plan in October last year as part of our mini-budget, which contained almost \$6.4 billion in extra funding for health in just over five years. No state or territory government in the history of Australia has made such a massive commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of its residents.

The health action plan is pumping this money directly into our health system to provide more doctors, and we are trying to recruit 300 of those over the next 18 months; more nurses, and we are trying to recruit 500 of those; and more allied health staff, and we are trying to recruit 400 of those. It will also cut waiting lists, maintain and improve our hospitals and buy new technology and equipment that will help save lives. Members will remember the health action plan. It includes money for cancer services, emergency departments, elective surgery, intensive care units, cardiac services, mental health services and of course money for workforce training. It also enabled us to fund an initial extra \$733 million for pay increases for doctors followed by another \$272 million over three years in increased pay and allowances to attract senior doctors to the system. The health action plan has also enabled us to offer the 22,000 nurses employed by Queensland Health a new enterprise agreement, which includes a 25 per cent pay rise worth almost \$1 billion. This offer is designed to ensure that our hardworking, highly skilled nurses and those employed by the Mater Public Hospital are justly rewarded and attract more nurses into the system.

The health action plan aims to recruit around 1,200 additional staff to the public health system during the next 18 months. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary dedication of Queensland Health's health workers. We have a plan and we are determined to deliver on that plan to improve health services. I seek leave to incorporate more details of the plan in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As I said the health action plan aims to recruit around 1,200 additional staff to the public health system during the next 18 months, including 300 doctors, 500 nurses and 400 allied health professionals, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists.

We also put in place a 10-point strategy to help deal with the pressure on our emergency departments which includes \$3 million to provide solutions to access block and a new interstate and international recruitment campaign.

We have also been successful in persuading the Council of Australian Governments to agree to extra doctor training places at universities.

And the council also agreed to establish a national accreditation scheme for overseas-trained doctors which will help us recruit more doctors and get them into the system quicker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Service Workforce

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.49 am): A new government report shows that the number of doctors working for Queensland Health soared in the two years to June 2005 by 602—from 3,117 to 3,720. That is a 19 per cent increase. That increase is more than four times the rate of the population increase.

I also want to table for the information of the House a document titled *Growth in the Queensland Public Service Workforce 2000-2005*. When members look at it they will see that that increase has occurred in the key service delivery areas. That is exactly what the community expects us to deliver. It covers workers in areas such as Education, Health, Police and other core services such as Child Safety, Communities, Disability Services and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

This is about building a workforce that delivers services. We are a growth state. We need to ensure that we have workers in the key areas. I seek leave to have the details of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

So much for the misleading, untruthful scaremongering of the Opposition when it comes to doctor numbers.

The number of nurses grew by 1,098 to 17,119 in the same period—up 7% which is also above the average population increase.

And the number of allied health workers increased by 601 to 8,299—up 8% to also outstrip the population increase.

All these figures are measured on what the public service calls full-time equivalents.

These figures also show the Coalition's threat to sack 2,000 health workers will cure nothing but would cripple the health system.

The ratio of staff either directly or indirectly engaged in the delivery of health services to staff in administrative roles remains at about 8 to 2.

The report says this is a conservative estimate since some of the managerial and clerical staff, such as hospital admission clerks, are essential to the delivery of health care services.

The catch in the Opposition's promise is that if administrators are sacked then, doctors, nurses and allied health workers would have to spend time on paperwork instead of looking after patients.

Staff essential to operating hospitals such as chemists, statisticians, actuaries, engineers and other professionals, operational staff such as cleaners, cooks, laundry workers and housekeepers, and tradespeople comprise 14% of the workforce.

Of the total growth in the Queensland public service between 2000 and 2005, 85%—14,547—was in education, health, police and other core services—child safety, communities, disability services and the Commission for Children and Young People and the Child Guardian.

The public service grew by a total of 8.5%—less than the Queensland population which grew by 9%.

Between 2000 and 2005 the number of teachers grew by 2,562.

In this same period, the number of police rose from 7,669 to 9,151—an increase of 19%.

The report—Growth in the Queensland Public Service Workforce 2000-2005—will be placed on the Government's website.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

James Cook University, Brisbane Campus

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.50 am): I will have the pleasure at midday today of officially opening the new James Cook University Brisbane campus. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This Campus has been created through a partnership between James Cook University and the Sarina Russo Group.

The first intake of 40 students will occur on March 27.

The foundation students will be studying Business and Information Technology courses—in the future, it's hoped to offer a Masters of International Hospitality and Tourism, and a Masters program in Tourism, Hospitality and Accounting.

Officials at the campus hope that, within 3 years, student numbers will have grown to over a thousand.

Last year, Queensland was host to more than 55,000 international students who came here to study from more than 100 countries.

International students generate more than \$920 million in export income for Queensland and create employment for 9,000 Queenslanders in the international education and training industry.

One of our key attractions for overseas students is our Smart State policies, which support knowledge, creativity and innovation.

James Cook University has been involved in numerous Smart State programs.

At the international BIO 2005 conference last year in Philadelphia, I announced \$5 million support from our Smart State Research Facilities Fund towards the new Tropical Science and Innovation precinct at JCU.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

North Bank

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.51 am): I advise the House that four substantial bidding organisations have expressed interest in developing stage 1 of the North Bank project in the Brisbane CBD. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The project promises to transform Brisbane's north bank into a vibrant people place on the riverfront.

Like South Bank, this project is intended to deliver a precinct which is attractive to Brisbane residents and visitors.

Expressions of Interest for the North Bank project have been received from Multiplex, Lend Lease Development, QM Properties, and the Property Solutions Group.

The Coordinator-General is now analysing the proposals and preparing a report on the Expressions of Interest so that we will be in a position to make an informed decision on the future of the project.

The purpose of this stage in the process was to establish a short list of proponents that could demonstrate their technical and financial capacity to successfully deliver the project.

Stage 1 of the North Bank project occupies the riverfront land between the Victoria Street Bridge and Alice Street.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Greats Awards

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.51 am): I advise the House that nominations open today for the 2006 Queensland Greats Awards. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

These prestigious awards recognise outstanding individuals whose lifetime achievements have played a significant role in the history and development of Queensland.

The awards are presented annually as part of Queensland Week Celebrations.

Last year's Greats were Dr Aila Keto AO, Bill Brown OAM, Terry Jackman AM, Dr Tony Gould AM and Rod Laver.

Five people will be added to the list of Queensland Greats this year.

All Queenslanders are encouraged to nominate Queenslanders they believe worthy of this distinguished honour.

Nominations close on April 6 and the Awards will be presented on May 30.

Further information on the nomination process is available at the Queensland Week website.

Mr Speaker, this is the sixth year that we have held these Awards and twenty-five Queensland luminaries are now recognised as Queensland greats including Ted Smout OAM, Dr Clem Jones AO, Wayne Bennett OAM, Professor Peter Doherty AC, and Professor Julie Campbell.

The awards honour individuals not for a single achievement of success but for a life's work and the contribution made to Queensland over many years.

I encourage everyone in communities throughout our State to have their say on which Queenslanders they believe worthy of joining our Queensland Greats in 2006.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Petie, Mr D; Queensland's 150-Year Celebrations

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.51 am): I am pleased to announce that Dawson Petie has been appointed Executive Chair of Queensland's 150-year celebrations. He will be responsible for overseeing the \$200 million program set up to build practical tributes to our state's 150th anniversary. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The anniversary year is 2009 and it will be a significant milestone for our great State.

To mark this historic occasion we have created a program to build new facilities such as gardens and tourist attractions in towns and shires throughout the State.

The projects will provide a boost to local economies and also provide permanent reminders of the 150th anniversary for residents and future generations to enjoy.

We are contributing \$100 million to this program and will be working with local councils asking them to match our contribution.

The money will be used to build wonderful new community facilities and infrastructure throughout the State.

The new Executive Chair will oversee the celebration planning and work closely with local councils to help implement the new program.

Dawson Petie has more than 30 years experience as a company director. Board positions held during this time include Queensland Investment Corporation, Queensland Rail and Sunsuper.

Mr Petie recently retired as General Manager Special Projects for the Queensland Investment Corporation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Economy

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.51 am): In the past week data has been released that further underscores the strength of the Queensland economy and why we are the engine room of Australia. I seek leave to incorporate the details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on national accounts show state final demand growth of 1.9% in Queensland compared to 1% in the rest of Australia during the December quarter.

Over the year we recorded an increase of 6.5% compared to 4.2% in the rest of Australia.

Business investment was the main driver of the increase in the December quarter rising 6.1% to be 17.4% higher over the year.

Machinery and equipment investment increased by 6% while non-dwelling construction increased by 6.3%.

Household consumption increased by 1% with a rise in most areas of consumer spending except motor vehicles and transport services.

Dwelling investment declined slightly for the first time in over a year dropping by 0.2%, however, looking ahead housing construction should be supported through strong population growth and a large volume of construction work yet to be completed.

In fact, despite building approvals moderating from the high levels of a few years ago, the total value of residential building work yet to be done has remained above \$3 billion since June quarter 2004.

In addition, the home renovation market continues to grow—rising by another 0.1% in the December quarter.

Mr Speaker, the latest retail trade data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is also very encouraging.

Trend retail turnover increased by 0.4% in January.

On the back of strong growth last year this has resulted in an annual increase in trend retail turnover of 6.8%.

This is the highest growth rate for any mainland state in Australia and well above the national growth rate of 3.9%.

Hospitality services and household goods made the strongest contributions to monthly growth consistent with strong growth in household incomes.

Over 2005 retail growth was underpinned by strong average weekly earnings as well as the highest annual trend employment growth since 1989.

Household wealth also benefited from higher house prices and a surging sharemarket.

Looking forward, continued strong labour force and wage conditions indicate a positive outlook for retail turnover in 2006.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Invest Queensland

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation) (9.51 am): On Sunday and again yesterday the Premier and I were involved in the launch of a major new interstate business attraction program for Queensland. Invest Queensland is a 12-month campaign for key investors from around the country and around the world. The key elements of the \$975,000 campaign include an advertising component that shows that if an industry is heading somewhere, it is heading to Queensland.

Invest Queensland includes television commercials, which members may have seen on the news last night, print and online advertising, in-flight videos, outdoor signage, airport signage and a card promoting Queensland that will be distributed in Melbourne during this month's Commonwealth Games.

Yesterday we also unveiled a newly painted Virgin Blue plane in the campaign style. This plane, called the *Miss Chief*, will have 4,000 stops in regional centres and cities throughout Australia in the next 12 months. As members know, Virgin Blue is a key part of our aviation strategy, as are the many other aviation firms that have set up operations in Queensland—firms such as Boeing.

Such a profile across so many locations across the nation means that this campaign and the Virgin Blue plane offer excellent value for money. The comprehensive program includes face-to-face business meetings such as the one that was held in Melbourne on Sunday where the Premier and I met with 35 key business and economic leaders. Among them were key players from BHP Billiton, Macquarie Bank and Tenix.

We also have a new range of marketing material which I will have tabled in the House this morning. Part of the program is a new web site—www.investqueensland.com.au. This is a critical tool in helping business find out more about investing in Queensland. It provides a single gateway to information about investment in our state.

The Invest Queensland team from my department has industries and firms that they will target and they are ready to hit the pavement to sell a great product. That includes a proactive program of trade missions and attendance at key national and international business events, including BIO2006 in Chicago. Associated with the program will be a range of initiatives such as visiting journalists programs.

In short, the comprehensive marketing strategy is to attract more investment to Queensland and simply to create more and more jobs. We have a great product. The global investment attraction market is intense and Queensland needs to keep up its strong performance to deliver services in a growing state such as ours.

With our 4.25 per cent growth and five per cent unemployment rate, we stand out from the crowd because our Smart State strategies are working. But we need to keep selling the differences. Our approach is aggressive and we make no apologies for our attitude.

The Invest Queensland program reinforces that we have a strong track record of partnering with business. The campaign shows that Queensland is different: we are hungry, we get things done, we are direct, unapologetic, innovative, sophisticated, resourceful and accessible. We are a state heading somewhere. We are creating jobs—as many in one year to fill the 40,000-seat Gabba facility, where we launched the Brisbane leg of the campaign yesterday. This program is about bringing investment to Queensland. That is simply about the most important job of government—to create jobs, jobs and jobs to underpin our prosperity.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health System

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.55 am): Despite the political nonsense from the doom and gloom merchants opposite, significant progress is being made to reform and improve Queensland's public health system. Queensland Health has already taken significant strides towards increasing its medical workforce, reforming its structure and culture, and providing new and improved hospital services for patients.

In terms of medical workforce, Queensland Health currently employs 4,742 doctors, compared with 4,552 in June 2005. We have recruited 87 extra doctors, nurses and allied health professionals from interstate and overseas since September and a further 211 are under consideration. Since January, the Medical Board has registered 109 new doctors from interstate and overseas to work in our public hospitals. We are delivering multibillion-dollar packages to provide better pay and conditions for our doctors, nurses, and other staff working at our public hospitals.

The government is opening additional hospital beds to ease the pressure on emergency departments and eliminate access block. We are rolling out \$6.4 billion in new money to cut waiting lists, to perform more operations, to maintain and improve hospital services and to buy new equipment that will help save lives.

We are already giving doctors a greater say in health decision making. We have created clinical CEO positions at major hospitals so that senior clinicians—not bureaucrats—manage and coordinate medical services. We have established clinical networks of doctors at our hospital emergency departments and we have a clinical advisory group of senior doctors and nurses advising government on reform and emergent clinical issues.

I am also pleased to report that the internal reorganisation of Queensland Health is finalised and the department is now operating under the new streamlined structure. One hundred and forty-nine of the 168 head office jobs have been abolished, as recommended by the Forster review, with a further 19 positions to be abolished early this year. As well, 1,150 head office staff are being transferred to local health districts to support doctors, medical recruitment and emergency departments. A new statewide health services plan and area health services plans are under development in consultation with clinical stakeholders.

We are also making solid progress in changing the culture of Queensland Health and making its performance more open and transparent. A new code of conduct is in place for all Queensland Health staff. We are investing \$3 million over two years to improve workplace culture and eliminate bullying through a new Workplace Culture and Leadership Centre.

A new Leadership Development Program starts in May for the top 300 senior staff of Queensland Health to develop and improve their management skills and help repair the department's damaged culture. A new independent Health Quality and Complaints Commission will be established by mid-2006 to service public and staff complaints. For the first time ever, Queensland Health's web site now contains comprehensive information about hospital activity, emergency department performance, elective surgery waiting times, medical staffing and patient safety and quality issues.

We acknowledge that there is still a long way to go to rebuild and improve the health system. We know we can do better—and we will do better. Labor is getting on with the job and we already have solid runs on the board. Contrast this to the doom and gloom merchants opposite who have nothing positive to say and no policies and no solutions. They will continue to whine and seek to sabotage the health system for whatever political mileage they can get out of it. But only the Beattie government has the commitment, policies and funding to deliver a better health system for all Queenslanders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electricity Infrastructure

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (9.59 am): The Queensland government is investing more than \$6 billion over the next five years in capital expenditure on its electricity distribution infrastructure. This investment will continue to improve the reliability and capability of the Queensland distribution network.

Every day over 7,000 Queenslanders work to maintain and expand our electrical supply system. Queensland government owned corporations are investing \$2.275 billion this financial year to further strengthen the state's power network. Energex and Ergon alone are each investing over \$2 million a day in developing what will become Australia's largest electrical network. That is twice as much as they spent on capital works two years ago.

The money is being invested in projects such as new or upgraded substations, feeders, transmission lines and general electricity supply improvements. In the six months from June to December 2005, the energy GOCs invested nearly \$1.2 billion in the state. CS Energy has invested

\$236.9 million; Stanwell, \$55 million; Tarong Energy, \$49.4 million; Powerlink Queensland, \$44.3 million; Energex, \$408.4 million; and Ergon Energy, \$303.4 million.

As at 31 December 2005, Powerlink completed two projects in its 2005-06 capital program: a \$17.9 million installation of voltage support equipment at the Woree substation to reinforce the network supplying the Cairns region and a \$13.25 million refurbishment of the Middle Ridge substation in Toowoomba.

Energex has completed many capital projects as at December 2005. These include establishing new substations at Varsity Lakes, Hope Island, Ipswich South, Tewantin, Sandgate, Cooroy, Arundel, Springfield, Boonah and Stradbroke Island; replacing or installing transformers, switchboards and capacitor banks to improve substation capacity in the CBD and at Archerfield, Imbil, Coomera, Toogoolawah, Upper Mount Gravatt, Tingalpa, Laidley, Stafford, Moggill, Runcorn, Helidon, Enoggera and Annerley; establishing new feeders at Alexandra Headlands, Broadbeach, Ashgrove, Cleveland, Archerfield, Wynnum and Coolumb; and establishing a natural gas supply to new development in Southport and the West End renewal project.

Capital projects by Ergon Energy have achieved 'practical completion' for the quarter ended December 2005. Those projects include works to provide supply to Rolleston coalmine project in the Gladstone area; \$7.39 million to establish a new 33-kilovolt line at Tennyson Street, Mackay; \$30.1 million to augment supply to Goondiwindi; \$8.24 million to rebuild the Dawson-Callide 66-kilovolt powerline in Banana shire; and \$4.43 million to rebuild the Carmilla 33-kilovolt powerline in Sarina shire. This infrastructure investment is part of our ongoing commitment to powering Queensland's residential and commercial future and to facing the challenges of a rapidly expanding economy.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Young Drivers

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.02 am): Too many young Queenslanders are being killed and injured on our roads—17- to 24-year-olds are one of Queensland's most at-risk groups on the road. During 2001 to 2005, 558 fatalities involving young driver crashes in Queensland comprised 35 per cent of our state road toll. In 2004, young people made up 13 per cent of all licence holders but 28 per cent of the road toll. During that time, 88 young people died on our roads. In November last year the Premier and I launched a young driver discussion paper called *Queensland youth—on the road and in control*. We have been holding forums all around the state—Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Caboolture, Brisbane and later this week Logan. I thank honourable members who have participated in these forums. I thank my parliamentary secretary, Lindy Nelson-Carr, for her role and I thank other stakeholders, including the police, RACQ and other experts, who have attended and participated.

The paper outlines 22 possible initiatives to reduce the high fatality rate of young drivers on Queensland roads. It focuses on prelearner, learner licence and provisional licence phases, and it presents a range of initiatives to improve the safety of young drivers aged between 17 to 24. Consultation ends this Friday, 10 March. It has been well received so far—20,000 hits on the web site, with more than 13,000 downloads of the discussion paper. We want people to have a say. Reports from each of the forums have been posted online so that people can see that their comments have been noted. On the Gold Coast, for instance, a key issue was the prelearner education packages. The group showed strong support for more information to help supervising drivers teach young drivers how to drive. In Cairns they had an extensive and constructive discussion about peer passenger restrictions. The group agreed the idea was well worth considering because of the reduced crash rate. However, the group noted that there could be issues with its application—for example, rural and regional Queensland, which I thought was quite important. In Mackay about 60 high school students turned up. The idea of 120 hours of supervised on-road driving experience was popular with the group.

The tragedy of young people being killed on our roads is the responsibility of all of us. Governments have a role to play but governments alone cannot make it work. Everybody needs to get involved and together we have to find workable solutions to reduce youth carnage on our roads. We are taking all of these suggestions on board. We will analyse the feedback and put a package of young driver safety initiatives to government for consideration midyear. Queensland has a proud record of addressing road trauma, with road tolls in recent years around half those of 30 years ago. But the 2005 toll was 329, an increase of 18 fatalities on the year before. That is not something to be proud of and it is far from acceptable.

We staged a successful Road Safety Summit at Parliament House last month that came up with new measures to reduce the road toll. The community feedback from the summit, along with responses to the discussion paper, will inform the direction that government takes to make Queensland's roads as safe as possible. If you have not had your say, do it before Friday. It would be far worse to stay silent and not have a say. The future of young drivers is in all of our hands. The web site is www.transport.qld.gov.au/youngdrivers or the toll free number is 1800681636.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Borallon Correctional Centre

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.06 am): This government is committed to fighting crime, particularly drug related crime. This includes a zero tolerance to drugs and contraband in our prisons—which was demonstrated in a blitz on visitors and prisoners in a targeted drugs operation last weekend at Borallon Correctional Centre, near Ipswich. Operation Echo Lock was coordinated by the Corrective Services Investigation Unit and was conducted with correctional staff at Borallon, together with staff from the Department of Corrective Services Intelligence Group, Dog Squad, and police officers from Ipswich Tactical Crime Squad, traffic branch, CIB and Karana Downs Police Station.

In the operation, all 235 adult visitors to Borallon were intercepted by police prior to entering the prison last weekend. Passive drug detection dogs were used to screen visitors on arrival in the jail's car park. About a dozen vehicles were also searched. In total, six visitors were arrested. One was arrested for possession of a dangerous drug, while two were arrested for possession of a dangerous drug and utensil. One was arrested for disqualified driving—having first been detected on Saturday, then detected by police again on Sunday when she returned to the jail for another visit. Another was arrested for driving unaccompanied on a learner's permit, and another was detected for outstanding matters. In addition, 22 traffic infringement notices were issued and 54 random breath tests performed. While these blitzes are part of our strategy to reduce drugs in prison, as members can see they are also highly effective in capturing other types of criminal offences.

Of course, the other part of Operation Echo Lock was the search inside the jail, in which a number of prohibited items, including drugs, were detected. Syringes, ink, two tablets that were possibly buprenorphine, an unknown white powder and a spoon with a powdery residue were found inside cells. All materials were seized, and police expect to interview about eight prisoners over the next few days, which may lead to charges being laid.

People might complain about the level of security for visitors, but our ongoing intelligence shows it is necessary, and there is good reason for prison visits to be monitored. We are serious about detecting contraband items and drugs as they enter prison, and we will continue to employ drug detection devices such as ion scanners and drug detection dogs to prevent drugs being smuggled in. We will continue this tough approach in our jails because it is working. The level of drug use in Queensland correctional facilities continues to fall. An initial survey in 1996-97 indicated an average drug use of 17.9 per cent of inmates. Since then, the state average has continued to drop, down to 4.6 per cent in 2003-04 and 5.1 per cent for the last financial year to April 2005.

As the introduction of drugs invariably involves visitors secreting dangerous drugs to pass to prisoners during contact visits, these targeted operations will continue to happen anywhere, anytime in Queensland jails.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Childhood Obesity

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts) (10.09 am): The level of obesity in Australian childhood is increasing at an alarming rate. It is an unfortunate fact that 25 per cent of Australian children are currently overweight or obese—and this is a big jump from five per cent in the 1960s. If we think the pressure on our health system is bad now, it will pale into insignificance compared with the effect on the health system arising from the chronic illness suffered by young people in the future if this continues.

As the Premier pointed out last week, unless we address this issue, the present generation of children is at risk of dying before their parents. Our government is stepping up to the challenge of making young Queenslanders healthier. Last Friday, as one of these steps I travelled to the Albany Creek State School, within my electorate, and launched two initiatives to promote healthy eating and physical activity in Queensland state schools. The first of these is the Smart Choices Tool Kit. This provides guidelines for our schools to help them implement our Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy, which will take effect from 1 January next year. From that time, it will be mandatory for state schools to supply and promote food and drinks that are low in saturated fat, sugar and calories, and to limit tuckshop items low in nutritional value. Many schools, such as Albany Creek State School, have already changed their menus and are offering healthy food choices to students with great success. I encourage other state schools to follow its lead. Do not wait until January next year. The original time line for the introduction of the Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy was 1 July this year. To allow schools more time to adjust to the new guidelines, we will now commence this new strategy formally in a mandatory sense from 1 January next year.

Last Friday, I also launched another healthy schools van. These vans are on the road visiting schools in Brisbane and Townsville to reinforce the message about physical activity and healthy food choices. They are staffed by a nutritionist and a teacher who will work with schools and parents to help them promote healthy eating and physical activity through local workshops and forums, and newsletters. The rate of childhood obesity in Australia is one of the highest amongst developed nations. I support the Premier's plan to hold a summit to find new solutions for tackling the problems of bad diet and insufficient exercise. Poor diet and obesity can affect students' academic performance, and children who make healthy choices now are more likely to carry healthier habits into adulthood. Initiatives such as our Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools will ensure that our students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles at an early age.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Emergency Services

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 am): The member for Chatsworth is at it again. After spreading misinformation in the media over the Christmas holidays about emergency services, he has repeated his efforts in his local newsletter. At least he is sure of getting a run in his local newsletter: he is the editor of his local newsletter. But, seriously, I was saddened to see that he was so far off the mark. He claimed that the fire service is not keeping up with the population growth and that we have had no new firefighters join the service. For starters, it is the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. At the very least he could get the title right when he is bashing our hardworking emergency service crews.

Our fire crews, along with the QAS, attend up to 10,000 accidents on Queensland roads, and the rescue part of their service is something they are very proud of and very good at—and firefighters get it right. I have had the pleasure to attend the firefighters graduation ceremony at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy at Whyte Island. A total of 37 new firies have graduated since I became the minister last July, and there are another 25 recruits training right now. The member for Chatsworth claimed that there were 1,962 firefighters in 1998 but in fact there were 2,051. He mislaid 89 firefighters. He claimed that there were 1,875 in 2004 when in fact there were 2,189.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth!

Mr PURCELL: I do not know where he is getting his figures from.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth!

Mr PURCELL: It is in relation to the administrative staff numbers that the member for Chatsworth really needs to dive for the calculator, or perhaps he should take his shoes and socks off so he can count past 10. He said that there were 287 administrative staff in the fire service in 1998. Again, this figure is not right. The annual report for 1997-98, when the coalition government was in power, showed that there were 297 support staff.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth, I warn you under standing order 253.

Mr PURCELL: It is unknown who was included in this figure because the breakdown of the staff was not shown. So what the member for Chatsworth has done is use very dodgy figures from the coalition government's rubbery figures in 1998. The member for Chatsworth claims that there were 934 admin staff in 2004. The annual report for 2004-05 clearly shows 620 support staff. Under the Beattie government, we are transparent in our figures. The 2004-05 total includes maintenance staff, communications staff, admin staff plus the corporate services allocation staff. Maybe if we do not repair our trucks, we do not do any maintenance on our buildings, we do not have any communications at all, we do not talk to one another, we do not recruit and train people and we do not pay our staff we would not need them, either.

The member for Chatsworth is trying to put our hardworking firefighters down. We all know that Queensland has a booming population, but the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service continues to meet its targets. Firies still attend 90 per cent of responses to structural fires within the urban levy boundary within 14 minutes, and this is a great effort. I would like to thank all the firies who turned up at Roma on the weekend to take part in the south-west regional firefighting championships. There were rural fire services and auxiliary fire services competing, and they had a great time while improving their skills at the same time. I would also like to thank the families of all our firies for the great support of their loved ones to enable them to train and compete over the weekend.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Foster and Kinship Care Week

Hon. MF REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.16 am): I want to bring to the attention of the House the important news that the key role which relative carers play in the child protection system will be formally acknowledged for the first time this year with the renaming of Foster Care Week. The word 'kinship' has been added to the name of the week to give special recognition to Queensland families who care for relative children who are the subject of child protection orders.

When Foster and Kinship Care Week begins this Sunday, 12 March, publicity will highlight the vital role that all foster and kinship carers have in strengthening the lives of children and young people who cannot live in certain homes because of abuse or neglect. The theme of the week this year—'Foster-carers make a difference'—is an excellent message because it is so true. The more carers we have, the more options we will have to place children with loving families that suit the individual needs of children and young people in care.

Foster and Kinship Care Week will be the vehicle that helps us build on our ongoing campaign to recruit an extra 500 foster-carers—a campaign that has already resulted in over a thousand expressions of interest from the Queensland public. We are confident that many of these inquiries will translate to hundreds of foster-carers in the months ahead as we work on the assessments and training.

I will have the privilege of launching the week in spectacular fashion this Thursday in the City Botanic Gardens, just across the road from Parliament House. Kites symbolising the role of foster-carers in freeing vulnerable children from abuse and neglect will be flown at no cost to the public purse by the Redcliffe Kite Club at a picnic for foster-carer families. Members are most welcome to join the festivities. Then next Monday I will have much pleasure in presenting Foster and Kinship Care Week awards at Customs House in Brisbane to some wonderful couples from throughout Queensland who have really opened their hearts and homes to vulnerable children and young people.

This year my Department of Child Safety provided organisations across the state with \$50,000 in funding to promote the role and contribution of foster-carers during Foster and Kinship Care Week. Activities range from barbecues and lawn bowls to movie matinees and bush dances in metropolitan, regional and rural communities. The week promises to be a great opportunity to highlight and promote the wonderful work of foster and kinship carers. On behalf of all members here today, I thank all carers for their tremendous efforts and I pledge my department's ongoing support.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Environmental Programs

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (10.18 am): Queenslanders right across the state are doing their bit to protect the environment. While thousands of people rolled up their sleeves and participated in Clean Up Australia Day in their communities on Sunday, other Queenslanders are protecting the significant environment right in their backyards. I am really pleased to announce that another 21 landholders have signed up to the Beattie government's Nature Refuge Program.

Their properties, from the Wet Tropics in far-north Queensland to Mount Tamborine in the south, cover 2,379 hectares and bring the total number of nature refuges in Queensland to 182, covering 412,700 hectares in total. This is fantastic. The Nature Refuge Program gives individual landowners the power to protect Queensland's incredible variety of plants and animals right in their own backyards.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Green Rewards Program has been extended to the end of the 2009-10 financial year. Since it started in October 2003, \$111,000 has been reimbursed to 19 eligible landholders covering 8,105 hectares of land.

I sincerely thank nature refuge landholders for their leadership and for their real contribution to a healthy environment. I encourage more landholders to consider making part or all of their property a nature refuge.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Boarding House Program

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.20 am): The recent property boom in Queensland and right across Australia has seen many low-income people squeezed out of the private housing market in recent years. Many of the traditional forms of affordable housing provided in the private sector, such as boarding houses and caravan parks, have been lost and replaced with new residential developments pitched at middle- to high-income earners.

This is a problem we have seen right down the coastline. The result has been a significant increase in single people needing housing assistance.

One of the initiatives of this government to meet this change in demand has been to move away from building detached housing and provide more units and boarding house style accommodation. As part of the record \$668 million allocation for housing in this year's state budget, \$40 million was allocated specifically to deliver the Boarding House Program. I am pleased to advise the House today that the department has been very active in expending this special allocation of funding by purchasing existing motels and boarding houses as well as land for future construction.

We have also commenced construction on a number of new projects including a \$4.9 million, 26-unit boarding house in Totness Street, Scarness, in the electorate of Hervey Bay. Preliminary construction work has also commenced on a \$4.9 million, 26-unit boarding house at 237 Government Road, Labrador, which is in the electorate of Southport.

Government members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take that interjection. I am also pleased to announce today that we are now under contract with a builder for the construction of a \$4.9 million, 24-unit boarding house at Glenlyon and William streets, Gladstone. As the member for Gladstone is aware, finding a suitable site for this boarding house has been a challenge. However, this site has the full support of the member for Gladstone, and I thank her for that. These are difficult things to do. Unfortunately, there is a lot of nimby when it comes to boarding houses. I do not know why that is so.

Construction is also due to commence on another complex in regional Queensland. I have just approved \$3.8 million to construct a 19-unit boarding house at Oak and Duke streets, Gympie, in the electorate of Gympie.

In the Burleigh electorate, the Department of Housing recently purchased a 21-bed motel in Burleigh Heads for just over \$2 million. I thank the honourable member for her very considerable support in that project. That was a very difficult project.

The department has also signed a contract for a 16-bed motel in Milton Street, Mackay, which should settle in the next couple of weeks. That site was shown to me by the member for Mackay, now the minister for primary industries, when I visited Mackay last time.

The Department of Housing has also purchased around 10 blocks of land, valued at more than \$10 million, across the state in places like Upper Mount Gravatt, Labrador, Maroochydore, Yeppoon, Maryborough and Toowoomba. It is expected that around 250 new units of accommodation will be constructed on these sites.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, despite the Howard government's refusal to face up to its responsibility when it comes to housing, we are looking at new ways to deliver housing outcomes for low-income Queenslanders. I thank every single member whose projects have been nominated today because they have really gone out on a limb to support them. That is not easy to do in our electorates against some of the people who do not want these projects there.

After eight years and several promises from successive shadow housing ministers, the opposition still has not come up with a housing policy. This is because the Liberals and the Nationals do not care about housing. The record of their federal colleagues in Canberra says it all. The last time those opposite had control of the Treasury purse strings, the Borbidge government was the only state government in the country to take its contribution for the Howard government's deficit reduction strategy straight out of housing instead of sharing it across agencies.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Multicultural Queensland

Hon. CP CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs) (10.24 am): March is a big month for multicultural Queensland. The Beattie government is investing more than \$70,000 this month in multicultural events and projects. The big day in the calendar is, of course, Harmony Day on 21 March, which coincides with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. All members will soon have their Harmony Day orange ribbon. I urge members to wear this ribbon on 21 March in a show of solidarity and support for multiculturalism. This year's theme is 'You + me = us'. The University of Southern Queensland is celebrating Harmony Day with the opening of their multicultural centre in Toowoomba on 22 March. I will be delighted to officiate at that opening. Elsewhere, we are funding Harmony Day activities at the Redcliffe Multicultural Festival on 19 March, where the member for Murrumba will represent the Beattie government. I thank him for that.

We have also funded the Gold Coast Multicultural Communities Council's Harmony Day family picnic on 19 March and Harmony Day celebrations on 21 March at Deception Bay State High School and Balaclava State School in Cairns, in the electorate of Cairns. On 19 March, the Beattie government

is funding Noe-Rooz celebrations for the Persian New Year at Robina on the Gold Coast. Also on 19 March, the Feast of St Joseph will be held at New Farm Park, hosted by the Casa Italia Community Centre.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr CUMMINS: I take the member's interjection and acknowledge his strong support for that group. I am delighted to report that the Beattie government has doubled our funding this year and is providing \$10,000 support for this outstanding cultural and religious celebration.

Then, on 25 March, the community of Caboolture will hold the 2006 Multicultural Festival with \$10,000 funding support, something the members for Pumicestone and Glass House will be very proud of achieving.

Finally, on 29 March, the government is supporting a symposium titled 'Ageing and Cultural Diversity in Queensland: working together to make a difference.' Hosted by the Australasian Centre on Ageing at the University of Queensland, this symposium will examine the ageing of Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and look at future service delivery issues for them as well as future research agendas.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Caboolture Hospital

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 am): Mr Speaker, at the outset I thank you, the Premier and others for their expressions of sympathy on the bereavement faced by my family last week.

This morning the Premier announced to the House the government's fix—short- or medium-term—for the Caboolture base hospital. Whilst the coalition would welcome any solution to give the people of Caboolture and that district the mantle of care that they deserve, and which the government is obliged to provide them, we do not necessarily believe that this is the best medium- to long-term solution.

The Premier indicated this morning his view that the problem at the Caboolture base hospital was a doctor shortage. The reality is that there is another problem, and that is the government was not able to keep—that is, retain—the doctors who worked at the Caboolture base hospital.

Let us not forget that over the last three years 2,462 doctors who were employed in the public hospital system in Queensland have left. They have gone elsewhere. That is equivalent to two-thirds of the entire medical workforce of Queensland Health. They were lost because this government does not have an appropriate retention plan for those doctors. We know the reason for that: the endemic problems of bullying, neglect, blame shifting, underresourcing and bureaucratisation that have caused those people to leave over the last two or three years, or even beyond, have not been addressed by this government.

I say today that this solution should only be viewed as a short-term solution. It was not a doctor shortage which caused this problem. Let us remember for one moment that there were enough doctors working in A&E. There were enough intensives there—

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: The time for statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Health System

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 am): My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he had secretly set himself was met with three cheers and wild acclamation. With Dr Patel being paid by his government to escape and being still overseas with no charges having been laid against him, I ask: does the minister not think that having Dr Patel face justice would have been a better benchmark for the Premier to have set in regard to fixing the Queensland health system and getting justice for Bundaberg patients?

Mr ROBERTSON: The issues surrounding the charging of Dr Patel are a matter for the minister for police and for the Attorney-General, not the Minister for Health. Last week the Premier said—and I just happened to be there—that in his view we had turned the corner. We never said that every last issue in Queensland Health had been fixed—not for one moment. In fact, the Premier made quite a deliberate statement in that regard. He did say that we had turned the corner.

I think that is quite appropriate when we reflect on my ministerial statement this morning which, if you like, was a bit of a report card on how we have been going with respect to the implementation of the reforms of Peter Forster and the recommendations coming out of the Bundaberg inquiry. Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition was not listening. I am more than happy to help the Leader of the Opposition go through those issues, one by one, in terms of the report card in the time that is available to me. I am more than happy to do that, reflecting of course on the continuing nonsense that he speaks about the number of doctors that have resigned from Queensland Health over the past couple of years and despite the fact that he knows that the principal reason for the numbers being that high is that every doctor who graduates actually goes through the Queensland health system before they join private practice, as the member for Moggill did, albeit not in Queensland. Every doctor who graduates goes through Queensland Health before they leave to join private practice and, of course, we retain some of those in the system. Despite the fact that just this morning I reported to the House that, as at February 2006, there were 4,742 doctors employed by Queensland Health compared with 4,552 in June 2005, an increase of 190 over that period of less than a year, the Leader of the Opposition continues with his nonsense.

Moving on from there, we have seen better hospital services and infrastructure: \$463 million for cancer services, \$280 million for emergency departments, \$259 million for elective surgery—and the funding goes on in terms of the \$6.4 billion that has been put on the table. As a result of that, we are opening more beds, employing more doctors, employing more nurses, employing more allied health professionals. Honourable members have only to look to the Queensland Health web site, because we now report on a regular basis just how we are travelling with those targets because we are more open. We are addressing those issues of not being as open and transparent as we should have been. That is on the table. We have the new health commission on its way with a new code of conduct. The reform agenda continues apace.

Health System

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is also to the Minister for Health. I again refer to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he had secretly set himself was met with three cheers and wild acclamation. I ask: with 36 of the 84 maternity wards in Queensland closed, does the minister not think that reopening the closed maternity wards would have been a better benchmark for the Premier to have set in regard to fixing the state's failing health system?

Mr ROBERTSON: There was one matter that was outstanding, if I recall correctly, when the Premier addressed the media. When he was asked about how we had turned the corner, there was one outstanding issue, and that has been answered here today: the reopening of the Caboolture emergency department. In terms of the four points that were made by the Premier, the one outstanding one that he acknowledged was the reopening of the Caboolture emergency department, and today's announcement brings that to a close.

The member talks about maternity services, and, yes, that is an absolute concern to me. That is why we worked flat out to reopen Emerald just on Monday—as the member for Gregory would no doubt celebrate—as a result of the recruitment of new doctors out in Emerald. These issues will continue to challenge us in terms of the national and international shortage of doctors. We are working flat out. That is our commitment to the people of Queensland, whether they live in Caboolture, Emerald, Cairns or down on the Gold Coast. We will not rest until we have sufficient doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to deliver the services that we want for the people of Queensland. It is not a question of money; we have \$6.4 billion of new investment in Queensland Health. We are dealing with a national and, indeed, international doctor shortage. There is no argument about that. The only person who tries to deny that is the member for Moggill. The AMA does not deny that.

Mr Mickel: John Howard doesn't.

Mr ROBERTSON: Every expert in the health field does not deny that. John Howard, as the Minister for Energy reminds me, does not deny that. The only person who does is the member for Moggill.

Let us stop this nonsense about what we are up against with respect to Queensland Health. The simple fact is that we are paying our doctors better than ever before. We are nationally and internationally competitive in terms of attracting doctors to our state. We are seeing it in places like Bundaberg, where new doctors are joining, and also in Maryborough and out at Emerald. We are seeing it in places like Caboolture with the new emergency department deal that was announced today. The Premier and I will not rest. In terms of what the Premier said last week, he has delivered.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Mansfield, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students from the Mater Dei primary school, Toowoomba in the electorate of Toowoomba North, which is represented in this parliament by Mr Kerry Shine.

Barton, Aunty D

Mr REEVES: Can the Premier inform the House about the government's response to the plight of Indigenous elder Aunty Delmae Barton, who was ignored by passers-by as she lay sick on a bus seat at the Griffith University bus stop last Thursday?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. When I read the report this morning I was really disappointed not just because a lady was allowed to lie unattended near a bus station for so long, but because it actually says something about our society. We have all got so busy in our lives that we have forgotten, to some extent, to care for those around us. This is really quite sad. It is an opportunity for us to say to the community: please, the whole thing about the human race is that we are a community; we support one another. We need to be caring for one another. If someone is lying on the road, we obviously need to give them help.

I have spoken to the minister for transport. Paul Lucas and I both share deep concern about what happened here to Aunty Delmae. The minister has asked for an urgent report. He will investigate what has happened here and we will release publicly what has happened.

It really does say something about us. I want to appeal to Queenslanders today: if there is someone lying on the side of the road, do the good samaritan thing. We should not leave them lying there. Australians are noted for their giving of a fair go, their commitment and their compassion. We should never lose it. Even in this crazy 21st century in which we live we should not lose the dignity, respect and support that goes with the traditional values we hold. I urge people to think about those traditional values. The minister and I will have a good look at what happened here and we will report back. I wonder how many motorists drove by and did not stop. I wonder how many people walked by and did not stop.

What basically happens from a government point of view is that we have joint arrangements with Griffith University security at the interchange. This is as we understand it because the details are a bit unclear. What the government will need to do—and the minister will do this—is look at the role of the bus safety officers who are state government people, interview drivers who would have been through there—obviously council drivers are involved—and examine security camera coverage to see whether it covered that area. As I understand, it did not happen at the busway itself but at an interchange next to it. We do not know whether there is footage.

One thing we are going to do is find out what happened. I just say to Aunty Delmae: I'm sorry this has happened to you. You are a very decent Queenslander. Many members would know her son, William Barton. He was on the front page of the telephone directory. He is an internationally recognised musician. He plays the didgeridoo. He has played with the Queensland Orchestra. I have heard him play. He had a scholarship with the London orchestra. In fact, his mum has sometimes sung with him. She has actually performed with him. She is a really lovely lady and she deserves to be treated better than this. I say to Queenslanders that we can do better than this.

Mr SPEAKER: There is only one thing the Premier missed out. Delmae and William are from Mount Isa.

Health System

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he had secretly set himself was met with three cheers and wild acclamation by caucus. Based on the minister's own figures, some 2,462 doctors have left the public health system in the last three years. Does the minister not think that retaining some of those 2,462 senior doctors would have been a much better benchmark for the Premier to set himself in terms of fixing the system?

Mr ROBERTSON: I can only repeat what I said in answer to the Leader of the Opposition and that is that Queensland Health is employing more doctors than ever before. In fact, over the last eight months we have seen the number of doctors employed by Queensland Health rise from 4,552 to 4,742—an increase of 190. That means 190 more doctors are employed by Queensland Health than ever before.

Let us contrast that to the record of the opposition when it was in power. Those opposite make a great story about their policy to sack 2,000 public servants from Queensland Health.

A government member: How many did they put on?

Mr ROBERTSON: What did we see at the end of the two years that they were in office, when they actually had a policy to sack 200 bureaucrats from Queensland Health? How many more bureaucrats were employed at the end of their reign compared with when they came in? Over 1,200 more bureaucrats were employed, when the policy was to reduce the number by 200.

Mr HORAN: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive because it is misleading. They were doctors, nurses and allied health—

Mr SPEAKER: Are you asking the minister to withdraw?

Mr HORAN: I ask him to withdraw. They were in mental health, BreastScreen, immunisation, pathology and surgery on time. I ask him to withdraw because it is misleading.

Mr ROBERTSON: That is exactly the point.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, are you prepared to withdraw?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am prepared to withdraw. That is exactly the point. The member has just hung the member for Moggill. Those opposite say that they want to sack 2,000 bureaucrats, yet they are the same bureaucrats that the member just mentioned—the bureaucrats who work in BreastScreen and in a range of other public health services. They are exactly the ones that those opposite are targeting at district level. Those opposite have been hung by their own policy. Well done, member for Toowoomba South.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South!

Mr ROBERTSON: He has effectively sunk the member for Moggill in terms of the policy to sack 2,000 bureaucrats.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South!

Mr ROBERTSON: The 2,000 bureaucrats that they are talking about are the very ones in BreastScreen—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South, I warn you under standing order 253.

Mr ROBERTSON:—and working in a whole range of areas of public health. The member for Toowoomba South has just embarrassed the member for Moggill. Their policy is now in absolute shreds.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Ipswich, I recognise in the public gallery Mr Bob Scott, a former member for Cook who continues to serve this state in many ways. Welcome to Parliament House, Bob.

Health System

Ms NOLAN: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the worldwide shortage of doctors which has led to major problems in every health system in Australia, a problem that was emphasised yesterday by studies in Perth and Canberra showing that overcrowded hospitals and emergency departments are unsafe. I ask the Premier: what is the state government doing to tackle the shortage?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for her question. The government has a plan—the health action plan. Every member of caucus, every member of the government and every member of the community in the long term will understand that this is the way forward. As I have indicated to caucus on many occasions—and I did last week when I was talking about the goals that I had set—those goals were set as part of this plan.

This five-year plan will deliver the best health system in Australia. We have a plan to go forward, and that is what will deliver the sort of health care that Queenslanders need. The member for Ipswich is right. That is why this plan provided for us recruiting an additional 300 doctors over the next 18 months and in the long term provides more money for health than Queensland has ever seen. Every one of the commitments that I said were my personal targets were part of this plan. The rest of the issues that the opposition has raised today are covered in that plan. Everyone in my caucus knows it.

Let us talk about where we are. I indicated to the House this morning that the Public Service Commissioner indicated when we were looking at increased numbers in the Public Service that they would be in service delivery areas. We have increased the number of doctors working in Queensland Health. Is it enough? No, it is not. Do members know why? It is because we have growth in Queensland. Our population has doubled since the late 1970s. That increase is nowhere near enough. That is why we are going to train more doctors. That is why we are pushing the Commonwealth to do that. That is why the health minister and I are working on recruiting doctors from interstate and overseas. There are not enough doctors. As reflected in the report that I tabled, that increase is not good enough. We need to do better and we will.

Let me talk about what our plan provides. The health action plan aims to recruit around 1,200 additional staff to the public health system during the next 18 months including 300 doctors, 500 nurses and 400 allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists.

I am happy to share this with those opposite. Caucus spent a lot of time yesterday talking about the plan as a follow-up to what I said last week. This plan is going to deliver to Queenslanders what they are entitled to in terms of health services. The initiative in Caboolture today is designed to restore services.

It is tough. I would have preferred not to have to arrange the agreement with Aspen, but the fact is that we do not have enough doctors. Even though we have increased the number in the public system, it is still not good enough. I want to make it clear: we will do everything we can to recruit more doctors across the system. On 8 February the health minister released a statement to the effect that 70 per cent of first- and second-year Queensland Health doctors have decided to continue to work in public hospitals. That is a good sign. That is part of the plan. Queenslanders will hear a lot more of the plan because it is in their interests.

Caboolture Hospital, Emergency Department

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. With reference to the announcement this morning that the government has admitted defeat and handed the Caboolture emergency department to a private provider on a 12-month contract, why is it that the minister was unable to retain or find doctors to keep Caboolture open yet a private sector provider is able to find the doctors?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am sure that very soon members will hear more about what we are planning to do with respect to the existing staff at the emergency department of Caboolture Hospital, particularly those senior doctors who have tendered their resignations and those whose resignations have taken effect and who have left Caboolture. I actually think it is appropriate that Aspen and Queensland Health actually do talk to those doctors about the future at Caboolture and see if we cannot offer arrangements that meet their particular needs. For example, I am aware that there have been quite extensive discussions with my director-general and the acting director of emergency at Caboolture, Dr Johnson, about his future. I am told that those discussions have been very positive.

I am a bit concerned that the member for Moggill would be so critical about the innovative arrangements that have been put in place at Caboolture. As I recall, he has been goading us to do whatever we can to restore services at Caboolture's emergency department. In fact, I recall on 16 January he put out a release that said that the Liberals and Nationals have a plan to fix the emergency department crisis. What does the plan provide for? It states—

Secondly, immediate action must be taken to reopen the emergency departments by employing where necessary emergency locums to plug the exodus of doctors ...

Mr Welford: Private contractors!

Mr ROBERTSON: Private contractors! Doctors from the private sector! Bring them in! That is what will fix Caboolture, according to the member for Moggill. But wait, it actually gets worse. But wait, there is more. It goes on to say—

This may be expensive but the loss of these vital services cannot be allowed to continue no matter the monetary cost.

So bring them in from the private sector and pay them more! That is what we did.

Health System

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: Before I ask my question of the Minister for Health, can I thank those members on this side of the House, especially Carolyn Male, the member for Glass House, who helped me during these last two difficult months.

Mr SPEAKER: We appreciate your thanks. Question please.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the wonderful announcement by the Premier this morning about the reopening of Caboolture Hospital's emergency department, and I ask: could today's agreement help change the minds of senior doctors who have recently resigned from Caboolture's emergency department?

Mr ROBERTSON: As I predicted, I thought we might hear a bit more about this issue. I thank the member for the question. The short answer is: I hope so. The reality is that Caboolture's emergency department has experienced an unusually high number of senior doctors tendering their resignations over a relatively short period of time. Obviously with the lack of senior doctors providing training and guidance it has been virtually impossible to attract our full establishment of nine registrars or principal house officers. However, today's agreement is a breakthrough. It is a circuit-breaker, if you like. I believe it presents those who have tendered their resignations, including the acting director of the emergency department, with an opportunity to consider their futures.

I believe Caboolture's limited hours of operation over the past six weeks have been one of a number of factors in their decision to resign, and that is why I am pleased that Aspen has sought to conduct discussions with those doctors. In fact, just this morning Aspen indicated to both the AMA president and me that re-engaging with the medical workforce at Caboolture's emergency department, including those who have resigned in the past and those whose resignations have not yet taken effect, is a priority. I have also asked the AMA and my department to continue their discussions with them in the hope that they may decide to stay on at Caboolture, where they will be more than welcome. They are all talented, experienced doctors who would be most welcome in a fully operational ED under Aspen and they would be paid by Aspen for the length of Aspen's contract and then transferred back to Queensland Health's payroll without any loss of entitlements.

If they do not want to stay at Caboolture, I would ask them to consider other emergency departments across south-east Queensland that currently have senior vacancies. For example, at Logan, Ipswich, QEII and Royal Brisbane hospitals there are vacancies for emergency medicine specialists carrying remuneration packages of up to \$295,000 per year, and that is a significant increase on the salaries that they were provided with only six months ago. These are all quite lucrative salaries obviously and exciting opportunities for these doctors in a renewed and rebuilt Queensland Health and a rebuilt and renewed and refreshed and re-energised Caboolture emergency department. I hope we can hold on to them. Aspen and Queensland Health understand the importance of retaining those doctors who have tendered their resignations at Caboolture and re-engaging with those who have already left. That is why we can offer these doctors a secure and exciting future where they will be valued and appropriately remunerated at Caboolture or any number of Queensland Health emergency departments throughout the state.

Nambour Hospital

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Prior to Christmas last year I met with the consultants employed by Queensland Health to investigate options for the future delivery of health services on the Sunshine Coast. At that meeting I made it clear that I believed the Nambour public hospital is strategically located to continue providing important health services for the future, and I ask: has the minister yet made a decision on what future health services are planned to be provided from the Nambour Hospital and, if not, when does he plan to make a decision?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. What we have been engaging in, as the member would be aware, over the last number of months is an extensive consultation process that has involved local members of parliament—irrespective of whether they are government members or opposition members or Independent members—to talk about how we arrange health services across that valuable part of south-east Queensland called the Sunshine Coast. The new hospital for the Sunshine Coast provides us with a wonderful opportunity to get it right for the future of one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. That is why we have committed ourselves to an exhaustive consultation process to come up with a package of services that should be offered at that new hospital but, importantly, how those services integrate with existing infrastructure such as the Nambour Hospital. There is a long-term future for the Nambour Hospital, but it will be in the context of providing services overall for the Sunshine Coast—meeting the needs of that growing population, and a particularly ageing population I might add.

We have committed ourselves to a major community health centre on the Sunshine Coast as well as that new hospital for the Sunshine Coast. What that means is that we have an opportunity to rearrange services in a way that meets the needs of that community, and that is what we are working on currently. But our commitment is firm, and it is outlined in the infrastructure plan for south-east Queensland that we will provide a major new hospital for the Sunshine Coast. But it will not come at the expense of the Nambour Hospital. I understand the importance of the location of that hospital and the size of the community that it currently services. There may be some changes. I do not know, but they will not be politically driven, member for Nicklin; they will be driven by the needs of the community.

We are focused on ensuring patient-first outcomes and also planning that engages with clinicians—whether they be doctors, nurses or allied health professionals—because they are the ones who will determine how we provide health services across the Sunshine Coast, and that is why we are so committed to this consultation process that is not limited by political boundaries. But I do hope that the members opposite—I do not have to say this to you, member for Nicklin—will continue to engage positively with Queensland Health in how we plan for those services into the future. I thank everyone for their cooperation to date. Long may it continue.

Aurukun Bauxite Project

Ms JARRATT: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation. The recent good news that the Aluminium Corporation of China, otherwise known as Chalco, has been selected as the preferred provisional bidder for the Aurukun bauxite resource on western Cape York has been greeted positively by most commentators. Is the minister aware of any critics?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and for her very keen interest in this project. There was great news last week that Chalco plans a \$3 billion bauxite mine and alumina refinery, that it is currently looking for locations for that refinery and that Townsville, Bowen and Gladstone are all in the bid. I understand there have been some 60 articles published internationally about this process in the last week and they have been overwhelmingly positive. But nobody here will be surprised to know that there have in fact been some critics. And who is among them? The Queensland National Party! I remember the days when it stood for development in this state. But on 4QR last week the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Callide, said—

I think the whole process has been set up to ensure that the Chinese contingent was the eventual proponent. And I think that's evidenced by the number of other noteworthy aluminium companies that pulled out of the tender process.

I cannot believe that someone in a position such as the member for Callide would make such irresponsible, unsubstantiated, wild and dangerous claims. What is wrong with these claims? Let us go through them.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: There may be some members of this parliament who are not quite interested in this development but I certainly am and I want to hear what the Deputy Premier has to tell this parliament.

Ms BLIGH: Firstly, this is an outrageous and unsubstantiated slur on the process that was put in place for this selection. This process has been subject to the most strict probity arrangements, as members would expect. There is no evidence—none whatsoever—of the claims of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. They are wild and dangerous claims. Why are they dangerous? Because they have a very damaging effect on the international—

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Chatsworth, you have been warned once. This is now a final warning.

Ms BLIGH: They have a very dangerous effect on our international reputation. Secondly, they are a slur on the businesses that ultimately withdrew their original bids. They have implied that companies such as BHP Billiton, Alcan, Comalco and Alcoa are somehow part of some dodgy, sneaky, corrupt arrangement.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms BLIGH: That is exactly what the member said. But worst of all, it is an outrageous slur on Chalco and an outrageous slur on the government of China. Chalco is 70 per cent owned by the government of China. The clear implication is that Chalco needed some kind of help to get through the process—that it could not do it on its own merits. That is the view of the Queensland National Party.

I note the comments from the federal member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly—and I do not know of a better example of serial stupidity. Last week she claimed some credit for this project. She would be better off criticising the member for Callide. Every day in this House the member for Callide offends 60 people. This time he has offended 1.2 billion people.

Public Hospital Beds

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer again to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he secretly set himself to fix the Queensland health system was met with three cheers and wild acclamation. That sounds like a real backslapping party! The number of hospital beds available to Queenslanders has been drastically cut during the term of the Beattie government. I refer the minister to an article that appeared in Saturday's *Courier-Mail* that shows the Premier's grinning face next to some figures provided by Queensland Health which indicate that the number of hospital beds fell by 811 when the Beattie Labor government came to power, which is a loss of 811 hospital beds—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, could you come to the question, please.

Mr SEENEY: Does the minister not think that returning the number of hospital beds in Queensland to at least the level that existed when the Beattie government came to power would be a more appropriate measure of whether the Beattie government has fixed the Queensland health system?

Mr ROBERTSON: We are actually committed to opening more beds. Had the member been listening, he would know what our plan is. Our plan is to open new beds. We have announced over 60 beds—

Mr Copeland: Sixty beds! Wow!

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Cunningham, I warn you under 253.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, you have asked the question; allow the minister to answer it.

Mr ROBERTSON: We have announced over 60 beds to be opened immediately with an additional 107 to be opened by the middle of next year. I hear some muttering from members across the chamber. Frankly, we can open more beds when we get more staff. That is what determines the number of beds that can be opened. So when we get more doctors, more nurses and more allied health professionals, we will then determine how we are able to increase the number of beds.

I remind the member for Callide, because I know he was not in this place at the time, that the strategy to reduce bed numbers was announced by the member for Toowoomba South when he was minister for health. If we look at the figures—

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I will table this so the minister can see that the number of beds actually rose between 1996 and 1998—

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order,

Mr SEENEY: I table it for the minister's information.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, I told you there is no point of order.

Mr ROBERTSON: I do not know where the member is getting his figures from, because during 1995-96 the total number of beds in Queensland was 10,164. During the next year—1996-97—that number decreased to 9,970. The opposition cut the number of beds immediately it came to office.

Of course, the other telling statistic is the number of patients we are seeing. In fact, it is probably a much more accurate representation. I say that because that was the justification by the member for Toowoomba South when he was minister. He said—and had the member for Callide been listening he would know that I referred to this during the last sitting week—that the number of operations is actually more relevant in terms of hospital performance than the number of beds. So if we look at the number of patient admissions between 1994-95 and 2004-05, we see that it increased from 6.147 million to 8.758 million. That is the measure of performance in terms of the number of patients going through our hospitals. Members should not believe me; they should believe the member for Toowoomba South.

Caboolture Hospital Emergency Department

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can he detail the level of support for the reopening of the Caboolture Hospital emergency department?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that, like the Minister for Health and I, she will be pleased we are moving to open that hospital's accident and emergency department. Only one group of people is opposed to the opening of the accident and emergency facility at Caboolture Hospital, and that is the Liberal Party and the National Party.

This morning I appealed for some bipartisan support for the people of Caboolture. The members opposite want the people of Caboolture to suffer pain so that they can have some political gain. That is absolutely disgraceful. Sometimes people's best interests—that is, patients getting access to medical care—is more important than politics. I say to those opposite: think about the people of Caboolture. Stop trying to white-ant every proposal we put forward.

As the health minister, Stephen Robertson, indicated, the member for Moggill was out there talking about getting emergency locums. Where do they come from? From the private sector. That is exactly what we have done. We had the Leader of the Opposition talk about bringing in the army. We came up with a solution that would give accident and emergency care to the people of Caboolture and within 30 seconds of that being done we had the Liberal Party and the National Party trying to destroy it.

We are trying to encourage the doctors to be part of this solution and the members opposite know that that is a sensitive issue. We are confident that it can be done, but we do not know for sure. What we do know is that we have a plan that gives the people of Caboolture an opportunity. Who is trying to wreck our health plan? The National Party and the Liberal Party. I say to Queenslanders: do not accept for one minute that the members of the Liberal Party and the National Party are serious about health; they are interested only in seeing pain for Queenslanders for their personal gain. So let us not have any more nonsense about it.

This morning the health minister and I met with the AMA—and the health minister met with the AMA for a lot longer than I did—to brief them and to try and make sure that health people were on side. We are doing everything we can to get this plan to work. I urge the Liberal Party and the National Party to rethink their position.

One of the things that the *Courier-Mail* did not refer to—and I urge it to do this—is what happened to bed numbers under the National Party and the Liberal Party. In 1995-96 when the coalition was in office there were 10,164 beds. In 1996-97, there were 9,970 beds. So bed numbers went down. The government that approved the bed numbers at the Royal Brisbane and the Princess Alexandra Hospital—all the major hospitals—was the National Party and the Liberal Party government. So let us not have any more nonsense; let us have some truth. I urge everybody to get on side with our plan as it gives the people of Caboolture an opportunity.

Elective Surgery Waiting Times

Mr COPELAND: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he secretly set himself was met with 'three cheers and wild acclamation' by caucus. With 35,398 Queenslanders on the waiting list for elective surgery, of whom 9,585 have been waiting longer than the recommended time, does the minister not think that providing elective surgery within the approved waiting time would have been a far better benchmark for the Premier to have set himself for fixing the health system?

Mr ROBERTSON: One thing about elective surgery waiting times, as challenging as they are, is that they are not as bad as they were under the government of the members opposite. When we go back and look at its performance in terms of the elective surgery waiting list, we see that it was

absolutely disgraceful. Despite that—and I have said this on a couple of occasions—I find the elective surgery waiting list figure unacceptable. But, until we can attract more doctors, more nurses and more allied health professionals, they are going to remain challenging. That is why we are getting on with the job through our \$6.4 billion action plan. We have set ourselves specific targets in relation to attracting new doctors, new nurses and new allied health professionals.

On the Queensland Health web site people will see the publicly available targets that were recommended to us by Peter Forster in the independent review of Queensland's health system. The targets that he set were that by the end of this financial year we should have employed 300 more doctors, 500 more nurses and 400 more allied health professionals. So how are we tracking? In relation to the target of employing 300 more doctors, we have 190 new doctors—so we are 63 per cent on our way to achieving that target. In relation to the target of employing 400 more allied health professionals, we have 298 more allied health professionals so far this financial year—so we are 75 per cent on our way to achieving that target. In relation to the target of employing 500 more nurses, how many new nurses have we attracted to Queensland Health since the beginning of this financial year? A total of 811. We are above target by 162 per cent. That demonstrates our commitment to rebuilding our workforce. Once the workforce is rebuilt, the number of beds open can be increased. Once the workforce is rebuilt, the number of operations that are performed can be increased. Those figures are proof positive of how committed we are to achieving those targets in our \$6.4 billion health action plan. We are delivering and we will continue to deliver. As I said, I find those elective surgery waiting lists unacceptable, but this is proof positive of our commitment to addressing those issues and address them we will.

Telstra

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I refer the minister to his statement in the House last September when he warned the Queensland Nationals and Liberals what could happen to services in the bush if Telstra were sold. I ask the minister to update the House on the latest developments in this ongoing saga.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank a bloke who stands up for the bush, a real battler from the bush himself, the member for Fitzroy who, like me, opposed the sale of Telstra, as did this side of parliament. The reality is that Senator Joyce has now become 'Backstabbing Barnaby'. He has backstabbed the bush. With 5,000 public telephones about to go out the window, what is his response? 'Let's get a private member's bill into parliament to undo what we did in the past.' Have you ever heard such a joke in your life? But it is not as big a joke as the lack of policy on the other side of the House. There is absolutely no policy coming from that section over there. I remember the member for Callide standing up and saying, 'Thank God for Barnaby Joyce.' I am sure that everyone in those places where the public telephones are going to be taken away will remember them on election day.

I want to congratulate the opposition. They are the only species known to mankind that can survive in a vacuum. The reality is that there is no policy coming from over there. They live in a policy vacuum. They have no idea. They have no health plan, as we heard this morning. They want to criticise us. They are the only group in Queensland that does not want to see the emergency department at Caboolture Hospital reopened, which is yet again an indication that they are residing in a vacuum. They are also the only group of people that I have spoken to anywhere in Australia that believes we do not have a doctor shortage. In the vacuum in which they exist, they are the only ones who believe that there is not a doctor shortage in Australia.

They are the only opposition that I can ever recall, in the history of this parliament, that would wilfully go out and knock an enterprise with the Chinese. What opposition in its right mind would be out there wilfully trying to undermine a \$3 billion project coming to our door?

Ms Bligh: And offending the Chinese government.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. As the Treasurer said this morning, we are used to the bubble boy over there from Callide—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister.

Mr SCHWARTEN:—the member for Callide offending everybody in this chamber and everybody else who goes near him. But this time he has taken it to a higher plane by offending 1.2 billion Chinese. I am sure that John Howard will not agree with that and he will be quick to distance himself from it.

Mr Malone: Congratulations.

Mr SCHWARTEN: If I were the member for Mirani, I would be a bit dirty on Mr Caltabiano mowing my grass and talking about my portfolio area. You live in a vacuum. I notice that you, too—

Mrs Stuckey: What about Ken Slessor?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Currumbin, how about you?

Mr SCHWARTEN: They again make history in that they are the only ones who can make noise in a vacuum.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Maryborough, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students of year 11 legal studies at Park Ridge State High School in the electorate of Logan, which is represented in this House by Mr John Mickel.

Maryborough Hospital

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. In the Queensland Health publication *Health Matters*, the Director-General, Uschi Schreiber, refers to the fact that there would be a one-off \$40 million spent immediately on purchasing and maintaining hospital equipment in areas of urgent need. Will the minister demonstrate his commitment to our hospital by using a fraction of those funds to purchase a CT scanner, as this will further underpin the viability of our A&E and restore some community confidence?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am advised that a business case for the provision of a CT unit at Maryborough was prepared and considered in late 2004. It was found at that time that it would not be viable to purchase a CT unit for Maryborough Hospital. The business case showed that the Fraser Coast community has already had access to three CT machines, with a public unit situated at Hervey Bay Hospital and private units available at both Hervey Bay and Maryborough.

One may ask why a CT scanner has been funded for Hervey Bay and not for Maryborough. The existing CT unit at Hervey Bay Hospital was originally scheduled for replacement in 2006-07. However, that had to be brought forward as the unit would not meet current industry standards and required replacement prior to the end of 2005. It has been replaced in the 2005-06 financial year through the Health Technology Equipment Replacement Program, and funding for this replacement unit was provided in the budget that was recently announced, which the member referred to.

I think we can demonstrate our commitment to Maryborough because, whilst Maryborough may not have picked up a CT scanner in the recent round of equipment upgrades, it did pick up a significant commitment for accommodation for health staff in Maryborough. Approval has been granted for the purchase of five houses for accommodation for clinical staff at Maryborough. That is all about showing our commitment to attract staff to places like Maryborough, where we have been under some stress, as the member knows. The purchase of accommodation that can be provided to both doctors and nurses, if need be, is an important component on top of the significant pay increases that we have given our public sector doctors, particularly with enhanced arrangements in localities such as Maryborough. I think that sends a very positive signal to the people of Maryborough that we are serious about trying to attract new staff to fill those vacancies that are challenging us so much, particularly in relation to the emergency department there.

As the honourable member knows, both the Premier and I travelled to Maryborough following the Bundaberg community cabinet. It was very useful to talk with some of the staff there about their aspirations for Maryborough Hospital, and it was an opportunity for us to reassure them that there was not an agenda being pursued to use the doctor shortages to close the Maryborough emergency department. It has to be acknowledged that, with the national doctor shortages that we face, it is tough. But I am confident that with positive initiatives such as accommodation—five new houses in Maryborough—we will get there.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Thuringowa, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students of Moreton Downs State School in the electorate of Murrumba, which is represented in this parliament by the Hon. Dean Wells.

Dairy Farmers Stadium

Mr WALLACE: My question without notice is directed to the minister for employment, industrial relations and sport. The coming National Rugby League season is looking like another great one for the North Queensland Cowboys, who will beat the Broncos this Sunday. Can the minister share with us the good news he personally announced last Friday at Dairy Farmers Stadium in Thuringowa?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question. Of course, Dairy Farmers Stadium is in the electorate of the member for Thuringowa. He is a great supporter of the North Queensland Cowboys, as is the member for Mundingburra and the Minister for Child Safety. I certainly have great news for league fans in Townsville and north Queensland. On Friday I was able to tell everybody about the extensions to Dairy Farmers Stadium that will provide even more seats than we originally thought and originally planned for. In addition to the 4,000 new seats in the eastern grandstand that will be ready for the first home game on Saturday week—and I had a good look at those seats; they were just about ready last Friday morning when I was there—we will be putting in a further 1,300 seats in the northern and southern stands, and they will be finished by either late May or early June. So we will be able to pack even more North Queensland Cowboys' fans into Dairy Farmers Stadium. It will take the capacity to more than 26,000, which is great for a regional stadium.

Already the Cowboys draw the second biggest National Rugby League crowds behind the Broncos, so Queensland's two teams absolutely lead the way in Rugby League. There is little doubt that every seat will be eagerly snapped up by Queensland Cowboys' supporters. It was last October when the government announced extension plans for Dairy Farmers Stadium, providing these 4,000 new seats. However, when the detailed plans were done, it was learnt that it was possible to add an additional 1,300 seats. So the 4,000 seats will be in the eastern grandstand on Saturday week when the Cowboys play their first home game against the Sea Eagles at home. I am confident that they will go very well against the Sea Eagles.

All up, this is an investment of \$7.4 million by the government through the Major Sports Facilities Authority. Last Friday I was also able to announce other ground improvements including better lighting in public areas involving relocating two of the lighting towers. This work has provided a terrific boost to the region's building and construction industry, creating 90 jobs during the construction phase, and in every case it was local suppliers and services that we used. Extensions were designed by the local office of consultants PDT Architects. The managing contractor is Townsville based builder TCS (Queensland) Pty Ltd.

While it looks like being a great year for the North Queensland Cowboys, I think it will also be a great year for our other Queensland team, the Broncos. The first game will be played this Sunday at Suncorp Stadium, and what a cracker of a game that is going to be between the Brisbane Broncos and the North Queensland Cowboys. I should point out that we have a third team coming online next year—the Gold Coast Titans—and I am sure that it will also follow. But this year and this question is all about the North Queensland Cowboys—

Time expired.

Queensland Health, Emergency Departments

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the announcement by the member for Rockhampton last Thursday that the Premier's decision to stay on because he had met some of the targets he had secretly set himself was met by three cheers and wild acclamation.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Transport!

Ms Nolan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have said this on a number of occasions. I demand that when ministers are answering questions they are allowed to do so in silence. I also demand the same when members are asking ministers questions. Please have some respect.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With patients daily being unable to be treated at accident and emergency departments because of access block, does the minister not think that providing timely treatment at accident and emergency departments would have been a better benchmark for the Premier to have set himself in regard to fixing the health system?

Mr ROBERTSON: In terms of the report card that I provided to the House this morning, had the member for Burnett been listening—and there must be an audio problem on the other side of the House—he would have been aware that one of the issues we ticked off was the immediate opening of new beds in hospitals throughout Queensland to address access block. From listening to doctors throughout Queensland, as we do, we know that one of the major issues in treating more patients through our emergency departments is this issue of access block. That is why we announced the immediate opening of over 60 beds throughout Queensland's major hospitals, with another 170 to be opened by the middle of next year, targeted specifically at the issue of access block—to allow more patients to go through our emergency departments in a more timely way.

The reason we have done that is that more so than ever before we are engaging with our clinical workforce. In fact, today as we speak emergency department directors throughout the state are meeting with senior Queensland Health staff as one of their regular meetings through the ED task force. That is all about finding very practical solutions, driven by clinicians, to the increasing pressures on our emergency departments.

One of the things that we have done as part of our \$6.4 billion health action plan is commit ourselves to listening more to our doctors, nurses and allied health professionals than ever before. That is what leads us to make announcements such as we did only a fortnight ago about the number of new beds that we can immediately open to address access block in our emergency departments.

But the news gets a lot better. One of the things that continually frustrates me is how the member for Burnett continually talks down the local hospital in Bundaberg—a hospital that has done it tough over the last 12 months but a hospital that is well on its way to recovery. At the end of January 2006, total medical staff at Bundaberg had increased. There have been 20 doctors recruited to Bundaberg who are expected to arrive over the next three months—20 new doctors for Bundaberg, filling vacancies to

restore services at one of the most valuable hospitals in the state. Many specialists have been recruited and have commenced duty. They include a director of obstetrics and gynaecology, a director of emergency medicine, a director of surgery and a psychologist. I am also pleased to say that the following specialists will be commencing duty within the next two to three months: a director of psychiatry, two additional general services, one orthopaedic surgeon and two additional—

Time expired.

Road Infrastructure, Sunshine Coast

Mr HAYWARD: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. There are numerous aspects that go into keeping our roads safe for drivers. Can the minister inform the House of measures to improve safety on Sunshine Coast roads?

Mr LUCAS: I note in passing that the Premier has called a by-election for Gaven. In about 33 days they will have a new member. Under the Borbidge government the people of my electorate had to wait 127 days before we had a by-election, and yet the Leader of the Opposition had the cheek today to urge the Premier to be prompt, which of course is what he did.

I thank the honourable member for his question. He is vitally interested in roads in his area, as are our Sunshine Coast members as well. I am pleased to say that yesterday work began on a million-dollar safety upgrade to replace and install guardrails on 34 roads in the Sunshine Coast and surrounding areas. These guardrails meet higher safety standards than the existing ones and will provide better protection for motorists. Some \$998,000 will be spent replacing guardrails at 34 different locations on 13 state controlled roads.

Following the Road Safety Summit, the state government announced that it would extend the current \$12 million Safer Roads Sooner program for a further three years for vegetation clearing and the introduction of rest stops and crash barriers at a further cost of \$20 million as well as the other matters the program deals with.

I want to say this about vegetation: often we have difficulties when we want to take out trees on roads and on road reserves. People like the beauty of natural vegetation, and it is always a difficult balance to strike, but trees close to the road can be very hazardous if people run off the road and hit them. That is why guardrails are important, particularly in the many mountainous areas of the Sunshine Coast.

As well as those programs, we will replace 1,000 kilometres of road with audible lines every year for the next three years at a cost of about \$8 million. That is the state controlled network. I have indicated that I will write to the federal minister asking that he match the money on the National Highway network—the Bruce Highway and the like—to make sure that that is also taken on board.

The guardrail work was already programmed before those road safety announcements, but this money for guardrails is on top of that announcement. It is another example of our commitment to improving road safety. This work is happening on roads right across the area, not just one or two roads. Roads that are receiving guardrail upgrades are the Palmwoods-Mooloolah Road, Yandina North Connection Road, Yandina South Connection Road, Gympie Connection Road, Yandina-Bli Bli Road, D'Aguilar Highway—Caboolture to Kilcoy, D'Aguilar Highway—Kilcoy to Yarraman, Gympie-Woolooga Road, Yandina-Coolum Road, Cooroy Connection Road, Maroochydore-Noosa Road, Sunshine Motorway—Mooloolaba to Peregian, and the Burpengary-Caboolture Road.

Work is expected to finish in late May to early June. This is the first in an ongoing program to improve guardrails on the Sunshine Coast. This government is committed to improving road safety through big and small programs as well. \$1 million may not seem like a lot, but it can make a major difference to how safe people are on our roads.

We make no apology for spending more per capita than any other state on our road network, and we do so by a country mile. Indeed, in the *Courier-Mail's* road report, which was commissioned a few years ago and very helpfully made available, it noted that the government spent 2½ times per capita what Victoria does, and of course it is much greater than that now.

Mr SPEAKER: The time for question time has expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Caboolture Hospital

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): Earlier we heard the Premier again distort the position of the Queensland coalition regarding the closure of the A&E at Caboolture base hospital. It was, in fact, the Queensland coalition that did much over the Christmas break to expose the problems at Caboolture base hospital. At that time the local Labor members of parliament were virtually silent on this. They were trotting out the false assurances of this government that, in fact, there was no problem whatsoever.

The coalition will support any reasonable moves from this government to put in place a program to provide the people of Caboolture with the mantle of coverage that they deserve. As I understand it, this hospital in actual fact looks after more than 100,000 people in that particular region and deals with their emergency needs.

There was no excuse whatsoever for the closure of that emergency department. The real issue is—and it is something this government has not been able to answer: why is a private provider such as Aspen able to attract doctors to meet a need within the public system when the government is unable to attract those doctors? That is the question. The answer is very simple: it is because the specialist staff—the trained staff—do not want to work for this Labor government. That is why, in actual fact, those people left the employ of Queensland Health over the last couple of months. It was not a doctor shortage that caused the problem in the first place. The problem was caused because those people who had an interest in specialised care and in accident and emergency care in our public hospitals left the public system. These were not interns, although the health minister seeks to create that impression. They were not registrars. We are talking about the loss of very senior people with experience in accident and emergency. That is what we are talking about. That is what this government has not been able to address. This government has deliberately distorted and stepped away from the issue in recent times. It completely confuses this whole issue.

Some of the doctors who have left Queensland Health have been our interns who, once they have their experience or training, step out of the system and go elsewhere to other or better jobs interstate or within the private system. It does not excuse the fact that a large number of second-year interns are actually resigning and moving out of the system. I think, on the government's own figures, some 50 per cent are moving out of the system. However, by and large, that is not why the accident and emergency department at Caboolture Hospital has closed. It is because our senior doctors are leaving the system. Just as our VMOs have been resigning in recent times, our staff specialists and generalists have been going out of the system.

The government can try all it wants to address the situation with glossy brochures. It does not make up for the fact that the failure to attract and retain doctors in the public hospital system is what makes the very big difference.

Some 2,462 doctors have walked out of the public system in Queensland over the past three years. That is an enormous proportion of the overall number of staff medical officers within Queensland Health. That is at least half, if not more, when the number of visiting medical officers is taken out. Members should look at the cost of the solution that the government says is in the best interests of the people of Caboolture. It is going to cost twice as much as it would have cost to retain those people as paid medical officers within the Queensland health system. Is that common sense? It is not common sense. It is a short-term solution for the people of Caboolture, but it is not a long-term solution. Can members imagine the cost if the government was forced to pay twice as much to deliver basic medical care for Queenslanders beyond Caboolture—in Maryborough, Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba or wherever? The state would not be able to afford it.

This government is in a very fortunate position at the moment. Due to the economic good times and the confidence of the community at large, it is absolutely rolling in money. However, this solution would not be available to this government if the times were not as good economically. Imagine if the government had to find this money in those bad times! It has been able to buy itself out of a health crisis and it has been able to buy itself out of a child safety crisis in Queensland—or at least it has tried to buy its way out of them. That is not a long-term solution. The only long-term solution is to actually get the structural issues right so that these doctors—whether they be generalists or specialists—want to work within the public health system in Queensland. At the moment they do not want to. We know what the solutions are. One of the solutions is basically to deal with the workplace issues that have driven the doctors out of the system—the culture of bullying, intimidation and bureaucratisation. That is why they do not want to work there.

Blame shifting goes on, where it is more about empire building within the public health system than it is about attracting and valuing people as clinicians or medicos. It is about looking after the system; it is not about valuing the medicos and the clinicians. This is not a long-term solution. It is a solution that the coalition would say is the only short-term solution, but the system cannot be bailed out like this in the long term. Spending twice the amount of money just does not make sense in any way whatsoever.

Mr Terry Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, but it does not have to in this case. This is not a remote region. This is not the bush nursing centre at Birdsville we are talking about.

Mr Copeland: It's Caboolture!

Mr SPRINGBORG: This is Caboolture! Surely the honourable member for Stafford can see that if the government had been able to retain the people who worked there in the first place then this problem would not have arisen. That is the issue. These people resigned in the most acrimonious circumstances.

They resigned for the same reason that people elsewhere in the public health system resigned—because they had had enough of the culture and the system that did not support and value them. That is the issue. The member knows that.

Enough has been written, and actually referred to, by the AMAQ and the Visiting Medical Officers Association in recent times to know exactly why these people are leaving. If the member wants to be in denial, then he can be in denial at his own peril. It is always someone else's fault; it is always something else. It is not. It is the government that has actually presided over this issue for a long time and failed to address it.

There are two other issues I would like to mention today. One relates to the matter the Premier addressed in his answer to the first question asked by a government member today. I refer to Aunty Delmae and what we as a parliament should do in very troubling circumstances. She was a woman that was left in need as people went past. I agree with the Premier when he asks: where is the basic compassion and the basic humanity of society when those sorts of things happen? We hope that these things do not happen. Other issues also have to be looked at. Some people are concerned that if they do intervene and provide assistance in certain circumstances and that person dies or there is further injury then the person who helped can themselves be legally liable.

Mrs Reilly: No, there's no excuse.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I say to the honourable member for Mudgeeraba that this is an issue that is of concern to community groups and community organisations, and it has been identified in the debate that we had regarding the Civil Liability Bill in this parliament.

If we are talking about proactive approaches that give people the certainty and the surety they want, one thing we as a parliament should do is enact good samaritan legislation. That legislation should ensure that, as long as they have provided assistance in good faith, they will be properly legally protected in the event that things do not go the way they should. That is all I am saying.

Mrs Reilly interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: There are people who will mind their own business or do not want to get involved because they are concerned about the consequences. If the honourable member wants to deny that, frankly, the honourable member is not dealing with reality. That is why we changed the Civil Liability Act insofar as volunteers are concerned.

Mrs Reilly interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I warn the member for Mudgeeraba under 253. She has not stopped in five minutes.

Mr SPRINGBORG: All I am giving is a practical solution to take away one potential obstacle from people. There are people who are concerned about the consequences in the event that they do intervene and something goes wrong. It may not have helped in this case, but it will help in some cases. We should have good samaritan legislation to make it unequivocally clear that, if people intervene to assist somebody, they are protected legally and properly as long as the level of their assistance was based on goodwill and the best interests of that person. I think it is a reasonable approach.

Nurses, Pay and Conditions; Bow Tie Appeal Week

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (11.40 am): We highly value our nurses, who are instrumental in caring for patients in our hospitals and in the community. They are essential to rebuilding our health system. The Beattie Labor government's wages package of a 25.3 per cent pay rise over three years offered to nurses is very well deserved. Under the proposed agreement the pay of level 1 registered nurses will increase from \$53,525 to \$64,497 as at March 2009. The Beattie government's enterprise agreement offer will bring Queensland nurses' pay rates into line with their colleagues around the country. This will enable Queensland to attract and retain nurses.

Some key areas of the enterprise agreement proposal include competitive wage rates, including four per cent pay increases in October this year, July 2007 and July 2008; two additional 3.5 per cent nursing attraction and advancement incentive payments in March 2006 and March 2009—these increases are in addition to the four per cent wage increase already provided in the interim agreement; professional development for all full-time and permanent part-time nurses; enhanced career paths for registered and enrolled nurses, including advanced practice roles such as nurse practitioners; an advanced career path for assistants in nursing; additional support for nursing graduate transition into the workplace; extended rural area incentives to enrolled nurses; and improvements to night shift and on-call arrangements. Queensland Health is continuing to work with nurses to ensure that we have workable and acceptable roster systems that allow staff a better work-life balance, education and training, and managing workloads in hospitals.

Nurses are loved by members of our community. They provide not only professional care but also words of kindness and reassurance to patients and patients' families. I know many nurses who live in the electorate of Bundamba and I know that they are dedicated, hardworking professionals. On behalf of our community and members of the Beattie Labor government, I salute our nurses across Queensland.

This Friday evening I will have the pleasure of launching Queensland Cancer Fund's Nurse of the Year Campaign 2006. The Nurse of the Year attracts significant community attention and draws a focus on improving health outcomes for Queenslanders with cancer as well as raising much needed funds for cancer programs. The Nurse of the Year is judged on his or her qualities as an ambassador for both the nursing profession and the Queensland Cancer Fund. At last year's finals many of the entrants personally discussed with me their reasons for participating including their own experience with cancer, either as a patient, carer, nurse or from specifically working with oncology areas of the nursing profession.

As at 3 March, there were 42 entrants, but the Queensland Cancer Fund is looking forward to having 50 entrants in total for the campaign. The entrants are from Bamaga and Palm Island in the north, west to Mount Isa and Charleville and south to Tweed Heads, and they range from student nurses, assistants in nursing, carers, enrolled nurses and registered nurses. Most encouragingly, the entrants are mainly mature age, with the average age of nurses being 46 years. This demonstrates that even students nurses as well as those who have been in the profession for many years are dedicated and passionate enough to raise funds and awareness in their own time to ultimately save lives.

Last year's Nurse of the Year, Amy Dance, from the Millmerran Health Service was selected as she was a fine ambassador for the nursing profession and for the Queensland Cancer Fund. Last year's campaign raised \$1.738 million, which supported general Queensland Cancer Fund activities as well as special programs for nurses. The charity winner in 2005, Lyn Burke, raised an outstanding \$146,340. The prizes for the Nurse of the Year campaign cover professional development, including overseas tours.

In conclusion, I would like to talk about this week's health week which is Bow Tie Appeal Week, supported by the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Queensland. Tragically, there are 3,000 cases of muscular dystrophy in this state. In the most commonly occurring form, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, the rate of incidence is one in 3,500 live births. Diagnosis occurs at the toddler stage. Sadly, they are confined to an electric wheelchair, usually by 13 years, followed by continued deterioration and death between 16 and 25 years. In some of the congenital and late onset forms, the time from diagnosis to death can be as short as one to 10 years. That is why the Beattie government, through Queensland Health, provides the Muscular Dystrophy Association with \$17,730 a year. This money goes towards equipment, respite care, counselling and support services for families. During Bow Tie Appeal Week I ask all MPs from both sides of this House to support the appeal with a donation and promote awareness in the local community of this tragic illness.

Time expired.

Proserpine Hospital

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (11.45 am): I have risen on a number of occasions to tell the House about my admiration for the staff of the Proserpine Hospital. Most recently I spoke about the green room project at the hospital which, in cooperation with the community, will see the hospital's courtyard transformed into a very special place complete with locally inspired landscaping that will provide a haven for staff and patients alike.

The news about the Proserpine Hospital just keeps getting better. Last week it was announced that Proserpine Hospital was rated by its patients as the best medium sized hospital in the state. The findings of the patient survey revealed a 100 per cent overall satisfaction rating and very high levels of patient satisfaction in all surveyed areas, including access and admission, general patient information, treatment and related information, complaints management, physical environment and discharge and follow-up. This is an outstanding achievement for the staff of the Proserpine Hospital. I certainly congratulate the Medical Superintendent, David Farlow; the Director of Nursing, Nicola Young; all nursing and allied health; and administration and ancillary staff. This is a wonderful achievement and a great accolade for all at the hospital. It is a fitting reward for the thoughtfulness, skill and sheer hard work that underpins the outcome.

Indeed, there are a number of reasons that the Proserpine Hospital has again been recognised as a leader in its field. The first of these is leadership. We hear a lot of about the culture of Queensland Health and how it is a negative aspect within our hospital system. I can assure honourable members that this is not the case in Proserpine. Dr Farlow and Nicola Young are well respected by their staff and operate an open-door policy so that problems and issues are actively discussed and resolved. This approach empowers staff, builds morale and leads to a level of teamwork that ensures that patients receive the best possible care. Staff at the hospital from the cleaners to the nursing staff all take pride in their work. This is reflected in the very positive feedback they received in the patient survey.

A second factor underpinning the survey outcome is the fantastic community support enjoyed by the hospital. Since its redevelopment and opening in 1997, the hospital has promoted an 'adopt a ward' program in which community groups take responsibility for supporting different sections of the hospital. This has resulted in some great outcomes, including the donation of medical equipment and creature comforts that improve both the level of available treatment and the comfort of the staff, patients and

visitors. The green room project that I spoke of earlier is another great example of how the community gets behind its local hospital to make it a great country hospital. Central to the great community support is the hardworking hospital auxiliary whose efforts deserve recognition and commendation.

Nobody likes to find themselves in hospital, but when the need does arise Proserpine Hospital is a great place to be. I can attest to this from personal experience having had my partner admitted to the hospital on several occasions in recent times. On both of these occasions he received an outstanding level of care in every respect—from the expert care of the doctors to the professional attention of the nursing staff through to the special attention given by the catering staff.

While I am on my feet I want to give a big plug to the coronary care unit at the Townsville Base Hospital, where my partner was also recently treated. We hear a lot about big hospitals and not all of it is positive. I can only say good things about the Townsville Base Hospital and the level of care provided. Yes, there are still a few issues to be resolved in health across the state, but it is not all doom and gloom.

The results of the patient survey and my own observations lead me to conclude that there is much to celebrate with the way health care is delivered in Queensland hospitals. With this government's \$6.4 billion action plan now being implemented and what I think is a very good enterprise bargaining proposal being put to Queensland nurses, I choose to be an optimist. What we need most is bipartisan support for our plan to recruit more doctors and to make the delivery of health care in this state not just among the world's best but the world's best.

SunWater

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.50 am): Today I would like to put on the record the coalition's policy on local area management of SunWater supply schemes and address some of the misconception being peddled in a political panic by the current minister. Local area management of water supply schemes is not a new concept. It has been talked about for years. The 1994 COAG water resources policy included a reform principle on local management of irrigation assets which stated—

... constituents be given greater degree of responsibility in the management of irrigation areas, for example, through operational responsibility being devolved to local bodies, subject to appropriate regulatory frameworks being established.

A Department of Natural Resources and Mines discussion paper prepared in November 2003 stated—

Local management has been provided for in SunWater's Corporatisation Charter.

This NRM discussion paper goes on to state—

... the shareholding Ministers have determined that, under specific circumstances, the opportunity could be made available for local users to manage schemes.

So much for the minister's panic politics. The Queensland Farmers Federation produced an excellent water policy brief in November 2004 which noted—

Since 2003, SunWater's costs have increased sharply ... Costs rose 7.7% in 2003/04 and 14.6% in 2004/05 with most of the increase in labour, professional services and related costs.

Further, in a submission to the Senate inquiry into water policy initiatives in December 2005 the QFF again outlined its case for local management irrigation schemes. It stated—

Customer councils and other scheme advisory committees are increasingly concerned about the ability of the current SunWater structure to manage schemes across the state.

It stated further—

... many schemes are now of the view that local management of irrigation schemes is the only option to drive efficiency.

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines stated in its 2003 discussion paper—

... local management arrangements might come in different forms and many options are possible. The form of local management can also differ between different schemes.

That is exactly the view of the coalition and it is reinforced by the minister's own department as well as by every other credible interest group in the water use industry. It will become the basis of the policy that we will implement in government. The coalition believes local water users in SunWater supply schemes should be given the option of managing their own schemes where the capacity and interest exists. Obviously, local management may not be appropriate or possible in every scheme. But we believe many water users certainly would be interested and take up the challenge of managing the schemes themselves.

With SunWater's costs skyrocketing in recent years and those costs being passed on to water users, those being shouldered with these increased costs should and will be given the option of managing their local schemes at a lower cost when the coalition wins government. Local water users have a wealth of local knowledge that is currently being ignored by SunWater. Local area management will harness that wealth of local knowledge and allow water users to have a real input into the decisions that affect their scheme and their business. It is clear that local area management is a concept that has the support of the rural sector and it has been an integral part of the COAG reform agenda since 1994. Local area management has the potential to reduce costs, drive efficiencies and produce better environmental outcomes in water supply schemes where it can be appropriately implemented.

A coalition government will certainly be providing the option of local area management to water users. It has been talked about for too long. We will give water users the option of managing their own affairs. We will give them the option of producing an outcome that has lower costs, better efficiencies and better environmental outcomes.

That is the concept that the current natural resources minister has been making dishonest claims about in recent weeks. All of those claims are absolute rubbish and are contradicted by his own department. The minister has been taking a hammering over recent weeks for his unfair water taxes. He has been desperately thrashing around for a diversion.

Local area management is not that diversion. It will result in less, not more, bureaucracy. Any local area management model pursued would empower existing water boards and customer councils to manage their own schemes. The minister only objects because local area management threatens the SunWater bureaucratic empire and threatens the government's agenda to turn SunWater into a profit source for Treasury.

It is interesting that, despite the minister's attacks on the concept of local area management, the previous natural resources minister initiated a discussion paper into the idea. In addition, the Premier's Queensland Water Plan 2005-2010 refers to local area management as an issue to be decided in the future. So the Premier and previous ministers have been signalling the government's intention but this minister is trying to play scare politics with the concept. The coalition government will introduce it.

Time expired.

Samford Valley, Public Transport

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (11.55 am): Improved public transport is an important policy priority for the Beattie Labor government. As the No. 1 ticket holder on the Samford to Ferry Grove trial bus service, I know how important public transport is to residents of Samford Valley. I rise today to call on the minister for transport, the Hon. Paul Lucas, to approve the Samford bus service as a permanent TransLink service at the conclusion of the trial on 7 April this year.

Back in late 2003 or early 2004 I was approached by a fantastic local resident, Mrs Gillian Blackett, with her concerns about the difficulty people living in the valley face in accessing public transport, particularly in the peak hours in the morning and afternoon, and for school students accessing the train at Ferry Grove railway station. As people here would know, the Ferry Grove railway station is the busiest railway station outside Brisbane Central and Roma Street stations, with over one million passenger movements a year.

As a result of Gillian's approach and that of a number of other residents who were interested in this important issue, I convened the first meeting of the Samford Public Transport Group to look at this issue. We looked at how we might progress the idea of improving access to public transport in Samford Valley. We then commenced a series of meetings with the department of transport and later TransLink.

A number of people came forward. I am grateful that they did and that they assisted in developing the Samford Public Transport Group's initiatives. A survey was produced and circulated to all residents of Samford Valley. I am grateful to the *Village Pump* which circulated the survey. The idea of the survey of course was to try to gauge the level of support there would be or could be within the valley for a bus service from the Samford Village to the Ferry Grove railway station.

Over a thousand people put their survey forms in at my office, at the *Village Pump* and at the Ferry Grove railway station. There are 4,500 residents living in the valley. There are not too many surveys that receive that level of response. As a result of an analysis of that survey and very close and constructive work with TransLink we were able to go to a public meeting and discuss the prospects of a trial bus service.

Fortunately, the minister for transport was very open to this initiative and received well my representations to him to permit a three-month trial. TransLink then approved that trial, which would cost \$15,000. During the trial it became quite clear that an extension was necessary to help ensure that we had a good idea of what was actually taking place. We undertook a lot of research and established that the two peak hour—that is, morning and afternoon—services Monday to Friday were the best services to provide. As a result of further surveys of constituents we varied the times on a number of occasions and most recently extended the service into Highvale.

Viability is the issue here of course. Whilst for a long time the patronage has been somewhat marginal, the patronage in recent times has increased such that it is reasonable to argue that this service would be viable as a permanent service.

There has been much community consultation. As I said, there have been two surveys, a public launch in the park and a public meeting, the *Village Pump* has been fantastic and I have sent two open letters to all residents in the community. They have—and I am grateful for them doing so—supported wholeheartedly the call to get on the bus. I repeat my call to the minister on behalf of Samford Valley residents—my constituents—on behalf of the Samford Public Transport Group and on behalf of the commuters who have supported this initiative. I call on the minister to make this service a permanent service, provided the viability is established at the end of this final quarter.

I want to thank all of the Samford commuters and residents for supporting this service. There are many people to acknowledge—more than can be named in this short speech. They all know who I am talking about—those associated with the progress association, researcher Tristan Peach, Councillor Bob Millar from the Pine Rivers Shire Council and of course Harry Audus of TransLink. I commend this call to the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Caloundra, I acknowledge teachers, students and parents from the Mater Dei Primary School in the electorate of Toowoomba North, which is represented by Kerry Shine.

Crime Rates

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (12.00 pm): Both the Attorney-General and the police minister have failed the people of Queensland. This was highlighted most recently by *Courier-Mail* reports of a gang of youths holding a family prisoner in their own home for more than half an hour as they tried to break in and bash a teenager who had sought safety there and a second report of a young man aged 19 who was attacked and stabbed three times for seemingly no reason.

Both of these incidents were reported in yesterday's *Courier-Mail*. The first event involved a young person being chased by a gang of youths and that young person trying to find protection in the home of Chris Abraham and Carole Gamble. The frightening aspect of this matter is that, even though the person being chased was inside the house, the gang smashed windows trying to break in and demanded the teenager be handed over to them. All praise must be given to Mr Abraham and Ms Gamble because they refused to do so. As Ms Gamble said, it was like a scene out of *A Clockwork Orange* and the police arrived 20 minutes after being called. The result could have been horrendous if the police had been delayed or the youths had gotten into the house.

The second incident involved a 19-year-old man on his way home being stabbed for apparently no reason, and that is equally concerning. The newspaper report reads—

'One of them had a knife or something sharp and stabbed me, it was a sort of burning pain,' he said.

He received stab wounds to his abdomen, lower back and right forearm.

A local police officer heading to work found Mr Waugh unconscious on the side of the road shortly before 4.30am and called an ambulance.

What do we hear from the Beattie government? Nothing but rhetoric. We do not actually see any plans being put in place to curb juvenile crime, the incidence of young men and women being attacked and bashed, innocent people in their homes being assaulted, damage to property and ongoing violence which seems to be escalating to an epidemic proportion. Both the Attorney-General and the police minister have failed in their obligations to the state and to the people.

The police minister, for all her rhetoric, is simply not providing police numbers sufficient to cater for the problem. She can bleat all she wants, but the real situation is that police throughout this state are not in sufficient numbers on the ground and they are not properly resourced. There is barely a day that goes by that we do not pick up the newspaper and read that some person has been bashed, a home has been invaded or worse as a direct consequence of the inactivity of this police minister.

The Attorney-General has similarly failed in her obligation to deal with crime in this state. Her obligations include upholding the law, ensuring sentences are passed that are commensurate with crimes and ensuring that the attitude of the public is taken into account in sentencing procedures. This is not happening. She has not conducted herself or her ministry in a manner that is going to help the people of Queensland. She has failed in her obligations to the people of Queensland.

I turn specifically to juvenile crime and table a series of documents prepared by the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants League Caloundra in which 325 people were asked the question, 'Should under-age criminal offenders, if found guilty of their crime, have their identity released to the public?' Of those who took part in the survey, 300 said yes and 25 said no. This is a strong indication that people throughout Queensland want something done about juvenile crime. To my knowledge, no name of a juvenile who has been convicted of a crime has ever been released. It is time to take this issue seriously. We need juveniles who commit serious offences or who are repeat offenders named, and there are two reasons for this. The first is to protect the public. The public has a right to know who these people are. Secondly, juveniles must be made aware that their actions have long-term and far-reaching consequences.

Both portfolios, as I said, have failed. Both the minister for police and the Attorney-General have not lived up to the requirements of their office. They are not taking heed of what the people of Queensland are saying and, as a direct consequence of that, we are seeing crime escalating, people are being hurt and criminals are thumbing their noses at the criminal justice system.

On 21 February an article appeared in the *Courier-Mail* reporting on police numbers in a study undertaken by Dr Colin Thorne of QUT. The article states—

The ratio of police per population is officially touted as one officer to 440 residents but in Brisbane's metropolitan north district, it is reported as one to 533 and on the Sunshine Coast it is one to 622.

That is a clear indication that the police minister has lost any concept of what is required in this state. When is this government going to realise that the people of Queensland need more than words? They need a determined government fixed on getting this problem solved. We are losing control of our streets. We are losing control of one of the basic tenets of our society. It is these two portfolios that have the main responsibility, and they have failed the people of Queensland.

Work, Life and Family Balance

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (12.05 pm): Tomorrow is International Women's Day, and I would do a disservice to women in my electorate if I did not respond to comments from the Australian woman's alleged new 'feminist vanguard'—federal Treasurer Peter Costello. Were members not as dumbfounded as I was by news reports last week that Peter Costello is set on turning Australia into the most female-friendly country in the world? It is great rhetoric and a great goal, but do we trust him? They are hollow words from a Treasurer and a federal government that appear set on undermining women and their opportunities, particularly in the workplace. To see this, members need only look at the Howard government's recent track record in industrial relations. They should have a look at its track record in child support, child care and its upcoming Centrelink reforms. So where has Costello's sudden empathy for women come from? Girls, some of us know what it is like to be a bridesmaid—poor old Costello still waiting in the wings to catch Howard's leadership bouquet! He is looking for new friends, he is looking for support and he thinks he can con his way into the hearts of women. Mr Costello, women voters are brighter than you think.

Just how female and family friendly are some of Mr Costello's and the Howard government's reforms? Some women in my local area, for instance, have rightly asked: why is it sending single parents receiving Centrelink support, most of whom are women, back into the workforce once their youngest turns eight? Mr Costello said that it is their 'public responsibility'. Women in my local area are not happy, Mr Costello. In fact, many of them are very troubled about these reforms. Where will women find child care with the severe lack of affordable, accessible and high-quality child care? Women can rightly ask: is the Howard government going to change its mind on paid parental leave?

To make the workplace female friendly, the Howard government must overturn its savage industrial relations changes—changes which have been described by many commentators as hostile to families and disempowering and hostile to women. There is compelling evidence suggesting that the Howard-Costello industrial relations changes will only lead to more low-paid, precarious jobs for women. They will give more flexibility to employers and less flexibility for women and men to better balance their work, life and family responsibilities. Now, as a mother of young Alexander, I know exactly how it feels trying to juggle work and family. It is a great need that we have to allow people to do this much better than they are currently doing it.

Will we see new federal measures to achieve more equity in pay for women and opportunities for advancement for women in the workforce from the so-called female-friendly Treasurer? I think not. My message to women is: beware. Women can do without a federal Treasurer wanting to be friendly. We want a federal government that will be determined to achieve a country of equals. I am very encouraged by the initiatives Minister Tom Barton and our Beattie Labor government have implemented for employees to better balance work and family and have implemented to advance women in the workforce. Our Labor government has established Queensland's first ever Work and Family Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations. In 1999 the Beattie government led the country in becoming the first government to provide for unpaid maternity leave for casual employees. In 2001 we extended that by reducing the qualifying period to 12 months service for casual employees and we expanded the entitlement to provide unpaid parental leave. Women and families need these things so that they can balance their work, life and family needs.

The Beattie government knows the value of women. We know that women deserve better. Women deserve pay equity and they deserve to be able to balance their work and family responsibilities. We certainly are committed to equality between men and women and have many policies in place to achieve that goal. Again, my message to women around the country and in my local area is: beware of the man with the smirk on his face—that is Mr Costello. He is really a wolf in sheep's clothing.

WorkCover

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.10 pm): Many honourable members will have read an article in the *Courier-Mail* of 26 January this year lauding the achievements of Labor Party 'identity' Ian Brusasco and his offsider, Tony Hawkins, in raising WorkCover from being a corporate basket case with an alleged \$321 million deficit to being a national leader with a \$723 million surplus. The essence of the article is that Messrs Brusasco and Hawkins have engineered a \$1 billion turnaround over the past 7½ years, in the process kicking a much-needed goal for the Beattie government.

There is certainly good news. The management of WorkCover over the life of the Beattie government is a rare corner of public administration in which excessive ministerial micromanagement and political interference has not destroyed any prospect of the public good. The drop in workers

compensation premiums to \$1.20 per \$100—the lowest in the country—is a real achievement for the government and its ‘identity’, Mr Brusasco. It is interesting to note that last year the nine per cent superannuation component of wages was added to the fund’s calculation and then premiums were adjusted to reduce the overall rate from \$1.40 for every \$100 to \$1.20 for every \$100.

I do not want to deny the government its moment in the sun, but I suggest that those interested in the full story behind this unique managerial miracle look a little further into the history and inheritance of the Beattie government. If one were to believe the tale told by the *Courier-Mail*—and doubtless the Labor-induced spin surrounding the 26 January article—one might be tempted to accept the election of the first Beattie government in 1998 as a kind of WorkCover year zero requiring a complete revision of the mistakes of the previous administration.

The traditional Labor line is that the alleged \$321 million deficit owed by WorkCover in mid-1998 was the construction of the previous coalition government, in response to which the Beattie government’s new plan has revolutionised workers compensation funding. Three issues have been glossed over and there is one bold misrepresentation. The latter is that as at 30 June 1998, some months before Mr Brusasco’s August appointment, WorkCover was \$43 million in deficit. The \$321 million referred to in the *Courier-Mail* article was the deficit as at 30 June 1996 and represented an inheritance of the moribund Workers Compensation Fund from the Goss government. I will not be so cynical to suggest that the government has deliberately confused these dates, but I will allow honourable members to draw their own conclusions.

From this lapse in historical fact, the three glossed over issues come into play. The first is that the Kennedy inquiry, which was responsible for the innovations upon which the current Labor government and its ‘identity’ have relied to build upon their inherited surplus, was instigated by and reported to the last coalition minister for industrial relations, the Hon. Santo Santoro. Changes emanating from the Kennedy inquiry included the corporatisation of WorkCover, tougher fraud enforcement, transparency and accountability, and a new system that rewarded safety. Initially, these changes were onerous and required employers to pay average initial contributions of 2.145 per cent to create a solvent entity. However, that was a transitional figure and it was already down to 1.85 per cent upon Mr Brusasco’s arrival—another piece of incorrect data that the government has neglected to correct. Contrary to the spin currently being pervaded, the design of WorkCover, like the surplus, is an inheritance.

Secondly, Mr Tony Hawkins, who has been a most able CEO of WorkCover and who in the contemporary version of the events—

Time expired.

World Oil Production

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.15 pm): On 22 February last year in this place during the matters of public interest debate I made a speech in which I warned of the probability of world oil production peaking and then going into decline in the next 10 years. I know that at that time the concept of peak oil was unheard of in this place and had attracted virtually no coverage in the Australian or world media. However, over the last year public, political and media awareness of this critical challenge to our way of life has grown significantly. I note that peak oil was the subject of a very well attended Brisbane Institute forum featuring Swedish nuclear physicist Professor Kjell Aleklett and University of Queensland economist Dr John Quiggin in Brisbane in November 2005. That Brisbane Institute forum was cosponsored by Queensland Transport, which was entirely appropriate. The challenges posed by the end of cheap energy, as outlined by Professor Aleklett, will have to be addressed largely by the reinvigoration of our public transport network as demand for the private use of petrol for cars declines in the face of continuing surges in fuel prices.

I note that President George W Bush in his State of the Union address this year committed the USA to beating what he described as America’s addiction to oil by reducing that country’s oil imports by 75 per cent by the year 2025—a mere 20 years away. President George W Bush framed his case for such an ambitious target largely in terms of national security considerations. The president did not refer to the imperative to reduce oil use that peak oil represents, but it was undoubtedly the elephant in the room when he made his enormous commitment.

I note that this point was made very well in a major editorial piece in the *New York Times* on 3 March 2006 by Robert B Semple Jr, who is an associate editor of that paper and who has worked at the *New York Times* since 1963. He won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing on environmental issues in 1996. I table for the benefit of honourable members a copy of Mr Semple’s excellent summation of the issues and challenges that peak oil presents.

In his article Mr Semple concludes, as do I, that very significant demand restraint—in other words, using a lot less oil—is unavoidable. We will not see hydrogen powered cars in meaningful numbers for 30 years. Non-conventional fuel sources such as tar sands and shale oil remain vastly expensive in terms of not only dollars but also energy and water costs. Conventional substitutes such as ethanol, while needing to be pursued with vigour, will not make up the difference as world oil production begins to decline by two per cent per year.

Of course, the critical issue is: how long have we got until we reach that peak? I suggest that the doubling of world oil prices over the last 18 months, with oil again pushing towards \$US70 a barrel today, suggests that we can see the summit from where we are now. I table a further paper by Professor Emeritus at Princeton Kenneth S Deffeyes, who concludes that world production peaked on 16 December 2005, which will be good news for those who own shares in energy companies with proven reserves, although it might be worthwhile to consider offloading those before the inevitable inflation-driven recession occurs.

The most optimistic assessment of the date for peak oil is given by the US Geological Survey as 2037. Even if we accept that that date is accurate—and clearly George W Bush does not, because his time frame for radical reform of energy use in the US is 20 years, not 30—it is still only one generation away. That is one generation to completely retool our economy, to rebuild our communities and to replace our transport sector.

I am of the view that, despite Professor Deffeyes's analysis, inventories and voluntary demand restraint caused by high petrol prices will give us a 10-year window in which to make these changes. I take this opportunity to table Dr John Quiggan's speech at the Brisbane Institute and commend his call for coherent, well-designed policies to meet this challenge. I know that it has been the way of things in politics to not say that we will ever run out of anything or that we have to change our ways to use less of something, but that is what must happen. As a society we need to be revaluing our carbon resources of coal and oil and gas against the coming shortages. We need to electrify everything we can, to massively reinvest in light urban electric rail systems and coastal barge traffic and increase rail freight capacity. We need to recognise that our carbon resources are too valuable to waste and we need to change our ways now while our economy has the strength to undertake the massive changes that are required.

Children Leaving Home

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.20 pm): We often hear debate about protecting the safety of children at risk and about whether or not the foster care system is working properly. We hear about the level of resources devoted to protecting children, about case loads and restructuring and so on. There is, however, another issue impacting directly on a number of families in my electorate—and I am sure there are similar cases across Queensland—that I will talk about today, and that is the devastating impact on families when their children decide to run away from home for what appears to be no good reason. This has happened in my electorate to three separate families over the last few months. In all cases the families have been confronted by bureaucracy—bureaucrats who all say that their hands are tied and that there is nothing within the law that they can do to help these distraught parents. These particular children are aged 14, 15 and 13. They have each left home to live at the homes of their friends.

When their parents sought help from the police, the education department, child protection and community services, they were advised there was no way to force any of the children to go home. The police could do nothing for fear of being accused of assaulting the child if the child were forced into a police car. The education department could not help them either, even though it is the parent's responsibility to see that the child attends school until the age of 16, and on one count I am advised that a guidance officer even told the child of her rights on leaving home.

Community Services said that it would not have an interest unless the child had turned 16. Child protection was not interested in two of these cases as it did not believe that the children were in any danger. To give the local child protection department credit, it did step in in the case of the 13-year-old but even then it did not return her home. Instead, the child has been temporarily placed in foster care pending further developments.

However, nothing has been done in the case of the 14-year-old, who, I am advised, has moved into her boyfriend's parents' home. Her family has been extremely worried about her welfare and has contacted all government departments from police to child protection, education and communities for help but to no avail. Each service has said there is no law that can force this vulnerable child to go back home to the family that loves her and where she has been supported in a normal family situation. These are all children who have been housed, fed, clothed and supported as normal family participants. They are under the age of consent, yet they are falling through the cracks because the Beattie government has no laws in place to support parents who are doing the right thing in bringing up their children.

All of us have gone through teenage years and know what it is like to go through those growing pains. Those of us who have been parents of teenagers know full well the intricacies of guiding our children through those difficult years. Sometimes as parents we have to make rules and show our children where the boundaries lie for their own good. I have been advised by all of the parents involved that their children have left home not because of any abuse or any kind of mistreatment but they have simply decided that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence and other families have decided to keep them.

These children belong to their own families, not the state and not these other families. They are and should be the responsibility of their parents and only in exceptional circumstances should child protection have to use its powers and step in. Children should not simply be allowed to leave the safe environment of their homes and they should not have the right to apply for financial assistance from society's financial coffers without good reason.

These parents want their children back. They want to rear their children as they see fit and they want to discipline their children as they see fit within reason. More and more of our caring families are seeing this government white-anting parents who do act responsibly, who do try to keep track of their children and who do care, by telling these children that their parents have no authority nor power over them. Governments should not interfere in the normal course of family life. There are already too many children in real need with too few resources to go around. To waste time and money protecting the so-called rights of these children for no good reason is robbing resources from children in real need and along the way it is destroying families, and that is totally unacceptable.

Morayfield District Guides Hut

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.24 pm): The Morayfield District Guides hut burnt down at approximately 1 am on Tuesday, 6 December 2005. This was a sad day for the Guides as it had been their permanent home for around 12 years and they lost everything. Prior to being located there, the Guides met at the Torrens Road special school. The hut was moved to Caboolture River Road from a prison west of Caboolture and its former life was a shower block there. It had, however, been extensively modified to suit the Morayfield Guides.

Over the years the hut has had many renovations and a lot of money has been raised from the community to help. In the past five years the hut has also had a number of vandalism and graffiti attacks. As a member of the graffiti task force set up by the Beattie government two years ago, I organised a graffiti trailer for the electorates of Pumicestone and Glass House. It was made at the Woodford Prison and was another pilot for Pumicestone. In fact, the Morayfield Guides hut suffered a terrible graffiti attack which was obscene and offensive not only to the Guides but also to the whole community. So Bribie Island Apexians, Councillor Lynette Devereaux, Carolyn Male, the member for Glass House, Guides' parents and I repainted the Guides hut. It was the first job done by the graffiti task force. We were very proud of those efforts and when the Guides hut burnt down we all felt a sad loss.

We felt we needed to help more to re-establish the organisation. After all, the Guides are a valuable and well-respected asset in the community. I set up a fighting fifties fund to raise money to outfit the new building, which was fortunately insured. Morayfield businesses were approached and asked to contribute to the cause. I must say that, although my assistant electorate officer, Amber Hartley, and I could not physically doorknock every business, the ones that we did gave us a wonderfully warm reception and they were very keen to help.

I was so impressed with the generosity of Morayfield businesses that I would like to list their names: Camelot Castle by the Sea, Steve Hay Real Estate, Morayfield Shopping Centre, Caboolture Retravision, Butterfly Silver, Gloria Jeans, Matty's Meat Barn (Mega Meats), T&L Air Conditioning, *Caboolture Shire Herald*, *Morayfield News*, Marsellos Pike Real Estate, Brian Heneberry—Gentlemen's Barber, Remax Real Estate, Queensland Outdoor Furniture, Battery World, Peter Campbell Realty, Time Furniture, Quality Computer Services, Richardson and Wrench Caboolture, Bunnings Morayfield, Kraemer Chiropractic, Morayfield Accounting and Taxation Services, Middletons Printing House and Good Guys Morayfield. Councillor Lynette Devereaux also contributed. A total of \$2,000 was raised. I was also told on Saturday night that the Morayfield and District Lioness Club has promised \$1,000. There are some other local businesses which have promised to do some voluntary work. I will donate an honours board to the new hut with all of the donors' names on it as a tribute to their generosity. They will be invited to attend the grand opening, which I hope will not be far off. I would like to thank Vanessa Hutchins from the Guides movement for all of her help and cooperation during the collection of funds.

The Morayfield District Guides has three units with approximately 48 girls and three qualified leaders. Individual units details are as follows: Burrendong Guides are aged five to nine and meet on Wednesday evenings—they have 26 girls, one leader and one assistant; Kurrookarook Guides are aged 10 to 13 and meet on Thursday evenings—they have 16 girls, one leader and parent helpers; and the Nangkita Rangers are aged 14 to 18 and meet on Friday evenings—they have six girls, one leader and parent helpers.

I would also like to thank the many parents who help the Morayfield Guides every week. Since this incident they unfortunately have had to meet at parents' houses which has been quite difficult. The fact that they have lost all of their very valuable equipment and personal belongings over the past 12 years is indeed a tragedy. But, with the help of the community, the Morayfield Guides will rebuild and we are very much looking forward to that day.

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

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.29 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001 and the Medical Practitioners Registration Regulation 2002. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.29 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

It is in everyone's interest that suitably qualified overseas and interstate doctors who accept jobs in our public hospitals are registered and working as soon as possible. This bill introduces a number of measures to improve Queensland's capacity to recruit and register these doctors. I will address these measures in turn.

The bill will require the Medical Board to streamline and expedite the medical registration process without compromising public safety. Additionally, the board will be required to report to the minister if it fails to decide a registration application within 25 working days of receiving it. The report must give reasons for the delay and outline actions the board will take to avoid similar delays in the future. The information provided in these reports will be used to help identify administrative or legislative changes to improve the registration system. This measure in no way affects the board's duty under the act to act independently, impartially and in the public interest.

The bill will require at least one board member to have a high level of expertise in organisational management, customer service or business. With such skills at hand, the board will be better placed to identify ways to improve registration processes.

The bill will also expand the board's power of delegation to allow a board member, its executive officer or a committee including at least one board member to approve registration applications. This amendment is expected to reduce application processing times by between two to four weeks for straightforward applications. However, it is expected that the board will still consider applications if, for example, there is a question about an applicant's fitness to practise.

The board will also be able to delegate its power to set conditions on registration. This will allow the delegate to impose standard conditions that apply to interns or 'area of need' registrants. Again, the board is expected to reserve more complex and serious matters for its consideration.

I want to assure members that the measures proposed in the bill do not in any way 'water down' the quality of the stringent screening process we have in place. All doctors will still have their medical qualification and work history thoroughly checked before they are allowed to practise in Queensland.

Queensland is taking the lead in addressing the problem of doctor shortages. The bill broadens the qualifications for general registration to include recognition of medical qualifications, not only those certified by the Australian Medical Council but also those recognised by certain prescribed overseas registration bodies, such as the United Kingdom General Medical Council. By introducing this provision, the Queensland government will be in a position to give prompt effect to proposals currently under consideration at a national level. Holders of prescribed qualifications will be able to apply directly to the board without having to go through the AMC assessment process.

This bill also provides greater scope for universities and other bodies to attract practitioners in medical training and research positions. Doctors, including specialists, who come to Queensland to teach or do research who do not qualify for general or specialist registration are limited in their capacity to practise in connection with their teaching or research. The bill expands this category of registration to enable medical teachers and researchers to engage in clinical work connected with their primary teacher or research duties.

Finally, the bill provides greater incentives for interstate or overseas doctors to perform short-term locum services in Queensland by waiving their registration and application fees. It enables doctors to register in Queensland for up to five weeks at no cost. These amendments reflect the Beattie government's determination to rebuild and improve the health system for the benefit of all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

FORESTRY PLANTATIONS QUEENSLAND BILL

First Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation) (12.33 pm): I present a bill for an act to establish Forestry Plantations Queensland to manage, under the Forestry Act 1959, state forests that are plantation forests, including selling particular forest products from those forests, and to own and use other property for plantation related purposes, and to amend various acts. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation) (12.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Forestry Plantations Queensland Bill 2006 represents a major advance in the commercial reform of the state owned plantation forests in Queensland which will underpin the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the plantation timber industry, provide appropriate market signals for both the state's commercial plantation manager and private plantation growers to invest in the Queensland market, and secure the future of the some 6,000-plus jobs that are dependent on the plantation sector in the state.

The bill also includes proposed amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 which give effect to changes to salary sacrifice arrangements for members of parliament elected after December 2004 and clarify salary entitlements of members holding more than one office. On these bases, I am pleased to provide the following comments on the bill.

The bill will establish Forestry Plantations Queensland as the new commercial manager of the state owned plantation assets and equip it with the commercial capacity, property rights, clarity of purpose and accountability framework needed to continue to support and provide resource to the important plantation processing sector in this state. In particular—

- The bill will establish Forestry Plantations Queensland as a corporation sole that represents the state and has two responsible ministers, the Treasurer and the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries.
- It will equip Forestry Plantations Queensland with property rights, assets, an appropriate accountability framework and clearly defined objectives required to operate in a commercial manner, including:
 - the requirement for it to agree and adhere to an annual operational plan, which outlines key strategies, activities, targets, performance criteria and operational and policy guidelines;
 - the provision of responsible ministers with the power to issue directions;
 - the consent for it to enter into the financial arrangements and transactions needed to undertake commercial activities detailed in its operational plan, particularly its investments;
 - the provision of certain assets presently controlled by DPI Forestry;
 - access to state plantation forests and the rights to deal with natural resource products;
 - compliance with the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977; and
 - quarterly reports to responsible ministers on the targets and performance criteria, and the publication of an annual report.
- The bill will establish a commercial governance structure for Forestry Plantations Queensland, including:
 - the ability to appoint a commercial advisory board;
 - delegated responsibility of the board's strategic planning, development and negotiation of the operational plan, performance monitoring and review; and
 - the responsibility of ministers to provide the board with other duties and responsibilities as required.

The bill is required to underpin the long-term sustainability and overall competitiveness of the plantation timber industry by ensuring that the state owned supplier of the majority of the resource inputs for these industry processors has an efficient, commercial governance structure, with clear objectives and an accountability framework.

The government presently harvests some 1,600,000 cubic metres annually of sawlogs, roundwood and pulpwood from some 250,000 hectares of state plantation forests through DPI Forestry, a commercialised business unit within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

These state forest plantations and the resources they produce support very significant industry investment, particularly in the Moreton, Wide Bay and Brisbane regions, and increasingly in the north and central regions. It is estimated that the state's plantations directly and indirectly support more than 6,000 jobs in the state.

The industry processing sector operates in a highly competitive market and, as a result, faces the ongoing imperative of continuing to strive to improve productivity, undertake commercial investments in order to achieve and maintain competitive advantage, and manage ongoing structural reform pressures in the industry. To meet these challenges, industry processors need equitable access to competitively sourced resource inputs.

The government very strongly supports the plantation processing industries in this state. This bill supports the plantation processing sector by creating Forestry Plantations Queensland and providing it with the commercial reforms needed to continue to provide a sustainable and competitive supply of resources to the market. These reforms have been designed for the Queensland environment and provide the state owned plantation grower with the commercial reforms that were applied to competitors in southern states and New Zealand.

Specifically, these reforms will enable Forestry Plantations Queensland to benchmark itself against southern and New Zealand growers, address the low productivities experienced in a number of the state's plantations, develop commercial governance and risk management structures, establish commercial partnerships, maximise value, add opportunities and better respond to the demands of major clients which are facing challenges in maintaining market shares.

The government is also cognisant that the state plantation forests are an important multiple use resource. In addition to underpinning very significant commercial investment, these plantations give rise to a range of other landscape, conservation, grazing, beekeeping and recreation opportunities. This bill will clarify the responsibilities for managing and delivering this broader suite of services and enhance the delivery of these services, and it will do so in a way that is consistent with the commercial production requirements of the forests.

I want to put on record the fact that nothing in the bill is intended to limit the right of people to access state plantation forests for legitimate recreational pursuits, such as horse riding. This access is, of course, subject to operational requirements and other restrictions on access when, for example, fire management and safety concerns require. Further, the government intends that this new structure will enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that horse riding can continue in state plantation forests.

In order to meet these challenges, the plantation manager needs the commercial focus provided by the establishment of a separate legal entity with a commercial charter and a best-practice governance structure. The proposed reform of the plantation business will see the formation of Forestry Plantations Queensland as a corporation sole. It will not be established under the Corporations Act 2001 and will be an excluded matter for the purposes of that legislation. This model provides the government with the flexibility to provide a commercial structure within a strict accountability framework and will include clearly defined objectives and a commercial advisory board.

Additional benefits of these reforms include that—

- employees are to continue to be employed by the state of Queensland and as such will remain within the Queensland industrial relations framework; and
- the tenure and ownership of the state plantation forests will remain unchanged, as will the state's rights, with regard to the management of forest products, thereby ensuring that the reforms are valid for native title purposes.

In regard to the first of these, Forestry Plantations Queensland will be able to enter into work performance agreements with the state. As mentioned previously, the bill will provide Forestry Plantations Queensland with an appropriate accountability framework, including the need for it to agree to an annual operational plan with responsible ministers and for those ministers to provide ample insight.

Given the length of the second reading speech and the time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of the speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It is anticipated that this operational plan will address:

- the activities to be undertaken by Forestry Plantations Queensland;
- the establishment of performance milestones and criteria and the monitoring and reporting against these criteria;
- protection of the public interest;

- third party access, particularly the provision of recreation services;
- the relationships between various public land management authorities;
- the payment of taxes and charges;
- Community Service Obligations;
- achievement of the principles of competitive neutrality;
- capital structure;
- derivation and use of cost of capital;
- market valuation; and
- the application of relevant government policies.

Mr Speaker, the Bill provides that State plantation forests be defined by reference to 1:50,000 reference maps as the gross plantation area on State Forests, which in itself is a reserve tenure under the Forestry Act 1959. Forestry Plantations Queensland will be required to negotiate, on behalf of the State, with key stakeholders on the external boundaries of the gross plantation estate, that is, those not negotiated pursuant to the South-east Queensland Forest Agreement. Furthermore, within 12 months of operation, Forestry Plantations Queensland must prepare a report for the responsible Ministers detailing where there has been agreement and, if applicable, where there is disagreement and outline the nature of the disagreement.

The Bill also provides that Forestry Plantations Queensland will enter into agreements with other State agencies involved in the management of Crown Forests, to provide the necessary access required by those agencies to Plantation Forests, and to ensure that the State agencies will provide Forestry Plantations Queensland with access to other Crown Forests. This will ensure that the key issues pertaining to forest fires and pest management will be jointly coordinated across Crown land tenures.

Mr Speaker, in addition to providing the strong commercial focus and clear authority that the plantation manager will require to meet the significant and immediate commercial challenges facing the industry and the plantation forestry business, the Bill will:

- provide the State's plantation processing sector with the commercial certainty required to make significant investment decisions in accordance with an endorsed operational plan; and
- provide assurance to the 600 staff who are presently working in commercial plantation management within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

There are six cases in the Bill where limited delegation of legislative power is proposed and consideration of fundamental legal principles is required. These occur because it is not possible to provide exhaustive definitions or lists with respect to a number of key subject matters including the definitions of financial arrangements, borrowing, contents of the operational plan, board functions and transitional arrangements. For example, the types of financial or borrowing arrangements that Forestry Plantations Queensland may desire to enter into (with the approval of responsible Ministers), or the functions that the board may be required to undertake may change over time in line with market development. These in turn may warrant the responsible Ministers to obtain more stringent reporting from Forestry Plantations Queensland or the capacity to respond rapidly to emergent issues. It is important to provide for sufficient flexibility in the future operations of Forestry Plantations Queensland. The proposed delegations of legislative power provide this flexibility, in a way that does not have far reaching consequences and the scope of the regulation-making powers is limited by the context for which they are provided.

Mr Speaker, the Bill reaffirms this Government's priorities of increasing economic development and strengthening regional Queensland by establishing a new commercial entity to ensure the long term sustainability and overall competitiveness of the plantation processing industry.

I commend the commercial reforms that are included in this Bill to ensure Forestry Plantations Queensland can provide the necessary security and confidence to the important plantation processing sector in this State.

In addition, the Bill includes proposed amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. These amendments include:

- clarification of salary entitlements of Members holding more than one office; and
- the introduction of new salary sacrifice arrangements for the superannuation entitlements of Members of Parliament elected after December 2004 covered by the State Public Sector Superannuation Fund.

In response to an issue of clarification raised by the Speaker, the proposed amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 also make clear that a Member is only entitled to one additional salary irrespective of the number of positions held at any given time. Mr Speaker, I wish to make it clear that the Government has not been approached by a Member seeking to access two additional salary payments. However, during the normal course of administering Members' salaries, this issue has been identified and this Government believes that it is appropriate to take the opportunity through this Bill to amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 so that this potential issue does not arise.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.42 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Integrated Planning Act 1997, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (12.42 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 (or IPOLA Bill 2006).

The Integrated Planning Act 1997, or IPA, has now been in effect for almost eight years. The government constantly monitors the performance of the IPA and has periodically introduced amendments to ensure the IPA stays relevant in a dynamic planning and development environment. The bill I am introducing today continues this process of continual review and improvement.

The IPOLA Bill 2006 contains several key reforms to the IPA as well as some minor and clarifying amendments. Additionally, it contains some significant, though mostly minor and clarifying, amendments to other legislation, which I will outline in more detail.

A summary of the key amendments included in the bill follows.

1. Currency periods

All development approvals expire if the development is not started in a reasonable time. However, industry has expressed concern that there is no clear link between the different approvals they might seek for a single project. For example, this means an approval to use a building might expire before it is actually built, unless the applicant seeks an extension to the approval.

What we are doing in this bill is to more clearly link the different approvals for a project. We will allow any lapsing periods for use and subdivision approvals to automatically 'roll forward' to line up with the periods for later works approvals for the same project.

2. Accountability measures

From time to time decisions made by local governments about development applications lead to concern in the community about a perceived lack of accountability and transparency in decision making. This is more particularly so when these decisions appear to contravene the council's planning scheme. To address these concerns and to contribute to public confidence, the IPOLA Bill includes several measures to deliver more transparent decision making. These measures are—

- requiring reasons to be given for all departures from planning schemes, whether the application is approved or refused;
- defining the grounds on which local governments can depart from their planning schemes. These grounds can only be for a public interest, and not a private interest, of an individual owner or interested party; and
- requiring details of decisions to be published on the council's web site.

3. Enforcement reforms for environmental nuisance, erosion and sedimentation control on development sites

From time to time councils and the EPA receive complaints about poor erosion and sediment control. Councils have, rightly in my view, complained that they have not had sufficient immediate enforcement powers to deal with these situations. Previously, if an offence was occurring, like sediment running into a river from a building site, a show cause notice had to be given. This meant the offence could continue for two weeks before the second step, an enforcement notice, could be given. This bill contains provisions to remove the need for a show cause notice. Councils will be able to act speedily and firmly. They will also be able, with the enforcement notice, to require a compliance program to be prepared to demonstrate how compliance will be achieved.

4. Building Act—inspections of budget accommodation

As a consequence of the Childers backpacker hostel fire, the Building Act 1975 was amended to require budget accommodation buildings built before 1 January 1992 to meet a minimum fire safety standard. However, meeting today's standards, in some very old buildings, would be very costly and difficult. This bill will allow owners to use management procedures in lieu of building work to manage fire safety risks in some circumstances. For instance, in a building with a narrow corridor, rather than moving the wall the owners may train staff that they must check daily to make sure no furniture or other obstacles are in the corridor. In such cases, local governments are presently obliged to conduct yearly inspections. This is not practical. Neither would it necessarily be effective. The amendment in this bill replaces yearly inspections with random inspections which, for any given premise, must occur at least once in every three years. It will also enable councils to issue 'on the spot' fines to owners who do not implement the approved management procedures to counteract owner complacency between inspections.

5. Plumbing and Drainage Act—greywater

The bill also includes a minor amendment to the greywater legislation contained in the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002. The current definition of 'greywater application area' requires that greywater is distributed by subsurface irrigation in both sewered and unsewered areas. However, in unsewered areas people have always been able to dispose of their greywater by surface irrigation if allowed by their local government. This amendment to the definition will ensure that surface irrigation of greywater remains an option for people in unsewered areas.

6. The Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976

The Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976 provides for the control or conduct of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary by the National Trust of Queensland. An amendment to the act is proposed to allow the National Trust to establish a wholly owned subsidiary that will be able to operate the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary as a commercial entity at arm's length from the owner, the National Trust.

7. Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Regional Agreement

On 29 April 2005, 18 rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups represented in the Wet Tropics area, along with the state and Commonwealth governments, signed the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement. The agreement provides for the involvement of rainforest Aboriginal people in the management of this World Heritage property. One clause specifies that the parties 'will seek to amend the Wet Tropics World Heritage area legislation so there is a requirement for a second rainforest Aboriginal person on the WTMA board of directors'.

The proposed amendment to section 14 of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 honours that commitment by providing for one Aboriginal person 'particularly concerned with land in the Wet Tropics area' to be appointed on the nomination of ministerial council. As one of the Commonwealth nominees must also be an Aboriginal person, this will mean that a minimum of two Wet Tropics Management Authority directors, out of a total of seven, must be Aboriginal people. This is a significant move and clearly indicates a strong commitment by the government to involve Aboriginal people in the management of the World Heritage property.

These are some of the key highlights of the IPOLA Bill 2006. I would like to now go into more detail on some of the other amendments proposed.

Regional planning—local growth management strategies and structure plans

During the last election campaign, the Beattie Labor government promised to deliver a comprehensive regional planning framework for south-east Queensland linked to the delivery of key state infrastructure. The government has delivered on this promise. Soon after its re-election, the government established the Office of Urban Management, charged with preparing and implementing the SEQ Regional Plan, and amended the IPA to authorise the plan's preparation, including tough regulatory provisions to support the identification of an urban footprint for the region. A draft regional plan was released for public comment in October 2004, and after carefully considering nearly 9,000 public submissions the final regional plan was implemented in June 2005.

We are now in the implementation phase of the SEQ Regional Plan. The IPA amendments originally made in October 2004 envisaged that, upon implementation of the regional plan, local governments would be required to immediately amend their planning schemes to align with the regional plan. As the Office of Urban Management has worked with the 18 local governments in the SEQ region to reflect the regional plan in their planning schemes, it has become clear that some of the key elements of the regional plan representing a framework for implementing the plan in each local government area should be established first, and act as a 'bridge' by which the more detailed technical amendments to planning schemes could later be made.

In particular, the Office of Urban Management, working in collaboration with the local governments of the region, has developed the concepts of a local growth management strategy and structure plans as the key basis for implementing the regional plan in each local government area. A local growth management strategy will identify for a particular local government area key aspects for implementing the plan, such as transit oriented development sites, greenfield development areas and priority infrastructure areas.

Structure plans will identify how each of the key major development areas will be developed, including sequencing and sites for key infrastructure. Local growth management strategies and structure plans will be developed by local governments under guidelines produced by the Office of Urban Management and in consultation with their communities.

However, to facilitate their effective introduction, the IPOLA Bill 2006 allows for the inclusion of local growth management strategies and structure plans under the SEQ Regional Plan, using a simplified amendment process, reflecting the public consultation that will already have occurred in their development. As with most provisions of the regional plan, local growth management strategies and structure plans will 'fall away' when they are replaced with detailed planning scheme amendments prepared under the normal processes under the IPA.

Referral coordination and referral assistance

The government is always looking for ways of further streamlining development assessment processes under the IPA, and the IPOLA Bill contains a further reform in this regard. The referral coordination process has been a feature of the IPA since its commencement in 1998. Referral coordination consists of the coordination by the chief executive of my department of information requests for development applications under specified circumstances. For example, where there are several concurrence agencies for a development application, an applicant would receive multiple information requests from each agency as well as the assessment manager. Referral coordination was intended to ensure applicants received only one information request.

Referral coordination has also been used as a 'stopgap' arrangement to allow state agencies to review development applications until the assessment processes those agencies usually use have been integrated into IDAS. That process of integrating development approvals into IDAS is now nearly complete. So there is less need to use the referral coordination process in this way. Also, while it was originally intended as a 'value-adding' process to provide applicants with a consolidated information request, referral coordination nevertheless requires some additional red tape and time, which on balance applicants have found to outweigh the benefits of a single information request.

As IDAS has developed, many applicants have also become more familiar with the system and are able to negotiate directly with agencies about the contents of their information requests. Consequently, the IPOLA Bill contains provisions removing the referral coordination process from IDAS. Commencement of these provisions is intended to be deferred until appropriate training and administrative processes have been put in place and to allow my department to finalise consultations with other state agencies about possible limited additional referrals for development applications affected by the removal of referral coordination. The amendments will remove about half a dozen pages of process from the IPA and streamline development assessment processes.

Currency periods for development approvals

As I advised earlier, the IPA contains rules providing that development approvals lapse if development is not started within clearly stated times. These times can be varied either in the approval itself or later at the applicant's request. Some time ago industry made representations to me about the lapsing requirements for development applications under the IPA. A given project may involve several stages and types of development, and an applicant may choose to obtain several different approvals for these. The IPA does not automatically create a link between the currency of, say, a use approval and a building approval necessary to allow the use to proceed. Consequently, unless the applicant manages their approvals by seeking extensions when necessary, some approvals for a project may lapse before others, on which they depend, can be completed. It seems applicants were not sufficiently aware of the necessity to manage their approvals in this way and, as a result, industry believed several approvals may have unintentionally lapsed.

A proposed legislative solution was developed to link such approvals more closely together. However, as local government expressed concern about the effect of this solution, a transitional arrangement saving existing approvals was put in place while a longer term solution could be brokered between key stakeholders.

This transitional provision is due to expire at the end of March 2006. The IPOLA Bill 2006 contains a long-term solution to this issue which has been the subject of extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups. The solution involves linking the lapsing times for related approvals to ensure, for example, that a completed building can be occupied for an approved use without the use approval having first run out. The linking arrangements involve approvals for uses and subdivision 'rolling forward' to correspond with the start of lapsing periods for related works. However, the provisions also contain safeguards against abuse and to ensure local governments can still manage the currency of approvals they give in their communities' interest.

Most importantly, applicants will need to bring forward applications for related works within two years of the previous approval to demonstrate progress towards completing the project. Otherwise the current default arrangements will apply, and applicants will need to individually seek extensions to their approvals. I seek leave to have the remainder of this second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Local governments will also retain the ability to vary the currency periods of approvals they give on reasonable grounds, and also to establish milestones for completion through conditions of approval.

Accountability measures

Mr Speaker, local government planning schemes are the key document for integrating state and local government planning and development policies in a local context, and they have a central role in development assessment. The IPA accords them great importance as the key benchmark against which development applications are assessed.

Consequently I am concerned to ensure that local governments adhere to their planning schemes in making decisions on development applications, and are open and accountable for any departures from their schemes.

For this reason, the IPOLA Bill 2006 contains several provisions designed to improve transparency and accountability for decisions by assessment managers.

Firstly, assessment managers will be required to give reasons for any departure from their laws and policies (including planning schemes) when making decisions on development applications.

Presently, the IPA requires reasons only in the case of a refusal of a development application, however there have been instances of departures from planning schemes in order to approve applications, and the community currently has no way of knowing the grounds on which such departures have occurred.

Secondly, the bill includes arrangements for publication of decision notices on assessment managers' websites. Decision notices are already required under the IPA to be publicly available, and assessment managers must also keep a register of all decisions about development applications. However this information is currently difficult for the community to access. The provisions in the bill require publication of decision notices on assessment managers' websites in a searchable way.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate that some assessment managers may not have websites with the technical capability to publish documents in a searchable way, and it is not my intention that assessment managers divert scarce resources to provide this capacity immediately.

Consequently the bill provides for technical guidelines prepared by the chief executive of the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, identifying the circumstances under which decision notices must be published. These guidelines will be developed in consultation with assessment managers and will take account of differing technical capacities of assessment managers' websites.

Thirdly, the IPOLA Bill 2006 contains a new definition of "sufficient grounds" in relation to departing from laws and policies guiding development assessment, including from planning schemes. This definition is intended to give broad but clear guidance to decision makers about the circumstances under which it is appropriate to consider departing from their laws and policies when making a decision about a development application.

In particular the definition makes it clear that any departures must be on public interest grounds, and not be related to the personal circumstances or private interests of an applicant, owner or interested party.

The definition also includes guidance about the types of grounds upon which a departure may be based. This is an inclusive list only and is not intended to detract from the substantial body of judicial authority in this area.

Infrastructure amendments

Mr Speaker, amendments to the IPA in 2003 introduced priority infrastructure plans (PIPs) to better integrate local government land use and infrastructure planning with state infrastructure provision, and to provide a transparent, accountable and certain basis for the calculation of infrastructure charges levied on new development.

With an increasing number of local governments now making good progress in the preparation of their PIPs, a number of opportunities have been identified to further refine and improve the IPA infrastructure planning and charging framework.

Consequently, the bill includes key reforms which provide greater flexibility for local governments in how they set their infrastructure charges, and removes a restriction on local governments using a mix of different infrastructure charging instruments. These amendments are intended to make it easier for local governments, particularly those in rural and regional areas, to prepare their PIPs.

The bill also includes an amendment to extend the operation of the current transitional infrastructure charging arrangements to give local governments adequate time to prepare and adopt their PIPs.

Other IPA amendments

Mr Speaker, the IPOLA Bill also contains several amendments designed to clarify or streamline the operation of the act, in response to continuing experience with its administration.

For example the bill contains several amendments designed to clarify the relationship between temporary local planning instruments and planning schemes, and to clarify temporary local planning instruments do not affect rights to compensation if they are followed by a change to a planning scheme.

Mr Speaker, the IPA contains powers of ministerial direction in relation to planning instruments, such as the power to direct the making or amendment of a planning scheme. However it is currently unclear whether these powers can be exercised in relation to planning instruments that are under preparation. The bill contains amendments clarifying for example that the powers of direction may be used to achieve completion of an instrument once the process of making it has started.

The bill also contains provisions clarifying how designation of land by a state minister affects land in a state development area under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971, and allowing for consultation between designating ministers and the minister administering that act.

Amendments to environmental legislation

Mr Speaker, with the introduction of regional coastal management plans under the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, any existing scheme of works approved under the now repealed Beach Protection act 1968 has lapsed. However, the Gold Coast scheme of works, which was prepared for the protection of beaches and mainly deals with engineering works in relation to coastal erosion management, remains current. The bill includes amendments to the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 to ensure the continuation of the Gold Coast scheme of works when the South-east Queensland Regional Coastal Management Plan is introduced.

Mr Speaker, during the debate on the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2005 the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee noted that decisions about financial assurance for petroleum activities under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 had not been included in the list of decisions that can be appealed under the Environmental Protection Act. This bill honours the commitment I gave to the committee to introduce an amendment as soon as possible to correct this oversight.

The Nature Conservation Act 1992 is also being amended to correct an error in the numbering of schedule 5 of the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994.

Townsville—Douglas Land Act

Mr Speaker, the Townsville City Council (Douglas Land Development) Act 1993 provides for development of certain land within Townsville city in accordance with a master plan prepared for the area. Land developed under the act is to be integrated into the Townsville planning scheme as development is completed. However, because the act does not recognise the council's IPA planning scheme, there is some doubt regarding whether amendments made by the Townsville City Council in 2002, 2003 and 2005 to include land developed under the Douglas Land Act are valid.

Consequently, Mr Speaker, the bill includes provisions to validate these amendments and to provide a process for including future amendments in the council's IPA planning scheme. These amendments will help to protect the property entitlements of hundreds of land owners.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 contains key reforms to the state's planning and development assessment system designed to improve accountability for decision making, streamline development assessment processes, provide greater certainty to applicants and the community alike.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McArdle, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (2.30 pm): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 1 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 29 November 2005 (see p. 4388).

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (2.30 pm): The Recreation Areas Management Bill before this House comprises nine parts and 154 pages. This piece of legislation fundamentally concentrates overwhelming legislative and regulatory power in the hands of the environment minister by, firstly, abolishing the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and also the board, which is contained in clauses 233 and 234, and, secondly, delegating ministerial powers to Public Service officers, which is contained in part 10, division 3, clause 225.

The Recreation Areas Management Bill is not consistent with fundamental legislative principles. This is reflected in the unusual and, what I believe to be, unprecedented comments in the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's—a bipartisan committee comprising both Labor and conservative members of this House—latest *Alert Digest* at page 19 point 3 where it reads—

... these provisions impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter, or wish to enter, such areas.

That is a phrase that we will continually hark back to. It must ring alarm bells for members of this House. The areas we are talking about are Green Island, Moreton Island, Fraser Island, Bribie Island and Inskip Point. The rights and liberties of individuals such as the campers, the tourists, the permanent residents and the mums and dads of Queensland will be affected.

Alarm bells should be sounding right now for members of this House who value the principles of social justice because this bill, if it passes this chamber, will give rangers and EPA officers the equivalent of police powers without the proper checks and balances, without the training. A renowned lover of social justice and former member of this House and Labor Premier Wayne Goss would never have allowed this legislation to come before this place because it breaches the Legislative Standards Act 1992 and fundamentally undermines the liberties, civil rights and freedoms of Queenslanders.

Then Premier Goss introduced the Legislative Standards Act 1992 which established at part 2 section 4 the meaning of fundamental legislative principles, which states—

For the purposes of this act, 'fundamental legislative principles' are the principles relating to legislation that underlie a parliamentary democracy based on the rule of law.

It requires that any legislation must have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of parliament. Deciding whether the legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals depends on (a) whether the legislation makes rights and liberties or obligations dependent on administrative power only if the power is sufficiently defined and subject to appropriate review. In relation to the RAM bill the minister and the department head have those rights. There is no mention of them being subject to appropriate review.

The Legislative Standards Act further states that legislation must be (b) consistent with principles of natural justice. Natural justice principles are something that seem to be lacking under this legislation before the House.

The act goes on to state that the legislation must (c) allow the delegation of administrative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons. Again the legislation before this House overextends the delegation of administrative powers as it now applies to the world at large and does not limit it to appropriate cases and persons.

The act goes on to state that legislation (d) must not reverse the onus of proof in criminal proceedings without adequate justification. Again this legislation before the House reverses the onus of proof in that it allows the rangers to apply charges to an individual, including fines, without having to prove that they had reasonable grounds. Therefore, the individual is guilty; not innocent until proven guilty.

It continues with legislation must only (e) confer powers to enter premises and search for and seize documents or other property only with a warrant issued by a judge. Once again, the RAM bill confers powers to enter without a warrant or the owner's permission.

The act goes on to state that legislation must (f) provide appropriate protection against self-incrimination. The legislation before this House denies the right to silence and the right to protect oneself from incrimination.

The act further states that legislation must not (g) adversely affect rights and liberties or impose obligations retrospectively. This bill imposes rights and obligations on individuals and affects their liberties.

It continues by stating that legislation must (i) provide fair compensation for property. The RAM bill makes no allowance for compensation. The individual has to seek compensation via the courts.

Further, legislation must (j) have sufficient regard to Aboriginal tradition and Island custom. These are the forgotten people in this RAM bill. There is no mention in the RAM bill of having any regard to or acknowledging Indigenous customs and traditions or the Murri Court.

Why would this Labor minister introduce to this House, an institution where the flame of democracy and freedom rages, a bill where the umpire—I remind the House that the umpire has said this—the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has said in an unprecedented way that the RAM bill will impinge in many ways on the rights and liberties of individuals? Why is this Beattie Labor government so eager to impinge on the rights and liberties of our mums and dads and tourists and permanent residents who choose to live, for example, on Fraser Island?

It does so because it is locked into an inflexible, stupid ideology which says that the best way to manage our environment is to lock it up and the only way we can lock it up is by giving our EPA officers illegal policing powers. Make no mistake, if this legislation passes this place it will—and this is a statement of fact—impinge in many ways on the rights and liberties of individuals who enter or wish to enter a RAM designated area.

We know—because of the minister's 'lock it up and do not talk to the locals' policy—that there has been a serious breakdown in the relationship between EPA officers and the community. Members do not have to take my word for it; all they have to do is get out into the community and meet with Queenslanders who have some common sense. We just have to leave the spin doctors behind. We have only to visit places like Inskip Point, Rainbow Beach, Tuncumba, Happy Valley and Fraser Island and ask the people there what is happening on the ground.

Because of the Labor Party's flawed policies the relationship between the community and rangers is dysfunctional and the rangers have become the meat in the sandwich. This legislation will not improve the matter. This legislation will create more distrust. As we will find out in the course of this debate, this law has more holes in it than Swiss cheese.

The ancient Romans, from where many of our laws and legal terminology originate, had a phrase for such legislation—*lex nous lex*—which is Latin for an unjust law. This is not a just law. It is bad law which fundamentally reverses the onus of proof, making people who are deemed by EPA officers to have committed offences under this legislation guilty and they have to prove their innocence.

It does not allow for open, independent, transparent or public scrutiny of ministerial decisions relating to internal reviews. That can be found in division 3, clauses 206 to 209. How do we gauge if the bill is achieving its goals and objectives if there is no accountability? Nor does the bill allow for an independent, open and transparent system of review in relation to EPA officers' decisions. Under the legislation—clauses 143 to 195—they have been given unprecedented police powers. It limits the basic tenements of access to justice that is the keystone of the legal system and a democratic, independent government as it forces individuals to pursue their concerns through the courts and at their expense.

Four times in the explanatory notes this legislation is described as breaching fundamental legislative principles. On page 2 in relation to regulatory signage the explanatory notes state—

This provision might be considered to breach fundamental legislative principles relating to delegation of power ...

At page 4 the explanatory notes state with regard to powers of authorised officers for compliance and investigation—

... these provisions might be considered to breach fundamental legislative principles relating to laws conveying power to enter premises ...

Again at page 4 under 'Powers of authorised officers to give directions' the explanatory notes state—

These provisions might be considered to breach fundamental legislative principles relating to delegation of powers ...

At page 5 under 'Responsibility of executive officers' the explanatory notes state—

This provision might be considered to breach fundamental legislative principles that a law should not reverse the onus of proof in criminal proceedings without adequate justification.

It is for those elementary reasons that I find this legislation grossly flawed, and the Queensland coalition will not support its passage through this place. The Queensland coalition cannot accept a piece of legislation which undermines people's basic legal rights while at the same time increases government powers, reduces its public accountability and denies an open and transparent government.

How many people will be affected by this legislation? On Bribie Island, for example, there were 12,747 camper nights from declaration from 3 June 2005 to 15 February 2006. The revenue raised was \$18,000. The revenue for 2005-06 is expected to be \$350,000. On Fraser Island revenue of \$3,637,000 was raised and there were 311,401 camper nights. Persons carried by commercial operators in 2004-05 numbered 174,619. On Moreton Island revenue of \$899,000 was raised with 122,303 camper nights. Persons carried by commercial operators in 2004-05 numbered 67,844. On Green Island revenue of \$683,000 was raised with over 390,000 day visitors, because there is no camping on Green Island. Persons carried by commercial operators numbered 389,820. With regard to Inskip peninsula, revenue of \$445,000 was raised with 60,159 camper nights.

The aims of the proposed legislation are (1) to improve procedures for management plans and implementing them; (2) to define appointments for officers and identity cards; (3) to increase officer law enforcement ability under the State Penalties Enforcement Act; (4) for visitor conduct to be regulated in the bill; (5) the management and regulation of recreational activities; (6) the collection of funds to spend on the management and facilities; (7) to create a consistent permit regime and visitor management; and (8) to allow continued management of the recreation areas.

This bill raises several areas of concern. Firstly, there are issues associated with the representation of non-state landowners and administrative arrangements to manage this act. Based on the briefing I received on the issue of private landowners, I was informed that currently there are no private landowners who have agreed to enter into this RAMs agreement. The Green Island resort, which is in the middle of the RAMs area, rejected approaches by the EPA to participate in the RAMs agreement as these agreements are currently very open-ended and at the discretion of the minister as to the terms of the agreement between the private landowner and the state.

The issue of commercial activities is not limited to the act but includes the Nature Conservation Act. This requires two forms of compliance for commercial businesses to address, as opposed to one. Therefore, there needs to be consistency with the Nature Conservation Act, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, the Forestry Act 1959, the Workplace Health and Safety Act, the State Penalties Enforcement Act, the noise pollution act, the Magistrates Act 1991, the Bail Act, the Evidence Act, the Justices Act 1886, the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 and the Mineral Resources Act.

That the bill might conflict and overlap with the federal government World Heritage areas and legislation is another concern. It could cause conflict and confusion for the businesses and individuals in the areas in question and the bill's objectives might not be achieved. Another area of concern is that, because of the nature of the areas in question, a stand-alone bill relating to Fraser Island would be of more benefit and allow better management of an individual area in conjunction with the federal government World Heritage listing.

Commercial activities will only be issued under tourism in protected areas—TIPA. That is based on sustainable visitor capacity. This presents a number of concerns including site capacity. How will it be measured and will this limit the type of activities? Another concern is the distribution of access to all parties based on site capacity. How will consultation occur and decisions be made? Is there a right of appeal in relation to any decisions that may be considered unfair and unreasonable?

Another area of concern is that the 10-year commercial agreements could also be offered to community groups for a minimum of three years, unlike the proposed one year offered in this legislation. There is the issue of fees—that commercial activities might receive preference over community interests and that community fees should be varied from the commercial fees as they are not income producing and are education based. Also, the three-year commercial agreements should run concurrently—a three by three-year option as opposed to a 10-year limit. This legislation further disenfranchises and ignores the wisdom of local communities. In its response to this legislation the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation also made the same point.

In the past, local governments and private landholders may have been reluctant to hand over responsibilities to a board on which they are not represented. The proposed changes to the RAM act, with the dissolution of the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and board, with their functions and powers to be vested in the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women and chief executive of the EPA, in no way improves the situation. The minister may establish advisory committees to obtain the views of government entities, individuals, community entities and other non-government entities about the recreation area, and that is stated in division 3, at clause 244. The Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation rightly points out that the establishment of such advisory committees is not guaranteed. It is completely at the minister's discretion.

What we are getting with this legislation is less community consultation and more power in the hands of government officers—more power in the hands of bureaucrats with an inadequate method of appeal. As I stated earlier, it limits access to justice as there is no cheap, easy method of appeal if one has a dispute with this government. As described in division 3, at clause 206, one can start an appeal process with an internal review. One is not guaranteed an independent review consisting of a tribunal containing some peers. It is similar to, say, the Building Services Tribunal.

What we will get with this bill is Caesar judging Caesar. If there is to be public confidence in the administration of justice, it is vital that a government's independence is not compromised, as it is being compromised in this case. If you do not agree with a ruling by an EPA officer who is acting under the authority that this legislation gives he or she and you want to appeal that decision, then you had better have deep pockets. Under this legislation you are deemed guilty and the onus is on you to prove your innocence as there is no independent tribunal or third-person mediator to assess the ruling. In order to prove your case you must do that as described in division 4 section 210 by appeal to the Magistrates Court.

In many cases innocent people will choose to pay the fines imposed on them for a breach of these rules, because they will not be able to afford the cost of the legal fight. Even if they win in the Magistrates Court, there is no guarantee that costs will be awarded to them, as referred to in division 2 section 214. The court may make an order for costs if it considers it appropriate. Unfortunately, for many members of the Queensland public, a legal fight with this government is an unwelcome reality and, of course, must be considered very much like a David versus Goliath battle.

Common sense in decision making by this minister is a very, very rare commodity. We do not have to cast our minds back all that far to think of examples where community common sense and wisdom backed up by an optimistic course of action was ignored and replaced by a pessimistic, rigid and ideologically driven environmental philosophy. Dolphin feeding at Tin Can Bay is a classic case in which common sense within the EPA went out the window and was replaced by a frightening ignorance and arrogance. If we asked the people of the Tinnanbar dolphin feeding centre if the minister for environment and her officers needed more legislative power, we would find that they will wholeheartedly say no.

Currently, this legislation is proposed to cover five main areas: Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsula, Moreton Island and Bribie Island. Fraser Island is one of the iconic travel destinations in Australia. It stretches over 123 kilometres along the southern coast of our beautiful state. With an area of 184,000 hectares, Fraser Island is the largest sand island in the world. It is a must-see for international tourists visiting Australia. It has been voted one of the world's top 10 tropical islands by *Conde Nast Traveller* readers for three years running. The entire island is listed as one of the world's 10 best beaches by the USA cable network's Travel Channel. Fraser Island's World Heritage listing ranks with Australia's Uluru, Kakadu and the Great Barrier Reef. As I mentioned, it is one of Australia's iconic destinations for overseas visitors. When they come to our shores they want to see the coathanger at Sydney Harbour, the rock, the reef and the island, which, of course, is Fraser Island.

Fraser Island has a rich cultural history. Aboriginal history claims the island as K'Gari—and I apologise if that pronunciation is not quite correct—meaning paradise. The last Indigenous people there, the Butchulla tribe, left the island in 1904 when the Indigenous mission at Bogimbah was closed. They were transported to Yarrabah, near Cairns, and Durundur, near Caboolture. Once again, we will find out in the consideration in detail stage just how disenfranchised the Indigenous people of Fraser Island are when they visit the island. We have seen a complete erosion of personal rights, liberties and freedoms by this legislation.

The European history of Fraser Island is rich with tales of shipwrecks, logging and sandmining. Fraser Island is a precious part of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. We all want to protect it to enjoy it. Who could forget the island's exceptional beauty, with its long uninterrupted wide beaches flanked by strikingly coloured sand cliffs and over 100 freshwater lakes—some tea coloured. The people who have visited the island will know of the island's striking blue freshwater lakes and sandy beaches.

A lot of people enjoy fishing on Fraser Island because of 75 Mile Beach. It provides some of the best beach fishing action in the world. There are plenty of surf gutters along the ocean beaches and they provide all-season angling. People can catch whiting and bream. In the warmer months they can catch a nice feed of swallowtail. The tailor season in winter sees dozens of fishing groups along the beach. All the usual rock species can be caught off the headlands from Indian Head to Waddy Point.

The legislation has a direct impact on tourism and the tourism operators on the Fraser Coast. Damien Massingham from the Fraser Coast South Burnett Tourism Board estimates that tourism injects approximately \$360 million a year into the Fraser Coast economy. The latest statistics by the Hervey Bay City Council estimate that figure as \$500 million per year. As well, recently Queensland Treasury developed an economic model that shows that for every 167 domestic overnight visitors and for every 65 international visitors, one full-time equivalent job is created. Therefore, based on that model, there are approximately 8,914 full-time equivalent jobs, or up to 15,000 people employed in tourism on the Fraser Coast.

Concerns have been expressed to me by permanent residents of Fraser Island about this government's poor management policies regarding the island. This legislation does not look as though it is going to improve those policies. I have been told that the decision-making process is flawed and that user and community groups should be involved. That does not occur at the individual camper or community level and/or with interest groups. The management plan was reviewed without public consultation, as promised by the minister and the Premier. The public consultation should be at the user's level, not with a select few who do not inform the residents and let them have a say and make a decision as to what they believe is right or wrong.

Fraser Island is being taken away from the traditional family camper with the almost total ban on the traditional camp fire even for cooking purposes. Camp fires are a traditional part of Australian camping life and should be allowed in all areas—weather permitting, of course, and common sense should apply.

I have also been told by the residents of Happy Valley that the Waddy Point camping ground booking system is a farce. The new booking regulations for the Waddy Point camping area are greatly reducing family camping numbers. A sign at Champagne Pools does not advise campers of the alternative camping area north of Orchid Beach if they have not prebooked at Waddy Point. This is seen as a way of deterring campers from Orchid Beach and containing tourists towards the southern part of the island. One can look up the availability of camping spots and see that Waddy Point is not booked out, although visitors are deterred from coming to Orchid Beach and Waddy Point. They need to go to the EPA web site and from there go to step 3, 'availability', and they will see that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is turning people away from going to that location when there are plenty of camping spots available. The residents of Happy Valley would like to know if that is due to laziness on the part of the QPWS or if they are just trying to close it down.

I have also been informed that there is concern that there is not a sign near the Champagne Pools indicating the direction to Orchid Beach and what is available there. Orchid Beach is the largest freehold township, with 140 blocks of land. It has a shop, garage, fuel, rental homes, accommodation, great camping areas on the beach plus two camping areas at Waddy Point, where toilets and showers are available. Everything is there for the tourists, so why are they not allowed to go there? Why are they being discouraged from going there? The impression of those residents is that all management decisions are made to assist tourism on the southern half of the island.

The proposed closure of the beach from Hook Point north to almost Dilli Village will make accessing the northern part of the island more difficult because of impending delays accessing and traversing. The track, or road, proposed from Hook Point to just south of Dilli Village is poorly constructed and will become congested in busy times, causing major problems for all, especially heavy vehicles carrying bulk fuel and stores and all vehicles travelling further north with the tide factor. Who will be accountable for any deaths caused on this road when people are forced to use this road against their wishes and taken off a perfectly good and safe highway, namely the beach? The residents would also like me to inform this place that birds do not nest below the high tide mark. This was a decision made before 1991. The influx of traffic to the island since that decision was made has increased beyond safety for this type of road and the quantity of traffic.

I have recently been contacted by small business operator Mr Gerry Geltch of Air Fraser and I have advocated on his behalf to the Premier. He is another gentleman who will be affected by this legislation. Mr Geltch's business is affected by not only the legislation but, more importantly, the interpretation of this legislation by the EPA officers. There appears to be a will or policy by senior departmental officers to restrict Mr Geltch's ability to land on Fraser Island which is partly covered in division 5, clause 132 'Unauthorised landing of aircraft'.

I wrote to the Premier on 19 January this year—as yet I have had no reply from the Premier—asking for his assistance on this urgent matter involving a Fraser Island flight charter service and its commercial beach operation permit, which is currently being revised to the detriment of the business. I have been approached by the owners of Air Fraser Island, Mr Gerry and Mrs Terrina Geltch, who currently run the successful flight charter service to and from Fraser Island and have done so over the past 13 years. It is also important to note that their family has been collectively operating this service since 1974. The service has been praised over the years and has received numerous tourism awards on a local and state level.

Air Fraser Island is a well-respected and highly valued service to many, including the Queensland Police Service. Air Fraser Island has assisted the Queensland Police Service on a number of occasions, including assisting in searching for vehicles and camp sites and reporting numerous traffic accidents and other related offences. The flight charter service also provides a free service to visitors on the island in need of prescription medications and assists in flying people off the island in emergencies. The Queensland Ambulance Service is also assisted by the company in the evacuation of medical injuries from traffic accidents on the island on a voluntary basis, and I have cited a letter of support from the emergency services minister, who is very grateful for the service Air Fraser Island provides.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service also utilises the services of Air Fraser Island to search and check for fires, particularly when it is burning off. Bearing this in mind, I find it inconceivable that Air Fraser Island's commercial beach operation permit, as per the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's instructions, is to be revised by, amongst other things, changing and completely closing down landing areas and increasing ground staff to unreasonable levels. Ultimately, these adjustments to the permit will make Air Fraser Island's business completely unviable by decreasing turnover by a minimum of 60 per cent and increasing running costs by approximately \$150,000 per annum. If these changes were to be enforced, Air Fraser Island would have no choice but to cease operations.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service states that its reasoning behind the permit restriction guidelines is due to safety. However, the Queensland department of transport and the Civil Aviation Authority, which is responsible for aircraft safety, have both conducted safety audits and have found no concerns with its operations and are satisfied with its level of safety. In fact, I flew to Fraser Island with Gerry Geltch and landed on the beach. He is a very, very experienced operator. Never for one moment did I feel unsafe.

The owners of Air Fraser Island are appealing to the Premier to ensure that they are given a fair deal and ask that he assist them in attempting to keep their commercial beach operation permit as it stands at present. In the correspondence I sent to the Premier, I provided copies of the Queensland Police Service letter of support for Air Fraser Island and a letter from Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village for his consideration. Mr Geltch wrote a letter to me saying—

At this point I would like to bring to your attention a meeting that was held mid 2004 in QPWS rooms in Maryborough. The meeting was attended by Charles Hammond (QPWS), Michelle Grimes (QPWS), Terrina and myself.

I intended to apply for an additional landing area to be added to our existing Beach Landing permit. The requested area was Cornwell's Break Road.

The ability to utilise this area would reduce the aircraft movements in the northern high use areas north of Happy Valley.

After several attempts to identifying Cornwell's Break Road correctly, Mr Hammond totally refused to consider the suggestion of this additional area.

He pointed out that he was totally unhappy with current aircraft activities of Air Fraser island "hopping up the beach with tour buses" and in the words along the lines of "I will make it one of my priorities to stop these activities."

I fear that the revised permit is to faze out prematurely aircraft landing north of Happy Valley as per Great Sandy Region Management Plan. This plan need not be implemented until 2010, if at all necessary.

This is another example, in this whole saga that Mr Geltch has gone through over the last few months, of the narrow-mindedness and limited forward planning by the minister's department.

I turn to other areas of concern relating to this legislation. According to the briefing I received, the estimated revenue from permits in the RAMs areas is \$5 million to \$6 million. I would like the minister to detail where that money is going to be used. Estimates of revenue available to government under the proposed legislation are \$38.8 million. These estimates are based on a 'consumer surplus' projection. There is also the issue that a declaration of a recreation area does not change the right of underlying land tenures and does not affect the rights and obligations, including government agencies, except to the extent of any agreement between the landholder and the board.

Other concerns are that the legislation enshrines an authority consisting of one minister and a board constituted by two departmental heads. This lacks the necessary transparency for accountable processes and governance. It is difficult to judge a process if there is no openness and therefore there is no way to judge if the bill is achieving its goals, aims and objectives.

Any appeal has to be considered through the Magistrates Court, making access to justice limited. It is not the appropriate forum for these forums and an alternative needs to be considered. Also, in relation to any matters considered by the board, it needs to be clear that the matters will be the matters that are already listed and should only be relevant to the issue at hand. A role for the local community groups should also be considered in the legislation. At present there is no real public input into the management of these areas in question.

At part 1 of the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005, clause 4 'Purpose of Act' does not define the interests of the area landowners in relation to the act and the expectations of the landowners in relation to the purpose of the act. Part 1, clause 4(2)(a) does not allow provision for the permanent creation of a consultation body with a view to having regard to all of the interested parties. Part 1, clause 4(2)(e) does not indicate if the fees are regulatory or CPI linked or subject to a department or ministerial whim.

I turn to part 2, recreation areas, and division 1, establishing recreation areas. Clause 6 concerns agreement for inclusion of land in recreation areas. Questions raised in relation to this area include whether there is any benefit for a private individual to enter into agreement with the government to have their land included in a recreation area—for example, financial incentives or a reduction in rates. What compensation is the government offering these people for the use of their land? What money has the government set aside for private landowners' compensation? There is also the issue of public liability in relation to the use of private land for public use. Is the government prepared to compensate the landowners for the necessary insurance or in the event that they are sued? Will Parks and Wildlife

Service officers manage the land for weeds and pests? Will the government provide increased funding for the necessary personnel? What plans does the government have for increasing staff numbers in this area if it is responsible for the management of private land included in the recreation areas? Or will it pay private landowners to maintain the land in question? These are all questions that the minister might like to answer.

Do landowners still have unlimited freehold rights to the land and the property in question by becoming part of the agreement? Who still pays for the rates on the private property after the agreement is signed? Who is responsible for the control of stock and fencing on the properties? Will the government compensate the landowner for any loss of grazing or cropping? Under subclause (3) concerning recreation area agreements, paragraph (e) should be added to cover the following—whether the freehold land is included in a recreation area agreement, the length of the agreement, the number of years, the tenure of the lease and whether it passes on with the sale of the property. Also, is the sale of the property affected by it? Does it reduce the value and saleability of the property in question? Can the new owner seek to have it removed without having to acquire the minister's consent?

I turn to clause 9—revoking recreation areas. There is no choice in the matter in relation to the landowner. This is not in keeping with informed decision making or giving the landowner the right to appeal or argue their case.

I turn to division 4—effect of declaration on landholders and native title rights. There is no mention of air rights over RAM areas. Under part 3, management plans, division 1, preparing and approving management plans, clause 19 concerns the public notice of draft management plans. How are they advertised? Is there a set format? Are they to be advertised in the *Courier-Mail*, the *Government Gazette* or perhaps a local community paper? The content of the draft management plan should also include the parties' names and details and an address where objections can be lodged; the right of appeal details and point of contact; the time of implementation of the management plan; what the plan entails and encompasses and size of the area in question; what communities have been consulted and included in the draft plan; and any community suggestions or concerns that might impact economically, socially or environmentally. Any legal implications, the costings of the management plan and what support is to be provided to create this management plan and any review of plans intended on this date should also be included. This is partially addressed in clause 52 and clause 71.

When an approved management plan takes effect should also include the date advertised in the appropriate media—the *Courier-Mail* for example—public notices and the local area newspaper to create community awareness instead of just limiting it to *Government Gazette* notices. The idea is advertising to the community at large instead of limiting public access. Under clause 33 the chief executive may enter into a cooperative arrangement for an approved management plan. At present, it is limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. There is a need to consider native title implications and the federal government World Heritage implications. The federal government and the relevant department should be involved and consulted on any management plans in sensitive areas such as Fraser Island. A separate government body to look at cooperative arrangements for management plans might need to be considered.

I turn to part 4—access to, and permits for, recreation areas. Division 1 deals with permitted activities. Clause 35—terms of permits—is a real issue of concern. There needs to be further clarity on this matter. Subclause (2)(c) should not limit group activity permits to one year. There should be an option for three-year permits, as there is with commercial permits, with a review in relation to insurance carried out every year. Subclause (d) deals with commercial activity permits. There needs to be greater clarity as to exactly what a commercial permit entails and how the option for renewal in 10 years is considered. The bill attempts to address this in clause 52—deciding application for commercial activity permit. There is no right of appeal or ability to challenge a decision in relation to the deciding of an application and this should also be included. Under clause 59, steps to be taken after a permit application is decided other than a commercial activity permit, subsection (2)(b) states—

... for any other permit—tell the applicant about the refusal.

In what nominated time frame? The bill does not state or allow for alternative appeal or lodgement of an alternative. Under section 62, amendments by application, there is no mention of what the fee is. Is it an annual fee? Is it a fee for the term of the permit? Is it a legislative fee or a regulatory fee? Is it CPI linked and can it be amended? Under part 5, division 2, expression of interest process, clause 74 deals with invitation for submissions. How is the expression of interest raised? Is it invited or advertised? Is it by tender or personal approaches by the community or individuals? Are the applications for submissions advertised to the community once again at large, or are they just limited to the *Government Gazette*? How are the sustainable numbers for the submissions reached in relation to the RAMs legislation and how are they distributed? Who decides if the applicant is a fit and proper person? Just what are the requirements that a commercial operator needs to meet in relation to a fit and proper person? Is it the same standard that is required by the Supreme Court regarding the admission of a solicitor or an individual in the community at large?

Under division 3, application process, clause 81 deals with applying for commercial activity agreements. Again, there is no mention of fees. It needs to be clear as to what the fees are and the ongoing costs. Are the fees prescribed under regulation and how are these fees decided? Section 85, which deals with the application of section 51 to commercial activity agreements, needs to include public notice of application in the appropriate media—for example, the *Courier-Mail* or the local newspaper.

I turn to division 4—requirements applying to and nature of agreements. Clause 88 deals with the term and review of commercial activity agreements. Are the reviews regulated or based on an internal time line? The reviews must be reasonable and fair, and conducted within a reasonable time frame which must be indicated. Matters to be considered at the review should be informed prior to the review to allow the parties in question the ability to address the matters. Is there a set standard of matters that will be raised at the reviews along with other topics or matters that might be raised?

I turn to division 5, amendment, termination and suspension of agreement by chief executive, and clauses 90 and 91. This division raises the issue of the safety of the person or a person's property. Is this under the guise of workplace health and safety? Therefore, should it be actioned under the Workplace Health and Safety Act in relation to the suspension?

Clause 93 outlines the process for cancelling or suspending under section 92. Again, this clause needs to include a time line which will take into account and inform the parties about the decision. When does the cancellation take effect?

Under division 6—transfer of authorisations under commercial activity agreements—does the sale or transfer of a business fall under the 10-year limit or does the change or transfer, despite the business remaining the same, reset the 10-year time line for the business concerned? Also, what is the time line for approval regarding the sale or transfer of a business to assist with the commercial transaction and due diligence test? Most businesses need between 21 and 90 days for financial considerations, due diligence and the necessary searches to be conducted, along with the transfer of property and the interlocutory exchange of documents between legal representatives. When is an information noticed issued? Does it come into force immediately? What is the breakdown of fees in relation to the transfer and sale of a business? These need to be shown to allow commercial transactions to proceed uninhibited to allow the costings of a sale.

I turn to part 7, 'Offences', division 1, 'Access to, using and conduct in recreation areas'. This is an area of real concern as some of the powers of enforcement, bailment, penalties and compliance in relation to the parks officers have been upgraded to include similar powers to the police under the State Penalties Enforcement Act. This raises the question: do these new powers now fall under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act? They have the same effects and penalties, so who is monitoring these parks officers? Is there a right of appeal in relation to their decisions? Is there a control on the ability of the parks officers to act in a reasonable and fair manner without the threat of their turning into little dictators?

I turn to division 4, 'Pollution and waste'. What disposal alternatives are available if a receptacle is not provided? Individuals should then be required to collect and remove their own rubbish. What is the penalty if they do not? I remember hearing a story from Fraser Island residents about how over the Christmas and new year break the rubbish bins became full and the EPA officers sealed them shut. As a result, campers took their rubbish and waste and dumped it in bags beside the bins. What happened after that? The dingoes started scavenging around the bins, totally defeating the purpose of not feeding the dingoes. Once again, we have seen a failure in policy.

I turn to division 5, 'Other conduct'. In relation to disturbance by radio, tape or sound system, does this fall under the noise pollution act, which is now incorporated in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act? Clause 133, entitled 'General misconduct', should include a paragraph (c) 'or the property of another person in the area'.

Clause 139 is entitled 'Commercial activity agreement must be available for inspection'. What is the time line needed for notice of inspection in relation to commercial activity? What does the inspection entail in relation to the commercial activity apart from (2)(a) and (2)(b)? What are the implications of not producing it immediately?

I turn to division 6, 'Demerit points for offences'. Does incurring a certain number of demerit points trigger a loss of a commercial activity permit? What are the consequences and outcomes for the individuals and business operators concerned? For example, is there a right of appeal of the loss of commercial licence? What is the length of time regarding the loss of permit? As we will raise during consideration in detail, will people's driver's licences be able to be taken away if they accumulate enough demerit points?

I turn to part 8, division 2, 'Powers of authorised officers'. This represents an upgrade of the officers' powers and allows them to issue warrants, conduct searches and conduct property seizures. It gives powers of entry to a property without the consent and authorisation of the property owners and gives powers after entry.

There is an issue in relation to any damage that an officer might cause as the bill relies on the officer to report any damage caused to the property. The seizure issue and the disposal of items or property might also fall under the bailment act, which currently allows for seizures and the sale of seized property by a court appointed sheriff. Does it fall under the guise of the bailment act? Is there any form of compensation available for property seized? Is it a department process or a regulation procedure? What process is in place for an appeal? How is it assessed? There is also the issue of training in relation to the parks officers pursuant to the new upgrade of their powers. Will the minister provide an accredited training program similar to what the police undergo? Parks and Wildlife officers are authorised to use force in the normal course of their day. Will the officers be trained in the use of force? Will we have them doing martial arts courses? When does the training commence? How long is the course? What will the course entail? Is it held in conjunction with the police? Has it been costed? Where is the money coming from? Where is the training to be held? With regard to compensation, how can an individual or business make an application in relation to a notice of damage? Is there an appeal process? How is the compensation assessed?

There are so many concerns about this legislation. This is flawed and fundamentally bad legislation. The powers of EPA officers will be dramatically increased by clauses 157 to 181 of this legislation. Instead of spending money and focusing on enforcement, the Beattie government could work with the local communities and use local wisdom and knowledge to cooperatively solve our environmental problems.

The DNRMW officers were once the respected friends of rural families and their communities, but under the management of this Beattie Labor government they have become hated and distrusted. They have become the tree police. Sadly, the same process is taking place within the EPA. If this legislation gains the approval of this place then EPA officers, who have always enjoyed the respect of the majority, will become hated and distrusted and will become the environmental police. On 20 January 1961, John F Kennedy said in his famous inaugural speech—

And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man—

and woman—

come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

In relation to the RAMs legislation, it appears that not only has Queensland generosity to the rights of its citizens run out but also this minister and her Labor colleagues' appreciation and understanding of our history has run out. Our country has waged war many times against corrupt, unjust regimes whose dictators and despots would be proud of the Labor Party RAMs legislation before this House. This RAMs legislation diminishes our citizens' God-given right to be innocent until proven guilty in a tribunal of fact—not, as Peter Beattie would have us believe, proven unjustly guilty on the whim of a government official and then having to prove their innocence.

In closing, I would like to draw the attention of this House to UN resolution 217A(111), which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. The resolution's original 30 articles sought to define the fundamental rights of every person on the planet. Article 11(1) says—

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

Once again, I remind members of what the government's own explanatory notes state in relation to clauses 202 to 205—

This provision might be considered to breach fundamental legislative principles that a law should not reverse the onus of proof in criminal proceedings without adequate justification.

Any person charged under this legislation—and that is probably business owners, campers, four-wheel drivers, tourists or local residents—will have their basic human rights violated by this Labor government, which will presume them guilty. Those people will then have to prove their innocence.

The government has been caught out by its own words. This proposed law is unjust. I remind members again of the saying 'lex nous lex'—an unjust law is not law. It is just like other natural resources legislation that has been condemned by the conservative side of this House and passed by the Labor dominated chamber. Noted law professor Suri Ratnapala, writing a report entitled *Constitutional vandalism under green cover* for the Samuel Griffith Society, states—

There are growing concerns that aspects of environmental law and policy have unacceptably high costs in terms of their impact on civil liberties. Among the concerns are the following features of environmental legislation:

- Regulatory decisions affecting rights being taken in breach of natural justice by structurally based tribunals, that deny rights holders reasonable opportunities to present their cases.
- Uncertainty of laws defining environmental offences that make compliance difficult and costly.
- Investigatory powers that are intrusive and compromise due process.
- Negation of traditional procedural and evidentiary safeguards in prosecutions for environmental offences, including the reversal of evidentiary burdens usually borne by prosecutors.

Before voting on this bill, all members in this House would do well to reflect on Professor Suri Ratnapala's words—

... aspects of environmental law and policy have unacceptably high costs in terms of their impact on civil liberties.

I yearn for the days when personal freedoms and civil liberties are respected in legislation brought before this House. The Queensland coalition does not support this fundamentally flawed and ideologically driven piece of legislation.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (3.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. The essence and intent of this bill and its effects can be summed up in the explanatory notes accompanying the bill where it is stated that it breaches fundamental legislative principles no less than four times. I repeat that: it breaches fundamental legislative principles.

This is the parliament of Queensland and we are elected as representatives of our electorates to this parliament. We are accountable. We are accountable to our constituents to represent them and ensure that their rights are not trampled by heavy-handed, misguided, bullyboy partisan politics. This bill is flawed on so many levels in its 'capture all' approach that I am appalled that it has reached the House in this shape and form. It would be hard to pick one sector of the Queensland public that would benefit from, or be in favour of, its passing—apart from one probably very small, unrepresentative, unelected group that seems to have some unreasonable pull within the department. I have to question yet another department's management processes that deems it necessary to introduce this legislation.

On first reading, the stated aims of the bill seem innocuous enough. I note in the minister's second reading that the primary reason for the bill's introduction is the popularity of the public recreation areas mentioned. Special measures are warranted to remove responsibility from a representative authority, with input from local communities, to the minister. However, closer scrutiny reveals that it could also remove the fundamental right under common law of being innocent until guilt is proven. It aims to introduce excess powers for the authorised officers, in lieu of the police. These powers include: issuing of warrants, seizure of evidence, tampering of evidence and seizing of persons or persons and their equipment. I ask that the minister gives a detailed explanation to the Queensland public and those users of the recreation areas under discussion of why they may be automatically deemed to be guilty of an offence until they can prove their innocence. What has happened to the principles of due process, natural justice, jurisprudence, and fairness and equity? Can I ask when this government was granted the right to ignore these fundamental principles of common law?

I further note that, if this bill is passed, the minister will have sole responsibility for the granting of commercial permits. I have the greatest respect for the minister and I do not for one moment suggest that she is not able to judge or decide who will be fit and proper persons under the provisions of the bill. However, I do question whether this is a practical use of the minister's time. We are all fully aware of the demands that ministers have placed upon them and how precious their time is. I would expect, therefore, that the minister would have to delegate responsibility for the process of determination to members of the department or perhaps ministerial staff.

There is also the question of what defines a person to be fit and proper to hold a commercial licence. Is it the same standard required for admission to the bar in the Supreme Court or to hold a brothel licence? Is it the community at large standard of a fit and proper person? Which is it? The process outlined in the bill for the issuing of commercial permits is overly complicated. It lacks rigour and consistency. It is not definitive and it lacks transparency. This will do nothing to reassure operators that they will retain ongoing rights to carry out their activities. This further demonstrates the inability of the department to comprehend commercial issues and the need for consistency and reliability. The bill further reduces landholders' representations and rights. It overlaps a number of other pieces of legislation, both state and federal, and appears to deliberately hide notifications by restricting such notifications to the *Government Gazette*, a publication which is not, I believe, on the daily delivery list for 99 per cent of Queenslanders.

I do question this methodology and ask why this is necessary when there is a perfectly good working arrangement under the present legislation that, furthermore, has input from local and community members familiar with and cognisant of local conditions. It may also be suggested that the minister is being somewhat disingenuous in her opening remarks in her second reading speech. She states—

It is a simple and straightforward piece of legislation ...

And—

The bill provides simply for administration by a single minister and by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Perhaps the minister is using an obscure meaning of the word 'simple' that I am not aware of. Any bill that proposes to alter, change and regulate as much as this bill does can hardly be called simple. Any bill that has so many breaches of fundamental legislative principles as this bill does cannot be described as simple or, more importantly, in the best interests of the greater Queensland public. This bill, if passed, will give ultimate power over the areas concerned to the minister and to the Environmental Protection Agency. They will, in fact, have created and annexed their own little fiefdom. They will

become answerable to no-one and to no other's authority. There will be no open, independent, transparent public scrutiny of decisions relating to internal reviews. The minister alone becomes judge, jury and, most possibly, executioner with few, if any, rights of appeal.

I repeat that this is no simple bill. In an era when we could be forgiven for thinking that community consultation and input was a recognised and accepted part of government, we are instead finding that this Labor government is intent on further disenfranchising constituents, business owners and tourism operators. We find that the supposed friend of the people and working class, a Labor government, is intent on stripping voters of their fundamental rights and reducing government accountability and transparency.

Before this bill should even be considered in this House we should be reassured that issues of compensation and appeal are fully detailed and answered. We should know that the rights of EPA officers will not exceed those we have in common law and that we still have a presumption of innocence until guilt is otherwise proven in a court of law. Will EPA officers have the right, as it seems they do in clause 168(4), to use force to stop and search vehicles, vessels, aircraft or other recreational vehicles without consent or a warrant? Will they be allowed to pursue a vehicle, aircraft or boat outside a RAM area if they merely suspect that misdeeds have taken place? What levels of force are expected and endorsed by the minister? Will the officers concerned be trained to know what level of force can and cannot be employed?

Does the minister envisage that in future EPA officers will carry capsicum spray or stun-guns as part of their everyday working equipment? Do we really need to have legislation as heavy-handed as this when it is conceivably possible that EPA officers may engage in hot pursuit outside of a RAM area of a dangerous person or persons suspected of picking a flower or a twig? Has the term 'overkill' been deleted from departmental dictionaries, or is this now part of their new policy guidelines?

Our public recreation areas need good, solid, planned management and are indeed worthy of maintenance and protection. If that were the intent of this bill as stated by the minister, I would wholeheartedly be in favour and I would give it my full support. As it stands and as it reads, however, I find it impossible to support such a fundamentally flawed and heavy-handed piece of legislation. Too many times in this state we are being subjected to the whims of this Labor government that substitutes regulation and proscription for consultation and consideration. We are being regulated to death and we are sick of it. I will not be supporting the motion.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (3.39 pm): There have been some amazing contributions to date, I must say. I will confine my remarks to how the Recreation Areas Management Bill will affect Moreton Island. Moreton Island is in the adjoining electorate of Redcliffe; however, it can be seen from the wonderful electorate of Sandgate.

Mr Neil Roberts: And Nudgee.

Mr NUTTALL: And Nudgee. Moreton Island is a place enjoyed by not only people of those electorates but also a significant number of other Queenslanders and interstate and international tourists. It is something that we should be particularly proud of. It is a relatively undisturbed wilderness area. It is situated on the doorstep of Brisbane. It is a tremendous recreational asset for Australia's fastest growing region.

Moreton Island is largely national park but it also contains Tangalooma Resort and the small townships of Bulwer, Cowan Cowan and Koorringal. The former lighthouse reserve on the north east of the island has in recent years been taken over by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and added to the protected area estate as a conservation park. That is something which was long overdue, in my view, and something that has been well received.

Moreton Island has been managed as a recreation area since 1991, providing residents and visitors with enhanced recreational opportunities and ensuring that the natural and cultural values of the island are protected. The resort and the townships that I have mentioned are not included in the declaration of the recreation area.

As the minister pointed out in her second reading speech, some of the critical areas for recreation management on Moreton Island are not national park. These include the high-use beaches and the esplanades. Although most of the area of national park is declared recreation area, it is necessary to maintain a separate recreation areas management act for the effective management of the beaches and esplanades and for the effective integration of recreation management on the island.

This bill updates the former legislation and provides an assurance that Moreton Island will continue to be managed in an effective way. I believe that the residents of south-east Queensland and the residents of Moreton Island itself want to see Moreton Island continue to be managed as a relatively undisturbed coastal landscape where people are able to access and enjoy nature based recreational activities.

One essential aspect of the bill that provides this assurance is the requirement that management plans be prepared for recreation areas to guide how the area will be managed. Management plans will identify the island's key natural, cultural and recreational values and enable the development of effective strategies for day-to-day long-term management.

A preliminary management plan for the Moreton Island recreation area has been prepared with input from landholders, local government, the traditional owners and other interested groups. This plan is combined with management plans for the national park and conservation park tenures providing a clear direction about management objectives, guidelines and actions for future management of this wonderful island.

Recreation strategies contained in the plan relate to vehicle access and transport, visitor safety, camping and commercial operations. Priority management issues include the erosion of sand dunes by vehicles, the disturbance of beach nesting and feeding sea birds and migratory wading birds and safety issues with dual use of the beach by pedestrians and vehicles.

Strategies for natural resource management include foreshore and dune management, fire management and pest management. These are also included in the plan that I have mentioned. The desired management outcomes are being actively progressed and results can already be seen if one visits the island. Management of camping on Moreton Island provides a good example of planning and management in action.

Stage 1 of the North Point campground has been completed and was opened to the public in December of last year. The establishment of this campground will remove pressure from other popular camping spots on the island that can become overwhelmed in peak periods creating erosion impacts and other management problems.

The development and construction of the North Point camping area is being undertaken with the support of the Quandamooka people as traditional owners. A memorandum of understanding has been developed with the Quandamooka people to ensure that management aspirations for the island are properly aligned. The campground has been designed to be ecologically sustainable. Ecological impacts will be minimised and the natural qualities of the area will be maintained. Sustainable waste water treatment, ongoing groundwater quality monitoring and remote area power systems are key design features.

Moreton Island is one of the 10 most visited areas in this state that are managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. I am confident that the bill that we have before the House today will continue to provide the necessary framework for its effective management so that it can be enjoyed by all who visit it.

We have heard some rather alarmist rhetoric from the opposition to date. What we should be doing is focusing on the positive aspects of the bill and what the bill will achieve. In my view, this is something long overdue. I commend the minister for her efforts and the efforts of those in her department in bringing this bill to the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.45 pm): The introduction of new laws which seek to take powers away from the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and the board and give increased powers to EPA officers is nothing more than a stampede over fundamental principles of justice. This draconian legislation is similar to the legislation that saw Natural Resources officers given the power to become tree police and this was then extended to them policing irrigators.

The proposed new laws allowing departmental officers to secretly obtain the criminal history of landowners that they intend to visit as well as giving them extensive powers to seize evidence including documents, secretly recorded conversations with landholders, using spy-in-the-sky satellites and a dobin-a-farmer hotline, are an absolute disgrace and are against the rights and liberties of people and breach their privacy. Principles that have been part of our legal system for hundreds of years are simply being tossed aside by this government. The landowners and water users are being denied the legal right—

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. This bill is related to recreation areas, not landholders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Come back to the bill, member for Charters Towers.

Mr KNUTH: The hatred and hostility towards the government that has escalated in rural and regional Queensland is evident. Now the state government is targeting recreational activities. There are five areas that are targeted in this piece of legislation—Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip Point, Moreton Island and Bribie Island. It is just the beginning. It will extend to the rest of Queensland as a result of government—Big Brother—having control over every individual in Queensland.

Members will be aware of the flying fox issue. EPA officers from Townsville have approached residents advising them of possible prosecution if they continue to disturb the flying foxes. These flying foxes have been flapping around for five years disturbing the peace.

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This bill is not about flying foxes; it is about recreation areas.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Charters Towers, please come back to the bill.

Mr KNUTH: This is about the powers that will be given to EPA officers. The flying foxes have been flapping around for five years disturbing the peace. They have been excreting over swimming pools and homes. Nursing mums cannot take their children out and let them play in their backyards and they cannot hang their clothes out. They cannot turn their air conditioners on.

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I would ask you to rule on whether this bill is about flying foxes or recreation areas.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Charters Towers, I have been very lenient. The last time you raised the issue of flying foxes you and I had a difference of opinion. Please come back to the bill, otherwise I may have to take some action and I do not want to do that.

Mr KNUTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I believe that this bill will extend powers to EPA officers. If they are given more powers they will be knocking on doors in Charters Towers apprehending law-abiding citizens whose only crime was to protect their families and their properties against these filthy, virus-ridden pests. I want to bring that issue to the attention of the House.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (3.49 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Recreation Areas Management Bill and I will actually speak on the bill, unlike the previous speaker. In particular I want to speak of Green Island. Whilst it is not in my electorate—it is in the electorate of the member for Cairns and the minister—it is something that is of particular importance to the whole tourism industry in far-north Queensland and it is a place that I have visited on many occasions and enjoyed very much. As members would know, it is one of the main tourist attractions in Cairns and has been so for many years. Whilst the island is only 12 hectares, it supports some 26 tourism operators and many other cruising vessels that moor there to enjoy the environment. It is a very beautiful area. The small amount of rainforest on this island creates a very special experience. At peak times the first-class tourism facilities attract some 2,000 tourists per day.

The history of Green Island is a very interesting one and goes back many decades when Hayles first ran day trips out to the island and accommodated guests at its resort. The underwater observatory, the Marineland Melanesia and Castaway Theatre showed Noel Monkman's famous movies of microscopic life of the Great Barrier Reef and offered a variety of attractions. It was then that the reef around Green Island was protected as Queensland's first marine park and formed the basis of the growing tourism industry. On that particular matter I want to pay tribute to Lloyd Grigg and Vince Vlasoff, the pioneers of the tourist industry on Green Island, in particular the underwater observatory which enabled people to enjoy the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef without even getting their feet wet.

Last year I received a request from the late Lloyd Grigg's wife, Mrs Lyn Grigg, who was concerned that there was insufficient recognition for the unique contribution of these early pioneers. I am pleased to report to the House that when I approached Mike Burgess, the CEO of Quicksilver Connections, and Tony Baker, the General Manager of Great Adventures, for assistance to address her requests they were most helpful and only too happy to assist. As a result of their willingness to recognise these amazing pioneers, today there is now a plaque in the underwater observatory that reads—

In memory of Vince Vlasoff and Lloyd Grigg, the original designers and builders of the first stationary underwater observation chamber in the world which opened to the public on Green Island on 26 June 1954.

We do forget that it was the first in the world, and that is an amazing achievement. They had the vision to bring that experience to people so that they did not have to do what was thought of then as quite a dangerous activity, snorkelling and diving. It is a dangerous activity, but people were even less willing in those early days to get out onto the reef. The underwater observatory enabled a lot more people to enjoy the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef in safety.

Since those times, sadly, Green Island has experienced some serious problems such as several infestations of crown-of-thorns starfish, which did some quite significant damage to the fringing reef. Then there was the problem with the older resort that discharged its sewage out on to the reef adjacent to Green Island. As a result, lots of seagrass grew there with nutriment from the sewage, which smothered some of the fringing reef. Then erosion occurred on one part of the island, which was being eaten away. There was a period of time when Green Island did suffer and was being neglected. This did not change until the mid-1990s when Daikyo took over the resort and worked with other agencies to change Green Island back to a high-class tourist experience. The erosion has been managed and stabilised. There is tertiary treatment of sewage, meaning that no discharge whatsoever is having an impact on the reef. The treated sewage is recycled back into the resort for use. It has made very significant environmental advances that are state of the art and which make a very significant difference. I certainly commend the management of that resort.

As a result, Green Island has taken its place again as a premier tourist attraction and now caters for up to 35 per cent of the tourism in that busy Cairns sector of the Great Barrier Reef. It is a major day trip destination and a jumping-off point for the reef for people who want to go further out. I commend the partnership that has made that possible—the partnership between private enterprise, state and local government and, of course, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. That partnership has played an important role in providing those services and facilities, enabling the resources for sound management as I indicated.

The former Recreation Areas Management Act has enabled its management as a recreation area, and that will continue automatically under the transition provisions in clause 235 of the bill. The area covered by the bill is the Green Island National Park, the beach and the surrounding reef. It has provided the means of imposing a levy on operators to Green Island to help fund sewage and water supply, recreation facilities, erosion control measures, walking track shelters, interpretive programs and staffing. People can see just how important it has been to have that ability to use funds for those purposes. I commend the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women—who I should recognise this week particularly—for ensuring that the recreation areas management fund is retained as a district fund with the Environmental Protection Agency, which ensures that funds collected from recreation areas go back towards their management. This has been an issue of some considerable sensitivity in Cairns—that is, the belief that perhaps this money was going to go into general revenue and never come back to our area. However, this district fund ensures that that will not be the case and that the money raised there will be spent to benefit the area. I commend the minister on her personal commitment to ensure that that has occurred and operators are very satisfied with that result.

The bill retains the features of the previous act but does make significant advances in some areas, and I want to make mention of those. It provides a head of power under part 5 to allow tourism opportunities in recreation areas to be granted as a 10-year commercial activity agreement with the flexibility for operators to trade allocations. This provides greater security and flexibility for our important tourism industry compared with the present system, which only allows for three-year permits with a fixed capacity. I do not think that we can underestimate just how important that is; people know they have 10 years in which to invest in their operation and in their product. Indeed, it makes them much more likely to care for the reef and care for the environment because they have that investment in it, which is an incentive.

Again there is flexibility if one operator has a booking for a tour group which exceeds the capacity of their current permit and another operator has unused capacity, because under the present rigid system they both miss out. New provisions on agreements under clause 94 will allow them to reach a commercial arrangement between themselves to achieve a win-win outcome. In contrast to the kind of impression that opposition speakers have given us about this legislation, what they have failed to convey is the flexibility that operates which gives much greater ability for operators to become both commercially successful and manage the environment in a much more sustainable way.

The new provisions on better linkages between management plans for different areas contained in clause 18 of the bill are also a sound and progressive initiative. Where a recreation area extends over a national park or over part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, as the Green Island recreation area does, it makes good sense for the recreation area management plan to provide that the provisions of a national park or marine park management plan also have effect under the recreation areas management legislation, as it does. In addition, the new provisions on internet and phone bookings for camp sites and vehicle permits also bring the act up to date with modern technology and users' expectations, which will be of great benefit to areas such as Fraser Island. In conclusion, I congratulate the minister for updating the act in such a way as to make it more responsive to the needs of tourism operators while ensuring the continued wise management of Green Island—truly an icon in the marine tourism industry in far-north Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (3.59 pm): I rise today to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005 as recreation areas and the continuance of such areas are crucial to provide tourism to the electorate of Gympie. It would be no surprise to members of this House that some of the proposed changes to camping regulations at the extremely popular Inskip Point have been of major concern to locals and visitors to the area over the past few months.

I will be tabling a petition to this effect during this session of parliament to show the minister responsible for the impending legislative changes that people are petrified of losing their much loved camping site. There are people, including members of this House, who have camped at Inskip Point for over 20 years and wish to continue to do so with their family and friends for the next 20.

According to the minister's staff, this bill relates just to statutory instruments of the act and not necessarily to the day-to-day operations of the area. I have been advised that there will be no negative impact on Inskip Point as a result of this legislation as it involves updating the current act, which occurs every 10 years. However, I could not waste an opportunity to articulate the very strong views of my electorate with regard to their access to this area. I am keen for the minister's committee to be formed with me as a contributing member.

The number of people who visit Inskip Point every year contribute greatly to the financial success of the electorate, particularly Rainbow Beach, which has managed to maintain its coastal appeal for families without having been taken over and commercialised to any negative extent. I believe that this is one of the major attractions of the area to visitors. As we are renowned for our love of the outdoors and camping, Inskip Point provides a typical Aussie environment. Although I realise there are departmental concerns regarding the protection of the area, one only has to visit the north of Rainbow Beach to witness the staggering beauty of the area and the simple fact that it has not deteriorated to any extent as a result of tourism. The majority of the visitors respect the location too much to damage it. They have a

true incentive and ulterior motive to ensure they look after the environment, and that is so that they can continue to return and have the ability to holiday in a virtually unchanged environment which is as close to nature as a person can get.

I have heard people talk about the behaviour of some at camping sites becoming unbearable. The reality is that there were one or two incidents over the Christmas period that were a little unsavoury and occurred as a result of a little too much alcohol consumption. These were not major incidents and did not involve a lot of people.

It is sad that the actions of a few can be misconstrued and blown way out of proportion. The majority of people who camp at Inskip Point are decent and respectful of each other. Being among them is like being among a collegiate community. I would like to reiterate that I am looking forward to hearing when the steering committee will meet to consider the issues surrounding the future of the camping site. I sincerely hope that the minister will take on board the views of those 2,500 people who have shown their support for maintaining their camping rights in this lovely part of the world, which is one of the last places in which a person or family can spend time together in a safe and pure environment.

That said, the area needs to be managed in a fair and open manner, and that should be the responsibility of both local and state governments. History shows that Inskip Point is one of the few areas that has had little ecological damage as a result of its continued use. It would be a travesty to take away the camping rights of the thousands of people who visit Inskip Point on an annual basis. It would be devastating to take away the financial benefits that the holiday-makers provide the Gympie community.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (4.02 pm): It a pleasure to rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. Indeed, the special piece of country in central Queensland that I represent contains some very significant areas—Homevale National Park, Cape Palmerston National Park, Eungella National Park and Finch Hatton Gorge just to name a few. The establishment of the Great Walks in the Eungella National Park through to Homevale National Park is a significant step forward in terms of creating camping and walking tourism, which is growing so popular throughout the world. Hopefully, that form of tourism will provide a good influx of tourists to the area.

Eungella National Park is located about 70 kilometres inland from Mackay, in the high country behind Mackay. Over many years it was a dairying area. Before that, and even continuing into recent times, it was also a timber area. Back in the early days great sawlogs were hauled out of that area. Indeed, Eungella National Park was actively a timber-getting area right up until the 1950s. If people walk through certain areas of Eungella National Park they will find where trees have been taken out.

I would like to raise quite a number of issues that relate to most of those parks but particularly Eungella National Park. In the not-too-distant past, that park was a great place in which young families could camp. Indeed, probably 100 camp sites could be utilised in that national park. Over the past 15 years, for a number of reasons a lot of those camp sites have been closed down. Some of those camp sites contained large trees and there was the possibility of branches falling into the camp sites. Workplace health and safety concerns as well as the liabilities that go with that possible danger made sure that those camp sites were closed down.

Unfortunately, in the past 12 months or so there has been a very significant reduction in the number of camp sites. In an area called Ferny Grove people could drive in and camp. It was located about three-quarters of a kilometre from the main road. That camp site contained environmental toilets and showers. Over the past 12 months or so those toilets and showers have been taken out and the area has been closed down. Although a toilet has been put back in place, there are still no showers and people are no longer allowed to drive into the area. That means that people who camp there have to lug their tents, their barbecues and their food for about three-quarters of a kilometre to the camp site.

That area is a very popular area for people with campervans. Some of those vans are worth a quarter of a million dollars. Some of those people are international tourists and they come back every two or three years. They are very upset about the fact that, in order to camp, they now have to leave their \$250,000 campervan and carry everything into the rainforest. The people who ran the kiosk on a leasehold arrangement found that it was too difficult to comply with the overwhelming constraints of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. They were abused on a regular basis by people who were no longer allowed to camp there.

I have to say that a fairly disappointing aspect of this whole national park saga is that we seem to be going further and further down the track of excluding people from national parks. As I said, when my family was young we used to camp in that area on a fairly regular basis. During school holidays it would not be unusual to find 200 or 300 people in that park. Nowadays you are lucky to find 20 or 30 people, because there are no camp sites available. Basically, people drive in, have a look around and drive out again.

This area is magnificent. People can view platypus from the Broken River Bridge. I am conscious of the fact that the Mirani Shire Council and the Nebo Shire Council have been extremely active over the past 10 or 15 years in trying to encourage people to come into the Pioneer Valley, go up to Eungella National Park and go out to Nebo as tourists.

I also mention Homevale National Park. It seems that the tourism department and Parks and Wildlife in the Beattie government are in conflict. That is really disappointing. I think we really need to do more and be more practical in terms of how we deliver tourism destinations in local areas. It is not about the big dollars and the flash hotels; it is about ordinary people earning an income from the tourism industry and making sure that our international and local visitors have an opportunity to see some of the magnificent areas that we have throughout Queensland. Quite frankly, I think there needs to be an intergovernmental review of what is happening.

Homevale National Park was acquired by the government almost 10 years ago. Homevale was a cattle property and obviously had quite significant areas of grazing land. There are some very significant areas on the escarpment behind the Eungella Range which quite rightly should be preserved. But there are quite large areas of the park that I believe could be leased back to grazing interests to minimise the fuel load that accumulates over the summer. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in recent times has been doing a reasonably good job of conducting cool burns, but the grazing country has a huge potential to build up fuel loads which become very dangerous over the hot summer period. I believe that common sense should prevail in respect of this matter. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service should consider leasing areas that are not of major ecological significance to property owners so that they can keep the fuel loads down. The property was owned by Mick Symonds and he ran that property very efficiently. As I said, it is a shame that common sense has not prevailed here.

Homevale was a very significant property. Indeed, there was a very significant homestead on the property which was in a reasonable condition when the property was acquired. Unfortunately, this beautiful homestead has been allowed to deteriorate. Consequently, it has become a hazard and will more than likely have to be demolished. However, there is a slab hut on the property that has great historical significance to the shire of Nebo. During the Rockhampton sittings of parliament, I met with the minister and a delegation from the Nebo Shire Council to try to put together a management plan so that that area could be excised from the national park so that the Nebo Shire Council could look after it and possibly encourage tourism to the area. After talking with the Nebo Shire Council in recent times, I know that it has made no significant move forward in trying to get together with the department to come up with a realistic plan to take over that area. That is a disappointment. We have basically lost a very significant homestead, and if we do not move fairly quickly we will also lose the very significant slab hut, which has significant historical connections back to the very early days of the Nebo shire.

Ms Nolan: I know of your criticisms of them.

Mr MALONE: They are very good people. Common sense should prevail. There are significant environmental concerns to be addressed with asbestos et cetera, and I understand that. But the council is keen to move forward. There does seem to be some very onerous conditions that have to be met before the council can take over the management of that area. As I said, common sense does not seem to prevail too much in respect of that matter.

The other issue is the kiosk at Eungella National Park. Over quite a period of time the people who run the kiosk at Eungella National Park have almost become de facto carers of the national park. Even though there is a ranger station nearby, quite often the interpretive centre is not manned. It is certainly not manned on the weekends. Quite often the kiosk lessees have borne the brunt of criticism yet are the providers of information in terms of what is happening in the national park. That role has never been recognised. I know of at least two lessees who over a long period of time have gone out of their way to ensure that people who visit the national park are well informed, if asked. Indeed, some lessees used to take interpretive night-time walks through the forest. So they very much played a part in promoting the national park to the visitors. As I said, that role was never recognised. They were never paid to do that. In recent times they have borne the brunt of a lot of criticism in terms of the camping areas. I could go on for an hour or so talking about the way in which the park has been taken away from tourists, the ordinary people. As I said, there really needs to be an intergovernmental inquiry into the way in which national parks are run. I have some real concerns about that.

In terms of the bill—

Mr Shine: Oh, the bill!

Mr MALONE: We might talk about the bill. The reversal of onus of proof, as the shadow minister has raised, is of grave concern to me. We really do not need this legislation. It is pretty obnoxious, quite frankly. Obviously, those of us on this side of the House have some grave concerns about it.

The Finch Hatton Gorge National Park and the Wheel of Fire trail, which is a magnificent area to the south of Eungella National Park, is a significant milestone on any tourist trip through the Pioneer Valley. Again, common sense has gone out the window. In Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service wisdom, it has lessened the size of the car park. Indeed, if a tourist bus drives into that car park it has to reverse for over a kilometre on a winding and very narrow road before it can turn around. I just cannot believe what is happening in our national parks. Quite frankly, for a Smart State we are doing it pretty dumb.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.17 pm): I rise to support the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. I would like to concentrate my remarks on Bribie Island because it is the most recent recreation area, with approximately 80 per cent of Bribie Island, or 12,000 hectares, declared a recreation area in June last year. I am disappointed that the opposition is not supporting this bill. It certainly is an important step in the management of Bribie Island's recreation, conservation, cultural and production values, and I can say that people have embraced the concept. Bribie Island supports residential communities at Bongaree, Woorim, Bellara and Banksia Beach, which includes White Patch, with a combined population of about 17,000 residents. The island is becoming increasingly popular for nature based recreation for local residents and visitors alike.

Located north of Brisbane, Bribie Island is a very popular spot for day trips, weekends and during peak period holidays with population swells. My husband, Jon, and I celebrate our 26th wedding anniversary this year, and we have lived on Bribie Island for 20 years. We have brought up two lovely daughters on Bribie Island: Casey, who is 21, and Tai, who is 17 and in fact turns 18 this month. We can understand why weekends are so busy, with more than 5,000 people attracted to the ocean beach and other recreation areas.

Future use and management of Bribie Island has been the subject of considerable public discussion and debate. A number of public interest groups, along with the state government, have released statements on the future use and management of the island, and the message has been very clear: conserve the island's significant natural and cultural values; limit development to retain the island's low-key, relaxed character, particularly north of those townships I mentioned; and encourage public use consistent with the retention of the natural and cultural values and maintenance of the character of the island.

The recent declaration of the Bribie Island recreation area is helping to deliver these outcomes. Apart from the townships I mentioned, Bribie Island comprises about 20 per cent national park, a considerable amount of environmental park and unallocated state land. Beach areas and some freehold and leasehold land are also included in the recreation area.

A lot of families now own four-wheel drive vehicles, and this recreation area offers a readily accessible but different getaway without the delays and complexities of barge access, which is required to get to other popular four-wheel drive destinations. Although there have been some requests for two-wheel drive access, this is a much more difficult proposition. However, we certainly have not given up on it. I have taken the director-general of the department of environment on a tour of some of these areas, and I must say that he was very impressed with the Bribie Island recreation area.

The bill will provide significant improvements in coordinated management of recreation across these multiple tenures that I have just mentioned. The opposition complains quite regularly about the government not doing enough to improve the management of fire, weed and feral animals in these areas. This is exactly what this bill is doing. It is improving management in these areas. The bill also provides for improved management of the recreational impact in sensitive dune areas, the impact on rare and threatened flora and fauna, and on cultural heritage sites.

Many environmental problems caused by unmanaged recreation can be overcome by providing suitable facilities and coordinated management. Under previous uncoordinated arrangements, I would have to say that the provision of these facilities could not be easily achieved on all of the various crown lands. Declaration of a recreation area means that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service can provide the necessary facilities and management across all the lands within recreation areas. Vehicle fees collected for access to Bribie Island will now be returned to the management of recreation on the island. The recreation area is expected to generate in the order of \$0.5 million in revenue per year, which will provide for significantly improved management of recreation and associated impacts. I can prove this because already the community has helped me successfully lobby for more facilities at the camp site at the northern ocean beach and funding for improvements at Fort Bribie, which is a historic asset worth preserving. This shows that the money is not going into a black hole in Treasury; it is going back to Bribie Island to fund much needed facilities and services. Access to natural areas on Bribie Island is also being facilitated within this recreation area.

I am a firm supporter of the benefits of recreation areas that are provided for in this bill, and I am delighted that the majority of Bribie Island will be managed under this proposed legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Queensland Parks and Wildlife rangers. They are doing a superb job and I commend them for that. I am confident the bill will ensure that the special qualities of Bribie Island are maintained for the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (4.23 pm): I rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. This bill abolishes the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Board, and increases the powers of EPA officers. It reverses the onus of proof on people who are deemed by EPA officers to have committed offences under this legislation—guilty before proven innocent. Quite a few times in the explanatory notes this is described as breaching fundamental legislative principles. It does not allow independent, transparent or public scrutiny of the minister's decisions relating to internal reviews, and it further disenfranchises and ignores local communities.

This bill really goes against the views of members on this side of the House as to how some of these areas should be managed. Local input should be sought in relation to these areas. Late last year I visited Moreton Island and that community was waiting for the management plan. The locals had some input into the local management plan but they had not seen the management plan. I ask the minister to advise if that management plan is the one that is being put in place. The locals were a bit disappointed because they had not seen the final draft of the management plan and did not really know what it contained.

This reminds me of the ROSS scheme, which was very similar to this. Glenrock Park in my electorate is part of the ROSS scheme, and the government is now trying to sell it off to one of the local councils. They procrastinate in a lot of these areas and do not seem to know what is going on. I have seen the same thing at Mount Barney with the ROSS scheme there. Local people have put a lot of effort into managing these areas, and the EPA does not seem to be taking any notice of them. I do not know why they are even persisting with these types of ideas. I do not know why they think they can do a better job themselves when they cannot do it with the assistance of the local people.

I am struggling to see any common sense in these provisions. Why would the government want to manage these areas itself and exclude the local people? I heard the member for Burnett mention some of the problems with Fraser Island. I can understand some of the operators on Fraser Island being very frustrated about some of those issues. Parts of the act are not consistent with the Nature Conservation Act, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, the Forestry Act or the Workplace Health and Safety Act. The bill goes against a lot of these principles. Some of the bill's commercial arrangements provisions are for one year. To be in a commercial agreement, tourism operators need a minimum of three years. These provisions will make it very difficult for a lot of these operators.

This legislation establishes an authority consisting of one minister and a board consisting of two department heads. This lacks the necessary transparency for accountable processing of governments. It is difficult to judge a process if there is no openness and, therefore, there is no way to judge if the bill is achieving the goals and aims of its objectives. With that contribution, I oppose this bill.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (4.27 pm): I rise to support the Recreation Areas Management Bill and to commend the minister for bringing this piece of legislation before the House. Many pieces of legislation come before this parliament, and members opposite will jump up and say that this is more bureaucracy or that it is adding to the complexity of running some area of government obligation. I particularly welcome this piece of legislation because, in my view, it is designed to simplify the management of the recreation area that I am most concerned with, which is Fraser Island. The process that this bill will put in place when passed effectively makes that management a simpler and more straightforward task.

The existing recreation areas management legislation has worked well. I think it has been well received by most stakeholders and has enabled high levels of visitor access in very important environmental areas. It has protected the environmental values in those areas. This bill will continue that effective management of Fraser Island and continue the very important public access, which is so important to the economy of my part of the world, but it will be updated so that it is consistent with the Nature Conservation Act 1992. That is especially important considering that 95 per cent of Fraser Island is national park. Rules relating to camping, commercial activities and other management issues in a recreation area are now consistent with those that apply to a national park.

We need to recognise that over time the areas that have been covered under the Nature Conservation Act and under the previous recreation area management legislation have tended to overlap and it was time for this update. The minister is to be commended for bringing this legislation forward at this time and making the administration of these areas more consistent.

For visitors to Fraser Island, this will mean that there is no duplication of permits and charges, which, obviously, is to be welcomed and it will be welcomed by business operators who are involved with Fraser Island. In the recreation area, the single regime for camping and vehicle permits replaces similar permits under other legislation. Therefore, I certainly reject the suggestion put about by members opposite that this legislation will somehow make the administration of recreation areas more complicated. Quite the reverse.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan interjected.

Mr McNAMARA: I take the interjection of the honourable member for Pumicestone, who I know has been very happy today that all of her great effort in working to restore medical services at the Caboolture Hospital has come to fruition. I congratulate her for her efforts in that regard.

Fraser Island was the first recreation area to be declared in 1989. It has been successfully managed with regard to recreation for some 17 years now. It is certainly one of Queensland's most unique and scenic natural areas. Obviously, I am very much committed to it staying so. The magnificent beaches, the majestic forests, the perch lakes and the coloured sands are without rival anywhere in the world. I am very proud to represent an electorate with such extraordinary natural assets as part of its makeup.

Over 360,000 people visit Fraser Island each year and most people stay for three days. It is an enormous asset to my community. Forty per cent of the visitors to Fraser Island are from overseas. Again, it is an enormous asset to Australia and to our foreign exchange for the earnings that come from it. The direct financial value of tourism and recreation on Fraser Island is approximately \$116.7 million. I certainly welcome this legislation which will enhance the recreation area management of the island and continue the strong record of protection of the island under this government, ensuring that that valuable natural, cultural and economic resource is protected.

I listened to the contribution by the member for Lockyer a moment ago. He is a tremendous chap and a nice person. I want to put on record that I find the member for Lockyer a most affable chap. Nevertheless, he was running the National Party line, again, that this piece of legislation will in some way affect transparency and accountability. It is an extraordinary thing for the National Party to say such a thing on a day when the AWB chairman, Brendan Stewart, has been reported in *The Australian* as saying that he went to Canberra in May 2005 to brief Downer, Truss and Anderson on the AWB scandal, and on the day that Anderson admits that he sold his parcel of shares in AWB just before the report was handed down.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr McNAMARA: It is extraordinary.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Copeland): Order! There is a point of order from the member for Darling Downs.

Mr HOPPER: That has nothing to do with the legislation we are currently dealing with.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Copeland): Order! I ask the member for Hervey Bay to return to the bill.

Mr McNAMARA: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. However, I note that the National Party's commitment to accountability is such as to try to stop me talking about it.

This legislation is a welcome reform. I think that the minister's office has it exactly right. I congratulate the minister and the department on this review. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.33 pm): I rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. This is a particularly important bill for Queensland. There are many recreation areas throughout the state, such as Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, Bribie Island and Inskip peninsula. While they are restricted at the present time, I believe that there is the prospect of other things happening to recreation areas in the future. To some degree, that raises concern for me.

It is difficult to understand why the repeal of the Recreation Areas Management Act 1988 has to occur. It was brought in by the National Party. I think people should find it interesting that we were very concerned about what was happening on Fraser Island. Of course, at the time there was a high level of four-wheel drive activity over there.

The intention of the National Party was to ensure that good and safe practices were adopted in important recreation areas. The act that this legislation will supersede was brought in by a party that many members on the other side of politics say has no interest in the environment. That puts the lie to that opinion. In fact, we were concerned to ensure that the right thing happened in many recreation areas.

The Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority Board, and its functions and responsibilities, will be abolished under this legislation. That was a facility where people were administering the act and, unfortunately, it will be abolished. As I understand this legislation, the bill vests those powers within the Minister for the Environment, Local Government and Women and the chief executive of the EPA. That seems restrictive.

It is not clear in the bill how much more input there will be into decision making about recreation areas. It appears to be very limited. I can only say that many local authorities throughout the state, and no doubt within areas that the bill now covers, will be extremely interested and will want to participate in matters affecting the future direction of recreation areas. I can only hope that common sense will prevail.

There are elements within the legislation that appear to be very restrictive. It states that local laws will be recognised but that they must be consistent with this bill. There needs to be a lot more consultation. I do not see that happening as far as local authorities are concerned. They have a very keen interest in what happens in their local areas.

There is the reversal of the onus of proof. Many members on this side have expressed concern about that provision. For a person working for an organisation conducting tours, or for the organisation itself, to prove they are not guilty under the reversal of the onus of proof will be very detrimental and goes against many principles of democracy. It concerns me greatly when this type of legislation is brought in.

I find the signage provisions relating to the use of signs quite amusing. I know of the difficulties there have been of people adhering to the signage requirements that are set down by the national parks. An incident occurred at Crystal Creek, not too far from where I live, in a national park area. People were not taking much notice of the signs placed there.

I was asked by the *Townsville Bulletin* for a comment. I said that it is difficult to put a sign up for everything, whether it is lighting a fire—which is fair enough—or slippery rocks, which was the particular case with this incident. At Crystal Creek, a person fell some distance and ended up on some boulders down in the creek itself. It is unreasonable to have to place signage to a level that protect people against themselves. This legislation contains particular references to the issue of signage. I am a little amused by that and I want to know just how all of this will work. The cost of implementation will be met by the EPA.

Difficult situations exist with pigs, pests, sicklepod and hymenachne, and all those sorts of things in national parks. We had a meeting with the minister about this particular issue. The damage done by pigs in national parks and in recreation areas is very, very significant and particularly detrimental. Very often if a recreation area or national park adjoins a freehold property that grows crops that are conducive to attracting pigs, it is particularly hard.

I hope that the minister will find some resolution to that through the ministerial council, through World Heritage listing and through national parks.

The people who have approached us are very professional. They are very dedicated. I only hope that we can find some resources and do some professional trials so that we can deal with pests—pigs in particular—and other pests of a vegetative nature such as sicklepod and hymenachne within national parks that then flow on to private property and have a severe impact.

Tourism and recreational activities within national parks and certainly through the recreation areas is one of the key aspects of the bill. We are witnessing the requirements that relate to camping, the walking tracks and those sorts of things. I can relate to what is happening in relation to the Wallaman Falls to Blencoe Falls walking track and of course the east coast walking track. I am not quite sure if it is the future intention of Parks and Wildlife to make them recreation areas so that people will have to pay charges to enter the national parks. Currently people pay small fees for a permit and so on to get into some of these areas. Places like the east coast walking track are world renowned. In fact, many Europeans are saying that it is probably one of the best walking tracks in the world. We want to enhance these areas as much as possible and keep them in good condition. We can certainly limit the amount of traffic, for want of a better word, the number of people who use these walking tracks, to ensure that their use does not do damage to them. That would certainly not be in the best interests of imparting the value of our national parks and allowing people to enjoy the experience.

I believe that the management plan is out of kilter. I understand that it is approved by the Governor in Council and the plan is then gazetted. It is not tabled in parliament. It is not subject to subordinate legislation and we cannot move a disallowance motion against it. So it virtually has no scrutiny whatsoever by the parliament. I believe this goes against the principles about which many members on this side have spoken. I believe it is not fair to have a management plan with no way for all sides of parliament to examine it via a disallowance motion or some other input. It is not reasonable. It is this type of thing that makes it very difficult for me to support the legislation.

There will be guidelines for the use of recreation areas and they are going to be declared by regulations. In that particular case there will be a chance to move a disallowance motion if there is concern about the fees that are going to be set down by the regulations. I believe the issue of fees is going to be quite an interesting one. I will be interested to see whether it is just cost recovery or a little bit more than cost recovery that is going to be woven into the fees that will be charged in relation to recreation areas.

I want to speak briefly about private land and property holders and the dedication of areas for recreation areas. I have a few questions on which I would like a response from the minister. Who is going to be paying the rates if it is a freehold area? What will be the remuneration? Will there be any remuneration paid to those people who either willingly or forcefully have their areas included in a recreation area plan—and I hope forcing them is not an option. Then there are the indemnity issues relating to people transgressing and using those areas. If they are on private property, will the indemnity issues be covered by the government? We would not want to see a private landholder who has a freehold or leasehold piece of land under his jurisdiction being sued because of something that may have occurred. I hark back to the rocks at Crystal Creek. If a landholder had an area such as that and a person fell down and then decided there was not adequate signage in that particular area, would the indemnity be covered by the government or would the liability stay with the person who owns the property? Then there are other issues such as will he be able to control pests, weeds et cetera on that particular tract of land. If they are not looked after they will get out of control. Will Parks and Wildlife, the rangers or those people involved in the recreation areas look after those types of things and make sure that we do not have weed and pest infestation in these areas?

The periods of commercial agreements are quite interesting. There has to be adequate time for commercial enterprises to sign an agreement because often there is the need for them to invest finances in a range of things—it could be boats, camping gear, et cetera—to allow people to have an experience. I am not absolutely clear. I know there is a very long section in the legislation dealing with it. I find it a little bit difficult to pick up exactly where a commercial enterprise stands in relation to this.

Community fees are a very interesting item, too, because there are schools and other community groups that want to go and spend some time in these recreation areas as against the likes of commercial fees by which somebody might conduct a tour. There would be a differentiation between the fees paid by the average person who wants to spend time in a national park as against the commercial activity. While I cannot see it in the legislation, I believe that may well come in by way of regulation. It certainly is a major item. We would not want to see the recovery of costs being sheeted home to the average person who wants to have some recreation time in these areas.

Generally I have some major concerns about the legislation and I find it difficult to support. The legislation is very wordy. There is a degree of conflict involved in it—

Mr Lawlor: Did you say there are a lot of words?

Mr ROWELL: Yes. The member opposite would be the one to bring up words, because he would not know which way is up. I think it is important that we recognise that people are greatly concerned by the onus of proof, the fees that will be charged, the conflict about operations and what they actually will mean at the end of the day. Unfortunately, many of these aspects will only be seen when we have a look at the regulations that will be brought in as a result of the bill that is being put before us today.

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (4.47 pm): It is my great pleasure to rise in support of the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. It is worth repeating, although everyone here should surely know it, that south-east Queensland is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. New residents are flocking to Queensland from other states because of our strong economic growth led by the Beattie Labor government and the desirable lifestyle that Queensland offers. Our forests and beaches, combined with our mild climate, offer opportunities to families for recreation in natural settings all year around. I am committed to maintaining and improving Brisbane's—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! There is a member on his feet. If honourable members want to have a conversation, please take it outside.

Mr WILSON: I am happy to let everyone know that I am committed to maintaining and improving Brisbane's very liveable lifestyle. With my electorate taking in urban growth areas in Brisbane's west along the important green space in the Samford Valley and Brisbane Forest Park, I am very much aware of the need for sound planning and balanced outcomes.

In passing I congratulate the government on appointing the new chair of the board of Brisbane Forest Park, Mr Terry Hampson, and the new community representative on the board, Dominic Hyde, a resident of Mount Nebo, which is in my electorate.

The bill that we are speaking to today provides for the effective and coordinated management of two of Brisbane's favourite weekend escape destinations—Bribie Island and Moreton Island—and similar areas elsewhere in Queensland. It is one of a number of important measures taken by the Beattie Labor government to protect the lifestyle we enjoy and to assist in the conservation of natural areas. Perhaps the most significant initiative in this respect has been the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which was released on 30 June 2005. The regional plan provides a blueprint for growth for the region for the next two decades.

A major element of the regional plan is the retention of rural areas and bushland and the maintenance of the existing character of the south-east corner of the state compatible with the high level of population growth we will experience in the years ahead. I am only too well aware of the significant impact that the South East Queensland Regional Plan has on the perimeter of the urban area of Brisbane through its implementation in the Samford Valley and surrounding districts.

In addition, the government has developed a regional nature conservation strategy for south-east Queensland to protect the rich biodiversity of the region. As most birdwatchers would appreciate, this region is one of the richest in the world in terms of the number of species to be seen within a day's drive. The nature conservation strategy will help ensure the protection of wildlife and key conservation areas in the region.

Every member will know that Brisbane Forest Park is known as the lungs of Brisbane. The South East Queensland Forest Agreement is another important initiative of the Beattie government with the result that an estimated 425,000 hectares of nature forest is being gazetted as protected area contributing to a world-class national park system.

Anyone looking at the government's policy initiative in this region would be impressed. The government has addressed urban growth, conservation, recreation, infrastructure and essential services and lifestyle issues. The Recreation Areas Management Bill is a sensible piece of legislation. It replaces and updates an earlier act that already plays a significant role in situations where high levels of

recreational use extend across different land tenures. The bill improves planning, management and facilities within declared recreation areas such as Moreton Island and Bribie Island by coordinating management across tenure boundaries, thereby managing the whole area with a common goal of enhancing and managing recreational use.

Approximately \$6 million is generated each year by user charges for recreation areas across Queensland. All of these funds are collected under this legislation, including visitor fees for camping and access, and will be directed back into the management of recreation areas to ensure facilities and services are maintained at the appropriate high standard.

I believe that the majority of Queenslanders appreciate their natural surrounds and have a genuine desire to preserve areas of natural, cultural and recreational value. As a result of declaring recreation areas, community awareness, support and care for these areas has increased, which is to be commended. Formalised camping areas, road upgrades and other improvements in facilities and services better cater for visitors, removing visitor pressures from overwhelmed areas and encouraging proper use.

A coordinated management approach has meant a better outcome for visitors and a better outcome for the environment. It is truly a win-win situation. Recreation areas such as Bribie Island and Moreton Island are an asset to residents, visitors and the greater Brisbane community. I believe that in the years ahead this bill will inevitably play an increasingly important role in providing opportunities for recreation in south-east Queensland for our growing population. I heartily support the bill.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (4.53 pm): In addressing the Recreation Areas Management Bill I, too, would like to say that most Queenslanders appreciate our national parks. Over the years, with the education programs that have been put in place by rangers and those policing these parks, people have gained a lot of respect and appreciation for the facility they visit. I love a trip to Fraser Island. Some of my colleagues and I go over there for a weekend each year. We go fishing.

When we go to Inskip Point we pay our fees. I will touch on this in a moment. The point I make is that during the time we are camped on that island a ranger usually pulls up and talks to us. He explains things about the island. There is an education program in place. He talks about the dingoes on the island and how we would handle a situation if we had children there. It is a wonderful program. I think it is working exceptionally well.

The tourists from overseas who come to that island have to be educated on driving four-wheel drives. I am serious. I think this is a very big issue for these uneducated backpackers. Eight or 10 of them jump in a four-wheel drive and, as long as they have a licence, away they go. Many four-wheel drives tip over. There have been fatalities and many broken bones. The minister really has to look at this issue. Very sensible people do go over and use those places.

For Fraser Island alone we have raised between \$3½ million and \$4 million in fees. I think it was the member for Hervey Bay who said that approximately 300,000 campers use this island. That is a heck of a lot of people who use the island. We have protected the island at all times.

A lot of people out there are of the view that the green movement will seek to have these areas locked up. I hope that is not the intention. I fear what would happen if that were ever the case. We do not want to lock these places up. We want to leave these places open to the public so that they can enjoy them.

In DNRMW we have tree police. We have seen evidence of what has been put in place there. Now we are going to have island police. Later in my speech I will talk about the powers that these people will actually have. As the shadow minister stated, the rights of people will be taken away. There was no mention of that from the member for Hervey Bay. People's rights will be taken away. If they are charged by one of these officers they will have to pay to defend the charge. Whether they lose or win the case, they still have to pay the court costs. What justice is there in that? It is going to be very hard for them to defend themselves. I believe that this is horrific legislation.

I sincerely congratulate the shadow minister for the work that he has done on this legislation. I very much doubt that any member of this House has read the legislation to the extent that this man has. After listening to the speeches of those opposite, I very much doubt that they have read the legislation. I very much doubt that you, Bribie Island, have read this legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Male): Order! Member for Pumicestone! When there is a member on their feet you will remain silent. I ask the member for Darling Downs to address his comments through the chair in the appropriate manner.

Mr HOPPER: Of course I will address my comments through the chair. It is very hard when there are such rude members opposite.

Ms MOLLOY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This speaker is highly provocative.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. Resume your seat.

Mr HOPPER: I have heard some good points of order in my day—especially from the member for Noosa—but that just about beats them all. Let me just touch on a few issues. We are going to have people policing these parks.

The member for Hinchinbrook talked about other national parks. Let us take, for instance, the Bunya Mountains national park and the state that it is in. There are no fire breaks. The surrounding forestry areas have become national park. The cattle are being removed. The weeds are growing. There are feral pigs, dingoes and deer there and nothing has been implemented. There has been no increase in staff. Nothing has been implemented to help police this situation.

In the rural areas there is a massive danger of the outbreak of diseases. Members can imagine the impact if foot-and-mouth disease ever broke out. Costly exercises are often beyond the financial consideration of individuals and, therefore, justice can be denied to an individual. The issue of appeals is an area that may warrant a lot of consideration.

There has to be a lot of consideration. At present the bill only allows for an internal right of appeal. If the individual is unhappy with decisions from that quarter, they are obliged to apply to the Magistrates Court, where the matter is heard in relation to an administration appeal and not a common law process. Therefore, it restricts the type of evidence that can be introduced and the decision can only be reviewed on pre-existing facts and issues of previous decision and not include new evidence that would normally be presented to the court. There is no guarantee of a permanent committee involving various community groups, interest groups, scientific groups, the federal government in relation to World Heritage areas, wildlife groups, seafood groups, commercial interest groups and recreational groups. There needs to be a guarantee that the permanent committee representing those various groups will be set up and that any decision making about the RAM legislation areas be left to the discretion of the minister and the chief executive officer.

Let us take as an example the average mum and dad who might take the kids camping to Inskip Point or Fraser Island. What education program will the minister put in place so they know that they may be breaking the rules as contained in this new legislation? They may be going to commit an offence. Fraser Island recently had a big tide whereby the sand washed away and revealed an area of pipi shells where in past years the Aboriginals used to gather to eat pipies. This magnificent sandbank was covered in thousands of pipi shells. If people remove them they are breaking the law. How do people know that this is going to be the case and that they can be charged under this legislation? I very much fear that. It will take a massive education program. It has taken years for the rangers to get Fraser Island to the stage it is at today, and I compliment them. They do a wonderful job.

Clause 163 of this bill really worries me. It relates to the powers of detention and detainment. Under this legislation, the officer can hold a person as long as they consider reasonably necessary. In her summing-up I would like the minister to explain to the House how this came about. Officers can hold a person as long as they consider reasonably necessary. However, the bill does not specify the length of that detainment. The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act contains specific time lines in relation to a person being detained, yet we do not see that in this legislation. There is no provision for officers of the same sex to detain and search a person under that same act. There is no allowance for the detainment of a child or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as there is in the police protection act. This bill goes directly against the requirements of the Legislative Standards Act 1992 and does not take into consideration the traditional Murri law, nor does it allow for intellectually impaired persons as per the police protection act and nor does it allow for an interpreter under the police protection act.

Why did those opposite not mention that in their speeches if they have read and studied this legislation? What education and training program for these officers has been put in place? They will have to enforce this and will be faced with the public. They are just some examples of people they may come up against. Has this been taken into consideration? I very much doubt it.

There are also issues of warrants by these officers. Currently under the police protection act a warrant has to be served within a nominated time of seven days. However, under this bill an EPA officer will have 14 days to serve a warrant and, unlike the police protection act, this can be served at night at a person's home without the court requirements that exist under the police protection act to seek this special condition.

There are all of these anomalies in this legislation that we are very worried about. Also under the police protection act, any warrant that is served must include a statement to be served to the persons on the warrant outlining their obligations and rights in relation to that warrant. Under this legislation no such statement requirement exists. Also under the police protection act, a person has the right to remain silent. However, under this legislation the right is denied. What have we got? We have an act already in parliament to cover these things, yet we have legislation before the House that opposes that act. I think this is an absolute mess-up and mix-up, and I very much doubt that much time has been put into this. I ask the minister to seriously listen to the points that I have brought up, do some very good research and in her reply address them, because this is just a shambles. It is an absolute muck-up. I sincerely congratulate our shadow minister for the in-depth work he has done.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.04 pm): I rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005 and acknowledge that there are five recreation areas declared to date—Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsula north of Rainbow Beach and the Bribie Island recreation area. I have not been to any of those, so I cannot speak firsthand about the conditions there. However, the previous member for Maryborough spoke very passionately about his concerns and the solutions that he proposed in relation to dingoes. I have listened to the contributions of the members for Burnett and Darling Downs and others who have expressed some very strident concerns in relation to this legislation. If they are incorrect—if their summary or their information is not accurate—I look forward to the minister's correction. With regard to the member for Darling Downs's comments in terms of issues of detainment and detention, the appropriate circumstances in which people are held and access to proper legal advice et cetera, I would be interested in the minister's clarification.

I note that the legislation allows for not only state land but also private land to be included in recreation areas. I have met people in my electorate—and I am sure that there are people of a like mind in most electorates—who are passionate about the environment who would happily include their areas of land, particularly those with recreational opportunities, in an area of public access. I know that many in the community have made their homes environmental areas and have taken on responsibility for retention of those lands in a particular condition. However, at times those declarations attract some rates relief or other encouragements. This bill, however, does not appear to have any consideration given for the people who offer their land for a recreation area. Indeed, towards the end of the bill it states that the state is not legally liable for an act or omission in relation to private land merely because the land is part of a recreation area. Elsewhere in the bill it states that, where recreation areas are private land, the responsibilities attached to it in relation to noxious weeds and animal control are retained by the owner. That is my understanding of the way the legislation is written.

I think most landowners would happily accept the obligations in relation to noxious weeds and pests. If one has a permit to occupy, the requirement often transfers to the permittee to control noxious weeds and animals. However, I am interested in the community response to the proposal where the private owner—the owner of private land—that becomes voluntarily part of a recreation area appears to retain all of the legal liabilities that would attach as if the land was his and he or she did not allow public access. I could see that as a huge barrier in terms of any incentive for a person to open their land up to the public for recreational activities, and I will be most interested in the minister's comments in relation to public consultation on that matter.

The legislation also exempts the minister from having public consultation in certain circumstances where changes to the legislation are a minor amendment to correct an error in the approved management plan and to make a change of a type that the plan states may be made under this subsection. The sections do not apply for an approved management plan that is substantially uniform or complementary with another act or a law of the Commonwealth or another state. The amendment is needed to ensure the plan remains substantially uniform or complementary.

If I have understood that correctly, there is no need to invite public submissions if the proposed amendment is minor, is to correct an error, or to make an insubstantial change, or the change is of a type that is stated to be allowed in the approved management plan. Will there be any risk that the judgement that a change is substantial is made in a subjective manner and, therefore, the plan is changed substantially from a community point of view and that people will not be adequately informed?

Contingent to this legislation is information and the availability of that information to the community—not in an ad hoc manner but in a very complete manner. I think the success of this legislation will be the availability of any information. I note that there is a review provision within 10 years—the usual sunset provision.

Mr Lawlor: Will you be around for that?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is up to my constituents. A person must obtain a camping permit by applying to the chief executive officer and must provide sufficient information to the chief executive officer to enable him or her to decide the application. I ask the minister to ensure that the information that is required to be provided is not onerous. We have seen some changes to other legislation—transport legislation in particular—where, in an effort to combat identity fraud, at times people have found it really difficult to get sufficient information together. It is quite an onerous task and sometimes it is very difficult. I ask for clarification from the minister that the information that these applicants will be required to provide will be of a reasonable nature.

I commend the minister for the conditions relating to a renewal application for an existing commercial activity permit. The existing permit will be taken to continue to be in force from the date it would otherwise have expired until the date on which one of the following happens—that is, the chief executive grants the new permit, he or she decides to refuse the application, the applicant withdraws the application, or three months has expired. I think that three months certainly gives the chief executive officer plenty of time in which to make a decision. I would personally like to see the reverse of that included in this legislation—that if the chief executive officer has not made a decision within three months, the application is deemed to be approved. That provides some motivation to the chief executive officer to make a timely decision. It appears that, if the decision has not been made within three months,

the permit expires. However, there is at least the certainty that, if the applicant has not heard about the renewal on the date of expiry, the applicant can still continue with their commercial activities.

I understand that the fees that attach to this legislation will be set by regulation. I would be interested in the level of fees that the minister is considering—whether they will be similar to the current fees or whether the department will be taking the opportunity to increase the fees in relation to permits, the renewal of permits and the replacement of permits.

I would like to put on the record some concerns about the chief executive officer's power to enter into commercial activities. The minister stated in her second reading speech—

Tourism operations in recreation areas will increasingly be managed on the basis of commercial partnerships between the operators and the Environmental Protection Agency. In the past, tourism permits have been non-transferable documents with fixed fees prescribed in regulations, a fixed capacity, a maximum three-year term and no transferability and have been issued on a first-come, first served basis.

I do not have a problem with the fact that that process has been reviewed. The minister stated further—

Where appropriate, they will allow agreements to be offered through an expressions of interest process, which is fairer than the current first-come, first-served approach and in keeping with national competition policy.

Currently, there would be a number of approved commercial activities taking place in these recreation areas. I seek clarification from the minister as to the certainty that those current permit holders will be allowed to continue with their activities, given that this legislation now allows for an expressions of interest basis. Is there a risk that their currently permitted activities may be put up in a general expression of interest process at which point they run the very real risk of losing their approval to a new operator? I ask this question not because anyone has approached me but because these operators would have invested a significant amount of money to get the infrastructure in place—whether that be vehicles, or whatever—to establish those facilities. It would be tragic to see their right to operate and that investment lost on the basis of this change in legislation. I would be interested in the minister's comments on that matter.

The provision that allows for the immediate suspension of commercial activities sets out a number of reasons for that suspension. I believe that the majority of those would be acceptable to members of the community. Those reasons include things such as the security and safety of a person or a person's property because of a fire or other natural disaster and to conserve or protect the cultural and natural resources of a recreation area to which the agreement applies. I want to put on the record, though, that a lot of concern has been expressed in this place—rightly or wrongly—about the change of interface between departmental officers and the public. There has been a change in attitude between the community and the inspectors of the department of natural resources in terms of their inspectorate and their responsibilities.

We heard the member for Burnett say that the recreation areas that he has visited are very well managed and that the minister's staff do an excellent job. As I said, I have not been to those areas, but it needs to be borne in mind that at times, human nature being what it is, there will be officers who will be officious in their manner and there could be a communication breakdown in terms of public relations between those who use the recreation areas, the community and the officers who police it. In a perfect world, everything would be done in an appropriate manner. I seek the minister's comments in relation to the ability of members of the community to defend themselves when they believe that a particular officer has taken these new powers a little bit too personally.

The bill also places considerable obligations on people to be aware of what constitutes unlawful entry. The bill contains provisions that impose a penalty of a maximum of 80 penalty units, which is a significant amount of money, for a person entering a restricted area unless the person has the written approval of the chief executive officer or enters under another couple of conditions. This provision again highlights the absolutely critical need for good signage and good information dissemination. Without that, there will be breaches of these conditions that are contained in the clauses of this legislation. In great measure, those breaches will be committed inadvertently. I have no doubt that there have been circumstances that have triggered the imposition of some of the regulations and some of the fairly stiff penalties that are contained in this legislation. Unfortunately, we seem to legislate for the few and in legislating to stop them—those who breach common courtesy and common decency—we usually put the honest majority at a disadvantage. That is what this legislation will do. So signage and information dissemination will be critical.

The provisions contained in the bill relating to the unauthorised feeding of animals will not be news to people, except perhaps those who have come from overseas and are not up to speed with the tragedies that have occurred, in particular on Fraser Island but I have no doubt that there have been other incidents that have not reached the paper. We are all well versed in the dangers of partially domesticating animals. They lose their ability or willingness to hunt for themselves and see human activity as an easy meal. The vast majority of people will accept and have accepted the need to legislate against the feeding of wild animals. But, again, there will be a need for information to be handed to every person that goes to these areas to ensure that they are aware not only of the prohibitions but also of the real risks that they run. The challenge in that is ensuring that each person who visits these areas is able to read and understand the documents that are provided to them.

I also raise the issue of pollution and waste. It may appear to be a trivial matter but I want to put on record the fact that this legislation states that a person must not pollute a dam, lake or watercourse in a recreation area. It goes on to state that 'pollute' includes using soap, detergent or shampoo in the dam, lake or watercourse. Again, information dissemination will be essential to ensure that people do not inadvertently breach these conditions. I think that they easily could because some people who camp may not be particularly environmentally aware. I do not mean that in a negative sense but they may not be used to camping; they may not even be aware of the potential impact that some of the detergents, which can be readily purchased at supermarkets, can have, albeit in small quantities. I am interested in the minister's response as to how this information will be disseminated. Campers are often depicted in movies—local movies as well as overseas movies—jumping into a lake and having a bath; it is just part of the story. I am interested in how this information will be communicated.

Powers of entry have already been discussed by previous speakers and they are significant. The member for Burnett spoke about clause 150. I re-read that particular clause and it appears to me that entry is only at the occupier's consent. Other areas of entry without consent or warrant are public places where business is normally carried on. I would be interested to know if I have wrongly read that section. That power is contained in a lot of legislation, where an inspector is able to enter a private residence at the occupier's consent or agreement and they can go to a public place of commerce when it is open to the public. However, this legislation does confer on the inspectors considerable powers once they have entered those premises. I am interested in the minister's comments as to the depth of her concern in relation to the matters raised by the member for Burnett. I note, however, that, whilst the authorised officer may require the occupier of the place or the person at the place to give information to the authorised officer, self-incrimination is a reason to exclude oneself from commenting. I commend the minister for that inclusion.

An authorised officer may require a person to state their name and business address or name and address if the authorised officer believes it is essential in the administration of his responsibilities. That power is also contained in a lot of legislation, but that does not justify it. Again it needs to be remembered that the relationship between the department and the public will sink or swim on the attitude of the inspectors and their ability to operate within these new-found powers in a way that is not provocative as far as the community is concerned. The ability for a company to be—

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time is expired.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (5.24 pm): I rise to support the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2006. I would like to start by supporting some comments made by the member for Gladstone, the honourable Liz Cunningham. I do not think that the department's success in relation to the quality of the interaction between rangers and the public will sink or swim 100 per cent on the attitude of the inspectors, but it will certainly be a significant contributor. It is important that we employ high-quality people in the position of rangers and that we provide them with the skills and training to undertake that task.

Mr Messenger: They are going to have to be police officers.

Mr ENGLISH: Parks officers are parks officers, police officers are police officers and never the twain shall meet, brother. I certainly do not want the police to be undertaking those types of duties. Whilst the majority of Queensland police officers undertake and perform a marvellous role, there have been examples where the mistakes or bad behaviour on the part of one or two police officers has given the entire Queensland Police Service an unwarranted bad reputation.

I endorse the words of the member for Gladstone. I am sure that the department will select good quality staff and will provide these officers with the skills and training necessary to undertake their duties which will then lead to a high level of respect from the public.

When one undertakes a law enforcement role, it is similar to being in politics—one cannot please everyone. I do not think I have arrested anyone who was happy to be arrested. I am sure that everyone I arrested was not happy with me undertaking my job. It is important that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The mere fact that an officer may have a complaint made against him could mean that the officer is being a good, effective officer carrying out his job. The complaint, in fact, may have no basis in merit or reality.

The main purpose of this bill is to streamline the management of various sectors of crown land. Other speakers have identified the current five recreation areas that have been declared. They are Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, the Inskip peninsula area north of Rainbow Beach and, of course, the Bribie Island recreation area which was declared last year. I note in the bill that it also extends the ability for recreation areas to be designated over private land. I can see some real benefit in that.

I am pleased that the minister is still working with the horse riding community to keep the commitment to no net loss of trails because horse-trail riding is a valid activity. I am glad that as part of the SEQFA process we were able to keep horse riding in the local Daisy Hill area. I was lobbied by my local equestrian community to keep that open. Myself and Barbara Stone, the member for Springwood,

were successful in keeping that area of Daisy Hill open for horse riding access and we appreciate that on behalf of our community.

Ms Boyle: It was very good work in your strong representations for your constituents.

Mr ENGLISH: Thank you, Minister. Certainly horse riding is a significant part of the Redlands community. We have two major equestrian groups: the Redlands Pony Club which is very, very active and, of course, the Redlands and Southern Districts Equestrian Group, otherwise known as RASDEG, that mainly organises dressage competitions.

Both of these groups have spoken to me about the issue of horse riding. As I have said, the minister has an open mind on the issue. She is continuing to talk to peak bodies with a view to resolving the horse riding issue. Again, everything I have heard coming from the minister's mouth and the minister's office acknowledges the central agreement that horse riding is a valuable sport and pastime. We need to look at a way forward.

I would also like to commend the minister on forming an interdepartmental committee—it comes after a few years of nagging from me and others, I guess—to look at the issue of trail bike riding. This is an area where we need to keep on the front foot. Again, dirt bike riding is an extremely valid recreational pastime. Some of the fittest athletes in the world are dirt bike riders. I think we need to look at ways of opening up crown land and private land to be used by dirt bikes. We currently have reigning enduro world champions. We have reigning US supercross champions. In off-road dirt bike riding Australia, as in many other sports, is certainly punching well above its weight in terms of our competitors on the world scene. Again, this is a very worthwhile activity. It keeps people physically fit. While they are out riding their dirt bikes, they are not doing break and enters and they are not doing drugs.

I support the dirt bike riders in my community. I know the government has funded a number of local councils, including the Redland Shire Council, to examine opportunities to create dirt bike parks. Having undertaken the sport myself, I know that where I live, in Victoria Point, there are three motocross parks within 20 to 30 minutes drive. There is one at Beenleigh—the Albert and Logan district motorcycle club—there is the motocross club at Oxley, and there is the motocross club at Wynnum. These all provide great opportunities for young people to learn to ride their bikes and for people who enjoy the sport of motocross. However, I think the government needs to look at opening up areas of crown land for trail bike riding. Whilst I personally enjoy motocross, it is only a part of the sector. There are a lot of other people who enjoy trail bike riding—that is, getting out there and going for 10- or 15-kilometre rides through the bush. I think we need to look at creative ways of catering for this part of the market that just cannot be contained on a couple of hectares of land.

I am glad that the minister has established this interdepartmental working group. I am sure that I will continue to bug the group to make sure the work continues to move forward in opening up increased recreation areas for both horse riders and dirt bikers in the state of Queensland. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr CALTABIANO (Chatsworth—Lib) (5.32 pm): I am very pleased to speak to this bill. As someone who has spent the best part of the last nine years preserving and enhancing our local environment in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane in working with local communities to achieve some great outcomes, particularly along urban waterways, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. This bill has been brought before the House to do a number of things. It repeals the present act. It brings the legislation into line with current drafting practices and enhances the consistency with the Nature Conservation Act 1992. It is supposed to provide a more contemporary style of legislation in keeping with present standards and administrative practices. Whether this bill adequately or appropriately achieves these purposes is somewhat questionable though, especially considering the nature of the laws contained herein and the number of provisions that do not accord with the fundamental legislative principles.

The bill establishes a comprehensive system of regulation of access to, and of activities within, recreation areas with provisions that impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter or wish to enter such areas. The replacement of the present act with this new act brings with it some great concerns, as have been identified by the shadow minister for the environment, the member for Burnett, Rob Messenger. On my reading of the bill, I am concerned that when it is implemented the freedom people have today to enjoy our beautiful recreation areas will be severely diminished for Queenslanders, for visitors from interstate and for visitors from overseas. There is a raft of powers to EPA officers and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers that far exceed the current powers in the current act and that causes great concern to many people.

Of greatest concern in reading the act and its provisions is the change in the concentration of power to the hands of the minister—whoever that minister of the day might be. When pressure comes from particular interest groups to close down Fraser Island to the general community so that families can no longer enjoy one of our most magnificent assets, where children cannot experience camping on a sand island ever again because the minister of the day said that the regulation would be changed, as he or she is allowed to under the act, and the signs go up, 'No vehicle entry; no camping,' anybody in breach of that is then in serious trouble under the provisions of this bill.

The member for Hervey Bay, who articulately advised us on the pleasures of accessing Fraser Island and camping on Fraser Island, was quite right: it is one of the ecotourism hubs of Queensland. To restrict access through the provisions of this bill would deny that local community any support from those activities. I and my family have been to Fraser Island on many occasions and have enjoyed Kingfisher Bay Resort, Eurong and the beaches, the sand and the camping. It is a magnificent place.

Just recently, with the feeding of the dolphins incident, the minister, who was under pressure from a small minority extremist view that these dolphins should not be handfed, reacted to outlaw a practice that had been going on for decades and a practice that allowed local families and local children to enjoy one of nature's greatest gifts—that of our dolphins and the experience of close-up handfeeding of dolphins in the wild. This is something that not very many people around the world could ever hope to do, but it can be done here in Queensland. It can be done in a safe environment here in Queensland. What the minister sought to do was to stop this practice.

My greatest concern is that under this bill and under the provisions contained in this bill we will see over time access to Fraser Island, access to Moreton Island and access to other magnificent recreation areas restricted. We heard from the member for Sandgate how wonderful Moreton Island is. I know that the lord mayor shares his view. He is a regular camper on Moreton Island with his family. He regards that as one of the greatest natural assets that we have in the city of Brisbane. To see access to that restricted and families not allowed to use that facility is something that cannot happen. We cannot see access to our great natural resources diminished or ceased. This is a situation that cannot be allowed to occur. These natural assets are owned by the people of Queensland, not by the minister for environment or some sectional interest group that has a particular view that access to any environmental area is detrimental to that environmental area; therefore, there shall be no more moving forward. We cannot support environmental extremism in this regard, particularly with our recreation areas.

I am also concerned about the nature of the powers conferred on officers, particularly the powers in relation to proof of evidence, and the change of onus from the government having to prove its case to the public having to prove its innocence. In this particular bill for these particular circumstances I think that the reversal of the onus of proof is inappropriate and that the former legislation—the current act—has a better balance when it comes to these matters. Some examples of how the balance has shifted too far is in the area of issuing warrants. EPA officers have 14 days to track down and serve a warrant on a person. This warrant can be served at any time in that 14-day period. Compare that with the roles and responsibilities of police officers who have only 72 hours to serve a warrant.

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr CALTABIANO: That is right. Should they wish to serve that warrant out of hours, they have to justify the reasons for wanting to serve it out of hours and get an appropriate court order to do so.

The bill does not expressly deal with the treatment of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders who have been accused of an offence under this bill. As the member for Darling Downs outlined, the police, by comparison, have a special code for dealing with Indigenous Australians and give full consideration to Murri law. The EPA officers do not have any training to handle this sensitive issue and there are no requirements in this legislation to be sensitive to this issue.

Similarly, there is provision for EPA officers to be conscious of people from non-English speaking backgrounds and what it means to them if the regulations under this bill are breached and similarly with children. The lack of consistency with fundamental legislative principles in a range of areas—whether it be regulatory signage, the powers of authorised officers to give directions, the powers of authorised officers with regard to compliance and investigation, the responsibility of executive officers or the appeal processes—and the raft of changes in this legislation that do not comply with and do not support the fundamental legislative principles make it very difficult to support these parts of the bill.

For example, under 'Powers of authorised officers' and 'Investigation and enforcement', it details the powers of officers to enter private property and, in particular, their right of entry, in a public place, onto or within private property such as a motor vehicle or a tent. The time line, in particular, for this entry being up to 14 days after notification of such offence makes it very, very difficult to enforce in the future. It is difficult to support these clauses of the bill in any reasonable way when they fundamentally breach the legislative principles that are part of our understanding of natural justice in our community.

Under the section dealing with the responsibilities of executive officers, it clearly and explicitly states that if a person acting for another is convicted of an offence then the person for whom he or she was acting is also taken to have committed an offence. It is fine to ensure that a person who commits an act complies with the legislation, but the extension of this to an employer does not seem reasonable.

I acknowledge that similar provisions exist in the licensing act for hoteliers and their employees. However, it is not the same when dealing with a recreation area. For example, an employer may say to an employee who has done a magnificent job: 'Why not go and have a holiday on Fraser Island. Take the family. We will pay for it and look after all the costs.' Acting under the direction of his employer, the employee goes to Fraser Island. He misses the sign that says 'no camping' in a particular area because

it has been restricted by the minister of the day. Under those circumstances, it is the employer who is deemed to have committed an offence under the act. The breach of the fundamental principle that a law should not reverse the onus of proof in criminal proceedings without adequate justification is certainly true. It is not a provision that should apply in this act.

We all value our recreation areas, particularly the five areas contained in the bill. I hazard a guess that there is not one single member of this House who would not rank the preservation and protection of our natural environment as the most important thing to our community moving forward. Having said that, we must also balance the desire and wish to preserve our natural areas against ensuring that the community values them. Valuing our natural heritage means that the public must have access to it. They must be able to see, smell and touch our great natural wonders to truly value their importance. We require a management regime that allows the community to access and enjoy these areas and will allow future generations to access and enjoy our great natural assets whilst at the same time preserving their integrity and diversity.

There are measures within this bill that, if implemented by the minister, go way too far to shutting down recreation areas that should legitimately be able to be accessed by the community. I repeat that we have only to consider the dolphin incident at the end of last year. Several speeches were made in this place, one in particular by the member for Currumbin, which outlined the ridiculous nature of the minister's position with respect to the dolphins. The minister had her head in the sand, refused to listen and outlawed the practice. Community outrage followed. Then 'Powerpoint Pete', the Premier of Queensland, stepped in, said sorry and promised to fix it.

We cannot have that sort of level of political interference in the management of our recreation areas. This bill puts all of the power in the minister's hands for access to our recreation areas, without consultation, without a sensible right of appeal for permits. Instead of going to the Magistrates Court, one has to see the minister if they want to appeal a decision that the minister has made.

I find that there are significant numbers of measures within the bill that leave too much uncertainty and too much power concentrated in the minister's hands to be able to support key elements of this bill.

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (5.44 pm): Just as well it is not RU486, I suppose.

I would like to speak on the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. I have stood in this House on many occasions to speak on environmental concerns. Today provides yet another opportunity for me to do so. In this year, 2006, the world is confronted by the greatest threat ever known to mankind, that is, the demise of the environment. We all recognise Queensland as Australia's fastest growing state and, given our gorgeous climate, beautiful beaches and open spaces, we are also a fast-growing international tourist destination.

Ms Jarratt interjected.

Ms MOLLOY: I take that interjection from the member and I thank her. What is our responsibility to Queenslanders? What is our responsibility to Australians and to the world at large? What is our responsibility as a government to ensure that we manage our environmental assets?

Do we allow the member for Burnett and his flat-earth approach to the world to guide the ship or the well-grounded, scientific, evidence based research formulated over the years to be our guiding star? The popular vote from the Noosa electorate resounds with a thunderous response—manage our environment for a sustainable future for aeons.

We have here a Recreation Areas Management Bill that has been put together to do just that. The areas covered by this bill are Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsula north of Rainbow Beach and, most recently, Bribie Island recreation area, declared in June 2005. I was just speaking to the member for Pumicestone and she said that her community are just thrilled. They really want to go to clean camping grounds which are well maintained and where there are good toilet facilities and places to dispose of their rubbish. The number of visitors to these areas is remarkable. With that level of visitation, this government has to ramp up its management now before it is too late and the whole place is bugged up.

Tourism is one of our largest economic drivers in Queensland. That is great, but we do need to look after the assets to protect them from being overloved or loved to death. Yes, some stakeholders will believe that their self-interest is paramount in this debate. Well, let me tell you: if we do not have the debate now, there will not be a future for these areas because they will be desecrated. All one has to do is drive to the Gold Coast to see how and when a coastline has been altered by development. Do not come back to me, howling to the moon, saying that that would never happen. It could happen and that is why this legislation is being bedded down now.

The minister has outlined the bill and explained the general thrust of the legislation. There are a couple of matters I would like to draw to members' attention and which will no doubt be of interest to my community. Matters pertaining to—and they are quite similar to the matters pertaining to the member for Pumicestone's constituents—camping permits, vehicle access—where you can and cannot take a vehicle—and group activities are all things we need to be aware of and have a responsibility to make ourselves aware of. Generally speaking, people value our local areas.

Now there are commercial activities which bring terrific profits to the individual operators, minimum wages to the employees and lots of tourist dollars in spending around the areas visited. That is all good stuff. So let us not have a whinge about compliance. Let us pull together to give our support to this legislation. I think it sends a strong message to everyone involved in the areas designated that they have to be on their best behaviour. People could have their vehicle, aircraft, boat or recreational craft searched if there are reasonable grounds for officers to think that they may have broken the law.

Another aspect of the legislation which I find interesting and would like to see adhered to by all community members is how unauthorised structures will be dealt with. It may come as some surprise to the community that certain individuals think that they can put up structures to enhance their own lifestyle on land that is clearly not theirs, sometimes on the edges of national parks, as occurred in my electorate around the perimeter of the Noosa National Park. I went around with the staff from QPWS, overseeing aspects of park management—that is, we looked at fire trails and improved signage for walkers—and I was staggered at the amount of urban encroachment into our national park. Sadly, some people even tipped their garden clippings over the fences, adding to the introduced species problem. It was good to hear how national park rangers discouraged these occurrences. Under this legislation people will be required—and rightly so—to remove unauthorised structures as well as unauthorised walking tracks.

There is also a clear message to councils to exercise due diligence and ensure that the rules are applied, not only to individuals but also to developers. Recently in my electorate a developer built a boardwalk with a viewing platform to the beach area, causing great disharmony among the community. Hopefully that matter will be treated with equal merit or demerit as any other matter that is brought before the council for scrutiny.

Before I close, I would like to remind members of the great shark hunter Ben Cropp. Yesterday morning I was listening to my favourite radio station, ABC Classic FM, and I heard Ben recall how in the early 1960s it was popular to hunt sharks. He talked about how we have become knowledgeable through the work of people like himself and his fellow divers and how that knowledge has flowed through the community.

Today we have a strong conservation constituency whose great works have ranged from helping manage the museum dives on the *Pandora* through to the great historic photographic journals like the ones collated by Len Zell, friend, author and marine biologist. I know the work of Ben Cropp has influenced not only divers such as Len Zell but also conservationists throughout the world. Ben Cropp has published a book called *Blood in the Water*, which I hope to read so that I can bring his wealth of knowledge to my work.

I have camped in some of Australia's most stunning national parks. While I have seen great beauty, I have also witnessed the devastation of some of our once most glorious areas due to man's stubbornness and apparent stupidity. I appreciate that this legislation is not perfect, but I wish to acknowledge that it goes a long way to creating an accountable, responsible community that really does care for Queensland. Congratulations to Minister Boyle, Ross McLeod, Bob Hoey from EPA, David Perkins and Ian Garvan. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to speak, on behalf of my electorate, to such visionary legislation.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.50 pm): I rise to speak to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. When referring to whether or not the legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, in the very first sentence of its report the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee states—

The bill establishes a comprehensive system of regulation of access to, and of activities within, 'recreation areas'. These provisions impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter, or wish to enter, such areas.

The bill does not breach our rights and liberties in only one way but, as the sentence says, in many ways. That alone should make every Queenslanders, including the people in this House, very wary.

Clause 150 of the bill confers on authorised officers power to enter places. The dictionary to the bill defines 'place' as 'includes vacant land or premises'. The *Alert Digest* states that, although 'place' would be more commonly used with reference to recreation areas, theoretically it could be applied to places elsewhere. Again, that made me very wary.

The power of entry conferred by clause 150 extends beyond situations where the occupier consents or entry is authorised by a warrant. I could be wrong, but I have interpreted this to mean conferring on authorised officers more powers than the police have. I can see the possibility of abuse of this particular power.

Officers are authorised to use force, and I have to ask: are they trained in the use of force? Do they undergo training such as police officers undertake? Does it relate only to self-defence? Is it force that could damage people, property or anything else? Does it leave the officers open to litigation? If a person is manhandled by an authorised officer, is there a place for them to go? Is there an appeal process for people who feel that they have been unduly treated or accused?

Frankly, I find this legislation very frightening. It reverses the onus of proof, and I have often fought against that reversal in this House. I note that in the eight years that I have been a member of this place this government has passed more and more legislation that says that people are guilty and must

prove their innocence. Another speaker has mentioned article 11 of the UN charter that states that everyone has the right to be thought innocent until proven guilty. This bill attacks that right, which is the most fundamental of all of our rights.

Although I respect the minister's intentions in bringing forth this legislation, I believe that it is wrong to put all the power in the hands of the minister of the day. That opens up the possibility of undue influence being applied by pressure groups or others. We often hear that people get themselves into situations where undue pressure can be applied. Everybody is an individual, and all ministers are individuals. At some time in their lives they may find that they have put themselves in such a position.

When I started reading this legislation, the first thing I thought of was the issue of feeding dolphins. I understand the minister's concern about the dolphins' welfare. However, the community did rise in opposition to moves to stop the feeding. The minister was made to change her mind and revisit the whole situation. Rightly or wrongly, I believe that that is part of the reason this bill has been introduced.

It can be very difficult to defend oneself against an accusation made by an authorised officer or any other person. Most people would find it difficult at the best of times. However, if those people had to go into a legal fight with the government, they would find it almost impossible to win. Under these circumstances a lot of people would not get justice because they would be thinking, 'There is no way I can afford a legal battle and I couldn't possibly win against government resources anyway.' It also worries me that even if someone were awarded costs chances are that it would nowhere near cover their real costs. People would need very big pockets to enter into any battle with the government on any issue, not only with regard to this bill.

I am also concerned that many people will not be able to enjoy the facilities that they currently enjoy. Historically, camping grounds have been the alternative holiday destination for those who could not afford a motel or holiday resort accommodation. People might well believe that this is yet another of the government's fundraising exercises. One could not blame them for that, because so many recreational pursuits that in years gone by were taken as a given now require permits. Over the years, lifetime permits became five-year permits, which became one-year permits. Now one needs to obtain a permit for every trip. It is harder and harder for people at any level of society to enjoy their leisure time cheaply.

Governments are slowly taking over areas that in the past were controlled by communities, shires et cetera. Large areas in my electorate have been left to grow wild and camping areas have been allocated to smaller areas. Consequently, a mass congregation of people in a small area puts a huge load on that area, whereas once they could have spread out.

Only a few years ago, state grazing permits were the norm. Our state forests were kept clear of rubbish, feral animals and weeds. Those state grazing permits have been abolished in many areas such as the Conondale Ranges, the Bunya Mountains and many other areas in my electorate. Since that has happened there has been a massive growth in the amount of rubbish in the forests. As everyone knows, Australian trees lose a lot of debris over the years. At times the rubbish has been well over my head as well as the heads of others a heck of a lot taller than me. All we have done is to create fire hazards and fire traps for the rural fires—the very people whom we expect to fight the fires. Those forests have become fire traps. We have put those people in great danger. Unless one has been out there fighting fires, one cannot recognise that danger for what it is.

Over the years local input has been negated. Local input is a fundamental ingredient for ensuring the preservation of areas. I cannot understand why outsiders feel that they understand and value an area more than the locals. The locals value those areas because in many places they do not have anything else to value and they look after what they do have. When that is taken away, vandalism and so on come into play. People say, 'It is not our concern anymore. We will leave it to government because it has claimed ownership.'

We hear so often that ownership is the key to preservation. When the Aboriginal people say that they claim ownership of areas, they say that they will look after them. The truth is that this happens in all communities. Communities that own areas will look after them. Ownership equals pride. Pride ensures that these areas are protected from vandals. Areas start to be vandalised if nobody actually owns them and they are owned by government. Rightly or wrongly, people feel that if it is government owned it is their responsibility so who cares?

I believe there is a need to ensure areas are protected. I have no argument with that, but everything has its limits. This bill goes over the acceptable limits. As the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee stated—

These provisions impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter, or wish to enter, such areas.

For that very simple reason, I cannot support this bill.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (6.00 pm): I rise in support of the Recreation Areas Management Bill. This bill is intended to repeal the current act and provide up-to-date legislation in keeping with present legislative and administrative practices. The legislation also reflects current drafting practices.

It is important to note that this bill will not impose further costs on government departments or the EPA, so it is fiscally responsible. The bill will provide for the establishment, maintenance and use of recreation areas. It will further coordinate, provide and integrate recreational planning, recreational facilities and recreational management for our recreation areas. Regard must be had to the area's conservation, educational, cultural, production and recreational values. It must also have regard to the interest of area landholders.

It is important that consultation will be had with area landholders as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities for the area. This is very important in the electorate of Bundamba as I have Aboriginal groups who are very active in terms of preserving their cultural interests and their land interests. Narella Simpson and friends from the Dinmore Murray Baptist Church have a keen interest in the Redbank rifle range land which is owned by the department of natural resources and other lands in my area. There are also sacred sites within that land that are of significant spiritual interest to them. The church members also have interests in other recreation areas within the Ipswich city boundaries.

The bill also provides for access and use, recreational services and facilities with the associated fees and charges. The bill also provides for the publication of information about recreation areas, which is very good for all Queenslanders. In the establishment of recreation areas the bill provides that any land can be included in such a recreation area. A landholder must enter into a written agreement with the state for inclusion in a recreation area for land other than state land. The agreement must be consistent with the act and it must be compatible with land tenure arrangements.

The bill has provisions for management plans, access to and permits for recreation areas, camping permits, vehicle access permits, group activity permits and commercial activity permits. I am a keen camper, as are other MPs in this House. I note that clause 36 sets out the process for obtaining a camping permit and the appropriate fee. There will also be self-registration camping areas. The maximum duration of a permit is 30 days or such shorter period as stated in the notice. Unlawful camping is also dealt with pursuant to clause 108. Clause 216 deals with e-permit camping notices. Clause 217 deals with camping tags. Clause 218 deals with the self-registration camping areas.

There are many dedicated campers who like nothing more than getting out into these recreation areas and into the bush for some relaxation. I am one of those. I particularly like going to Girraween and other national parks. I thank the minister for all the work done by the officers in her department. We really need to preserve our recreation areas. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.04 pm): I am pleased to speak in the debate on the Recreation Areas Management Bill. There are a number of issues. We have had some interesting contributions this afternoon in the debate on this bill. I support entirely the sentiments of the shadow minister, the member for Burnett, who went into a great deal of detail in relation to this bill.

I think that in a lot of ways there is a philosophical difference. Everyone in this House wants to make sure that we do have a good arrangement for the management of our valuable assets—that is, our national parks and recreation areas; the Fraser Islands of the world. We really have to have a good structure in place for managing these. I am sure that we can have that. It is a matter of how we get there and getting a good mix of information from both sides of politics and the community. Then we will have a system of management that has universal endorsement. It is pretty hard.

A while ago the member for Noosa mentioned that visitors want to have a good experience in a clean environment. That is absolutely right; they do. I think we have to be practical in examining the legislation before us today. That is the only way we can make a good critique of what is being proposed.

It appears as though not just this government but previous Labor governments do not necessarily like having community boards running things. They prefer to do away with them and run things themselves. That is the way those opposite operate. We disagree with that in a lot of ways. We think that the community can play a larger and better part in relation to the proper management and ongoing maintenance of our assets. As I understand it, no private owners have expressed any interest in being involved with this. Green Island Resort is one example. They do not necessarily support 100 per cent the process we are following.

There is a fundamental problem in relation to security of tenure that seems to be difficult for those in the government to grasp. People will not put their resources and money into a business unless there is some sort of long-term security. It appears that the government is of the view that we should take a short-term approach. Then, if something changes, it can move quickly to change things. The reality is that we are not going to get the private sector to provide the financial resources to help improve the asset unless they can have some reasonable tenure. If they face compliance restrictions all the time and the threat of losing their tenure or their security then they are not going to do this in a professional way; they will do it in a half-hearted way. They will not be prepared to stretch and do what is necessary.

In relation to improving consistency with regard to permits, offences and penalties, I think that the big stick approach—and that is what this bill in fact proposes—is not necessarily the way to go. I think there are much better ways to achieve consistency. The minister is replacing the board that exists with the minister and CEO. It was not a big board before. We seem to be getting smaller and smaller boards so in the end it would be the minister who entirely runs the show. I think that is even worse. I think that is a very important issue.

Natural resources legislation is a good example of where this approach has not really worked, particularly in terms of vegetation management. The departmental people are basically hated in those regions and there is no respect for them. We do not want that to happen to the people involved in managing these wonderful pieces of Australia. The fact that EPA officers in rural areas and the department of natural resources are virtually hated and despised by people on the land is just extraordinary. I cannot believe the turnaround in relation to—

Ms Jarratt interjected.

Mr HOBBS: There is. There is a huge problem. I am very pleased that the member for Whitsunday has interjected, because it is very important to understand that compliance in relation to natural resources legislation by the officers is over the top entirely. I do not want to see the same thing happen with this legislation. The member is shaking her head. Obviously she does not understand. She should ask her dad. He will tell her. He is one person who would know. I rest my case. The member should ask him and he will tell her so I will not have to tell her again.

In relation to recognising cultural values in recreation areas in addition to continuing the recognition of conservation education, production and recreational values, there is no confidence in best practice. I can give a very good example of that—that is, the south-east Queensland regional forest assessment done by this government in relation to trying to manage the forestry side of it. In the end the federal government did not recognise that it was a regional forest assessment and would not pay the money over to the state government because it did not do the job properly. We do not want the same thing to happen with this legislation, yet the government is using the same principle. It is virtually adopting the approach it has taken with the vegetation management legislation or resource management and plonking the same thing on top of these—

Mr Messenger: Cut and paste.

Mr HOBBS: It is a cut and paste, and the same thing is going to happen again; mark my words. If there were a credible Australian model, the government would not get the support that it is putting up here unless it was from the likes of Greenpeace or someone like that. There are some serious problems in that regard.

The other area of concern is that a person acting on behalf of another will be severely fined if there is a breach of some sort. We want to make sure that people do the right thing, but is it really fair for a supervisor to be punished if an employee working for that group breaks some environmental law? Does that mean that the chief executive officer also gets hit with a fine and faces the potential of jail? That is ridiculous. That could happen if there was something deliberate or they were exploiting something and it could be traced back, but at the end of the day that sort of thing is over the top. We do not need that in Australia. We should not have a Gestapo state. We probably have one in terms of vegetation management, but it is not necessary.

This bill is also the smoking gun that one day can close down Fraser Island. It is quite clear. All people have to do is read it and they will see that that could happen. I am sure that this minister would not do that—

Ms Boyle: What you can see is they would have to have a warrant. You would have to go before a magistrate to get a warrant. The magistrate—

Mr HOBBS: The minister has missed my point. What I was saying was that this is the smoking gun that could in fact one day shut down the recreation areas on, say, Fraser Island. That could happen, from the minister's position, by slowly changing all of the regulations and making it harder for people and by making the enforcement stronger so that people would not go there. The camping areas could be reduced and leases—I will come to that soon—could be changed or cancelled. The minister could do that, particularly when the minister is the only one and the only appeal is through the department. I am sure there is not going to be much of an appeal from the department if the minister has made the decision and then it goes to the magistrate. Maybe that is a possibility. I still believe that the minister could get up and say, 'In the best interests of the environment we've decided to close that camping spot there and that camping spot there,' and bit by bit the ability to access the area is reduced.

Mr Messenger: They just have to erect a sign.

Mr HOBBS: That is basically all they have to do. We do not need that trigger mechanism. There needs to be something quite clear to say that that cannot happen—that is, there is not the ability to reduce access to the people. What is the sense in having something beautiful locked up so no-one can see it? This seems to be the problem that we have overall with many of the national park structures in this state—that is, they are locked up and people cannot get to see them if they want to.

Ms Boyle interjected.

Mr HOBBS: They are. They are locked up, Minister. There are many places out there—

Ms Boyle: More money, more rangers, more parks—not less!

Mr HOBBS: In fact, there are areas where rangers do not even have petrol to put in their motor cars. That happened only last year in my area. They could not get enough fuel to drive out to the parks to manage them. The minister might be putting more on, but there have been so many increases in

national parks over the years that there are just not the resources. I know that the government is putting more money into it, but unfortunately it is just nowhere near enough.

Mr Messenger: There's fewer rangers!

Mr HOBBS: The member for Burnett says that there are fewer rangers. There may be; I am not really sure. I will keep out of it. The reality is that it is certainly nowhere near enough for what we have. There is no doubt about that at all.

In relation to amending or cancelling agreements, the bill provides that a recreation area agreement may be amended or cancelled by a subsequent agreement and provides for how and when the subsequent agreement is given effect, including provisions for land to be removed from a recreation area. If an amendment or cancellation results in all or part of the recreation area becoming or remaining state land, the agreement is cancelled to the extent that the land becomes state land. The resulting state land in the recreation area would then be managed subject to interdepartmental arrangements. While I do not doubt that there has to be some process to ensure that, if there is noncompliance it is able to be managed, this streamlines the process for areas to in fact be closed down and put back into state management. I would suggest, Minister, that leaseholders on this area would have fewer rights than retail shop lessees have for a right of renewal.

Many people in the shopping centres complain that they do not have a good process. I know that there have been some good improvements after the passing of the recent retail legislation, but I would suggest that that legislation would be far superior to this for anyone who is working on a commercial arrangement in some of these recreation areas. As I mentioned earlier, the approach by the state government—and it is not just this Beattie government; it was the Goss government as well—is to avoid community boards and for the government to run it.

This is a good parallel to what happened with the hospitals. We had hospital boards. The government took them away and look what happened to the hospital system. The problems are not entirely due to that, but boards represented one of the checks and balances that stood the test of time. It is important to understand that we should not be afraid of having members of the community involved. They might not do it exactly the way the government would like to see it run, but the reality is that they run it well and they will tell the government when there is trouble brewing and will be able to fix it up. This is something we have to try to work with the community on rather than stand over it with the big stick.

There are certainly a lot of interesting changes we need to make to the management of our recreation areas in order to improve them. Obviously we do want to make sure that we have a good system. We need to ensure that our future generations can visit these places and be proud of them. But the reality is that we do not want to lose them. We want to run them well and we want to make sure that they have a great future.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (6.19 pm): I rise to give my support to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. In doing so, I congratulate the minister on introducing this bill on 29 November and also being in the chamber personally to see its safe passage through the House.

As suggested by the title, the Recreation Areas Management Bill will introduce uniform regulations in our recreation areas. The bill will provide legislative power for the improved management of five recreation areas in our state: Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, Bribie Island and Inskip peninsula. Further, the bill will repeal the current Recreation Areas Management Act 1988, which, in its current form, is not in line with management principles contained in more recent legislation.

As the minister commented, put simply, the current act and laws are out of date. This updated bill will bring the legislation into line with current drafting practices; enhance consistency with the Nature Conservation Act 1992 in relation to permits, offences and penalties; and provide more contemporary legislation in keeping with present standards and administrative practices in law enforcement and planning.

The intent of the 1988 legislation, which was to provide for coordinated recreation management across a wide range of land tenures, is to be maintained. For streamlining of operational procedures and minimising red tape, this bill will abolish the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and vest its responsibilities in the environment minister and the chief executive of the EPA.

In developing the bill, account was taken of government business and public comments on a discussion paper about the review of the recreation areas legislation. Numerous submissions received on the discussion paper from a wide range of community groups and individuals indicated broad community support for updating this legislation.

Ninety per cent of the land identified as Queensland's five recreation areas are national parks. Some of the critical areas included for management within the Recreation Areas Management Bill include our beautiful beaches, esplanades and coral reefs. Because these areas are not zoned as national park land, they are not identified specifically and covered by current legislation. These critical areas experience very high visitation and recreational use. As I said, currently they are outside the protected area estates and, therefore, they are not included for management purposes under the Nature

Conservation Act. The primary purpose of this bill is to provide separate recreation areas management legislation for those specific areas.

The bill will cater for recreational activities on a variety of land tenures and will help ensure that the opportunities and experiences offered by recreation areas are maintained and properly managed for Queenslanders and visitors alike. This bill, with its updated provisions, is no surprise, because it is consistent and totally in line with this government's ongoing focus towards protecting, maintaining and promoting Queensland's magnificent and marvellous variety of natural environments.

This bill is about identifying more intrinsic and precise initiatives for better environmental management and protection in Queensland. In the 2005 budget, the Beattie Labor government appropriated \$272 million towards protecting Queensland's environment. Further, government was responsible for adding more than 380,000 hectares of tropical rainforest to the state's national parks in the biggest expansion of protected areas in more than a decade. Environmental issues are important to us. We are aware that Queensland's parks, forests and recreation areas contain a unique cultural heritage, landscapes, ecosystems, plants and recreational activities that support this state's economy and quality of life.

The government fully understands the link between our tourism industry and our natural environment. We are keenly aware of the role that our recreation areas play in the local economies of many Queensland communities. It is a fact that better management and maintenance of these areas will enhance the visitor experience. Tourists will be encouraged to stay, to return and, most importantly, to spend more money, which ultimately means more jobs for the community. Increased visitation to recreation areas that are better managed will pump many additional dollars into regional communities and create further jobs.

Last year, the minister identified that Queensland's national parks generate almost \$1.2 billion each year for the Queensland economy as well as being directly responsible for the employment of 6,000 people and indirectly responsible for the employment of a further 15,000 people. Tourism operators, snack shop owners, and equipment hirers all operate associated businesses that are making money and employing locals in communities around and within recreation areas. We know that their livelihoods are dependent on the proper management of Queensland's special places. It is for those reasons that we apply ourselves to constantly review, define and update legislation to keep abreast of community trends and needs.

I have to express my disappointment that the opposition is not supporting this bill. As many members before me have said, this bill obviously is not perfect—no legislation is—but it is good for Queensland and it is good for Queenslanders. It is for that reason that I support this bill.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.25 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. I have listened intently to speakers from both sides of the House and also to speakers from the crossbenches give their support, their opposition or their reservations about what is contained in this bill. Certainly, on reading the minister's second reading speech, it made sense as to why this legislation is necessary. I have considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I pose the question: are we setting a major precedent in this parliament in terms of the reversal of the onus of proof? The committee's report listed a whole series of current acts of the Queensland parliament which contain a reversal of the onus of proof. I note the report states the following at page 22—

Such requirements are now reflected in most natural resource legislation (such as the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995, the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, the Integrated Planning Act 1997, the Water Act 2000, the Vegetation Management Act 1999, and the Environmental Protection Act 1994) as well as national and international standards for environmental management (for example AS/NZS ISO 14000: Environmental Management Systems, Standards Australia).

There is no doubt that there is a precedent for the minister to justify what she has proposed in this bill. But how far does this reversal of onus of proof in criminal proceedings go? If the government is now going down the road of making significant changes to environmental legislation, will it make such changes to other legislation in Queensland?

I heard speakers talk about how great our camping facilities are in our state. There are certainly some great camping areas in my electorate of Nicklin. One of the reservations I have with this bill is that, on my understanding, it gives more power to senior management staff. I want to share with members a recent experience I had with senior management staff of the department on the Sunshine Coast. They made a decision to take rubbish bins out of a very popular camping location. We have heard members from the government talk about our great camping facilities and the great opportunities there are for people to dispose of their waste. I simply say that I had a recent experience which I had to bring to the minister's attention in order to get a resolution. That experience left me with the clear message that some of the senior management in the department seem to row their own boat. In relation to the incident in question, the senior management had an opportunity to consult with the community and the local chamber of commerce. But, alas, consultation did not happen until we had an embarrassing situation where the rubbish bins were removed without forward notice. As a result community and private rubbish bins were overflowing with refuse. After approaches to the minister, the senior management staff finally decided to consult with local council representatives and talk to the community.

Sometimes I worry when we give additional powers and resources to our senior management staff without any accountability for them. Yes, politicians are elected and they can be sacked just like that. Maybe this time next year we will be preparing to go to the election to let the people of Queensland decide our future.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have no doubt that the minister has good intentions in relation to what she is trying to achieve through this new legislation. We need to ensure that we do not kill our recreation areas with kindness. We need to ensure that we balance and control in a sensible way the very forests that everyone wants to enjoy and treasure. There is a need for some common sense and a sensible method of ensuring that we do not destroy the very forests that we are trying to protect.

I have some reservations in relation to the powers that we are passing on to our middle management staff. We have some wonderful staff in our environment department who give 120 per cent in their efforts, and in my comments tonight I certainly do not want to take anything away from those staff who give their all for the good of Queensland and our environment. But I do believe that there are some staff who are receiving a very handsome salary and, unfortunately, for whatever reason, they neglect some of their key responsibilities which involve consulting with the community and local council equals when they make important decisions.

Prior to the break I was reflecting on one recent experience that has been brought to my attention. Unfortunately it had to be raised with the minister for her intervention. There was a situation where a decision was made to remove important waste disposal facilities from one of our camping grounds and there was no notice in advance to the local council or to the local community. Unfortunately a sad state of affairs eventuated.

I will be voting against the legislation. I will be listening with a great deal of interest to the minister's responses to the various concerns that have been raised by the opposition and members of the crossbench. I look forward to this debate progressing to the committee stage where there can be further debate about the ramifications of some of the clauses and perhaps a better understanding of the reasons the minister has chosen to include some clauses in this prospective legislation. I also look forward to listening to other members' contributions on this important bill.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (7.33 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2006. This important bill will improve the processes through which recreation areas across a range of tenures, from national park to private land, are managed for recreational purposes. The bill will streamline administrative processes so that, for instance, visitors to designated areas will not get separate vehicle and camping permits. It will allow those recreation areas, which are currently feeling the pressure of high visitor numbers, to be better managed.

Five recreation areas have been declared to date. These are Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, the Inskip peninsula north of Rainbow Beach and the Bribie Island recreation area. This bill may well give us an appropriate mechanism for the management of a sixth area I envisage as protected recreational open space—that is, the Flinders-Karawatha green corridor.

Every year more and more people head for Queensland—1,000 a week, in fact. In that context, recreational open space is important and it will become more so as our urban environments become crowded and people increasingly look for the peace of the natural environment to escape from the pressures of urban life. There is a tendency in our culture to think that we humans can make the world around us. We ignore that people are animals too and that a sense of connection to the earth, be it through bushwalking, going for a picnic in the bush or even just keeping a pot plant, is central to each individual's spiritual and physical wellbeing, just as protecting our environment is absolutely central to the survival of our society.

Recreational gardens and bushland are not just some kind of desirable add-on to urban living; they are crucial if urban living is to work. Central Park is what makes New York the world's greatest city; Sydney would be nothing if there were buildings all the way up to the harbour; and there is a spiritual reason why the Japanese, who live in the world's most compact urban environment, so rapturously honour the coming of the cherry blossoms.

If Brisbane is to be a great liveable city in the future, we must get its infrastructure right, as the Beattie government's regional plan sets out. We must also make provision for bountiful recreational open space. Right now we have the opportunity to do just that. A large, relatively intact stretch of bushland runs from Mount Flinders, just to the south of Ipswich, 40 kilometres or so to Karawatha on Brisbane's southwest. The Flinders-Karawatha corridor is the largest area of intact lowland eucalyptus forest in south-east Queensland. Its rich landscape includes peaks and creeks, lowland forests, forested ridges and semi-cleared valleys. It is home to a whole range of threatened plants and animals, including Lloyd's Native Olive, koalas, the powerful owl and the brush-tailed rock wallaby. Two parts of the corridor, Flinders Peak and the Greenbank military area, are of such significance that they are listed on the Register of National Estate.

The corridor includes a number of significant and sacred sites for local Aboriginal people, including White Rock, which is a special place for Ugarapul woman. It includes important fossil deposits and its more recent historical significance includes the World War II weaponry scattered around White Rock.

The corridor is widely used for mountain biking, bird watching, walking, horse riding and orienteering. I have spent a lot of time running, walking and riding my bike in this beautiful bush. Indeed, I once came second in a Queensland orienteering championship near Springfield, an event which brought hundreds of people together to appreciate this area of bushland.

It is also used for, and in the process damaged by, four-wheel driving and trail biking. The importance of preserving the corridor as an intact parcel has been recognised, if not always prioritised, by governments for some years. In 1997 the Ipswich City Council, which is widely acclaimed for its Enviroplan, adopted the Flinders-Greenbank Green Space Plan. That plan identified the corridor's importance and inspired the council's purchase in recent years of 4,500 hectares of land crucial for the corridor's connectivity.

More recent efforts to preserve the Flinders-Karawatha corridor have stepped up a notch with the state government, through the EPA, binding together with the defence department, which owns Greenbank, and the five affected shires—Beaudesert, Ipswich, Boonah, Brisbane and Logan—to prepare a memorandum of understanding for the Flinders-Greenbank-Karawatha conservation partnership. The MOU, which will be signed shortly, creates an understanding about how the corridor, with its many tenures and land uses, will be managed cooperatively. The MOU is a very significant step. Following two years of negotiation it will have all the parties, with their very different interests and motivations, signed up to a document which recognises the corridor's importance and commits each party to sharing information and decision making.

That said, there are still threats to the corridor. Until very few years ago the corridor remained virtually intact to Daisy Hill State Forest, but development caused that connectivity to be lost. With the MOU not being legally binding, there is still the threat that parts of it will be developed. Development encroaching on the corridor means that weeds get in and that the pinch points become increasingly squeezed. While those are the headline threats, clearing and off-road vehicles are daily causing erosion.

For the first time, however, this MOU will give us the ability to cooperatively manage those threats. Preservation of the Flinders-Karawatha corridor would be one of the most significant environmental advances in decades. It could, and should, be a key legacy of the Beattie government. If completely preserved, the corridor has the potential to act as the lungs of the growing western corridor, to protect a number of threatened species and to provide recreational open space for the thousands of people who will move to the region in the next 20 years.

With the population of Ipswich alone projected to grow from its current 135,000 to 318,000 by 2026, preserving this green space will allow the western corridor to be developed and marketed not as a far-flung urban area but as a unique green community. My vision is that through this cooperative management process the potential of Flinders-Karawatha for conservation and recreation will be realised. With cooperative management really working, the corridor should be split up and managed in different parts for different purposes.

Five years from now a south-east Queensland resident thinking they want to spend more time in the bush on the weekend should be able to look up the Flinders-Karawatha web site and know that this is where they go for a picnic, this is where they go for horse riding and that there is a graded and signed walking trail along the whole distance from Mount Flinders, near Ipswich, to Karawatha, in Brisbane. This is a vision which seems a long way from where we are now, but it is not at all beyond reach. It will require further land acquisitions and cooperation with the private landholders both in and adjoining the corridor. With the MOU very soon to be in place, achieving this next vision should become a public commitment of the various signatories including the state government.

As I have worked on the Flinders-Karawatha corridor over the last couple of years, I have found very high levels of community support ranging from recreational users of the bush, like mountain bikers, to smart property developers who see the commercial benefit in developing in an area that is identified and designated as green, right through to recreational users like mountain bikers and bushwalkers.

I would like to share some of the comments made on the public record with the House. The Wilderness Society describes preservation of Flinders-Karawatha as 'a very good idea which we will support'. Respected naturalist Lloyd Bird says preservation of the corridor was first talked about 30 years ago but nothing ever happened. He says, 'If it's not done now, especially with all the population moving in, we'll lose it forever.' The Brisbane Environment Centre says that it is involved in dogfights all over the corridor and is particularly concerned about the Springfield pinch point, where the corridor is just 200 metres wide, and the proposal for rail yards at Larapinta. The National Parks Association says preservation of the corridor will give Ipswich the equivalent of a Brisbane Forest Park on its doorstep.

Jason Headridge, mountain biking coordinator of the Ipswich Amateur Cycling Club, has committed the club to supporting the corridor, pointing out 'It won't just affect mountain bike riding but

also horse riding, bushwalkers, triathletes orienteering and other pastimes, not to mention people who just want to get out and have a walk in the bush with the family'. Archibald Prize winning artist Davida Allen, herself a keen bushwalker, joined my call for the corridor to be preserved when, in August last year, she went public with her call for Mount Flinders to be gazetted national park. UQ Ipswich supports the call. Finally, in August last year the *Queensland Times* recognised the vital importance of preserving the corridor when it editorialised that green space needs to be preserved for the future. I table the QT's comprehensive coverage of the issue.

For my own part, I love this bit of bush. Over the years I have spent a lot of time in it—running, bushwalking, orienteering and riding my mountain bike. For Ipswich people, it is something of a hidden treasure, but the fact that it is on our doorstep and that this bush is so accessible is one of the things that makes Ipswich a really wonderful place to live. If Flinders-Karawatha is preserved, we will have made a crucial step in ensuring that Brisbane is one of the world's most liveable cities into the future. If it is not, we will rue the loss of a unique opportunity. This bill may well offer a mechanism for the management of the Flinders-Karawatha corridor to be preserved in perpetuity. As such, I strongly commend the bill to the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (7.44 pm): I think the Recreation Areas Management Bill really epitomises the reason the Labor government is so unpopular at the moment in Queensland. We all agree that we need recreation areas. They have to be well managed. They are some of the best areas not only in Queensland but in Australia. We need these areas to be the lungs of Queensland. We need to look after the environment so people can enjoy the environment. This bill makes provision for some wonderful areas such as Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsula, Moreton Island and Bribie Island. I think we would all love to be able to enjoy those beautiful places on a regular basis, as would literally the entire population of Queensland.

The real issue with this bill is that it is bringing in draconian police powers and attacking the people of Queensland in a way that you would not believe. If some of the powers that are to be enshrined in this legislation were brought into the Criminal Code and we passed these powers onto the police, the lawyers in the Labor Party would be up in arms criticising it, saying how dreadful it is and that it is not giving people a fair go. Essentially, this legislation is giving greater powers and authority to the environment police than the police have recourse to in the Criminal Code.

There is some amazing stuff in this legislation. The warning bells have been sounded by the all-party Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which is responsible for looking at our legislation. Let us look at some of the comments that it has made in its *Alert Digest*. The committee states in its report—

The bill establishes a comprehensive system of regulation of access to, and of activities within, 'recreation areas'. These provisions impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter, or wish to enter, such areas.

In the summary of the report, the committee states—

The committee notes that the bill confers upon authorised officers powers of entry which extend beyond situations where the occupier consents or a warrant has been obtained. The committee further notes that once entry has been effected, the bill confers on investigators a wide range of additional powers ... The committee draws to the attention of Parliament the nature and extent of these entry and post-entry powers.

They are the warning bells. These are parks and recreation areas that are meant for enjoyment. These are parks where we want a real ethos of partnership and cooperation between the people involved in the parks, the people involved in recreation and those people who are able to go in and enjoy them. I would like to sound a warning note to the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders who enjoy their camping, who enjoy their four-wheel driving, who enjoy their bushwalking and who enjoy these five areas of Bribie Island, Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsula and Moreton Island. They should be aware of this Big Brother tactic of the Beattie Labor government and how it may impinge upon them, their family or people who are running operations within these places in the future. It is a Big Brother philosophy which has permeated throughout the environment department. It has come from the top. It has come from the Labor policies, not from the staff themselves. It is the direction they are getting from the top—from the policy of the government and the minister of the day.

I took a trip last year through north Queensland and I was amazed and appalled at this ethos and attitude that has developed of 'catch people', 'attack people', 'don't help them'. People who want to get a river right, people running businesses or factories, organisations which are exporting or in the domestic economy that want to work cooperatively and make inquiries are just told, 'Read the bill and if you get anything wrong we'll catch you.' That is the attitude and that is what is coming through here.

No wonder the Labor government is on the nose when it has this jackboot, Big Brother mentality of attack. It thinks everybody is wrong, seeks to reverse the onus of proof and tries to see who it can catch in the net. This compares with the real Australian ethos of working in cooperation, bringing everybody along, including people who highly respect our recreation areas and national parks and working with businesses and organisations. Let us give people the chance to understand legislation. Let us get out there and work with them, instead of taking a them-and-us approach of thinking that Queenslanders come from another planet. That is the way the government treats them.

I compliment our shadow minister for his detailed, well-constructed and balanced speech here today. His was the sort of contribution that this parliament needs. It was a detailed analysis that looked

into issues. It was not just glossy statements like, 'It's nice to ride a mountain bike through the parks,' or, 'There will be some simplified system for obtaining a camping permit.' Let us come to the real principles of this particular bill, the principles that were espoused by our shadow minister.

I want to go through some important points. This bill abolishes the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and its board, and increases the powers of EPA officers to the level of those exercised by police. It reverses the onus of proof. The onus of proof is a fundamental element of justice and fairness, but here we see the reversal of that onus. In this case, anyone who is deemed by an EPA officer to have committed an offence under this legislation will be guilty and they will have to prove their innocence.

Four times in the explanatory notes this legislation is described as breaching fundamental legislative principles. Certain legislative standards were brought into this parliament by Wayne Goss when he led the previous Labor government, and already we are seeing a breaching of those principles by this government. It wants to trample over people and put power in the hands of EPA 'police'—extraordinary powers that even our well-respected police officers, who have to uphold the criminal law, do not possess.

This legislation, without any guidelines, allows the minister to decide who is a fit and proper person in relation to the issuing of a commercial permit or the sale or purchase of an ongoing business. It denies community involvement because it limits the number of persons on the recreation areas management board to only the minister and two internal departmental heads. They are keeping it all in-house. This legislation offers nothing to private landowners to enter into an agreement with the EPA.

One matter of great concern in this bill is the increase in power given to EPA officers. They can enter premises, both inside and outside a recreation area, to search for or seize documents without warrants necessarily being issued. Mr Deputy Speaker English, as a former police officer you would know the process that has to be gone through to obtain warrants and the fairness that has to apply to an investigation. This is a complete abrogation of all those principles, as the jackboot attitude of the Labor government comes through in this bill.

I reiterate the importance of having proper and varied national parks that are representative of all the important areas that we want to preserve and look after. It is important that these parks be looked after. Some parks are more popular than others. Some parks are more accessible than others. It is important that we preserve parks for their natural flora and fauna. It is important that we provide reasonable access to those parks for people who wish to visit and understand nature, to show nature to their children and to enjoy the rivers, forests, beaches and so on.

We must be careful not to massively overpopulate and pollute with rubbish those very popular areas at peak camping times. The people who visit those areas go there because they love them. We will receive good cooperation if we take a partnership approach. We need to understand that it belongs to all of us and that we want as many people as possible to enjoy it without damaging and destroying it. We can do this in a cooperative way, whereby we all move forward together, rather than through the imposition of the police type powers that are proposed.

I can tell the government that I know the attitude of people who are trying to do the right thing. I have talked to people, particularly throughout the agricultural areas of north Queensland. They seek to cooperate, work in partnership, look after the environment and do the right thing. However, they just cannot get cooperation because of the attitude filtering down, which staff are required to adhere to, of 'crush them, catch them, find them, get them gaoled, send out the EPA police along with uniformed Queensland Police Service officers, get stuck into them, see what you can get and don't give them a chance'. That is the attitude. It is the wrong attitude and people are sick of it.

People want to cooperate. They want to look after our recreation areas, national parks and so forth. However, they do not want Queensland relegated to a state that is subject to unfair laws which are against all legislative principles and which treat people worse than common criminals. That is our fundamental problem with this bill. I urge members to vote against it. The government should turn it around and get it right. Let us try for a decent system, where we stick together as Queenslanders—not try to catch and attack each and every person in this state.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (7.55 pm): I stand to speak in support of the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. This is an important piece of legislation. We need only to have listened to the news reports on the ABC this morning to hear the proposition that in the next 100 years we will see an extinction of species that has not occurred at the same rate for at least many millions of years. This extinction of species throughout the world is being projected, basically, as a result of human activity. This is certainly a worrisome thing. It really struck me, when I heard it, to think that I, as a legislator standing here in Queensland today, bear an historic responsibility. In 50 and 100 years time, people will look at that honour board outside and look at the records to see who was here and what responsibility we took in terms of being conscious of this reality and what we have done about it.

The essential word to be considered in a piece of legislation such as this is 'balance'. This legislation seeks to establish some balance between the needs of human habitation—especially recreation, in this context, in our magnificent wilderness areas of Australia and of Queensland in particular—with the need for conservation.

In our time, in our own generation, we have seen a radical change in the way that people go about their recreation. To see this, one has only to consider the growth in the number of four-wheel drives in use in the community. I have no real difficulty with four-wheel drives but there has been a proliferation of them. We can project what that means in terms of the number of people who have access to areas that were never easy to access before. You certainly could not access certain areas in your EJ Holden, even though you tried. Accessing areas that are quite remote, rough and off-road was not a reality. Now it is the reality of many, many families and individuals who go out on the weekends and easily access areas that we could not before.

This has its own very significant set of outcomes. I listened carefully to the debate tonight, when people spoke about being worried about regulating four-wheel drives on beaches. The one time I visited Fraser Island, I was very impressed to see the way in which the rangers regulated the movements of four-wheel drives along the beach to ensure that the bird population, as they rested in certain areas, were not disturbed or tired out by four-wheel drives coming too close to them and sending them into flight more times a day than necessary. That was a simple measure designed to ensure the welfare of those bird populations.

This is a very significant issue. It is extremely important that we do everything we can to moderate those activities in order to find some balance. It is the intention of this bill to give the authorities the capacity to finetune how areas are governed and controlled on a day-to-day basis to provide flexibility on the ground. That is also very important.

I draw the attention of honourable members to the growth in the use of recreational watercraft which give access to remote areas. I urge the minister to keep an eye on this significant issue into the future. There has been massive growth in the number of people using watercraft, especially jet skis. We are sitting on a time bomb in terms of jet skis. The community close to Brisbane that I am most aware of and where I spend time is Redland Bay. Jet skis are becoming an incredible problem for the safety of individuals—

Mr English interjected.

Mr FENLON: I take that interjection from the member for Redlands, who is very familiar with this subject. Jet skis are an issue not only in terms of people's safety but also because of their immediate impact on the environment. Some people have no consideration for the environment. They drive at high speeds close to banks that are vulnerable to erosion. They create incredible problems for the immediate environment, which is a very sensitive ecosystem for the dugong, magnificent bird life and other creatures that inhabit Redland and Moreton bays.

This is a further dimension that we will have to watch very carefully. As a government our role is to stand back and look at the big picture. The increase in the number of off-road recreational vehicles and marine recreational vehicles seem to be growing exponentially. We are sitting on a real time bomb in this respect.

This important legislation seeks to deliver some balance. It recognises the important role of the tourism industry. Australia's tourist industry is one of the most magnificent industries that one could have. If managed properly, it will be a non-depletable industry. If we ensure that the only thing that tourists leave on the sand are footprints that are washed away on the high tide, we will continue to have a magnificent resource. If we can retain an area's beauty and ecological value—the things that people come to enjoy—people will still be coming in 100 years' time and hopefully they will be paying a lot more to do so. We will be taking a lot of money from the people who come to enjoy our state. We should be doing that, because it brings money into the state and that is what we are about. The tourist industry has to be valued in a way that ensures that the fundamentals of our natural environment are properly appreciated and preserved.

We have a long way to go to redress the balance at a micro level on a day-to-day basis. This bill takes a very important step in the right direction. I commend the minister for bringing the bill to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.04 pm): I rise to speak on the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005. I commend the shadow minister for the environment and member for Burnett for his detailed analysis of the bill. The aims of this proposed legislation are well intentioned. However, I have some concerns that relate to the confusion that this bill may produce. This confusion could result in the worthwhile aims of the bill, those aimed at managing and protecting our recreation areas and even raising funds for those areas through permits, being lost in overregulation. This bill could be so much better.

The coalition is wary of the delicate balance that needs to be struck between protecting the beautiful areas of our state through regulation and the need to respect the aim of making those areas accessible, while ensuring that regulation does not lead to greater administrative burdens for the state and those wanting to enjoy the areas. As many have said before, the ambit of the bill aims to cast new regulation upon Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip peninsular and Moreton Island—some of our most beautiful and fragile environments. Currently, Queenslanders and visitors to the state alike are attracted to those beautiful areas because of their accessibility, and that has made them major tourist and

recreational attractions. For example, in 2004-05, Fraser Island had over 300,000 campers and another 175,000 visitors through commercial tour operators. Furthermore, the revenue created by those visitors is not insignificant.

Amongst other things, the bill aims to regulate the conduct of visitors, introduce further management and regulation of recreational activities, collect funds to be spent on management and facilities, create a permit regime and visitor management scheme and allow for the continued management of the recreation areas. They are some—not all—of the aims of this bill. I will get to the others a little later.

I reiterate my initial reservation to the bill, which is not necessarily directed to the aims of the bill that I have just listed. There is the need to balance the regulation and, dare I say it, overregulation that this bill may produce with the desire to keep those areas accessible. One of the main problems with overregulation is the subsequent administrative burdens it places back on the state. Indeed, the rigorous management scheme that this bill proposes would require much time and resourcing. Interestingly, I can only assume that the drafters of the bill realised these administrative burdens and provided in the bill that non-state landowners and administrative arrangements are to manage this legislation. I would like to express concern that if the state is not controlling the regulation it hands down, the opportunity for inconsistency in implementation arises. This could lead to Queenslanders, tourist operators, visitors and the non-state managers themselves being confused with what is allowed and what is not. We could not expect those individuals to dissect this lengthy piece of legislation.

I attempted to read part 2 of the bill and found it very confusing. Will the parks and wildlife officers manage the land for weeds and pests? What plans does the government have for increasing the staff numbers if the need arises? Does the landowner still have unlimited freehold rights to the land? Who is responsible for the control of stock and fencing? Part 4 relating to permits also needs further clarification. Furthermore, this bill should not be inconsistent with existing legislation. I am concerned that, if it is, it just makes future tweaking inevitable and then, when those changes are handed down, confuses the area managers more.

Therefore, the bill must be brought into line with the Nature Conservation Act, the Forestry Act, the Workplace Health and Safety Act and the State Penalties Enforcement Act, to name but a few. Furthermore, the bill must not conflict and overlap with existing federal World Heritage areas and legislation. This would lead to more confusion and conflicting regulation. This means that the worthwhile aims of the bill might not be achieved.

In addition, it will be difficult to determine whether the bill is achieving its aims. The bill maintains an authority consisting of one minister and a board constituted by two department heads. Such a set-up lacks accountability. It lacks openness. We need openness if this House is to know whether the bill is working or just causing the confusion that I suspect it may cause.

Part 7 of the bill introduces quite significant offences. Unfortunately, these offences and powers to enforce such offences cannot be effective in relation to such a confusing and potentially conflicting piece of legislation. We cannot have confusing regulations that people may unintentionally breach, thus becoming subject to significant offences. The potential for injustice is extremely high.

Furthermore, the bill will give our park officers some of the same powers as police. The following questions arise: do these new powers now fall under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act? Who is monitoring these significantly empowered park officers?

One can imagine an international student on a tour unintentionally going on to the wrong area whilst visiting Fraser Island and having a park officer slapping him with an unjustifiably high fine. The bill leaves the following question unanswered as well. Does he have a right of appeal in relation to the park officer's decision?

Overregulation can cause as many problems as divisions to the regulations themselves. The real concern with the Recreation Areas Management Bill is that it not only introduces further regulation but that that regulation conflicts with existing regulations and that can only lead to confusion and a future deeming of the legislation as ineffective.

Let us refer to the Legislative Standards Act 1992 for guidance here. It reminds us at part 2 section 4 that any legislation must have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of parliament. I am concerned that this bill may not have such regard. I am concerned that it does not provide for a proper review of the regulation's implementation and even the creation of a democratically open authority to oversee the regulation. I am concerned that principles of natural justice could be ignored. I am concerned that this bill does not limit itself to specific cases and persons, something it should have done in a legislative environment where other state and federal legislation exist and where it may be in conflict.

What about the recognition of traditional Aboriginal law in some of these areas? I am concerned that the power given to officers effectively reverses the onus of proof of individuals by allowing rangers to apply charges to an individual, including fines, without having to prove intention or reasonable grounds. I applaud the initiative to have consistent regulation of the state's most beautiful areas but to be effective this regulation needs to be consistent and not confusing to visitors and managers alike.

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women) (8.11 pm), in reply: This is a sad story tonight. It is the story of two people who have gone wrong—one an eager to please, newly employed lawyer; newly employed by the opposition, that is—and a shadow minister who is known for his flip-flops all over the place and who has a tendency to search out the reds under the bed. Their combined lack of intellectual rigour in terms of their approach to this bill through the briefing—

Mr MESSENGER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the minister's remarks offensive and ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Copeland): Order! Will the minister withdraw?

Ms BOYLE: I withdraw. There were two briefings offered to all Independents and all members of the opposition—National and Liberal members—and one member attended, the shadow spokesperson on the environment. It is really apparent when one listens to the presentations tonight from those in the Liberal and National Party coalition that Mr Messenger's notes were photocopied and given to all and that formed the basis of their speeches tonight. All members of the coalition have assumed that Mr Messenger understood what the bill is about and that his criticisms are justified. They are not at all justified.

He has entirely missed the point. Opposition members are fighting for relevance. They have decided to display to all Queenslanders their absolute and integral conflict about the environment. They are forced into a position where they have to pretend to care but really they do not. In their hearts they want to oppose anything that is about protecting or conserving the environment and about ordering activities properly in precious areas, mostly areas that are national parks.

Those opposite oppose any environmental restrictions—I will return to that a little later. They say that there should be no permits for those who wish to have commercial uses in protected areas on public estates. They say that it does not matter whether such operators are doing damage to the environment, the rangers should have no powers. There should be no restrictions. Yet they want us to believe that they really care and that we should have more rangers, we should do more, and we should work more with others. That conundrum shows in all of their remarks tonight.

Might I remind honourable members—and I thank those who have made worthwhile contributions to the debate on this important bill—that what we are doing is modernising legislation that was originally National Party legislation and that was put in place with absolutely no consultation, if those opposite check their history. This bill has been proposed for good reason. We have recreation areas that are just splendid and are being enjoyed not only by Queenslanders but also by tourists from interstate and overseas, and quite rightly. These areas are enjoyed by millions of visitors every year. The numbers are increasing every year. It is for that good reason that we need some order to the activities, some restrictions on what activities and where, some permits for commercial operators who are using public resources but who must behave within reasonable rules in terms of protecting the environment and their clients.

How could the shadow spokespersons for the environment get it so wrong? He has been demonstrating how he is getting it wrong all over the state, I have to tell members. He is widely known as being only as good as the last person who has spoken to him. That is the view that he takes. That has been demonstrated on a number of issues recently. For example, the rangers at Inskip on one day were arrogant and lazy and on the next day they were just the poor meat in the sandwich, I think was the description. On another day he was in Port Hinchinbrook and he was saying, 'What a spectacular development. It is better than Fraser Island.' Tonight he is in the House saying how magnificent Fraser Island is and how much it should be protected and nurtured as a tourism icon. He is a man who changes his views according to the last person who has spoken to him. I say this: if he thinks that will get him into government, let alone make him a good minister, then he has lot of lessons yet to learn. Finding a fair balance in terms of both protecting the environment and encouraging visitation, opening it up to tourists and making sure that they are safe and enjoy that experience of the natural environment is what this bill is about.

I would like to mention some particular issues that have come up in the debate in order to clarify them. Numbers of times members of the opposition complained that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is not doing enough about pests and weeds. I think it is just a little catechism that they sign on to, a bit like a prayer, when they go to caucus meetings. It has no reality. I want to put on the record tonight the kinds of increased and expert management that we are engaging in for some of the feral animal and weed problems in Queensland.

I will let everybody know that the total estimated expenditure for pest management in 2004-05 was \$4.5 million and the estimated expenditure for 2005-06 will be sustained at the same level, at \$4.5 million. This is a considerable increase and is record spending in these two financial years on weeds and feral animal management. That is being spent all over the state. For this financial year the spending in the northern division will be \$910,000, in the central division will be \$604,000 and in the southern division will be \$1,231,000.

Let me give members some highlights to demonstrate our credentials in this regard. In the Cape Melville National Park, for example, particularly during the wet season, rangers are chemically treating newly germinating seedlings of the invasive weed sicklepod. In Girraween National Park rangers are working to wipe out blackberry. In the Cooloola section of the Great Sandy National Park contractors have been employed to eventually cover about 10,000 hectares of national park in an ongoing project to remove pine wildlings.

In the Mackay highlands pig traps are being distributed as part of a cooperative effort with neighbouring landholders to reduce pig numbers. It is expected that almost 30 pig traps will be operational by next year. In and near Homevale National Park, which is close to the heart of the member for Mirani, more than 50 kilometres of roads have been cleared of parthenium, a weed that can cause serious allergic reactions in people.

On Moreton Island rangers are targeting prickly Mossman River grass, a widespread and common pest that clings to clothing, human skin and animal hides. In Bowling Green Bay National Park between Ayr and Townsville the rangers are working on controlling rubber vine and prickly acacia in Ramsar listed wetlands. In western Queensland thousands of baits for pigs, wild dogs and foxes have been laid in recent months, including 1,200 in Palmgrove National Park, 2,400 in Expedition National Park, 900 in Precipice National Park and so on and so on and so on. I will not take the further time of the House tonight to continue to outline those kinds of programs, but I say this to members of the opposition: they are absolute fools if they do not recognise the tremendous expertise and hard work that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers are providing every day of the week all over Queensland—much better than was ever done before and ever done in the time of a National Party government. If the shadow minister for the environment equivocates on that, then you are a fool indeed, sir.

I want to address some other matters that have arisen in the debate tonight which relate particularly to the fundamental legislative principles. It appears from the comments made by many honourable members that one small paragraph at the beginning of the extensive *Alert Digest* report, which I will table, published by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has been used by Mr Messenger and distributed to others on the opposition benches and some Independents as though that is the report. Therefore, I read into the record some very significant and important sections of this report. Yes, indeed the paragraph is there that says—

The bill establishes a comprehensive system of regulation of access to, and of activities within, 'recreation areas'. These provisions impinge in many ways upon the rights and liberties of individuals who enter, or wish to enter, such areas.

And at that point many members stopped reading, or maybe they were not given the further information. It is important that the House understands that there are restrictions on people's entry and activities, so they should read further to find out whether there are such good reasons, as indeed there are, and whether there are protective provisions put into the bill, as indeed there are. Other paragraphs from the *Alert Digest* on this bill state—

In the circumstances, therefore, the establishment of a regulatory regime in relation to recreation areas does not appear objectionable, and indeed would seem appropriate.

Another paragraph states—

The committee notes that the provisions of the bill establish a regulatory regime which impacts in various ways on the rights and liberties of individuals who enter and carry out activities in recreation areas.

Given the circumstances, the committee does not object to the establishment of this regulatory system.

Paragraph No. 12 states—

In the circumstances, these entry powers are relatively modest in nature.

Paragraph No. 14 states—

Clauses 157-181 confer an extensive range of post-entry powers. As on previous occasions, the committee recognises the significant efforts which have been made in drafting many of these provisions to take account of fundamental legislative principles. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the powers will most commonly be exercised within recreation areas, which are primarily on public land.

And so on and so on and so on. These are serious powers indeed. Where do they come from? They come from the previous bill—the National Party bill. Had the newly employed young lawyer or the shadow minister done his job and looked back at the original National Party legislation they would have found that these powers are there. What they also would have found—and I admit this—is that the powers in that earlier bill were very much shorter in terms of the numbers of words used to describe them and the amount of the bill that they took up. It would appear that the opposition has decided that the more words that are used to specify the powers, therefore, the more powers there are. That is not so. In the updated bill we have been so specific and so careful about the protections and the interpretation of those powers that the rangers will be able to do less, not more.

The powers are there to be used in those exceptional circumstances where they are needed for the good order and management of our national parks. How do members think those might ever be needed? Unfortunately, Inskip Point was one such example that comes to mind over Christmas. There are some members opposite who wish to minimise the disruption and the threat that was occasioned

not only to rangers but also to others in the park by those who were not just a little bit drunk and just a little bit noisy. They were invasive and disruptive and threatening to others who were there in good spirit for their usual holidays in family circumstances with young children. Should it be that people do the right thing and book into our camping grounds and behave in ways appropriate to the area—looking after their waste, being respectful of the privacy and the needs of others—and then along come some others who have not booked in, who are making a tremendous noise, who are misusing alcohol and disrupting others, then of course our rangers need the powers to move those people on and out of the way with proper order and proper recording of those powers and proper justification, as is given recognition in all of the clauses of the bill. I wish, too, that those circumstances did not arise, but unfortunately they have in the past and they, in great likelihood, will again in the future.

I want to mention several other matters that have also been raised this evening. It was a most unworthy presentation by the member for Toowoomba South in terms of his allegations that, after a visit to north Queensland, he could see that this business operator who was trying so hard to work with the EPA was forced to move his company overseas. I know that circumstance very well, because when he alleged such things I rushed to my own department and put the allegation to it to investigate it in some detail. This was a business operator engaging in highly hazardous activity on a creek bank that required permits under the Environmental Protection Agency. While every other such business operator in the state of Queensland has been pleased to get proper licensing and permitting, this particular person said, 'Nah! That is not cooperation with the EPA. That is not good order and I believe that the member for Toowoomba South knew better—that this was not a cooperative business owner at all but this was in fact a person who was refusing to obey the proper standards that other business operators accept as absolutely reasonable and appropriate in terms of work in a precious environment with their potentially environmentally damaging activities.

One of the disappointments I have had tonight in the improper attack that the opposition and some Independent members have made upon this bill is that what is not showing to the parliament is the tremendously good work that is going on, that is signalled and that is much needed—and some on the opposition benches have said so—in terms of improved working together between tourism and the environment. In fact, we heard the member for Mirani ask for increasing cooperation between tourism and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and I absolutely support that. I am pleased to take this opportunity tonight to mention to members of the House who do not know that the EPA and QPWS in Cairns have tried as a pilot the employment of a tourism liaison officer. This is a kind of bridge person who can move between the tourism sector to make sure that there is good translation between that industry and the EPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Tourism leaders are saying that that has been a splendid initiative and is going well. It is likely that that program will be extended to other areas around the state. They also congratulate this government on its tremendous initiatives in tourism in protected areas. These are given recognition in this bill tonight, and I recognise also the tremendous efforts of the minister for tourism, the Hon. Margaret Keech, in this endeavour.

All in this parliament who say that there are tremendous opportunities created by bringing together not only domestic tourism but also international tourism with our spectacular natural environment are right. Some members have raised the issue that the Recreation Areas Management Bill 2005 contains the potential—only the potential; it has not, in fact, happened yet—for private lands to be included in a recreation area. I clarify that, to date, we have had only public lands in recreation areas. Through this bill we want to open the door to provide that opportunity to those in the private sector. For example, a private landholder may have a parcel of land that is located adjacent to an existing recreation area and wish for that land to be part of the recreation area, particularly if his or her land is used for tourism purposes and is complementary to the area of environmental protection, exploration and camping. Therefore, we have signalled that should a private landholder wish to engage with us in recreation area management or to even become part of recreation management, we would be willing to talk further and to reach jointly a voluntary contract on our part and on the part of the private landholder. I look forward to the day when I can inform the parliament of the first initiative in that regard.

Another matter that I wish to bring to the attention of members is the twaddle that was put to us tonight about advisory committees. As a member of this parliament who represents a regional area—as are you, Madam Deputy Speaker—I know well that it does not matter what area of state government operations we are talking about; there is not a one-size-fits-all program that a central government can wheel out and say, 'Here's the structure, here's the size, here's the shape and that can fit all of the areas of Queensland.' It does not work like that. I have worked very closely with my tourism and parks people on the Green Island recreation area over many years. In fact, I am on the record as having complained from time to time to Brisbane management that they have not understood the nuances of the needs of Green Island, which are quite different from the needs, for example, of Inskip Point, Fraser Island, Bribie Island, or Moreton Island. That is why we do not want a rigid set of advisory committees or boards. In fact, we need to be available to whatever is the appropriate committee at the time.

For example, on Green Island we have an advisory committee that has been working extremely well. They will continue doing their work. We have a different arrangement on Fraser Island where the World Heritage area management has set up an advisory committee. They are pleased to also work with us and to provide that link between World Heritage management on the island and recreation area

management. It is clear that Inskip Point is an area of such concern that we now need a committee for that area. I have already announced to this parliament that, with the assistance of the member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone, and the member for Gympie, Elisa Roberts, I will be visiting Inskip Point on Wednesday of next week for our first committee meeting for that precious area. That committee will not only assist us with the issues that arose over Christmas at Inskip Point in relation to campers, it will also go beyond the protected area estate and work with business owners and tourism leaders on expanding camping tourism in the broader Gympie area.

Tonight it has been put about the House that there is no right of appeal. In fact, there are two levels of appeal available for those who do not like our decisions about permits. The first is an internal review. This is appropriate for all state agencies these days. People do not have to appeal to somebody outside the agency; they are entitled to appeal to the agency and ask for a review of that decision. Should people still not be pleased with the decision, they then have the option of going further and taking the matter to a magistrate.

I thank honourable members who have joined in the debate tonight. I remind honourable members that the key features of this bill are to ensure that the underlying land tenure is fully respected and cannot be compromised and that it creates arrangements that reflect contemporary government policy by establishing that the minister is responsible for administering the legislation and doing away with a statutory authority and board. This is a clearer path for the parliament—for executive government in the first instance and then for this parliament and all members of it to have a say should they wish to complain about the administration of recreation areas. In fact, when statutory authorities are created, too often they provide limited control for members of parliament. So placing myself as minister directly in the position of responsibility gives members of parliament the opportunity at all times to question the decisions that the minister for the environment might make relevant to this legislation.

This bill also maintains the capacity to appoint relevant consultative or advisory committees. It contains new provisions on commercial activity agreements appropriate to tourism in protected areas and provides better working arrangements with the tourism industry. It also allows for administrative decisions on permits and other matters to be appealed. It replaces the former Recreation Areas Management Act, which was introduced by a National Party government in 1988 amid considerable controversy and with no consultation. It is amazing that when they took credit for introducing the original legislation they did not bother to mention the considerable controversy and that there was no consultation. Labor opposed the original legislation on the grounds that a National Party government would use the legislation as a substitute for the declaration of national parks. Their agenda at the time was to use the legislation to override the conservation status of national parks and allow for unsuitable development. Has anything changed? Not at all! From 1988 to 2006 they are still complaining that there should be no permits and no controls and that we should not have protected areas. The shadow minister has a growing list of anti-environment policies. They want no more national parks, no more controls and willy-nilly development. That is their position and nothing has changed.

I table the full report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for the information of all members of the House who may have been misled by the limited mention and selected paragraphs that were referred to earlier. The provisions of the bill are framed to match up with those that are contained in the Nature Conservation Act. This legislation will be welcomed by those who are truly engaged in beneficial recreation area management throughout Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

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

AYES, 51—Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, E Cunningham, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reeves, Reynolds, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Nolan

NOES, 27—Caltabiano, Copeland, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, McArdle, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, E Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Rogers

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr MESSENGER (8.45 pm): I am a little confused. Could the minister define 'the interests of area land-holders' in clause 1(b)(ii) in relation to the legislation and the expectations of the landowners in relation to the purpose of the legislation? In subclause 2(a) the purpose does not allow for the provision of the permanent creation of a consultation body with a view to having regard to all interested parties. It states—

(2) The purpose is to be achieved mainly by—

- (a) providing for the declaration, planning and management of recreation areas, as far as practicable, in consultation with, and having regard to the views and interests of, area land-holders and other interested groups and persons, including relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities for the area;

Can the minister please define, as far as practicable, what the interested parties can expect in the formulation of a consultation body in the definition of RAMs? Will there be a constitution formed, for example, to give a working framework for the consultation body? Will the consultation body be a permanent body or just a temporary body? And if it is temporary, how long and why and what would allow for it to be a temporary body as opposed to a permanent body that could oversee the individual areas in the question? Paragraph (e) states—

(e) providing for the payment of fees and charges for the use of recreation areas and facilities and services for recreation;

It does not indicate if the fees are regulatory or CPI linked or subject to the department. Is there a fee structure in place to remain or will there be new fees included in these bills?

Ms BOYLE: I am pleased to say, if the honourable member was listening, that I addressed most of those matters in relation to advisory committees quite clearly in my speech in reply. The purpose of the legislation is really quite clear. The only clarification that needs to be provided is in relation to the fees; they are indeed regulatory.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you very much, Minister. I must say that I was quite disappointed with the minister's summing-up, where she used the opportunity to attack a very hardworking, diligent and new member of the opposition staff. I would like to take this opportunity to defend this person's honour. They are very, very hardworking. I must say that my earlier life has almost prepared me for this moment. I have tread the boards in some very bad theatre restaurants. I am used to the interjections and name-calling. In fact, those in the theatre restaurants were probably a little more original with their put-downs. It seems as if the minister has got a hold of the ALP booklet of standard put-downs and knockbacks. It is going to be a very, very long night indeed. We have a lot of hard work to do. There is a lot of detail that we have to clear up here.

In speaking to the clause, the minister says that the fees are going to be regulatory. Can the minister give this place an indication as to their structure and can the minister give ballpark figures?

Ms BOYLE: I am not at all surprised to hear that the member was treading the boards in very bad theatre restaurants. I would have to say to the honourable member that it shows. The fees are set by regulation according to the circumstances and the particular areas at the time.

Mr MESSENGER: I take it the minister has not a clue as to how much the fees will be or what the regulation is going to be.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr MESSENGER (8.50 pm): Clause 6 is entitled 'Agreement for inclusion of land in recreation area'. Is it the minister's intention that a recreation area as defined under this legislation is a notified area as per the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2000, which gives a government entity prescriptive powers for only two years? If the answer is yes, will we see the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2000 amended to reflect this fact? I would like the minister to also clarify clause 6(1), which states—

Any land may be included in a recreation area.

Is there any benefit for a private individual to enter into an agreement with the government to have their land included in a recreation area—for example, a financial incentive such as a reduction in rates? What compensation is the government offering those people who decide to sign up to this deal for the use of their land? And what money has the government set aside for private landowners' compensation—a budgeted cost?

There is also the issue of public liability in relation to the use of private land for public use. Is the government prepared to compensate the landowners for the necessary insurance, or in the event that it is sued? Will the parks and wildlife officers manage the land for weeds and pests? Will the government provide increased funding for the necessary personnel? What plans does the government have for increasing staff numbers in this area if they are responsible for the management of private land included in the recreation areas, or will the government pay private landowners to maintain the land in question? Does the landowner still have unlimited freehold rights? This is a very important point: does the landowner still have unlimited freehold rights to the land and the property in question by becoming part of the agreement? Who pays the rates on private property after an agreement is signed? Who is responsible for the control of stock and fencing on the properties? Will the government compensate the landowner for any loss of grazing or cropping rights? Clause 6(2) states—

However, land other than State land cannot be included in a recreation area unless the land-holder enters into a written agreement ... with the State for its inclusion.

Is the related legislation—the Nature Conservation Act 1992—linked and read in conjunction with RAMs? If so, does division 4 of the NCA apply, as the policy objectives of the RAMs legislation is to enhance consistency with the Nature Conservation Act? Do the RAMs legislation and the Nature Conservation Act place a dual obligation of compliance on landowners? Under the Nature Conservation Act, division 4 allows a minister to declare a private landowner's property as a protected area without

any consideration. If the minister is satisfied that the area should be declared a protected area, then the minister must prepare a proposal for the declaration and give written notice to all landholders affected by the proposal. However, part 5 of the act states that a minister does not have to give notice if the minister considers it impracticable to give notice to each landholder of a particular class and can mitigate this obligation by a public notice advertisement. Therefore, can private landholders' properties be included in RAMs and the NCA without their knowledge and without any form of compensation? This is a very important point. Can the minister decide the terms of that agreement? Why is it just limited to the minister? Is there a formalised standard agreement in existence or is it based on the discretion of the minister? Are we going to see a typical RAMs agreement?

Are the agreements decided by the minister available to the public for viewing? Do we have access to them under freedom of information legislation? Are we going to have a public review process? Can the agreements be reviewed on a regular basis without the minister allowing for a change of circumstances within those agreements? With regard to recreation area agreements under part 3, why has there been no inclusion in relation to the tenure of the lease? If it passes with the sale of the property, is the agreement similar to an easement? If so, does it affect the sale and value of the property in question? If it is an easement, is it registered at the titles office?

Ms BOYLE: The answer to the first question is no. The answer to the second matter in relation to the details of any arrangements with a private landholder was quite clearly stated in my summing-up. No such agreements have yet been struck. They will be voluntary and they will therefore include clauses, should they occur in the future, that are satisfactory to the landholder and satisfactory to the EPA. No, division 4 of the NCA does not in any way overrule or provide in any way for other than voluntary agreements should a landholder wish to engage in one with us.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr MESSENGER (8.56 pm): For the benefit of many people who I believe are listening to this broadcast on the net and who may not be familiar with the legislative and parliamentary process, clause 7, which deals with the declaration of recreation areas, states—

- (1) Subject to section 6, a regulation may declare an area to be a recreation area.
- (2) The regulation must—
 - (a) describe the land included in the recreation area; and
 - (b) give a name to the recreation area; and
 - (c) state the management intent for the recreation area.

It will allow for the creation of a recreation area by a direction from the minister or regulation. The minister may decide to wake up one day and take advice from the same advisers who told her to ban dolphin feeding at Tin Can Bay and impose a recreation area on any of our communities. In practical terms, this means that this House will not be able to scrutinise that choice of land. This clause allows the minister to bypass the people's House and declare a recreation area with little or no consultation with the community. During the course of this questioning at the consideration in detail stage, we will discover just why this is such a dangerous piece of legislation and a threat to the rights and civil liberties of those local communities that are inside or on the border of a regulated recreation area. The people of Queensland are entitled to make this assumption. This is a dangerous and arrogant way to govern Queensland. Why does the minister not want the establishment of a recreation area to be scrutinised by the people's House?

Ms BOYLE: The development of recreation areas is indeed scrutinised by this House. I am laughing considering that the previous recreation area bill was brought in by the National Party government with no consultation. This is a bit of a raw prawn in terms of any accusations that we might go out and decide to have a recreation area without any consultation. In fact, our most recent addition of Bribie Island was well consulted and well received. Indeed, that is the procedure that we would continue, as long as we are in government.

Mr MESSENGER: We have to take it on a nod and a wink that the minister will not do it. However, the minister has the power to impose a RAMs area. Clause 7 states—

Subject to section 6, a regulation may declare an area to be a recreation area.

In effect, it does not have to come before this House. Is the minister now confirming that a recreation area may be established on any community within Queensland by regulation?

Ms BOYLE: In fact, I am pleased to tell honourable members that, were any environment minister so presumptuous as to bypass other ministries in the state government and executive government—even if that could occur—the regulation would require tabling in parliament and a disallowance motion could, indeed, be moved. While I am absolutely pleased to reassure members that that will not be happening on my watch, should they be concerned about others they would know that the parliament would indeed have a way of questioning how, in fact, that regulation had been made.

Mr MESSENGER: We have seen this many times. What the minister is virtually telling us tonight is that the parliament has to be on its guard and that a regulation could slip by quite easily. If we do not choose to oppose that regulation then there it is—Bob's your uncle; we have ourselves a recreation area. We have seen many times in this parliament how regulations have skipped by. We have to be very vigilant against this government's will and decision to impose recreation areas on communities which may not want them established over their land tenure.

Question—That clause 7, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 50—Beattie, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reynolds, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Reeves

NOES, 28—Caltabiano, Copeland, E Cunningham, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, McArdle, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, E Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Rogers

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr MESSENGER (9.07 pm): Clause 9 states—

A regulation may revoke all or part of the declaration of a recreation area, whether or not an area land-holder asks for the revocation.

I would like members to note 'whether or not an area landholder asks for the revocation'. Why is a landowner excluded in the decision-making process concerning the revocation of a recreation area management agreement on their property? I would think that the minister would like to attract landowners to this agreement and would like landowners to join the scheme. Those landowners would have to put themselves through a very complicated process and make a considerable effort. They would have to invest time and energy to sign up to the minister's scheme. Then the minister has the power, through this clause, to tear up that agreement without any consideration for or consultation with the landowner.

Where is the respect for private landowners in this clause? Is there a right of appeal available to the landowner in question? That is a very pertinent point that the minister might like to turn her mind to. If there is no right of appeal, can the minister please explain why not and outline where this is addressed in the bill?

Ms BOYLE: I think the matters have been well addressed already, particularly considering that no such agreement has yet been struck. Of course, we could speculate on some of those questions and could do so for many hours. However, they would be speculations only. In fact, any agreement with a landholder will be a voluntary one, on terms that are agreeable to that landholder and to us.

Mr MESSENGER: The minister is starting to sound like a scratched record. She has not answered the question at all. She has not addressed the question or applied herself to it at all. We want to know if there is a right of redress for landowners.

The minister should put herself in the position of a landowner. They invest all this time, energy and money—they might have to take out a loan—into this agreement that they have struck with the state government and yet on a ministerial whim the agreement can be ripped up. Can the minister please tell me what right of redress a private landowner has? What landowner would sign up to this agreement knowing that clause 9 is in this legislation?

Ms BOYLE: No agreement has been struck. When there is an agreement, we can all read that agreement and determine the answers to those questions.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I would like to add to this. It is concerning that the minister is replying in this way. Considering the point to which the legislation has been developed, I find it quite unreasonable that, within the department and in discussions with the minister, no understanding of the structure of a future agreement has been formed. Most informed people would expect that, in discussing the agreement proposal, the departmental officers would have in their minds the form of responsibilities that they would be looking for a landowner to agree to retain; they would have an understanding of the sort of expectation that the government of the day would have of those individuals; they would have an idea of the amount of liability that those people would be asked to retain; and they would know how much assistance the government and the departmental officers would offer to those people as a recognition of their willingness to include private property in a recreation area and, indeed, allow access to the general public. If the minister's response is that she knows nothing and does not even have a structure in mind because at this time no agreements have been established, and obviously they have not been established because she does not have the head of power to do it, that is very concerning indeed.

Mr HOBBS: I shall follow through on this, because it is a very valid point. Earlier tonight I mentioned that, in one sense, this legislation is a smoking gun. This is one of those smoking gun issues.

As the member for Gladstone and the minister have both said, there are no agreements. I doubt if the government will ever get anyone to agree to this. Who in their right mind would go into an area where they would lose the very asset that they hoped to build on?

My question to the minister is as follows, and I am trying to be helpful with this: when she discussed this with her department officers, did they provide any examples of what they envisaged in relation to this type of thing? Something must have been discussed. For this clause to be in the bill, there must have been discussions about how it would work, what the objectives were, how it would be structured, and how on earth somebody would be convinced to come into this type of an arrangement.

Ms BOYLE: I note that the member for Gladstone made a statement and did not ask a question. The member for Warrego has asked a question. As a government, we are opening up the possibility for discussions through tourism in protected areas. We have been told very clearly by the tourism industry that in years past they believed that the EPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service were too rigid and too permit driven. They want more flexibility and a greater ability to negotiate according to the circumstances.

Presently, we have no agreements and no agreements are being negotiated. As yet, there is no clear direction that can answer the specific questions that have been asked about what the agreements might say. Very simply, we are signalling that there is no hidden agenda here. There is a willingness to work with, probably, landholders engaged in tourism activities close to protected areas that are a part of recreation areas. We are willing to talk. It will be a voluntary discussion. There is no force. There is no hidden agenda. So far, no such discussions have taken place.

Mr HORAN: Like the member for Gladstone, I am concerned that the minister says simply that because there no such agreement in place now, they are not prepared to answer the questions that the shadow minister asked about the redress that people will have. It also concerns me that the clause itself seems to be at odds with the explanatory notes. Clause 9 states—

A regulation may revoke all or part of the declaration of a recreation area, whether or not an area land-holder asks for the revocation.

The explanatory notes state—

Clause 9 states that all or part of a recreation area may be revoked by regulation, for example if the area is no longer required as a recreation area, or the area is to be removed under an agreement with a land-holder.

On the one hand the notes talk about an agreement with the landholder, but the clause itself states 'whether or not an area land-holder asks for the revocation'. It is really at odds with the clause. Can the minister explain why the explanatory notes state that it could be removed under an agreement with the landholder but the clause itself says 'whether or not an area land-holder asks for the revocation'.

Ms BOYLE: The matter is quite clear enough.

Mr WELLINGTON: Would the minister provide a commitment in relation to this clause, so that if a private landowner chooses to enter into an agreement, contained in that agreement will be an express acknowledgment of this clause so that the landowner will know from day one that, notwithstanding he or she may enter into an agreement with the minister or the government of the time, a future minister will have this power? Will the minister now provide acknowledgment that if an agreement is entered into, the landowner will not have to look any further than the very agreement that he will sign to see that it gives this minister or a future minister that power?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the member for Nicklin. The answer is yes. The bill is quite obvious. It is on the record. I will directly draw that clause to the landholder's attention if, in fact, the landholder did not already know it was there.

Mr MESSENGER: I can see by the minister's responses that there is no right of appeal for a landowner who signs up to this clause. Not only is there no right of appeal; the minister's answers also show that she has not even thought about an appeal process. There is no document showing an example of an agreement between the government and a private landowner. Fundamentally, that shows just how blunt and unsophisticated this legislation is. Clause 9 sums that up. If there is any reason at all to vote against the bill, it is this clause which shows a complete lack of planning and thought on the government's part. I am astounded at the minister's knowledge and preparation for this bill.

Mr HORAN: I am quite amazed at the minister's answer to the question asked by the member for Nicklin. She talked about drawing this to the attention of somebody before they sign an agreement or contract. Who would sign a contract knowing that a sword like this was hanging over their head? Knowing that a declaration can be revoked whether or not one asks for the revocation and, at the same time, having no right of appeal makes this an absolute blunt instrument.

That probably describes some of the dictatorial police powers that are in this bill. That is no way to go about getting people to work cooperatively with the department in recreation areas. We do not know what may happen down the track that might require there to be some change or some revocation. There may be some force of nature or economic change or a change in patterns that requires this to change. There needs to be some opportunity for those people to have some form of review.

The answers to date have indicated that there is absolutely nothing in this legislation in that regard. The power resides for a totalitarian government to simply revoke that with no form of appeal. It is a straight out blunt instrument.

Ms BOYLE: As a matter of interest to members opposite, I have had a check done. The option for possible private lands to be included in a recreation area was in the previous National Party bill, as was this clause. There is no change.

Question—That clause 9, as read, stand part of the bill—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 49—Boyle, Briskey, Choi, E Clark, L Clark, Croft, Cummins, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Molloy, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reynolds, N Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, C Sullivan, Wallace, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: T Sullivan, Reeves

NOES, 27—Caltabiano, Copeland, E Cunningham, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, Malone, McArdle, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Quinn, Rickuss, E Roberts, Rowell, Seeney, Simpson, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Hopper, Rogers

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.27 pm): I move—

That the debate be adjourned until 7.30 pm on Thursday, 30 March 2006.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.27 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Nundah State School

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (9.27 pm): I have no doubt most members of this House can point with pride to the schools in their areas as excellent examples of our school system. But very few can claim to be one of the oldest operational schools in the state. Nundah State School is in its 141st year, having continually operated on the same site since 1865 and having produced hundreds of notable Queenslanders over the years, including Rhodes scholars and Olympians. It is a school with pride in its traditions and community values.

If one walks through the grounds of Nundah State School one can sense the rich history. One might even be able to spot where the trenches were dug for the students' protection during the war. Unfortunately, one can also sense the very real need for infrastructure improvements to keep pace with enrolments.

I would like to acknowledge the minister for public works who in 2001 spent money to upgrade the toilet block to modern standards from its charming but inadequate 1957 origins. Alas, we have to go back to 1967 to see the last major change when two classrooms were joined to make a library and back to the 1950s when the school pool was installed.

The Ed Mac room has resulted in many fond memories but what it does not have is sufficient space. It would make a superb library if the school achieved its desire for a new all-purpose hall. I encourage the Minister for Education and the minister for public works to help make that desire a reality. Keep the proud history and tradition going in this new millennium.

Oh Nundah's our school and we're proud to belong.

Nundah's our school, let us sing it strong.

We'll be loyal and true and do our best.

To see that Nundah leads the rest.

It is a great school song. It is a great school. I acknowledge the principal, Mr Maurie Bernard, all the teaching staff, the students, the families and the P&C for doing what they can to make Nundah the great school it is. We will continue to support it. I do that in association with my colleagues Mr Neil Roberts and Mr Terry Sullivan who have a great affinity with the Nundah State School. It is a great little school and one that I will be working very hard with to get it up to the standard that we want. It is a great school.

Gladstone, Fishing Industry

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.29 pm): I rise to commend the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries for his response over the last few weeks to the oil spill incident in Gladstone. I note that Channel 9 is running ads, at least in my area, highlighting the spill but not highlighting the clean-up. We had a reception down here with seafood from the area. It was very successful. We had a small reception in Gladstone on Saturday and, unfortunately, the minister was unable to attend but certainly his apologies were tendered and his continued interest and support of the fishing industry was made public.

We had people there from the fishing industry, from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in Brisbane, the local Primary Industries and Fisheries officers who were directly involved in the clean-up, and restaurant owners who buy local seafood and present it to their customers and who are great ambassadors for the industry. It was a further opportunity to reinforce to the community that Gladstone seafood is well and truly back on the market, that it is great a product to buy and it is a great product to consume. I encourage all members to buy Gladstone prawns, crabs, fish and other seafood because it makes for a wonderful meal.

On a different but still local issue, recently the National Servicemen's Association held its memorial service at the Uniting Church. The Nashos, as they are affectionately known, joined the Army and were sent overseas in many instances, not necessarily of their own choice. The service was very encouraging, very rewarding and enjoyed by the Nashos themselves as well as all of the rest of us who were given the privilege to be involved. At the service held at the Uniting Church in Gladstone each guest was given a peace candle and we lit these candles from a central candle to celebrate peace and to encourage peace. I was asked to bring this small candle to this parliament, and I seek leave to table that.

Leave granted.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The overriding theme was a remembrance of what the national servicemen have contributed to our community, but an underlying feature was the fact that we need to continue to strive very strongly for peace not only in our nation but across the world. I commend the national servicemen. They are a wonderful group of men. Their wives are very supportive of them. The service was of great value to them. It was a moving service and one that very capably recognised the contribution they have made to our nation.

Toastmasters Week; International Women's Day

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (9.32 pm): Last Sunday week I spent a delightful afternoon with Toastmasters International as part of Toastmasters Week. I was invited and warmly greeted by Coral McVean of Noosa Toastmasters, along with local community identity Bee Williams of GAGS. The event was a debate held between Noosa Toastmasters and the Maroochy Shire Council Toastmasters. Special guests included the lovely Rosanna Natoli, journalism lecturer at USC and Channel 7 news presenter as well as proud mother of two gorgeous little girls. Rosanna is a very well liked lecturer out at the uni and my Honorlee was one of her students. Mayor Joe Natoli was there to support his team and was in good spirits. Other toastmasters in attendance were Trish Springstein DTM, Bob Simpson DTM and Michele Leighley DTM.

Our Noosa team debaters on the affirmative side of the 'Life Begins at 40' debate were Anne Hardcastle, Shereen Power and Tony Reynolds. The Maroochy team comprised David Fullmore, Jodie Martin and Chris Mehonoshen. What a great debate—full of thought-provoking jousting and props to die for. Superman Chris Mehonoshen really stole the show and his team bravely grasped back the holy grail from the Noosa team. It really was a wonderful, funny time spent with some excellent debaters. Adjudicators Moira Carr and Elaine Rudd had a very tough job to actually award the trophy as the score was so close. My score, of course, was that I was batting for my Noosa team, as one does.

To argue for and against the topic 'Life Begins at 40' was a challenge which the speakers obviously had researched and prepared well. Rosanna was tasked with handing the cup to the winning team and Joe Natoli was invited to speak for a short time, as was I. The funny thing was that we were given a soap-box—a milk crate with lots of holes in it, which was very user unfriendly, but thank goodness I was told to kick my shoes off. Other speakers equipped themselves extremely well to the delight of the audience. Congratulations to all involved and keep up the terrific hobby.

In celebration of International Women's Day I attended the Australian Federation of University Women Sunshine Coast breakfast with guest speaker, Senator Claire Moore. It was great to see Anne Kennedy, Pam Lenthall, Rosemarie, Robyn Deane and Robyn Tychsen. I was so sad to hear that Jeannie Woods's son, a highly respected police officer, had had a dreadful accident in the early hours of Saturday morning. Jeannie and Frank, our prayers are with you. Senator Claire Moore gave us a great overview of the recent debate on RU486 in federal parliament. The audience of 75 women graduates loved Claire's presentation and her stand and that of her colleagues against Tony Abbott and his attempts to change the debate from a moral debate to a 'Tony Abbott wants to determine whether women in this country can access the drug for the therapeutic purpose of securing a termination'. We women, backed up by our men, say that we have had that debate; now let us look after women's health. Claire urged the meeting to watch for a further debate on the proposed counselling services that John Howard wants to impose on the community. I for one will be watching that space and reporting back to this House on how that pans out. Thank you to the AFUW Sunshine Coast for a wonderful morning at the Blue Olive, Minyama.

Advertising Campaigns, Road Safety

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (9.35 pm): Tonight I want to draw attention to an issue that is of great concern to me and to my constituents. I want to focus on the issue of shock-value advertising campaigns and in particular the government's recent road safety television advertisements. I am sure most people in the House have seen these antispeeding ads, the message being that 'Every k Over is a Killer'. There are three different commercials. Each centres around a father and son speeding in a car as well as a mother pushing her baby in a pram on the footpath. These ads aim to get the antispeeding message across, but they are very distressing to watch. The graphic images depicted on screen illustrate the ultimate price paid—a mother killed instantly, an injured baby and the emotional trauma of those also involved.

Recently I spoke to one of my constituents, Debbie Zupp, who had grave concerns about the TV ads and the times that they go to air. As a mother with young children, she was particularly worried that the commercials had screened during an early timeslot when one of her young children were watching. Her son became very upset at the images showing death and blood. I admit that I also share these concerns, as does my wife, who simply will not watch these ads when they come on TV. While it is upsetting enough for adults to watch, it is even more distressing for children. These types of advertising campaigns are not targeted at children. They are instead designed for young adults, adults and seniors who have a drivers licence.

Effective advertising can change people's attitudes. However, changing their behaviour is a completely different matter. A 2004 report published by the Monash University Accident Research Centre makes note that there has been a lengthy debate on using fear in advertising campaigns in order to change behaviour. Road safety campaigns in particular have successfully incorporated 'fear appeals'. However, there is still wide debate about the level of fear arousal necessary to really affect a person's actions and behaviour. I would like to see these government commercials in a different format where, instead of depicting the dead mother and bleeding baby, other images may be more appropriate. Even just showing the looks on the faces of the uninjured man and his son may be enough. With that, the audience is then able to picture for itself what has happened. Perhaps the images not seen by the audience could be just as effective and hard-hitting, if not more.

It is interesting to note the results of a study conducted between road safety campaigns in New South Wales and Tasmania in recent years. While the New South Wales Road Traffic Authority implemented a shock advertising strategy, the Tasmanian road safety campaign used a more subtle approach. The 'Just Like That' campaign avoided shock tactics because it was thought that nowadays audiences have become more desensitised. Some 66 per cent of people surveyed in the first few months said the advertising campaign had influenced their actions. In comparison, New South Wales experienced a 4.5 per cent increase in road fatalities after the launch of its shock advertising campaign in 1999 while Tasmania recorded a decrease of 19 per cent. The horrendous road toll statistics experienced in Queensland over Christmas would indicate that the campaign in Queensland has not achieved the desired outcome. I hope Queensland Transport continues to educate the public on the importance of road safety—

Time expired.

Avicultural and Poultry Museum, Caboolture

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (9.38 pm): It was my great pleasure on the weekend to be invited to attend the official opening of the extensions to the avicultural and poultry museum at Caboolture Historical Village. In 2001 the Feather Clubs Association came up with an idea of how to preserve the heritage of the poultry and pigeon fanciers industry and decided that the best way to preserve the heritage and achievements of the pioneer breeders was to open an avicultural and poultry museum. Within two short years—in 2003—it managed to have the whole thing together, have the funding in place and the museum was opened by the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk MP, who at that time was the minister for primary industries.

I believe that the Feather Clubs Association of Queensland has achieved its aim of preserving history, providing a venue for current breeders and interested parties to come together to share information and ensuring there is an ongoing interest in developing stock. Every year over 150 schools across south-east Queensland get the opportunity to visit the museum and learn more about the history of breeding and get to see some quite fascinating equipment. If members have not been involved in the poultry industry, they would have no idea of the fascinating equipment that is available—ranging from things that are used to weigh eggs, debeakers for the chickens—all of those sorts of fascinating things. It is all there in the museum. These young people get the chance to come along and have a look at them.

I personally believe that we only continue to grow and improve as a society if we teach our young people about our history so that they can help us move forward. The Feather Clubs Association is doing that exceptionally well. That is why I was pleased to support the association's desire to continue improving its museum through its extension. The state government came through on this project through

the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. It provided almost \$16,000 to complete the annexe. I was very pleased to announce the name of the extensions, which is the Bill Clare-Ernie Currell Annexe, and it was named that in honour of two prominent poultry fanciers.

On the day I offered my congratulations to the Feather Clubs Association, its president, Owen Glover, and the museum subcommittee—and the chairperson of that is Bob Whitehouse—for continuing the excellent project that they started back in 2001. It was great to officially open the complex. Once we had all made our speeches, I got to go outside where there was a coop with homing pigeons in it. I got to open the coop. The pigeons flew out. It took them four minutes to get back from Burpengary to Caboolture, which is quite a distance. They did that very quickly. The pigeons fly up in the air, they circle around until they get their bearings and then they head off home. I am sure all the pigeons made it home. It was certainly an exciting and a fascinating way to launch the extension to that building.

The building is located at the Caboolture Historical Village. I urge members to visit that village. It is full of all sorts of museums, such as the transport museum and the telephone museum. There are all sorts of interesting things to see at the Caboolture Historical Village. Members should go out there; it is amazing.

Members of Parliament

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.41 pm): ‘Sometimes people’s best interests come before politics’. This simple, effective and seemingly obvious line was uttered in this place this morning, Tuesday, 7 March, and serves as a simple reminder to all of us who have the privilege to sit in this place of our true purpose as elected representatives. Our purpose in this House is not to serve as political heavies or factional overlords; our true purpose does not require us to serve the media and provide them with well-spun, easily presented stories. In the end, our purpose does not even lie in serving the person sitting beside us who represents a different portion of this state. Our purpose is to strive for the simply put goal of accommodating the best interests of the portion of Queensland we represent.

Although, as I stated, this objective is stated very easily, the process through which this purpose is achieved is, in essence, the definition of politics. The party room contributions, the representations to other members and the challenge of navigating competing interests within communities, political parties and, indeed, within ourselves are all part of a puzzle that is pieced together to make the picture of politics. Because one is trying to see the noble and pure goal of serving our constituents with distinction through a looking glass dirtied by political dealings and processes, there are times when no matter what the originally intended destination, we can lose the point on the horizon we originally set course for.

The words ‘Sometimes people’s best interests come before politics’ came from the mouth of Premier Peter Beattie in answering a question this morning. That was followed only minutes later by the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing saying that members on this side of the House ‘live in a policy vacuum’. That statement made me think: on what basis does one judge the policy ideas of one’s political opponents?

The vast majority of government-sponsored legislation goes through this place with the support of the opposition. Why? In part because this particular opposition looks primarily at the policy benefits of the legislation and then decides if and how it will support the bill. This is best practice for an opposition in a Westminster system because, if nothing else, it overcomes the effective criticism that a particular opposition is opposing government initiatives solely for opposition’s sake.

The same cannot be said, though, for the government. Under the Beattie government there have been 67 private members’ bills introduced by this side of the House. Only one of those bills has been passed. Does this mean that on 98.67 per cent of occasions the government has looked at a bill introduced by an opposition member or an Independent and decided on substantial policy grounds that it should not be supported? No, of course not! I have introduced two of those bills, the Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Amendment Bill 2004 and Racing (Race Fields) Amendment Bill 2006, and on both occasions the bills I introduced were Labor Party policy and/or supported by the relevant minister, but not supported in debate because they were introduced by an opposition member.

Maybe the government members should stop looking at which member introduced the bill and start looking at the content of the document in order to heed their leader’s words, ‘Sometimes people’s best interests come before politics.’

Green Bridge; Cr Leslie Green

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (9.44 pm): I am sure that all of us are aware of the impending opening of the Green Bridge in Brisbane and how important it is as a symbol of Queenslanders’ commitment to environmental responsibility. Under the auspices of the Brisbane City Council, and begun under the previous Labor administration, the Green Bridge has been embraced by the people of Brisbane as both a good, practical idea and an aptly named demonstration of our environmental values.

However, this apt naming seems to be a sticking point with the current Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman. Despite the fact that all community consultation about the project has been done under the name Green Bridge and the public support for that name, the Lord Mayor hesitates to acknowledge that support. Whether Lord Mayor Newman is displaying pettiness in not wanting to use a name coined by a Labor administration or whether he merely wishes to ignore the opinion of those who elected him is not immediately clear. Fortunately for Lord Mayor Newman, the Labor members of the Brisbane City Council have come up with the perfect solution that will allow him to maintain the facade of originality and not have to take his bat and his bridge and run off home to mother.

The solution involves naming the Green Bridge after Councillor Leslie Green. Not all of us will have had the opportunity to study the career of Councillor Green, which is unfortunate for his is a story of commitment to service. In 1924 he started employment with the Brisbane City Council as a tramways conductor where he was widely known as a staunch advocate for improving the conditions for tramway employees. He was elected as the alderman for the ward of Ithaca in April 1940 and served on the works committee and the health committee and was tireless on both.

In 1942 Alderman Green submitted an apology for nonattendance at the council due to his enlistment to fight for his country. Tragically, within a year of enlisting he was killed in Egypt and is buried at the El Alamein War Cemetery. Leslie Green was acknowledged by the lord mayor at the time as a gallant and honourable man who held high ideals about public service and commitment to community. I believe that the current Lord Mayor should reinforce that acknowledgement by naming the Green Bridge after Leslie Green. That way the community get the bridge with the name they want and expect, a great and noble man will be remembered and honoured, and Lord Mayor Newman can pretend that he has a semblance of the public interest at heart by calling the Green Bridge the Green Bridge. If anyone continues to point out that the name Green Bridge was a Labor initiative, he can respond by saying that his is a different shade of green.

Chalco, Alumina Smelter

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (9.47 pm): I welcome the announcement of Chalco as the preferred tenderer for the development of an alumina smelter in Queensland. However, the Premier and the members for Thuringowa and Whitsunday seemed somewhat confused, claiming the site at Abbot Point north of Bowen for the Whitsunday electorate and the Townsville site for one or all of Thuringowa, Townsville or Mundingburra. The member for Thuringowa went further and accused me of 'sprouting for an area that does not even seem to be in her electorate.' I sincerely thank the members' support for both the Townsville and Abbot Point sites but would respectfully like to point out that both are in my Burdekin electorate. Fortunately, at a meeting with the Chinese Consul, Madam Liu Fei, representatives from the Bowen shire, Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, and De-Anne Kelly and I were able to give a comprehensive briefing of what Abbot Point has to offer, including its location.

The member for Whitsunday is known for claiming projects in neighbouring electorates as her own. Last week, after talking about 'this government's commitment to issues of water in my electorate', she referred to the Gattonvale off-stream storage, the Burdekin to Moranbah pipeline and the Water for Bowen project, all of which for the most part are in or run through the Burdekin electorate.

Mr Wallace: Do you support it?

Mrs MENKENS: The member should just wait. When the error made by the member for Thuringowa was pointed out to him in Saturday's *Townsville Bulletin* he remarkably found room in his mouth for the other foot. He staked further claim to the goose of the month award bleating that I was somehow failing to represent 30,000 people in the northern part of my electorate. That is an interesting accusation given that in the last census the population of the entire Burdekin electorate was just over 33,000. Unfortunately, there was no overnight migration of refugees from Thuringowa and Whitsunday. For the member's future reference, total enrolled voters in Burdekin number 23,520 and current postal addresses for the northern end of the Burdekin electorate come to fewer than 6,000. I wonder what other misinformation may have been spread during his frenzied lobbying given the member's predilection for overstatement and demonstrated lack of any basic knowledge of the proposal.

The member for Thuringowa also challenged me to state whether I support Townsville or Bowen as the preferred location for the smelter. I support the project 100 per cent no matter where it may be located. The benefits of the venture far outweigh any petty or inane squabbling over my backyard or his.

I have been very vocal in my support for industry at the Abbot Point site and I will continue to support Bowen mayor Mike Brunner in this because of its suitability as a greenfield site and access to the necessary road, rail, power and water infrastructure and the complete absence of any resident urban population. The member for Thuringowa spends more time speaking about the Burdekin electorate than he does about his own constituents' issues, such as health and hospitals, waiting lists or cutbacks in emergency services, teacher aide hours for special needs students and police numbers. I suggest that instead of chasing headlines the member take some of his own advice and work for his Thuringowa constituents instead of looking enviously over the fence.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! 253, Minister.

Bowelscan

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (9.50 pm): I believe in the adage that truth and simplicity are always the best policy. Many years ago there was an advertisement for Volvo cars with the headline, 'They're boxy, but they're safe.' Currently there is a program called Bowelscan and the motto for that is '\$6 can save your life.' This is a great, simple motto. Please believe that \$6 may save your life.

There are over 250 Rotary clubs in Australia that have declared March Bowelscan month. I would like to congratulate Tony Wills and his team from the Rotary Club of Capalaba, James Pollock and the Rotary Club of Cleveland, Ron Lovett and the Rotary Club of Redlands Bayside, and Brian MacLachlan and the Rotary Club of Redlands Sunrise. All four Rotary clubs in the Redlands have united to promote the month of March as Bowelscan month.

For \$6 any person in the Redlands can go to one of the supporting pharmacies and buy a Bowelscan kit.

Government members interjected.

Mr ENGLISH: I am disappointed at the level of interjection in the chamber.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Redlands, are you asking for the Speaker's protection?

Mr ENGLISH: No, Mr Speaker, I am just disappointed. For \$6 people can take an active step to look after their own health and protect their life. They can go to pharmacies and buy a kit, go back home into the privacy of their own home and complete the test, then return these kits where they will be tested free of charge by Sullivan Nicolaides. I compliment Sullivan Nicolaides for coming on board in relation to this initiative.

Bowel cancer is extremely common. It is one of the most common internal cancers affecting Australians. I speak as someone whose family is being impacted by cancer at the moment. For the sake of a \$6 test we can try to decrease the load on our health system and possibly save a member of one's family, a friend or a loved one. I commend the Bowelscan program to all members of the House. I commend Rotary International and the work it is doing in this area to all members of the House. If members want a kit please contact my office. It costs only \$6 and it may save your life.

Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.53 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House a subject that has many Queenslanders questioning what has happened to our once infallible Queensland Ambulance Service. Under consecutive conservative governments the Queensland Ambulance Service was well managed and met the needs of patients for emergency care. Even the former Labor Premier Wayne Goss was able to manage the Ambulance Service, but not Premier Beattie and this is without excuse. Premier Beattie became the first Queensland premier who could not manage the Ambulance Service and the first premier to introduce an ambulance tax on the public because he claimed the government could no longer afford to prop up the Queensland Ambulance Service due to too many people not contributing or subscribing to the ambulance fees.

After much protest from many sectors of the community to what was an unfair new tax the Premier stated that it was the only way to fix and create a better, well-funded Ambulance Service. After four years of turmoil the question must be asked on behalf of so many Queenslanders: why is our ambulance service in such a deplorable state when it was promised so much financial relief?

Can the Premier or the emergency services minister explain why Charters Towers' ambulance service, which services a district of almost the size of Tasmania and which has an ageing population, had its night-time roster service removed? As of last Sunday the Charters Towers Ambulance Station is now fully closed between the hours of 11.00 pm to 7.00 am, which is another kick in the guts to the local Charters Towers community and paramedics.

The Ambulance Service is supposed to be an emergency service where officers are available, ready and alert to assist victims in the quickest, fastest, safest time frame. Five minutes is a matter of life and death. Not only have our paramedics been dealt a severe blow by the government's controversial roster reform, now the government expects officers who complete a 10-hour shift to be woken up all hours of the night, to drive a 440 kilometre round trip and to be fresh, have their wits and provide appropriate care and save lives.

What has happened to the money being raked out of the community? Can this government give the Queensland people accountability and an honest, accurate figure as to how much money is generated from the ambulance levy and how much is actually returned to the Queensland Ambulance Service? Does this government still subsidise the Queensland Ambulance Service from its budget or has it cut its funding altogether? These are simple questions from ordinary Queenslanders demanding answers.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I can answer that question; I think the honourable member wants a question answered there. About twice what the levy is, is the answer.

Mr KNUTH: I stand here tonight on request from the residents of Charters Towers and the Queensland public to challenge this government to answer these questions. I thank the minister for his answer and I will look to see if that is correct. I ask this government, which has been fortunate to inherit the most generously funded budget in Queensland's history as a result of the goods and services tax, to come clean on the facts and figures and tell the people of Queensland how much of the Queensland ambulance levy is actually returned to where it was promised.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.55 pm.